

Stairs

A stairway should be accessible from as many areas of your home as possible. It's hard to go wrong with stairs located to one side of the entrance foyer or aligned with the front door.

It's critical to allow enough space. Check your local building code for minimum measurements. This program draws a legal stair run and rise in most cases. For a standard 8-ft. ceiling, a straight stair usually has 12 or 13 steps and projects 9 to 11 ft. At either end you'll need a clear landing space at least 3 ft. wide and long.

Headroom should be at least 80 in.

Don't forget to provide adequate lighting for safety. If possible, place a window alongside the stairs or at the top landing.

Choose from these basic stair configurations:

Straight stairs are your least costly alternative and one that will use the least floor area. They make moving furniture easier too.

L- or U-shaped stairs give you flexibility in your floor plan, but their landings eat up space. The segments of the stairs don't have to be the same length. You can have a run of 12 risers to the landing, then 2 risers. L- and U-shaped stairs break up sight lines from the ground floor, which is important for privacy.

Spiral stairs are real space-savers because of their steep, compact run, but they can be difficult to navigate, especially with furniture. They are best as secondary stairs, except for lofts and cabins. Prefabricated spiral stairs come in sizes ranging from 4 to 6 ft. in diameter. They suit contemporary home designs best.