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The Staircase

Studies of Hazards, Falls, and Safer Design

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GLOSSARY

Baluster: a post in a balustrade of a flight of stairs that supports a handrail (from the Italian *balausto*, the wild pomegranate whose double-curving calyx tube the baluster often resembled).

Balustrade: the whole infilling from handrail down to floor level at the edge of a stair.

Banister: a baluster (corruption of *baluster*).

Circular stair: a helical stair.

Dextral stair: a stair that turns to the right during ascent.

Dog-legged stair (or dogleg): a stair with two flights separated by a half-landing, and having no stairwell, so that the upper flight returns parallel to the lower flight.

Double-return stair (or side flight): a stair with one wide flight up from the lower floor to the landing and two flights from the landing to the next floor.

Ergonomics: the interaction between work and people, particularly, the design of machines, chairs, tables, etc. to suit the body and to permit work with the least fatigue.

Flight: a series of steps between landings.

Going: the horizontal distance between two successive nosings. (In a helical stair the going varies.) The sum of the goings of a straight flight stair is the going of the flight.

Gradient of a stair: the ratio between going and riser; the angle of inclination.

Guardrail: a protective railing designed to prevent people or objects from falling into open well, stairwell, or similar space.

Handrail (or guardrail): a rail forming the top of a balustrade.

Helical stair: the correct but not the usual name for a spiral stair.

Landing: a platform at the top, bottom, or between flights of a staircase.

Mopstick handrail (or mopstick): a handrail that is circular except for a small flat surface underneath.

Newel (or newel post): the post around which wind the steps of a circular stair. Also applied to the post into which the handrail is framed.

Nosing: the front and usually rounded edge to a stair tread. It frequently projects over the riser below it.

Nosing line: a line touching the lead edges of the nosings of successive treads of a stair.

Nosing overhang: the distance that the nosing edge of a step projects beyond the back of the tread below.

Ramp: an inclined plane for passage of traffic.

Riser: the upright face of a step.

Riser height (or rise): the vertical distance from the top of a step at the nosing to the top of an adjoining step at the nosing.

Sinistral stair: a stair that turns to the left in ascent.

Spiral stair (or helical stair): a circular stair in which all the treads are winders.

Stair: (1) a series of steps with or without landings, giving access from level to level;
(2) one step, consisting of tread and riser.

Stairway: a staircase, or a stairwell.

Step: one unit of a stair, consisting of a riser and a tread. It may be a flier or a winder.

Stepladder: a ladder built with rectangular stiles and treads (not rungs) that are designed to be horizontal in use (*see also* Steps).

Steps (or pair of steps): a stepladder with a framed stay hinged to the top to make it self-supporting.

String (or stringer): a sloping board at each end of the treads that carries the treads and risers of a stair.

Tread: the (usually) horizontal surface of a step; also the length (from front to back) of such a surface.

Wash (or kilt): a slight sloping of treads to throw off rainwater.

Winder (or wheel step): a tread of triangular or wedge shape.

Winding stair: a spiral stair, a circular or elliptical stair with a well at the center.