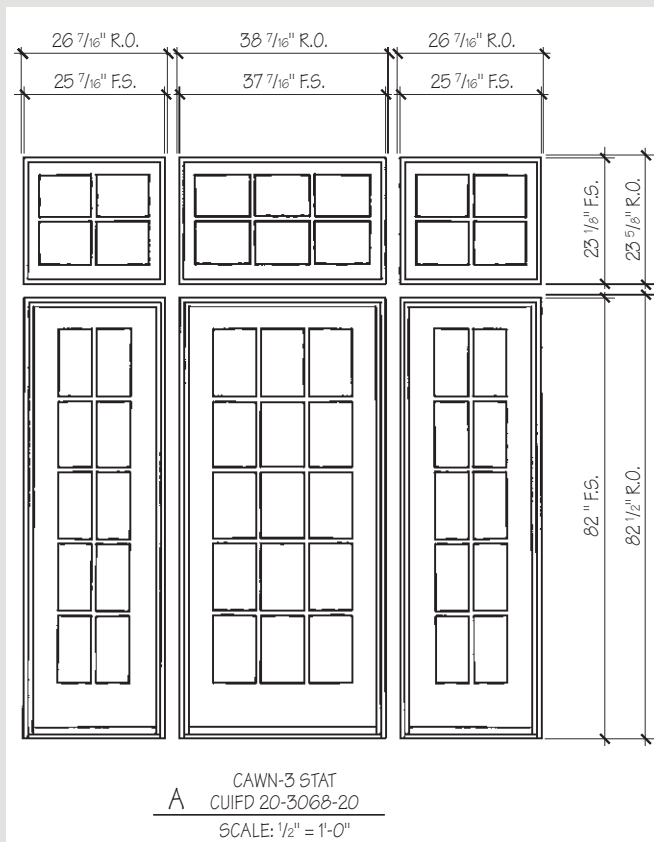


# Transom Window Layout

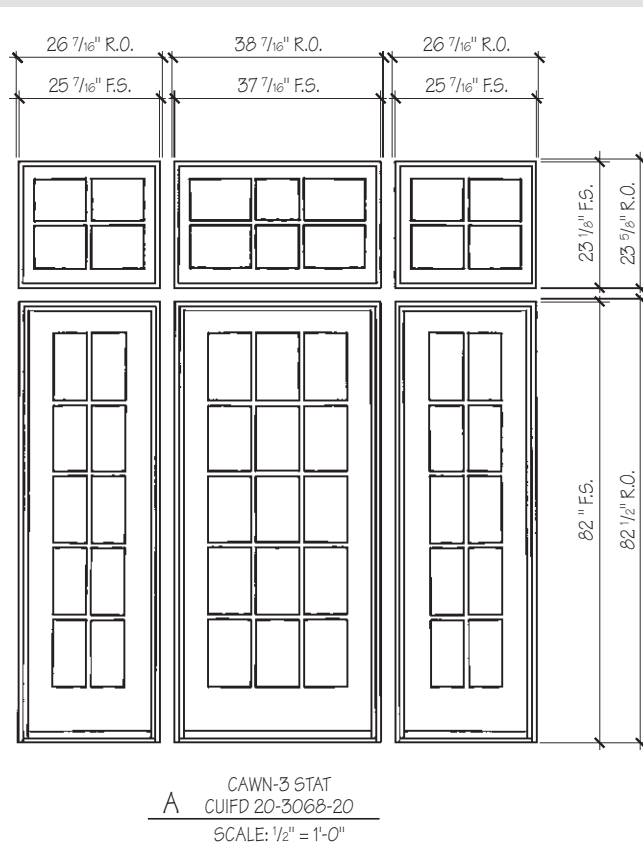
by Mark Bromley

Today's houses are much larger than those of just a few years ago, and they're also taller. Nine- and ten-foot residential ceilings have become commonplace. When French doors or glass doors with sidelights are combined with such high ceilings — as in a great room, for example — transom windows are often added to admit more light and give the room a more spacious feel.

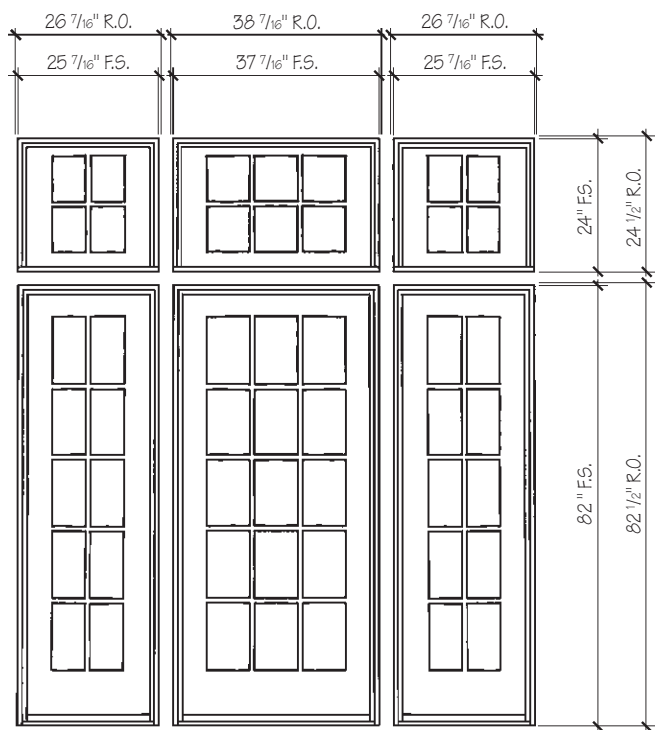
That's a simple concept, but the details can be surprisingly tricky. We recently walked a client through several options for combining a glazed door and sidelights with fixed transoms, and the drawings we came up with along the way illustrate some common problems. Everyone involved was glad we'd worked through the issue with drawings — rather than waiting until the windows had been ordered, delivered, and nailed in place.



**Figure 1.** This manufacturer's shop drawing represents one approach to grouping transoms over a door and sidelights. It looks pretty good, but the client was bothered by one apparent shortcoming: The vertical muntins of the central transom window didn't line up with the vertical muntins in the door below.



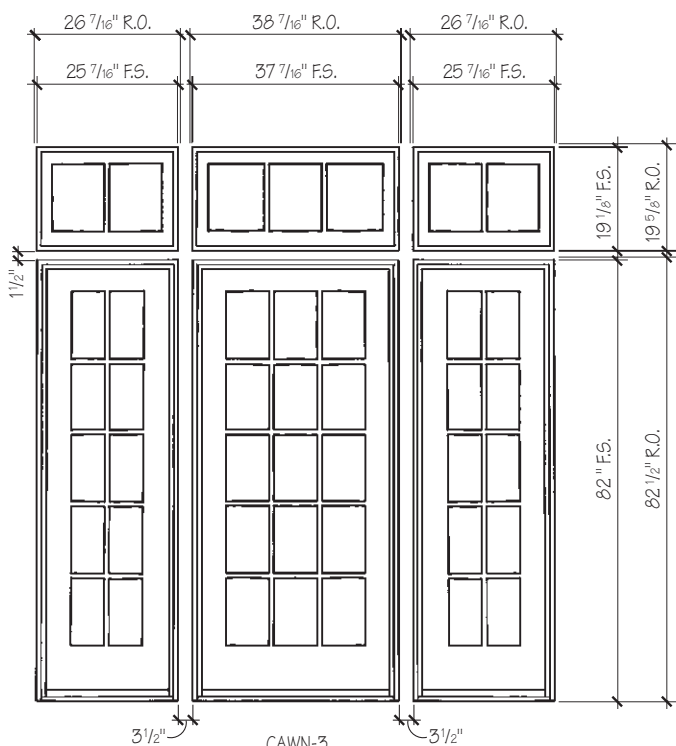
**Figure 2.** Repositioning the muntins in the transoms, unfortunately, didn't help. The resulting asymmetrical lights only called attention to themselves, and gave the entire group an awkward, off-balance look. This raised another possibility: Maybe the problem wasn't with the muntins, but with the relatively narrow stiles and rails of the transoms, which didn't match that of the doors and sidelights below. We went back to the drawing board again to find out.



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CUIFD 20-3068-20  
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

**Figure 3.** Nope. Widening the transom stiles and rails reduces the glass area so much that the units seem badly out of proportion, as if seen through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars.

By this point, the original drawing was looking better and better. But we pushed ahead through one more design change, and came up with a much more satisfying solution.



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SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

**Figure 4.** Eliminating the horizontal muntins in the transoms — while leaving the original dimensions unchanged — accomplished at least two things. First, it gave the individual transom lights a more vertical look consistent with that of the door and sidelights below — a big improvement over the original six-light configuration.

Second, it allowed the transom windows to stand as separate elements, rather than appearing as poorly matched extensions of the door and sidelights. As a result, the alignment — or rather non-alignment — of the vertical muntins became a non-issue.

Finally, it's important to note that the proper visual separation between the transom windows and the units below depends on not cramming them too closely together. A good rule of thumb would be to space the upper and lower units far enough apart to accommodate a run of whatever material will be used as side casing.