

External steps – mobility access (England & Wales only)

(January 2025) (Fourth issue – supersedes June 2022)

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Question

1. Are there circumstances where external steps with a total rise of less than 600mm should be provided with a handrail?
2. Where an approach to the principal entrance of a dwelling is formed by three or more risers, with each riser or pair of risers separated by a landing, should a handrail be provided?

Considerations

- NHBC Standards clause 10.2.5 refers to the provision of a handrail to external steps where the total rise of a flight exceeds 600mm.
- Approved Document M (England & Wales) requires a handrail on one side of a flight of steps where the flight comprises three or more risers. The rise of each step should be uniform and between 75mm and 150mm.

Answer

Where an approach to the principal entrance of a dwelling contains a number of steps, comprising of three or more risers, a handrail (850mm to 1000mm above the pitch line of the flight) should be provided on one side of the flight. The handrail should extend 300mm beyond the top and bottom nosings (see figures 1 and 2).

However, where a landing is provided between each riser or pair of risers, i.e. each flight that comprises a single step or two steps, a handrail is not required in this situation (see figure 3). The exception will be where there is a drop to the side(s) of the steps of more than 600mm in which case guarding and a handrail will be required.

It should be noted that a stepped approach is only permissible where the plot gradient does not allow sufficient space for the formation of a ramped approach.

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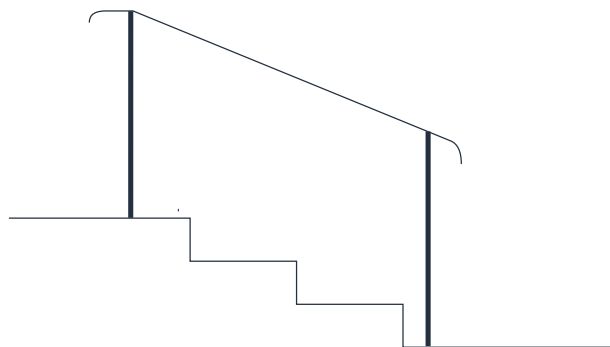


Figure 1 Three or more risers – handrail is required.

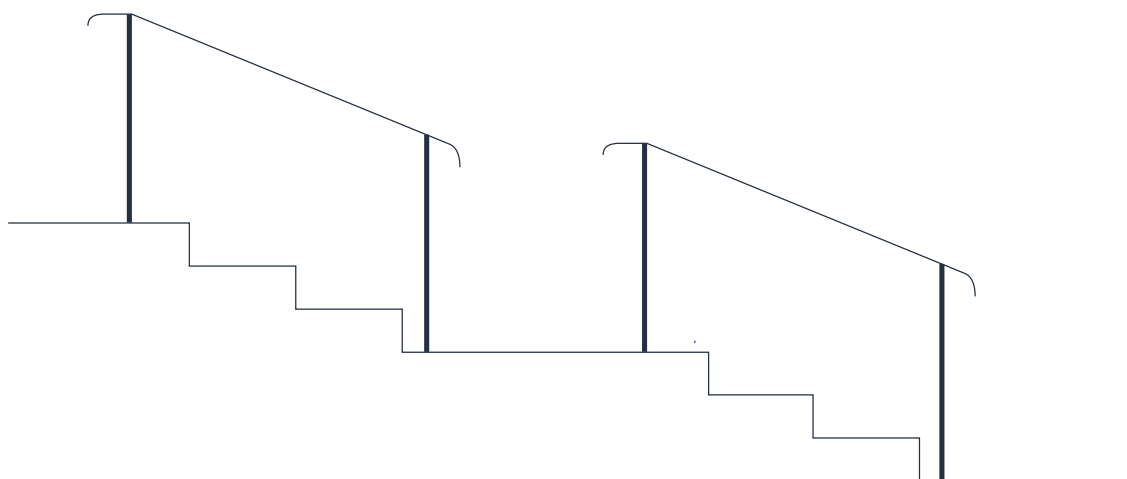


Figure 2 Three or more risers plus landings – handrails are required at steps.

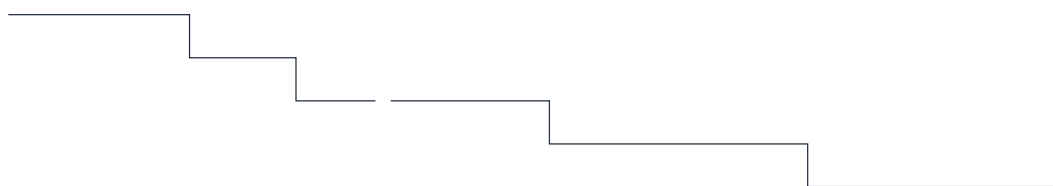


Figure 3 One or two risers plus landings – no handrail is required.

NB. A landing in all cases = minimum 900mm going. The handrails should be between 850mm and 1000mm above the pitch line and extend minimum 300mm beyond top and bottom nosings.



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