

Top tips to avoid common staircase problems

PREPARATION



1. Stop before you start

Early consultation with the staircase manufacturer is vital. The critical dimensions of the stair opening should be confirmed by a site survey and/or shown on accurate drawings before the manufacturer begins work on the staircase.

Details such as the wall and finished floor levels should be discussed as these will make a difference.



2. Minor change, major impact

Changes to the stair opening after the initial design is agreed should be in consultation with the staircase manufacturer. Even a minor movement of trimmers or joists can have a major impact.



3. Don't trash it in transit

Speak to your manufacturer about delivery - access issues can usually be avoided if identified early enough. Assembled flights can be heavy (an assisted lift may be advisable). Ensure that stair parts are lifted not dragged to avoid damage - careless handling can be costly.



4. Did everything arrive?

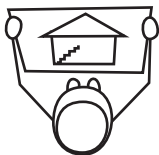
Check that all the parts of the staircase have been received and report any missing or damaged components to the manufacturer as soon as possible (ideally within 48 hours of delivery and before you start work). Don't be tempted to take parts from another staircase or make do on site.



5. Fit it now or store it carefully

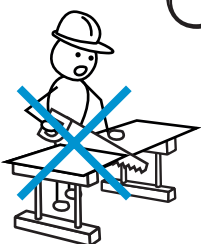
Ideally arrange for the staircase to be delivered when you are ready to install it. If this is not possible the staircase should be stored in dry, well ventilated conditions and supported so as not to distort any of the components or pre-assembled flights. If in doubt contact the manufacturer for storage advice.

INSTALLATION



6. Get the first step right (literally)

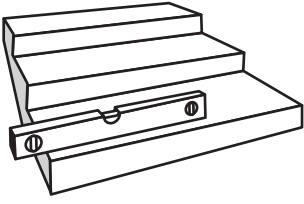
Ensure that the installer has a copy of and has checked the manufacturer's assembly and installation instructions (if available) and that they have the right equipment to complete the job. If unsure about any aspect of the installation contact the manufacturer for advice.



7. It might not be just a tweak

When assembling the staircase do not modify any of the components unless the instructions require this to be done (e.g. do not remove tenons from handrails or strings). Any site adaptation will impact on performance, could negate your warranty and even make the staircase unsafe.

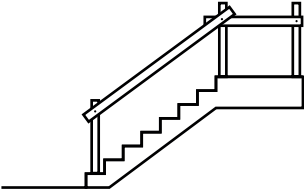
8. Level it, fix it, snag it



Ensure there is an effective sign-off process for each staircase. Treads must be level (no more than 3 mm drop from riser to nosing and no more than 5 mm drop in width), newel posts upright (within 5 mm deviation over their length), all joints should be tight and well-made and all glue blocks, wedges and fixings secure. Remember loose joints are the main cause of squeaks.

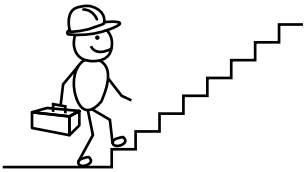
Ensure that any fixings (screws, bolts, etc) used to secure the stair into position are appropriate for the structure to which the staircase is being fitted. If in doubt consult the manufacturer of the fixings or the staircase.

PROTECTION



9. Safety on Site from DAY ONE

If the staircase is used for access during the early part of a job, remember safety features such as guards, balustrades and handrails are often not fitted to avoid damage. Temporary guarding of the flights and Landings must be completed before anyone other than the installer can use the staircase.



10. Take care and protect the stair

During construction works protect the staircase from damp muddy boots, knocks and scrapes, and the general damp conditions associated with the 'wet trades'. In some cases consider installing later in the build, when the building is dry.

If fitting a carpet take care when securing the "gripper rods" - hammering nails into the riser can cause it to become detached from the back of the tread, another common cause of a squeaking stair.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

For more information on design, manufacture or installation of staircases or to find a staircase manufacturer for your project visit www.bwfstairscheme.org.uk or contact BWF on 0844 209 2610 or email bwf@bwf.org.uk

It's All In The Badge

The BWF Stair Scheme is the only accreditation and certification scheme of its kind in the UK. Ranging from domestic, common and fire protected common stairs, the standard expected of the manufacturers for their stairs is extremely high to ensure quality and safety.

Every stair manufactured under the BWF Stair Scheme will carry the BWF Stair Scheme badge. The badges are self-adhesive and tamper-evident. They clearly identify the manufacturer and the level of accreditation and carry a unique serial number to ensure traceability.

The BWF Stair Scheme badges are located in one of three places:

- In a 3mm deep recess on the lower newel post immediately under the handrail.
- If the stair is supplied without baluster assembly, or is for installation between walls, on the top left hand corner of the lowest riser.
- Where the stair has open treads with minimal risers, or where the customer insists that the badge should not be visible, beneath the lowest tread in such a position as to enable it to be viewed using a mirror.

