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# **The Staircase**

## **Studies of Hazards, Falls, and Safer Design**

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### **OA Funding Provided By:**

National Endowment for the Humanities/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Humanities Open Book Program.

The title-level DOI for this work is:

[doi:10.7551/mitpress/6434.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/6434.001.0001)

## GLOSSARY

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**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.