

BALUSTRADING SAFETY

Many houses built in the last 50 years have balustrading that would now not pass an inspection. Here's how to check whether the balustrading in your property is safe.

Balustrading advice is distinct from guidance for staircases as it can also apply to external railings or barriers such as on balconies and outdoor handrails. Please also see our leaflet on staircases for specific advice and best practice for stairs.

Key requirements

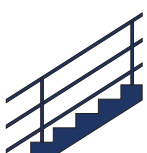
An inspection may require you to alter balustrading in order to make it safe under current landlord safety requirements.

Main points to consider are:

- Handrails on top of internal balustrading should be between 900-1100mm off the floor to comply with Building Regulations.
- Handrail design should be of a type that can be gripped easily in case of a slip.
- Open-sided staircases are not considered suitable for rented accommodation with children and require infilling including a handrail.



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dashservices.org.uk

Internal balustrading

Balustrades need to be over 900mm to ensure safety by preventing falls particularly in areas with staircase and balconies. Many older homes built before early 20th century have balustrading below 800mm which is considered unsafe for modern safety standards.

Current Building Regulations state that handrails for landings in rented property should be between 900-1100mm off the floor.

Importantly, the handrail supports and infills below the handrails should be of a design that is not climbable to deter accidents particularly among children. Therefore, spindles and newel posts need to be vertical and not horizontal.

Open side staircases

Staircases with an open side will require infilling this can be with vertical spindles set at intervals of less than 100mm. Alternatively glass balustrades are a popular choice and offer a modern look. It is important to use toughened glass suitable for the use. There will also need to be a handrail placed between 900-1000mm above the pitch line of the stair treads or the floor in line with Building Regulations.

External balustrading

This covers areas such as balconies and steps going into properties. Handrails here should be at least 1100mm from floor level with handrail supports and infill materials being unclimbable. As with internal balustrading, spindles and newel posts need to be placed vertically and not horizontally.

Internal staircases

Staircase handrails are often key to the prevention of accidents on staircases as they

can act as a vital handhold in the case of a slip and can prevent a fall. The design of the handrail should mean it can be gripped easily and made of a non-slip material. The old narrow 'pigs ear' style of handrail is now being rejected by many councils in favour of a sturdier circular or oval shape.



These styles of internal handrails as shown above offer better grip in the event of a fall.

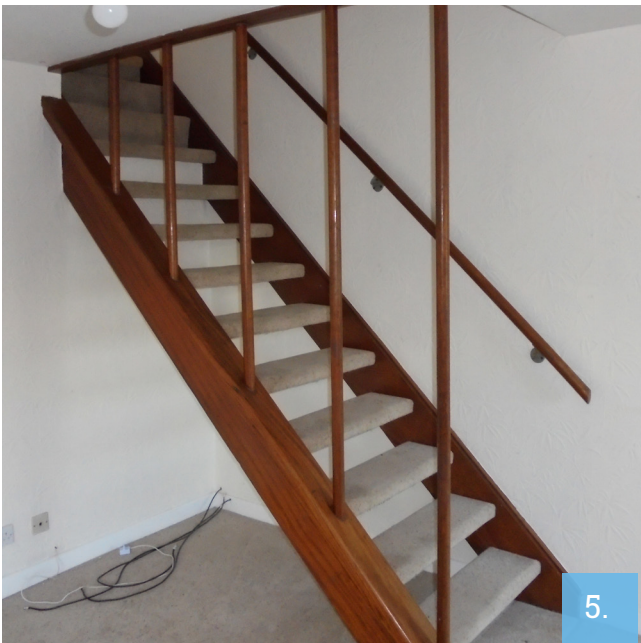
When is balustrading too dangerous for DASH Services approval?



Climbable horizontal balustrading, needs a handrail on the left.



Horizontal balustrading spindles, easy to climb.



Internal balustrading with wide gaps between spindles allowing falls in between.



Unsafe exterior steps with no guarding.

Further resources

DASH Services is a Private Rented Sector service for Local Authorities, Landlords & Tenants and is hosted by Derby City Council on behalf of a number of different Councils across England.

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The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

Falls associated with stairs and ramps where the change in level is greater than 300mm. It includes internal stairs or ramps within a property, but also includes falls over associated balustrading.

Falls directly from one level to another where the drop is greater than 300mm. It includes falls from balconies and landings.

Find out more at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

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