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The Stair Design & Code Compliance Guide

A free homeowner guide from stairs.id

Building Code Basics

Standard requirements

- ☐ Maximum riser height around 7.75 inches
- ☐ Minimum tread depth around 10 inches
- ☐ Minimum headroom of 6 feet 8 inches throughout

Don't skip these

- ☐ A graspable handrail is required above a certain number of risers
- ☐ Always confirm exact requirements with your local building department
- ☐ Structural changes typically require a permit

Material Comparison

Wood

- ☐ Lowest upfront cost, widest finish options
- ☐ Requires periodic refinishing

Metal & Composite

- ☐ Higher upfront cost, more durable
- ☐ Better for exterior or high-humidity applications
- ☐ Mixing wood treads with metal balusters is common

Choosing Your Layout

Straight run

- ☐ Simplest and most cost-effective
- ☐ Requires the most continuous linear floor space

L-shaped, winder, or spiral

- ☐ L-shaped/winder saves space at moderate added cost
- ☐ Spiral maximizes space savings, best for secondary access
- ☐ Consider furniture-moving needs before choosing spiral

Ready to build your stairs?

Get real dimensions, materials, and cost in 60 seconds at stairs.id, and get matched with licensed local stair contractors for a free, no-obligation quote.

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