

A Home for All Ages

Convenient, comfortable, and attractive

Every family wants a home that is convenient, comfortable, and attractive. But it is a challenge to make a home that is usable—and appealing—for people who come in a variety of ages, sizes, and abilities.

Careful planning is the answer. *A home for all ages* starts with universal design

features that can be used by everyone, includes features that can be adapted as needs change, and offers practical ideas for convenience and comfort.

A home for all ages will have a high resale value and need not cost more than other homes in the neighborhood.

Universal design features:

Five basic features make life more convenient and comfortable for everyone. They add very little to the cost of building or remodeling, but are difficult or expensive to change later.

1. **One no-step entrance.** An attractive entrance can be made by careful grading and landscaping, instead of building a ramp.
2. **Spaces for eating, bathing, and sleeping on an accessible level.** Not every part of the house needs to be accessible. A two-story house or a home with a basement is usable if these key spaces are accessible.
3. **Wide doorways** (36 inches preferred; 32 inches minimum) on the accessible level.

4. **Wide halls and pathways** (42 inches preferred; 36 inches minimum) through rooms on the accessible level.
5. **Extra floor space** for possible wheelchair use (60 inch turning circle) is needed in accessible activity areas.

Homes with universal design features are attractive and spacious. Furniture moving is easier without steps and narrow hallways. Family members will be able to "age-in-place" and maintain their desire for independence.

These features create a "visitable" home for friends and family with special needs: a teenager hobbling on a sprained ankle, a parent pushing a baby stroller, or a grandmother using a wheelchair.

Adaptable features:

These are features that won't be used now, but may be needed in the future. The key is to plan ahead so that changes can be made easily if a disability occurs.

- adjustable brackets in closets and cupboards to raise or lower rods and shelves.
- reinforced walls around tub and toilet so that grab bars can be added later.
- base cabinets that can be removed to create a seated work area.
- flexible drains on sinks in bathroom and kitchen so that counters can be lowered for wheelchair access.

Features for convenience and comfort:

As opportunities arise to build, remodel, or replace equipment in the home, select these features to increase convenience and comfort.

Living space

- low-pile carpeting makes maneuvering easier for persons who use wheelchairs or crutches.
- wall switches, phones, and temperature controls located at waist level can be reached from seated or standing positions.
- rocker switches turn lights on and off with ease.
- low windows allow views from both seated and standing positions.
- casement windows can be operated easily with only one hand.

Bathroom

- bathroom mirror extending to counter top with vertical lighting panels along each side provides good visibility for both standing and seated users.
- open knee space under lavatory counter accommodates seated users (insulate and/or recess hot pipes to prevent leg burns).
- single-lever faucets or electronic faucets make water temperature easier to control.
- bathtub and shower controls placed off-center can be reached before getting into water.
- showers with adjustable spray head accommodate people of all heights. Select spray unit that can be hand-held or used as fixed shower head.
- shower seat helps those who have problems standing and is convenient for shaving legs in shower.
- shampoo/soap dispenser eliminates clutter of bottles and problem removing bottle lids.
- stacked washer/dryer unit can be conveniently located in accessible bathroom.

Kitchen

- lowered work counter with open knee space allows seated work from stool or chair.
- pull-out drawers make items easier to see and reach than those stored in deep cupboards.
- lazy-susan in deep or corner cabinets allows items to be brought to the front for easy access.
- U-shaped handles make opening cabinets and drawers easier, especially for persons with arthritis or limited grasping ability.
- pull-out shelf or work space in front of microwave oven provides place to set hot dishes.
- loop handle on refrigerator is easier to grasp and pull open.
- side-by-side refrigerator-freezer allows access to users of all heights.
- refrigerator with built in ice and water dispenser adds extra convenience.
- controls located on front of major appliances can be reached by shorter people and persons who use wheelchairs.
- switches for lights, garbage disposal, and electric outlets located at front of counter are reached easily by a seated person.
- large print on appliance controls and measuring devices make them easier to see and operate.
- lever-style faucets are easier to control.
- lights under the cabinets brighten work areas, reduce eye strain, and prevent accidents.

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