



Hints & Tips

Below are a variety of hints & tips which you may wish to consider when thinking about planning and designing your new staircase. It's not an easy thing to do, so if at any stage you feel you need some extra help or professional advice, feel free to get in contact with one of our experts.

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Tip 1 - Location

Staircases, balustrade and handrails are an integral component of the styling of your home. When the staircase occupies a prominent position in the home it is essential that close attention is paid to the detail early in the process.

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Tip 2 - Saving space

Winder steps. Space dictates the need to have winder steps in a staircase. If you can afford the space, landings in lieu of winders are preferable.

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Tip 3 - Balustrade heights

Balustrade heights are set at one meter above first floor level for safety reasons. If you have an open area at the top of your stair, designed for use as a TV or recreation area for children, make sure that there is ample room for sofas other than against the first floor balustrade.

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Tip 4 - Long flights

Try to avoid extremely long stair flights. They can be intimidating when you're standing at the top looking down. Long flights can be split up with landings and changes in pitch/direction.

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Tip 5 - Stair generosity

Stair generosity. Encourage your architect to allocate a generous amount of space for the staircase. A few centimetres can make an enormous difference in the walking comfort of the stair. Again it pays to speak to the manufacturer early in the process.

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Tip 6 - Planning

Careful planning of the staircase and the void allocated to incorporate the stair is vital. It's never too soon to involve the stair manufacturer in the planning process. Early involvement achieves a better result for the consumer every time.

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Tip 7 - Dimensions



When an architect or designer dimensions the stairwell, (at one meter width, for example) the end result will never be a one meter clear width with a straight flight staircase; it will be up to 150mm less than that. Constraints such as handrail finger room and balustrade on the upper level always restrict the clear width. Again planning is the best defence against disappointment.

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Tip 8 - Changing plans

If changes are required to the stairwell, it's a lot easier and cheaper to change things earlier than later on in the process.

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Tip 9 - Check with the experts

If you are choosing a geometric (curved) stair and you wish it to be devoid of obvious support (floating), check with the stair manufacturer rather than accept the designer's guarantees.

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Tip 10 - Design

If you are unsure about what style of stair best suits your period of home ask us for advice. We can help you design and build stairs that will suit any recognised style of architecture, even one that's unique to you.

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Tip 11 - Colour variation

Being a natural product, all timber is subject to variation of colour and grain. We always match our colours and grains, though, it is always hard to find a seamless match. If you're worried about variation, we can help you choose a species of timber that minimises the issue.

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Tip 12 - Safety

We all loved playing around the staircase when we were kids. They are the closest thing to monkey bars in any suburban home. While it's a source of great inspiration for your young kids, the stair also presents some dangers. Never mind, they are easy to fix. There are products available that provide temporary barriers at the stairs entrance. It provides all the necessary protection for as long as your kids are learning. You can also build more permanent features, but often dampen the staircases natural beauty.

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Tip 13 - Continuous handrail

Continuous handrail doesn't stop and start at a newel post or where the stair changes direction. It continues in smooth curves from the bottom of the stair to the top. Continuous handrail is an art form and an old world technique in producing a barrier. It is particularly important to seek advice should your stair require continuous hand railing. This type of handrail design is extremely technical and the result is totally dependent on the knowledge and expertise of the maker. The line of the handrail is critical when creating a timeless feature staircase and without this attention to harmony between the staircase and balustrading the whole focal point can fail.

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Tip 14 - Component positioning

Riser positions, the size of handrails, the line of best fit between the riser lines, position of balusters, internal and external radius, are all consideration for the craftsman, while constantly considering not exposing the wreathing components to short gain. Over use of short gain can greatly weaken the rail at points where it requires the greatest strength.

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Tip 15 - Finishing

Are you painting or polishing your staircase? If you don't know, then you could consider a few of these suggestions.



Traditional stairs are almost always stained, polished or clear finished, likewise with contemporary stairs. If you are more concerned about the form and structure of your staircase, you can use lower grade timbers which can be carpeted or painted. The other positive of carpet, is that you can chose small parts of the staircase to feature high quality polished timber.

If you're house has lots of exposed timber work, sometimes the stair is more definitive with a contrasting stain. We recommend a lighter stain, which will also help in brightening the stairwell. Stainless steel and glass is used on contemporary stairs to create the same effect, channeling light through the stairwell and into surrounding areas. Georgian era stairs usually have painted risers and stringers, polished treads, painted timber turned balusters and polished handrail.

Unlike other timber in the house, stairs tend to be more defined as furniture than floors or doors for instance. From that stand point we believe it's important that more time and effort is spent on the finishing of the stair, particularly the handrail. The handrail is something that's constantly used, the hand is automatically drawn to it so even more attention needs to be paid to that. Experience shows us that it doesn't matter how much time and effort, craftsmanship and skill goes in to making the stair, if similar time and effort doesn't go into the finishing of the timber then our time and your money have been wasted. It is also of utmost importance to get at least one or two coats on the stair as soon as installation is complete. This prevents grit and dust becoming ingrained into the timber through use by trade's people after we have completed our job. French polishing is a most beautiful finish that can be applied to a staircase or more particularly a handrail. It has a rich luster and is soft to the touch, it even has a pleasant earthy smell. While French polishing is not as hard as other products, it tends to improve with age rather than the other way around. It can also be easily rebuffed and repaired if necessary unlike polyurethane.

