

## Glossary of Terms

**Baluster:** A vertical support used to fill the open area between the rail and the stair or landing.

**Balustrade:** A complete rail system that includes the handrail, balusters, and newel posts.

**Box newel:** An oversize square newel that is usually hollow and is used in a post-to-post balustrade system.

**Brackets:** Ornamental pieces fastened beneath the tread on the open side of a stair; also know as tread brackets.

**Building code:** A set of legal requirements established by various governing agencies that covers the minimum regulations for all types of construction, including stair construction.

**Bullnose starting step or tread:** A starting tread that has one or both ends rounded to a semi-circle and projecting beyond the face of the stair stringer.

**Cap:** The part of the fitting that accepts the newel post; used in conjunction with a pin top newel in an over the post balustrade system.

**Carriage:** See stringer.

**Easement:** The over or under ramp of a stair or rail.

**False Tread Caps:** A piece attached to the end of a rough tread to simulate solid wood treads, usually with a carpet runner down the steps.

**Fillet:** A thin strip that is usually flat on one side and fits into the plow of a piece of handrail or shoe rail.

**Flight:** A continuous series of steps with no intermediate landings.

**Gooseneck:** A fitting that is used in the transition of a handrail to a landing or balcony; compensates for the change in the rise of the stair and may make a change in direction.

**Guard rail:** A part of the balustrade system used to prevent a fall from an elevated surface such as a roof, balcony, landing, platform or stair.

**Handrail:** The top rail used in a balustrade system; provides a gripping surface for added support.

**Handrail fitting:** A part used in a balustrade to compensate for a change in direction. Handrail fittings can be used in both post to post and over the post balustrade systems.

**Handrail height:** The vertical distance between the upper surface of the top rail and the leading edge of the tread or the finished floor.

**Kicker plate:** A plate used to anchor a stair to the floor. Also known as a thrust block.

**Landing:** A horizontal platform at the end of a flight or between two flights of stairs, usually used to make a change in direction.

**Landing newel:** A post used on an intermediate or second floor (balcony); generally used where there is a change in direction or where a rake rail meets a level rail.

**Landing tread:** A part used as the tread on a landing and form a level surface with the finished floor on the second floor (Balcony). Also used as a level surface to attach balusters.

**Level:** Running on a horizontal plane.

**Newel:** A large vertical column or post to which the handrail is attached. Newels provide structural support for the balustrade.

**Nosing:** The part of a tread that extends beyond the riser; can also extend beyond the fascia on a balcony.

**Open riser stair:** A staircase in which the vertical space between adjacent treads is left open.

**Open stair:** A stair that is open on one or both sides, thus allowing riser and treads to be visible.

**Over easing:** A convex rail fitting used to transition from a rake rail to a level rail.

**Over-the-post:** A balustrade system in which the handrail runs over the Post and is continuous (uninterrupted).

**Pitch block:** A pattern for marking cuts that consists of a right triangle formed by the run and rise of a stair. A pitch block provides the geometry of the stair from which it was cut.

**Plow:** A recessed area in the bottom of a handrail or in the top of a shoe rail, the square top and bottom of a baluster is designed to fit into the plow.

**Plumb:** In a line that runs perpendicular to a horizontal plane exactly vertical.

**Post-to-post:** A balustrade system in which the handrail runs between the newel post, with the top of the post projecting above the rail.

**Quarter turn:** A rail fitting that makes a 90 degree or right angle turn.

**Quarter turn cap:** A quarter turn made to mount on top of a pin top newel in an over-the-post rail system.

**Rake:** The angle or slope of a stairway that is determined by the rise and run.

**Rake rail:** Rail section that runs parallel to the slope of the stairs.

**Rise:** The vertical distance from one tread in a stair to the next.

**Riser:** The vertical face of a stair step.

**Riser jig:** A piece of wood that straddles the skirt board and is used for laying out the mitered riser; must be same thickness as riser material.

**Rosette:** A decorative trim part used where railing runs directly into a wall; provides a surface for anchoring.

**Run:** The horizontal width of a tread between the faces of adjacent risers.

**Shoe rail:** The molding on top of a stair stringer upon which the balusters rest.

**Skirt:** A piece of finishing board used to cover structural supports or stringers of the stairs.

**Stairwell:** The vertical shaft that contains a staircase.

**Starting fitting:** The fitting at the bottom of a stair.

**Starting newel:** The newel post used at the beginning of the balustrade railing.

**Starting step:** The first tread and riser of a staircase.

**Stringer:** The support members of a stair; the treads and risers are attached to the stringers: also know as carriages. Stringers may be routed so treads and risers may be inserted (box stair), or they may be cut out as an open stair. Most stairs have three stringers.

**Tandem cap:** A rail fitting used to make a break in a straight rail section to allow attachment of a newel.

**Thrust block:** See kick plate.

**Total rise:** The total vertical distance the stair must travel, from finished floor to finished floor.

**Total run:** The total horizontal distance the stairs cover from the face of the top riser to that of the bottom riser. Also known as the “going” of a staircase.

**Tread:** The horizontal part of the step; includes the nosing.

**Tread return:** In an open stair, this is the continuation of the horizontal rounded edge of the tread beyond the stair stringer.

**Tread up:** The actual walking surface of the stair.

**Up easing:** The concave rail fitting that is used to make the transition from a rake rail to the horizontal piece of a gooseneck fitting or starting fitting.

**Volute:** The spiral starting of the handrail at the foot of a staircase.

**Wellhole:** The opening in the upper floor that allows for placement of the staircase. Also known as well opening.

**Winder tread:** A tread that is wide at one end and narrow at the other and is used for carrying stairs around curves or angles, as on a spiral staircase.