



ACCESSIBLE HOME DESIGN & REMODEL CHECKLIST



Planning & Community Development

Green Building Division

Designing accessible homes is a commitment to creating environments where everyone can interact meaningfully, regardless of physical or cognitive abilities. While the Americans with Disabilities Act doesn't cover private, single-family homes, design professionals can use ADA laws as guideline for designing single-family homes.

The guideline below comes from ADA and related government agencies. It is assumed that you will consult with an ADA professional to help make your home accessible. The measures listed below are recommendations and suggestions that are endorsed by the City of Santa Cruz, but they are not mandatory. Separate from these suggestions, the City of Santa Cruz has mandatory accessibility requirements in place that are required to be part of any residential remodel or new construction that is permitted in the City of Santa Cruz. Please refer to the [Santa Cruz Municipal Code sections 18.06.010 and 18.06.015](#) for specific requirements.

Walkways and Ramps

- ☐ Walkways between your entry door and garage/parking areas should be at least 36 inches wide.
- ☐ A walkway from the point where a vehicle is exited to a barrier-free entrance.
- ☐ Ramps should rise one inch or less per foot of length.
- ☐ Ramps must be at least 36 inches wide for wheelchair use.
- ☐ Ramps longer than 30 inches require a middle landing where wheelchair users can turn and rest.
- ☐ All porches and ramps should have handrails.

Garages and Parking

- ☐ Garages need at least 98 inches of vertical clearance to accommodate vans with wheelchair lifts.
- ☐ Easy pathway from garage to home entrance (no steps to climb, all walks 36" wide).
- ☐ Accessible parking spaces should be at least 8 feet wide.
- ☐ Van-accessible spaces are at least 11 feet wide with 5 feet of clearance on either side for unloading wheelchairs.



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Entrance

- ☐ No split-level entry.
- ☐ Door at least 36 inches wide to allow for a 34-inch clear opening when the door is opened at a right angle.
- ☐ Doors must be at least 3 inches wide from the face of the door to the frame with the door open 90 degrees.
- ☐ The door height must be at least 80 inches.
- ☐ The threshold should be no higher than 1/2 inch.
- ☐ Doors should have a handle that is easy to grasp with one hand and doesn't require the user to grasp or pinch the handle or twist the wrist to operate (Lever-style doorknobs).
- ☐ Peepholes at heights for adults, children, and people using a wheelchair; or sidelights (tall, narrow window along one or both sides of the door).
- ☐ Front entrance table on which items can be placed during transitions.

General Modifications

- ☐ Closet rods reachable from a seated or standing position, or adjustable-height rods.
- ☐ Windows that are easy to open, close, and lock, and require little strength to use (crank handles are a good choice).
- ☐ Laundry appliance controls that are easy to reach and operate, ideally at the front of the appliance.
- ☐ Provide smart home technology as an easy way to access appliances, blinds/curtains, lighting, and thermostats.

Doorways and Hallways

- ☐ All doors 36 inches wide to allow for a 34-inch clear opening when the door is open.
- ☐ Interior hallways should be at least 36 inches wide.
- ☐ Thresholds in doorways (including showers) should be 1/2 inch or less.
- ☐ Lever-type door handles (not round doorknobs).



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Floor Plans

- ☐ Open floor plan (avoid long, narrow hallways); consider large open areas without sharp boundaries between rooms, i.e. kitchen/dining/family room area.
- ☐ Large enough living area to accommodate normal furnishings and allow easy maneuvering around them.
- ☐ Easy passage from kitchen to dining area.

Flooring

- ☐ Avoid changes in floor levels or floor materials (such as vinyl to carpet) to prevent tripping or use transition strips that are flush with the floor to avoid tripping hazards.
- ☐ Use skid-resistant flooring such as rubberized flooring or bamboo.
- ☐ If you have carpet, make sure it's low-pile with a minimum of a 1/4 inch pad.
- ☐ Eliminate throw rugs to minimize the risk of tripping.

Kitchen

- ☐ Install cabinets at an overall height of 32 ½ inches and with a 9-inch toe kick. However, many pros recommend installing cabinets at varying heights (between 30-36 inches), which allows people of all abilities to use the space.
- ☐ In a pass-through kitchen (where the cabinets are on either side), make the clearance between the cabinets at least 40 inches.
- ☐ U-shaped kitchens require 60 inches clearance between work areas.
- ☐ Use floating (or wall-mounted) cabinets that allow leg room beneath for wheelchairs.
- ☐ The sink should be no higher than 34 inches off the floor. The faucet must be controllable with one hand and, like door handles, should not require the user to grasp or pinch the handle or twist the wrist to operate.
- ☐ Appliances should be usable at chair height with controls that are easy to read, easy to reach and can be operated by people with limited vision.
- ☐ Dishwashers must be mounted at least 6 inches from the floor.
- ☐ Good task lighting over sink, stove and other work areas.
- ☐ Ovens should be accessible for seated use: with side-swinging doors and breadboards below to support items being taken from the oven.



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Bathrooms

- ☐ Reinforce bathroom walls to support grab bars.
- ☐ Install grab bars in the bathtub, toilet and shower areas.
- ☐ Adjustable-height, handheld showerhead, with controls that are conveniently placed and easy to operate.
- ☐ The toilet should be 17-19 inches from the floor to the bowl rim (also known as Comfort Height).
- ☐ Use floating vanities to allow a wheelchair to slide underneath.
- ☐ Create a roll-in shower with a zero-threshold entry and a built-in seating area.
- ☐ Door 36 inches wide to allow for a 34-inch clear opening when the door is open at a right angle.
- ☐ All shower stalls must be at least 32 inches wide.
- ☐ Anti-scald faucet with a single-lever handle, for both the sink and the tub or shower.

Electrical Outlets and Controls

- ☐ Extra electrical outlets near the bed (for medical equipment or rechargeable items, for example), placed 18 inches to 24 inches above the floor.
- ☐ Light switches placed about 36 inches to 40 inches above the floor.
- ☐ Use rocker-style illuminated light switches.
- ☐ Electrical outlets placed about 18 inches to 24 inches above the floor, to minimize the need for bending down.
- ☐ Thermostat and other controls placed about 48 inches above the floor.
- ☐ Thermostat and control panels that are easy to read and simple to operate (check accessible equipment stores or web sites).
- ☐ Circuit breaker panel on the main floor and easy to access, perhaps in the laundry area.



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Stairs

- ☐ Sturdy handrails on both sides of all stairways, whether inside or outside of the home. For round rails, the usual size is 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 inches in diameter.
- ☐ Stair treads deep enough for the entire foot - at least 8 inches, but 10 to 11 inches is better.
- ☐ Stair rise no higher than 7 inches from one step to the next; a smaller rise is even better.
- ☐ No carpeting on stairs, to reduce the risk of slipping. If carpeting is installed, use a tight weave and no padding.
- ☐ No open risers (open spaces between each step).
- ☐ Steps with no "nosing" (in other words, the tread should not extend out beyond the riser) to minimize the risk of tripping.
- ☐ All stairways well lit, with a light switch at the top and bottom (light switches about 36 inches to 40 inches above the floor).
- ☐ Anti-slip strips on front edges of steps, in color-contrast material.
- ☐ Install stairlift with backup power.