Product Knowledge Guide

Glass Stepped vs Aluminium Rooflight

What they are, how they differ, and how to measure correctly

1. What Are They?

Glass Stepped Rooflight (Triple Glazed Sealed Unit)

A stepped rooflight is a bespoke triple-glazed glass unit where the top pane is larger than the bottom pane. The overhanging 'step' of the top pane laps over the outside face of the kerb, creating a weatherproof seal. There is no aluminium frame — the glass unit itself is the rooflight.

Typical spec: toughened outer pane (larger), argon-filled cavity, toughened Low-E inner pane (smaller). The step is typically 100mm on all four sides.

Aluminium Rooflight

An aluminium rooflight is a thermally broken aluminium-framed unit. A glazing unit (typically double or triple glazed) sits within an extruded aluminium frame. The frame sits on top of the kerb and is mechanically fixed to it, with the frame overhanging the kerb on all sides to create the weather seal. It can be powder coated in a wide range of RAL colours.

Typical spec: thermally broken aluminium profiles, sealed Low-E glazing unit, powder-coated finish to specified RAL colour.

2. Key Differences at a Glance

Feature	Glass Stepped Rooflight	Aluminium Rooflight
Construction	Single glass unit — top pane overhangs bottom pane to create a weather seal over the kerb	Thermally broken aluminium frame surrounding a glazing unit; frame sits on and over the kerb
Frame material	No frame — the glass unit itself is the rooflight	Extruded aluminium with thermal break; powder-coated in RAL colours
Glazing	Typically triple glazed: toughened outer, argon cavity, toughened Low-E inner	Double or triple glazed sealed unit set within the aluminium frame
Profile	Very low profile — sits flush and close to the roof surface	Raised aluminium frame visible above roof level
Installation	Glass unit drops into the kerb opening; step laps over outside of kerb to weather seal	Frame fixed on top of the kerb; glazing unit contained within the frame

Feature	Glass Stepped Rooflight	Aluminium Rooflight
Finish options	Glass type, coating (e.g. self-clean, Low-E), tint — no frame colour	Wide RAL powder coat range; anodised finishes available
Sizing rule	Ordered by internal kerb opening; 20mm deducted for fitting tolerance	Ordered by external kerb dimension + 20mm
Typical use	Flat roofs; residential new build and retrofit; clean flush appearance	Flat roofs; architectural and commercial; where colour or finish matters

3. The Kerb

Both product types require a kerb — a raised upstand around the roof opening, typically constructed from treated timber or aluminium on site before the rooflight is installed. The key difference is how each product interacts with the kerb:

- Glass Stepped Rooflight — the bottom (inner) pane sits inside the kerb opening. The top pane overhangs and laps over the outside face of the kerb to create the weather seal.
- Aluminium Rooflight — the aluminium frame sits on top of the kerb and overhangs all four sides. It is mechanically fixed down through the kerb and the frame acts as the weather seal.

4. How to Measure

Glass Stepped Rooflight — Measure the Internal Kerb Opening

Measure the clear internal opening of the kerb — the space between the inner faces of the four kerb walls. This is the size you give us. We deduct 20mm from each dimension (10mm per side) for fitting tolerance, and add the step to calculate the top pane size.

Stepped Rooflight — Measurement Rule

Measure: Internal kerb opening — width and length (e.g. 1000 × 1500mm)

We supply:

Bottom pane = internal kerb opening minus 20mm each dimension

e.g. 1000 × 1500mm kerb → 980 × 1480mm bottom pane

Top pane = bottom pane + step each side (typically +200mm each dimension)

e.g. 980 × 1480mm bottom pane → 1180 × 1680mm top pane

Always measure at multiple points and use the smallest reading.

Aluminium Rooflight — Measure the External Kerb Dimension

Measure the outside face of the kerb — the full external width and length of the kerb box. Add 20mm to each dimension. This gives us the frame size so that it overlaps the kerb correctly on all sides and creates a proper weather seal.

Aluminium Rooflight — Measurement Rule

Measure: External kerb dimension — width and length across the outside faces
(e.g. 1100 × 1600mm external kerb)

We supply:
Frame size = external kerb dimension plus 20mm each dimension
e.g. 1100 × 1600mm kerb → 1120 × 1620mm aluminium frame

Confirm kerb height and RAL colour at point of order.

Measurement Summary

	Glass Stepped Rooflight	Aluminium Rooflight
What to measure	Internal kerb opening (W × L)	External kerb dimension (W × L)
Fitting adjustment	Deduct 20mm per dimension — 10mm clearance each side	Add 20mm per dimension — 10mm overlap each side
Size we manufacture	Bottom pane: kerb opening −20mm Top pane: bottom pane + step	Frame: external kerb +20mm
Kerb height	Confirm — min. 150mm recommended	Confirm — affects frame rebate
Finish to specify	Glass type / coating / tint	RAL colour / anodised finish

⚠ Common Mistakes to Avoid

Stepped rooflight — do not measure the external kerb; always take the internal clear opening.

Aluminium rooflight — do not measure the internal kerb opening; always measure the external face.

Do not forget the 20mm adjustment — quoting the raw measurement without it will result in an incorrectly sized unit.

Always confirm kerb height before placing an order for either product type.