

Wheelchair Ramps

The structures most commonly known as 'wheelchair ramps' don't only benefit those in wheelchairs—they also make your residence more accessible to many people, especially both toddlers and the elderly, who may have a hard time with a conventional staircase. So, when you're ready to make your house welcoming to all who may come calling, here's some guidelines for the construction of the ramps, taken from the Americans with Disabilities Act, 1991:

The least possible slope should always be used, and the steepest slope the slope should ever be is 1:12, meaning for every 1" it goes up, it must go out 12". The minimum clear width on any ramp shall be 36"... more is always better. You should have level landings at the top and bottom of each ramp run. If a ramp rises more than 6", or projects horizontally more than 72", it should have sturdy handrails on both sides. Hand rails should have a level portion at each end that project 12" or more beyond the end of the ramp and that parallel the ground—and don't forget to round the ends of those railings to avoid injuries. The top of the hand rail should be between 34" and 38" above ramp surfaces. You might want to also consider covering your ramp with some non-slip surface to help in inclement weather.

For the full text of the ADA, visit www.sfdpw.com/dac/addaagtc.htm.