



How Will You Use the Deck?

You should anticipate all the various ways you plan on using your ideal deck. Entertaining, barbecuing, sunbathing, and pool access are all common activities for which decks are used. Because decks are frequently located above the ground, you should take into consideration whether or not current fencing can offer the privacy needed. Are you planning on installing a hot-tub or other heavy object on the deck? If you are, or think you are, this is the time to plan for it, so the deck can be constructed in a way that supports the added weight.

Some other considerations:

- Arranging the deck to not block a view you want and to cover views you do not
- Planning for Children
- Lighting the Deck
- Container Gardening
- Built in Benches or Patio Furniture

Make a list of all the ways you may use the deck and bring it with you to Curtis Lumber. Our salespeople will design a deck that achieves your goals and needs.

Deck Location

Where you want your deck and where it can go are sometimes two different things. Most homes probably have only one or two areas where a deck can be located. However, within those spaces can be more choices than you think. Adding patio doors or privacy screens can allow more entrances to your deck and placement closer to your neighbor.

Building a deck will require you to dig holes and cover what is currently there. Because of this, you should avoid septic areas, buried power and gas lines, and anything else that you potentially do not want to unearth or will want to access at a later date. Your local power and gas companies likely have a "Call before you dig" hotline which can tell you of any potential hazards of which you may be unaware.

Also, consider how the deck will be oriented for the sun. A deck on the north side of the house will be in shade most of the day. An eastern exposure gives the deck morning sun and afternoon shade, while a southwest exposure provides full late afternoon sun, keeping the deck warmer earlier in the spring and later in the fall.

Overall, careful placement can minimize traffic noise, eliminate unwanted views, or provide additional privacy.

Getting a Building Permit & Legal Considerations

Before you do anything, check your local zoning ordinances. Many cities and towns limit the height and size of your deck, require specific railings, and call for a minimum distance from your deck to your property boundary. Your local homeowners' association may also have appearance requirements. Verify with your local building department to find out if a building permit is required and the type of plans that need to be submitted. Finally, call your local utility companies to locate buried gas and power lines.

Right-Size Your New Deck

Decks can be built as large or small as you want as long as they meet your local building codes. However, decks can be either too big or too small. Usually, deck plans look bigger than they are in real life. To avoid building a deck that is too big or too small, transfer the scale drawings to the actual building site by driving 4' stakes into the ground and connecting them with string. Make sure the string is at about the railing height.

Now, place your lawn furniture inside the area to try it on for size. Imagine yourself doing what you hope to do with your new deck and determine if there is enough room. The most common mistake with new decks is people build them too small. If you find that the size is too small, it is best to upsize using increments of 2-feet. Lumber comes in lengths of 2' increments, and this will minimize waste and costs. If you have the space, you may be tempted to build a very large deck. To break up the size, you may want to try a series of decks at varying levels. Your Curtis Lumber salesperson can help you determine the right sized deck for your home.