

Top Tips for Steps and Handrails



If you are planning to adapt your steps or install handrails at your property, these top tips will guide you. Please ensure you choose a reputable and experienced tradesman when installing steps or handrails privately.

TIP 1

Doors

Consider which direction your door opens, for example the door opens into your house. If it opens out of the house, additional space would be required on the top step to incorporate the door swing and any walking aids.

Remember to consider the weather when looking to install a door opening out of the house, as snow can build up and wind can make opening a door harder. We recommend the minimum width of a door to be 826mm but this is not always possible in older buildings. Consider the threshold of your door - you can purchase low threshold doors, which eliminate trip hazards.

TIP 2

Materials

Anti-slip materials should be considered when installing steps, as these can become slippery in the ice and snow. Steps can be made with materials, such as slabs, concrete or metal. Concrete and slabbed steps should have a textured anti-slip surface to minimise the risk of falls. Metal steps are usually galvanised and have holes to allow moisture to run through.

Tip 3

Height

The minimum height of steps to access a property should be 100mm (approximately 4 inches). If the steps are less than 100mm high, this is considered a trip hazard. The maximum height of steps should be 225mm (approximately 9 inches). If you would like to create steps out with these dimensions, please consult with your local building standards office via the following link – [Planning and building - Aberdeenshire Council](#)

Tip 4

Width



Steps should be a minimum of 900mm (approximately 35 inches) wide. However, consideration of any mobility aids being used in relation to

the overall width of the steps. If the steps are 1000mm wide this would ensure ample space to accommodate most mobility aids.

Tip 5

Depth/Tread

Building Standards recommend the step depth should not be less than the height of the step. Ideally a step should not be less than 300mm deep (approximately 12 inches).



Tip 6

Handrails



If the total height of the steps are under 600mm high, then handrails are not required. Handrails should have at least 300mm extension at the top and bottom to allow for a person to steady themselves.

Handrails should be no less than 840mm (approximately 33 inches) high and no more than 1000mm (approximately 39 inches) high.

If looking at handrails, consider which arm is your preference? If you can only use one arm, consider bilateral rails.



Tip 7

Alternative Options

Consider whether altering your steps or installing either a single or bilateral handrails is the best option? Also consider whether there is an alternative door you can use?

Tip 8

Building Warrant and Planning Permission

You should always check if a Building Warrant or Planning Permission is required. If your property is within a conservation area or is a listed building, then you will require planning permission. For further information, please go to the Aberdeenshire Council website and search for check if you need planning permission. The Aberdeenshire Council website is www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning

Tip 9

Assessment if you have a specific condition

If you have a specific condition and would like further information and guidance, please contact Aberdeenshire Council Occupational Therapy Service on **0345 608 1206** and choose **Option 2**

All recommendations are made in accordance with The Scottish Government's Domestic Technical Handbook

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/building-standards-technical-handbook-january-2025-domestic/>



Permission granted from Lux Fabrication, Fencing and Maintenance to use these photographs of the modular steps and modular handrails.

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If you purchase a product due to a medical need or if you a physical disability, then VAT exemption may be available. VAT relief forms are available on the UK Government website and are called Eligibility Declarations by a Disabled person for VAT relief using the following webpage address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-reliefs-for-disabled-people-eligibility-declaration-by-a-disabled-person>