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ASK THE EXPERT

Ask the expert

Don't let your stylish new radiator be let down by inefficient installation says Barbara Payne at Bisque

Words: Ruth Bell

1 When refurbishing it's common to place radiators in the same position as the previous ones, which often makes sense as the space is already occupied and the pipework does not need to be moved. However, standard radiator sizes might not match the exact pipework positions and this can lead to ugly pipe connections. In these cases consider a made-to-measure model that fits the exact space required. Delivery times will be longer, but the lasting appearance will be much improved. At Bisque we offer over 3000 made-to-order sizes at no price premium. In addition, some radiators can also be manufactured in angles and curves. These look very neat under bay windows and ensure minimum intrusion into the room.

2 If moving the pipework isn't an issue, for example you have a suspended floor, then the radiator options greatly increase. Rather than stick to traditional under-window placement, you could consider mounting tall models on interior walls. In these circumstances one thing you will need to consider is the weight of the radiator. Some tall models can be quite heavy, especially when filled with water. In most cases your installer can use special plasterboard fixings, which should be sufficient, however it is worth discussing this with them prior to ordering. If there is a concern then additional support could be installed in the wall prior to fixing the radiator, which shouldn't cost much extra to do.

3 If the heating pipes are running under a sealed box, for example tile or wood, that you don't want to take up, you will need to stick close by to the existing pipe positions. As mentioned previously, made-to-order sizes can be specified, but the other thing to consider is the water direction. Most radiators have a defined water flow and return - for example water must enter on the right side and exit on the left - so check which way round your pipes are and that the radiator you want is compatible. Bisque shows full fitting instructions on its website so you can quickly assess the suitability. However, even if it seems not to be compatible, it is worth checking with the supplier as, in many cases, radiator connections can be adapted or ordered to fit your exact requirements. Importantly, do not be persuaded that it's okay to install radiators the wrong way round - they will work but will be subject to cold patches and noise issues.

4 Check the thickness of your starting boards. Floor-mounted radiators, such as the Bisque Classic (see middle right), will have a bracket support back to the wall, which is designed to fit the depth of normal starting. However, if yours is thicker or if you have a lip at the bottom of the starting (as with laid wooden floors) then the bracket may not be deep enough. To overcome this you can often request extra-long brackets when ordering the radiator.

5 Radiator outputs are based on a standard average water temperature of 70°C. However, these days many boilers come with an eco mode, which sets the water temperature at around 55°C. This will save a lot of energy, but in order to get the heat output required you will need larger radiators. Radiator suppliers can calculate the needed radiator output at different water temperatures. The purchase costs will be higher, but these could be offset against long-term energy savings.

6 One final tip is to check that any radiators you select are CE-approved. This means that they will have been independently tested and approved so that you can be assured they will perform as stated.

Above: Chair's styling, like this sleek Miro, offer plenty of space for towels, from £400.

Left: Award-winning Archibald is now a design classic, priced from £117.

Above and below: The Classic is available as a floor-mounted or wall-hung model, with prices from £211.

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