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Stepping up (and down) *in style*

Photos: Mike Chajewski



Photo: Stephani Buchman

pro-tip

Pre-planning for a staircase is vital. Consult an engineer at the beginning stages, since there are different structural requirements that may need to be accommodated before construction begins. For example, canti-levered treads require metal supports coming from the wall, and a steel or stone staircase can be very heavy. In these cases, an engineer will be able to assess the viability of your choices.

Interior staircases are becoming striking architectural features in homes

by JESSICA CINNAMON

Selecting the right stair design for your home involves a thoughtful blend of aesthetics, functionality and safety. A staircase is not only a means to navigate between levels in a home; it has now become a striking architectural feature that enhances a home's overall style, creating a focal point that draws the eye and complements the interior design. From grand, sweeping designs to sleek, minimalist styles, the options available today are diverse and varied.

Set the style

When designing a staircase, it's essential to consider the various style options available. Traditional staircases are characterized by rich hardwoods, intricate balustrades, and classic proportions typically made from oak, cherry or mahogany. These designs often feature spindles, newel posts and handrails as decorative elements that showcase traditional craftsmanship. In contrast, a modern staircase may offer a sleek, minimalist look, utilizing clean lines and geometric shapes with materials such as glass, steel and polished concrete.

Floating treads, open risers and cable railings create an airy feel that enhance contemporary spaces.

A rustic staircase incorporates natural materials and finishes, evoking a warm, cosy atmosphere. Often made from reclaimed wood, stone or wrought iron, these designs feature rough-hewn beams and hand-forged railings for a rugged, organic appeal. On the other hand, a more contemporary staircase blends traditional and modern styles, allowing homeowners to tailor the design to their unique tastes. A mix of wood, metal and glass may be used, experimenting with bold colour contrasts and unique shapes.

A spiral staircase provides a space-saving solution, while serving as a stunning focal point, and is often constructed from metal, but is also available in wood and glass. These designs are ideal for tight spaces and can include decorative features such as ornate railings.

Lastly, an L-shape or U-shape staircase offers changes in direction, making it suitable for larger homes.

Safe, not sorry

It's crucial to follow building-code-standard requirements for tread and riser heights to ensure consistency and safe use. Handrails should be

positioned at a comfortable height and spaced appropriately to prevent falls. Additionally, the dimensions of the room where the staircase will reside needs to be factored in to ensure there's enough space for comfortable movement, and that the design doesn't obstruct natural light or traffic flow. It's imperative to always follow local building codes when it pertains to stair dimensions and guidelines.

Harmonization

Maintaining style cohesion is also very important; the staircase should blend into, or complement, your home's overall architectural style. Choose materials and finishes that fit within your established colour palette to create a seamless transition between spaces. Lighting also plays a vital

role to enhance the staircase's visual appeal. Natural light streaming through windows or skylights can brighten the area, while artificial lighting fixtures such as sconces or pendant lights work to illuminate the stairway.

Function and form

Another key consideration is functionality. Assess how often the stairs will be used. High-traffic areas may require sturdier materials and designs that can withstand wear and tear. Before deciding which staircase to choose for your home, envision how the space will be used and how the staircase can enhance that experience. For instance, if your home has an open floorplan, a staircase with open risers or glass railings may be a good option to maintain the sense of openness and light flow.



Photo: Jagged Lens



Photo: Stephani Buchman

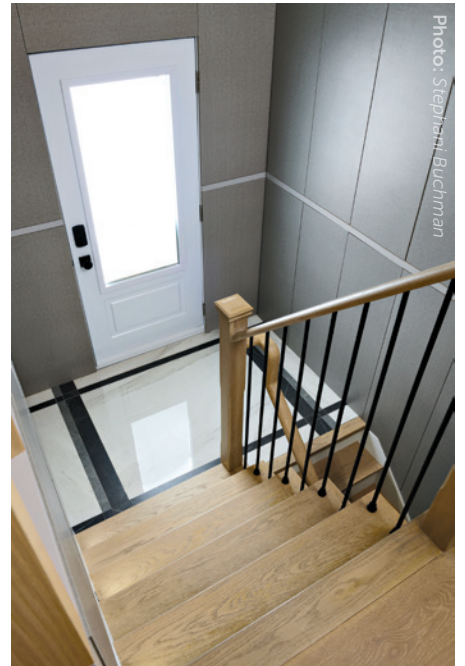


Photo: Stephani Buchman

This approach creates a visually striking focal point and makes the area feel larger and more inviting. You can also think about incorporating integrated lighting such as under-stair LED strips or pendant lights. These will illuminate each step, adding both safety and a touch of elegance.

Finally, remember that the staircase can also be a canvas for showcasing your style. Customizing the materials

and finishes to reflect the overall aesthetic of your home – whether rustic wood, sleek metal or a combination of textures – ensures it is practical yet stunning, enhancing the character of your interiors.

Tying it together

Selecting the right stair design for your home involves a careful balance

of style, safety and functionality. By exploring various design options – from traditional to contemporary – and adhering to essential design rules and building-code requirements, you can create a staircase that serves its purpose, while adding beauty and sophistication to your home.



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