

Decking Guide from GardenAdvice.co.uk

Decking today is fast becoming the most popular patio surface for many people. The aim of this guide is to show you the basic design and Construction techniques. The GardenAdvice team are always happy to provide advice on decking through the GardenAdvice free advisor service which can be contacted at www.gardenadvice.co.uk/freedvice/index.html or by telephoning our advisor line on 0845 665 0741 (Local rate call)



Planning your decking

With more than any other garden project planning is essential as it can save a great deal of time and money. The best way to plan a decking is with pen and paper. Firstly you will need to create a site plan, which will include measuring the area and estimating any falls on an existing base. The most important element within the planning is to decide which type of wood you are going to use for the decking boards and the lengths it is available. In most cases it's a good idea to plan your deck so that you avoid too many joints in the decking boards.

The next area to consider is the finished level. With decking unlike a normal solid patio you can build it on a frame

above the existing house damp course on the same level as the floors in your house. The above ground level can be achieved by constructing a frame on an existing patio or higher on brick or wood pillars.

By construct the deck on a frame you should not have any problems with standing water. However it is worth creating a small fall of about 1 in 200 away from the building to shed rainwater from the surface. If your decking boards are grooved then remember to design the fall on your decking so that it runs in the same direction as the grooves.

Finally you should consider access to manhole covers, which can be catered for by trap doors or by creating shorter lengths of decking boards over the area, which will have to be unscrewed for access.



Hand rails and steps

After planning your decking area it is worth considering the construction of a handrail and steps.

In the case of handrails and the posts they can normally be purchased pre made so all you have to do is to install them in the decking construction. To gain the maximum amount of stability you must build the posts directly into the frame and preferably secured into the ground under the decking by the use of a steel spike or concrete in.

With steps the key consideration is to get the treads large enough so the steps are comfortable to use. To do this try out a few other steps in your house at work etc and note the size of the treads and riser. If the steps are going to be small and steep it is worth planning for a handrail.

Remember also to create a small fall to the side of the step to stop any standing water forming on the step.

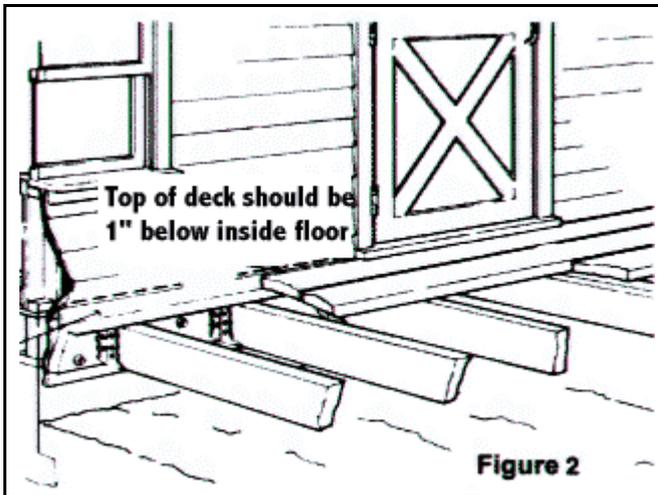
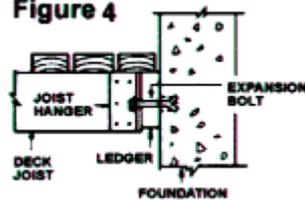


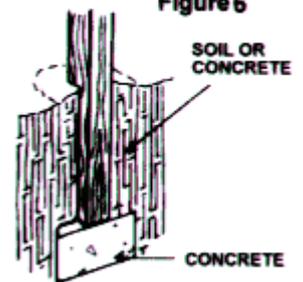
Figure 2

Figure 4



CONCRETE SETTING

Figure 6



Frame construction

The frame is constructed in a similar way to a wooden floor frame, but remember to use treated timber. Firstly using a length of timber running the length of the deck normally 150X50mm. secured this to the house wall using expansion bolts. This will form the level of the frame. (Remember to secure this first part of the frame 25mm below your decking surfaces finished level) Once this first part is complete you can then work out the positions of the main frames beams. These should be spaced every 0.75 metre approximately, however the distance will depend on the length of the decking boards you are using. Ideally the spacing of the beams should be arranged so that the decking boards you are using sit so that the ends meet the beams. It is worth working out the main beam spacing so that you do not have to cut the decking boards to meet the beams as this can add additional expense.

With the main beam spacing worked out you next need to decide how you are going to support the decking frame. If you are laying onto an existing patio you can use treated timber 150x50mm. However if the decking is to be raised this can be achieved by building brick pillars or with the use of wooden posts concrete into the ground. The more support the decking frame is given the less 'bounce' the finished decking will have.

To put the frame together you are best to nail it together first to archive the levels required, then once you are happy with the frame you should then screw it to add additional strength.

Finally treat the frame by painting with a wood treatment especially on the joint and the end of beams.



Laying the decking

With the frame constructed you should cover the ground under the frame with ground sheeting to stop any weeds from being a problem later. Next lay all the decking boards on the frame so that you can work out all the joints and the most economic way to use the decking with minimal cutting and joints.



Securing the decking boards and finishing touches

The final stage is to secure the decking boards to the frame. This is best carried out by screwing the boards down so that they can easily be removed at a later stage for replacement or repair. To screw the boards down it is best to pre drill the holes and counter sink the tops.

The screws you use should be one that will not rust. We have found that brass screws are not suitable because they tend to 'shear off ' once the decking swells with the winter rains.

A good tip at this stage is to mark out the holes first with a small chalk mark to make sure the screw are in straight lines.

The final stage is to consider treating the decking boards. We normally do not do this as most softwood decking boards are normally supplied treated and the hardwood is best left untreated.

Your expert supplier for decking materials



With branches throughout the UK the Builder Center is your idea partner for the supply of all the materials you will need to build your own decking. Our knowledge and friendly staff are available to help you work out the materials you require to undertake your decking project. To request a catalogue or find out the location of your local branch Tel. 0800 529 529

We hope that the information in this decking guide has been of some help to you. If you have any further questions on -

- The general construction techniques
- Designing a deck for your garden
- Working out the Materials needed
- Decking maintenance

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