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Getting Started

There are many practical and financial reasons to add a new deck to your home. Decks increase your home's living space, resale value, and require a much smaller investment than a full addition. Whether your motivation is to spend more time outdoors, improve your home's value, or both, Curtis Lumber has the materials and expertise to help you get your project done right the first time.

What to Expect When Building a Deck

Building a deck is something that anyone with some basic carpentry skills and time can handle. Since decks are built outside, the project will not disrupt your home life and can carry from weekend to weekend without any real issues.

The most important part of the deck building process is the planning stage. A deck is something that will last for years to come. Because of this, you should include anyone who will use the deck to make a wish list of features and ways each will use the deck. This will allow you to hone in on a design that will work, while not breaking the bank. Another great way to get design ideas is to collect photos from magazines or the internet that contain design features you like.

Once you've determined what you think you want, your Curtis Lumber salesperson will walk you through the deck design process, help you to create a plan, select materials, and print a 3-dimensional drawing.

Determining What You Want in a Deck Design

While deck materials, shapes, sizes, and costs can vary widely, there are several design decisions common to almost every deck project. These decisions center on you, and how you plan to use the deck.

- Will you entertain large groups or sunbathe on the deck?
- Do you want the deck to be a private space, or open to a view?
- What will the traffic pattern be?
- Are there weather conditions to consider?
- What is permitted in your local township, housing development, or city?
- Where do you want the deck located? Are there obstacles to avoid?
- Do you plan to leave your barbecue grill on the deck?
- Are you intending to place a table on the deck?

These questions are important. There are four basic areas that must be addressed before any other selections can be made:

- **How You Plan to Use the Deck**
- **Location**
- **Legal Considerations**
- **Deck Size**



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.



Planning Your Deck

Once you have decided on how you will use the deck, where you will put it, how big it will be and learned what your local building codes and permit requirements are, it is time to start making some design choices. Your Curtis Lumber salesperson can help you make some of these choices, however having a good idea of what you think you might want, can only help.

Deck Design Considerations

There are five main areas to consider when designing a deck. Some are determined by your style and taste, while others are dictated by local building codes. These design elements include shape, height, color, railings, and architectural interest.

Shape

Choosing a shape for your deck can accent your home's attractive exterior. Decks can be built in virtually any shape, but expect that the more complicated the shape, the more expensive it will be to build. The best option is to choose a shape that will harmonize with the lines of your home. Homes of confusing shape can be balanced with a simple deck and plain homes can be jazzed up with an odd-shaped deck. The most common deck shape is a rectangle attached to the back of the home leading to the backyard, but there are more styles that you may not have considered. Think about wraparound decks, L-shaped decks, decks that lead to a pool, islands, peninsulas, and even rounded decks.

Decking can also be turned at a 45 degree angle to achieve added interest, especially on homes with large blank walls. Overall, you probably can't change your house to suit your deck, but it is possible to change your landscaping in conjunction with your new deck.

Height

In general, the initial height of an attached deck is determined by the access door from your home. The decking should come to within two inches of the door from the house. Then, the deck should have stairs leading from the deck surface to the ground. If the deck is too high or on sloped ground, you may want to consider multiple levels to follow the slope and not expose the deck's framework. Deck height can be determined by local codes, so be sure to reference them before finalizing your finished height.

Color

When most people think of a deck, they immediately think of the exposed wood and how it will look. The wood grain and coloring of a deck can accent or detract from your home, so be sure to choose carefully. Most wood decking will gray over time and needs to be continually sealed. If you want your deck to be a specific color, apply deck stain or use composite decking that holds its color for the life of the product. Check out the decking page on our website to learn more about the options available.

Railings

The first thing people will notice on your deck is your railing. Because of this, the railing presents an area where you can use creativity. The primary limitation on a railing is the building code. The railing will keep people safe on your deck but also cannot have openings small enough for children to get their heads or hands caught. Be sure to check local codes before deciding on a railing. Once you know what options you have, you may want to use a variety of posts, balusters, and rails to satisfy structural requirements. Your local Curtis Lumber can show you a variety of railing options and be sure to check the railings page on our website.

Architectural Interest

Most decks have a design feature that creates interest and becomes the focal point of the deck. The most common features are multiple levels, transitions to a patio, built in benches and planters, and building the deck around trees or rocks. Pergolas and gazebos also create aesthetically appealing deck areas. If you're looking for that special touch, speak with one of our salespeople to talk about what you might add to your deck for more visual appeal.



Choosing the Right Decking

There are plenty of options when it comes time to choose the right decking material. Recent advancements have developed many low maintenance products that look great and last a long time. When choosing a material keep in mind its durability, maintenance, and aesthetic appeal.

Deck structures are all made out of the same material, pressure treated lumber, however the actual decking, can be made from a variety of woods or composites.

Composite Decking

The most modern and popular option for decks, composite decking is made from wood fiber and recycled plastic fibers. It is made in a variety of colors and textures to mimic real wood without the maintenance. The smooth, even makeup of the decking means it will not warp, split, or splinter for barefoot enjoyment for years to come. Hidden fastener systems can be used with some types of decking for a true smooth, sleek look.

Most manufacturers warranty their product, with some lasting as long at 25 years. The true beauty of composite decking is that it never needs staining or sealing and will maintain the majority of its color for its lifetime. Simply wash the deck annually for beautiful results.

One drawback to composite decking is staining. As with any material, clean and treat stains immediately according to manufacturers instructions.

Composite decking is more flexible than wood, so the framing underneath the deck must be made from pressure treated lumber. Be sure to frame the deck to manufacturers' specifications or the material may sag or slump.

PVC Decking

Nearly identical to composite decking, PVC decking has a PVC surface for added protection. This type offers unsurpassed stain, scratch, and mold resistance along with the convenience of soap and water cleaning. Patterns and colors are similar to those achievable with composite decking and also will give a sleek deck look.

Mahogany Decking

For a natural exotic look, philippine mahogany decking may be the right choice. Sawn from the meranti tree, today's mahogany decking creates the look of true mahogany from plantation grown trees. Philippine mahogany boards are absolutely clear with no knots and are kiln dried to resist shrinkage and swelling. This decking holds stain beautifully, weathers evenly to a silver-gray color, and has natural resistance to decay and insects. Mahogany must be sealed on all six sides (Top, Bottom, Edges & Ends) prior to installation and fastened with stainless steel fasteners. In order to keep your mahogany deck from looking weathered, seal as needed with a top quality finish.

Cedar Decking

For a traditional, natural look, cedar decking is a good alternative. Cedar decking has a beautiful and unique knotty look. It can either be sealed on all six sides prior to installation or left to weather naturally to a silver-gray. It is naturally resistant to decay and insects, but may not be appropriate for high-traffic areas because of its softness.

Pressure Treated Decking

The most common and traditional decking option, Pressure Treated decking is Southern Yellow Pine treated with a chemical that makes it decay and termite resistant. It blends beautifully with any landscape and can be stained in a variety of colors to match any décor. Pressure treated is an economical, strong and durable decking option. This decking will weather over time and maintenance is important. Splinters may occur and as with any natural wood product, boards may warp, shrink or expand. Be sure to install with the grain making an arch, crown side up, so the decking does not cup.

Other Decking

Decking is also made out of a variety of other woods. Be sure to check with your local Curtis Lumber for the availability of other unique types of decking, including Ipé.

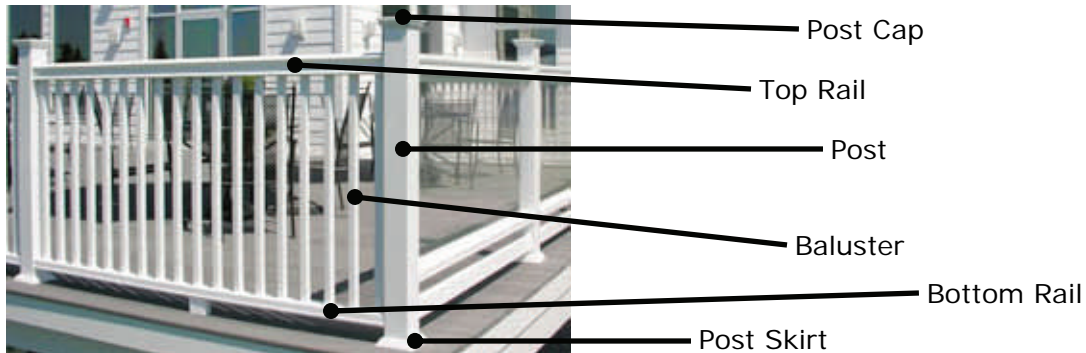


Select a Railing to Finish Your Deck

The railing greatly influences the overall appearance of a finished deck, by having strong horizontal or vertical lines, an open or closed appearance, or a polished or rustic look. However, the main reason for railings is safety.

Railing codes typically require a railing that is 36" high with balusters spaced no more than 4" apart. **Always be sure to check your local building codes** to be sure what is required in your area. No matter the requirements, inside your local code limits there are many railing options available. By combining different types, lengths, and styles of railings and balusters, you can create a railing system that suits your style and needs.

All railings are made up of a variety of components. Posts are the structural component of the railing, usually made by 4x4s of lumber or composite. They keep the railing from wobbling and provide the main support that holds the railing up and people inside. Balusters are the vertical pieces that extend from the top railing to the bottom railing to fill in the spaces between the posts and make a "fence." Bottom and top rail pieces run horizontally between the posts and form the bottom and top to which the balusters attach. Post caps and skirts are decorative designs that cover the posts and may contain lights or other architectural features.



Deck Railing Materials

Just like decking, railing is available in a variety of materials. The most common railing is pressure treated. 4x4s are joined by treated handrail with balusters. The balusters are typically 2x2 and can be square, beveled, or turned. Cedar and Mahogany rails, posts, and balusters are available in similar styles to pressure treated, allowing you to coordinate with your decking.

Becoming more popular are composite and vinyl railings. These railings are made with similar materials as composite decking and can be coordinated. Some brands come preassembled and are easy to install. Overall, composite and vinyl railings provide for years of maintenance free use with coordinating beauty.

Also available are aluminum and other metal balusters. These products allow for architectural interest while allowing for the mixing and matching of other materials. No matter the railing you choose, your friendly Curtis Lumber salesperson will be happy to help you make the right railing choices for your deck!

Finishing Touches

Adding a privacy screen, post caps and skirts, or lights to your deck might be just the thing that is needed for your decking project. Lattice panels are easily installed in areas where privacy is needed or below a deck to keep animals out. Post caps and skirts also add intricate personal detail to your deck and allow you to make it your own. Deck lights add light for nighttime entertaining or architectural interest. Your local Curtis Lumber has hundreds of ideas on how you can finish your deck off right, be sure to check them out!



Curtis Lumber Deck Design Services

Just starting your deck project? Your local Curtis Lumber is the best place to go when you want to be sure your project gets started off right. Our professional staff will gladly help you design a deck that meets your needs and lifestyle.

What to Expect

Each of our stores have deck displays showing many of the most popular materials and options. Come in and see what is available, pick up literature to take home, and talk to a salesperson about your project. If you know what you want, talk to a salesperson immediately to begin the design process. Depending on how intricate your deck, your salesperson may ask to set up a time to talk more in depth about your project in order to give you their full attention and the detail it deserves.

In order to prepare, you will need some basic measurements and to check with your local building officials to verify your specific municipality's codes. The measurements needed are overall deck size, where you would like stairs located, location of doors & deck access, if there are septic systems or pools that are nearby, etc. Use our handy measuring guide and checklist to guide you through the process.

Much of the deck design process is a learning experience. In order to make the right design choices, you must think about your lifestyle and how you plan to use the deck. Prepare a wish list and some questions to ask and think about your budget. Your salesperson will then be able to take this information and incorporate it into a design that meets your expectations.

When your 3-D design is ready, your salesperson will review it with you to talk about whether there are any questions or changes that need to be made. Once you've agreed upon a final design, your salesperson will create a final 3-D drawing, a material list, a project plan view, a deck layout (footing and beam location) sheet, and a stress analysis page. This packet is then adequate to get a building permit if you have not done so. Be sure to keep your design packet as it will serve as your plans to construct your deck.

When you are ready to purchase your deck and schedule delivery, stop back in the store and cover any questions you may have left. At this time you may want to pick up installation instructions for the product and most importantly all the other items you will need to complete your project. Your time is too valuable to be making return trips, check this short list to be sure that you have everything you need.

- Measuring Tape
- Drill & Bits
- Circular Saw
- Level
- Combo Square or Quick Square
- Framing Square
- Hammer & Flat Bar
- Chalk Line
- Extension Cord
- Nail Set
- Safety Goggles
- Gloves
- Shovel
- Post Hole Digger
- Wheelbarrow
- Wrenches-Crescent & Ratchet
- Carpenter's Pencil
- Sawhorses
- Utility Knife
- Clamps

When your deck is finished, be sure to bring in photos!
We love to see our customers' new decks.



Deck Maintenance

A new deck is a work of art. Unfortunately, after some exposure to the elements, some routine maintenance will be necessary to keep the deck in tip-top shape. However, with some simple steps, your deck will be able to withstand the elements and look great for years to come.

Deck Cleaning

Most decks need annual cleaning. For composite decks, use warm, soapy water or a composite deck cleaner in the spring and fall to remove any mildew or algae that may have formed. If any staining has occurred, refer to your decking manufacturer's instructions to remove the stain. Most manufacturers do not recommend using a pressure washer to clean composite decking, so be sure to check before using one.

Wood decks are more challenging to maintain. Any residual stain, algae, mildew, or discoloration can be cleaned off using a deck wash or pressure washer. Be careful when using a pressure washer as it can etch the wood. Then allow the deck to dry completely for a few days before applying a finish, otherwise the finish will not absorb into the wood.

Deck Finishes

Modern deck coatings contain a variety of chemicals that are designed to prolong the use of your deck. They may contain **water repellents**, **resins**, **preservatives**, and **UV Inhibitors**. Each of these chemicals has specific traits that help extend the life of the decking.

Water repellent finishes perform like their name, they simply repel water. Usually made with oil or wax, they keep the water beading up on the surface, rather than soaking in.

Resins (aka alkyd) are water repellents that last longer. They are absorbed into the wood and repel the water from the inside, without creating a hard finish. If a heavy coat of resin finish is applied, it may give your deck a slight sheen which many people find attractive.

Preservatives contain fungicide, mildewcide, and insecticide in varying amounts. All-purpose finishes usually contain a limited amount of preservative simply to contain minor problems.

UV Inhibitors are compounds that work to maintain the original color of your deck for as long as possible. All wood eventually fades, but using products containing these inhibitors will slow the fading process.

When choosing a stain or sealer, be sure to choose one that contains the compounds above that meet your needs. No matter what you do, you will likely have to seal the deck every year or so in order to keep it looking beautiful. More expensive finishes do last longer, so buy the best finish you can afford.

For more maintenance tips and advice, be sure to stop into your local Curtis Lumber for expert help on your next project.



Decking Checklist

Please fill out this planning sheet to the best of your ability in order to help you refine what you might want for a new deck. Our salespeople will walk you through the process in-person, however, this checklist will help you to think about what you might want. Bring this sheet to a store to share with your salesperson.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____ Fax: _____

Jobsite Location: _____

About Your Project

How did you hear about Decks at Curtis Lumber? _____

Have you obtained a building permit? _____ Checked local codes? _____

When would you like to begin the project? _____

Are you building the deck or are you working with a contractor? _____

If Contractor, Name: _____ Phone: _____

What type(s) of decking are you considering?

☐ Composite ☐ Pressure Treated ☐ Cedar ☐ Mahogany ☐ Other

What size deck are you considering? _____



Are there obstacles to consider?

☐ Septic System ☐ Sprinklers ☐ Doors/Windows ☐ Power/Gas Lines ☐ Other _____

What type of railing?

☐ Matches Deck ☐ Vinyl/Composite ☐ Custom Designed ☐ Other _____

How will you use this deck?

☐ Entertaining ☐ BBQ ☐ Sunbathing ☐ Pool Access ☐ Other _____

Do you have children? _____ Do you have any pets? _____

Do you want to place anything on the deck? (hot tub, grill, table, etc.) _____

Will you light the deck for night use? _____ How? _____

Are privacy and noise reduction a consideration? _____

Any unique design features?

☐ Pergola ☐ Pattern Inlay ☐ Food Prep Station ☐ Fireplace ☐ Changing Room

How high off the ground will the finished deck be? _____

What is your budget? _____ Projected completion date? _____

Be sure to bring this completed questionnaire to your initial store visit.

It is not required, but will help us to understand your project and get you accurate pricing.