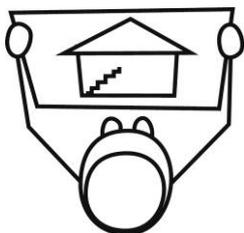


# The Timber Staircase: A Procurement Guide for Housebuilders



Staircases are a common source of complaints for new home owners, they also represent the one of the more common areas for serious accident during construction works and more generally in the home. This checklist has been produced to assist the procurement process for Housebuilders in order to achieve safe, compliant, squeak and hassle-free stairs.

## Safe design and getting your specification right

The building regulations provide guidance for the minimum standard that should be achieved regarding staircase build. There has been much additional work done and guidance produced detailing safer staircases, detailed in various British and European standards and Codes of Practice. It is important to understand the classification of the staircases (private, utility, non-domestic or fire protected) and specify correctly.

## Choose a BWF Stair Scheme Member

The BWF Stair Scheme is the only staircase accreditation scheme in the UK and its members work hard to improve quality and safety standards in the timber stair industry. The products manufactured by Scheme members are built to the rigorous and proven standards defined in the BWF Stair Scheme Design Guide and the manufacturing process is regularly audited to ensure consistent quality standards are upheld. All Scheme staircases are badged to provide traceability. The **BWF Stair Scheme Design Guide** (free to download from [www.bwfstairscheme.org.uk](http://www.bwfstairscheme.org.uk)) details all of the factors for consideration - your individual manufacturer can advise on any bespoke solutions required.



## Involve the manufacturer at the early design stages

BWF Stair Scheme members are highly experienced and have produced a range of technical guidance documents for the housebuilder. Working with a BWF Stair Scheme members brings expertise to your team – make sure you involve the manufacturer at the early stages of the design process so that issues in design compatibility or installation can be identified and remedied earlier (and before it adds cost to the process!).

## Measure twice, cut once

The critical dimensions that affect staircase build are important to confirm prior to manufacture to avoid installation issues. The stair manufacturer can advise accordingly on dimensioning and checking protocols and some will carry out site surveys to confirm accuracy of key dimensions such as finished floor-to-floor measurement. The stair manufacturer will also be able to advise on suitable tolerances required for positioning, fixing and installing the stair. Remember if the brick laying and floor finishes are inaccurate, the floor heights can vary and this can have major (and costly) impact.



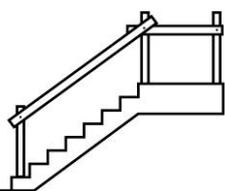
## Consider your wall construction

Secure installation and fixing of stairs with strings that are attached to walls can be dependent on wall type. Some wall types are not suitable for structural loading. Highlight wall type construction to your staircase manufacturer who will be able to advise on suitability and the specific fixing details required.

## Materials Considerations; Structural and Aesthetic

Timber stairs are available in a very wide range of materials and finishes to suit desire or budget. Consider and discuss your requirements with the BWF Stair Scheme Member to understand the full scope available. BWF Stair Scheme staircases are only manufactured using materials that have been tested to prove structural performance.

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## What Fire Protection is required?

Timber stairs can be used to compartmentalise the building and to provide safe evacuation from the premises in the event of a fire. BWF Stair Scheme Fire Protected Stairs have different specifications to a standard private stair and have been independently tested to prove performance in the event of a fire. The fire protected stair can be used in both private and non domestic situations such as the communal stair in a block of flats. You are advised to check requirements for fire protection.

## Installing the staircase

You can download **"BWF Installation Guide: Timber Stairs"** free from [www.bwfstairscheme.org.uk](http://www.bwfstairscheme.org.uk). This documents sets down all the stages of the installation process, providing top tips on delivery and storage of the stair prior to installation, H&S guidance and assembly and fixing methods. This Guide is also supported by **Toolbox Talks** that can also be downloaded from the site. We recommend including links to this document in any specification documents and ensuring that your site manager is aware.

## Competent and qualified workforce

Can you prove that your workforce is suitably trained and understands that accurate installation of a staircase is key to safety? This should be checked. Some BWF Stair Scheme manufacturers provide installation teams and others will be able to offer assistance by holding pre-start meetings and toolbox talks with your workforce.

**Timing is everything:** If stair components are on site weeks before installation there is increased risk of costly damage or uptake of moisture. In addition, the actual installation should be scheduled to ensure that it does not interfere with any other key trade activities such as fitting floors or wet trade activities (remember an uncoated staircase can absorb moisture after fitting from drying plaster or a screed). Adequate provision should be made on site for storage and components must be stored in a dry, well ventilated area where they will not be damaged prior to installation.

## Job Handover

After completion, the stair should be inspected to ensure it has been competently and accurately installed. The Housebuilder should handover any documentation associated with the stair such as warranty and guarantee information, care and maintenance information or any proof of performance required by the customer.



## It's all in the badge

- The BWF Stair Scheme – the only staircase accreditation and certification scheme in the UK. The standard expected of the manufacturers within the scheme is extremely high to ensure quality and safety.
- All companies within the scheme are regularly audited to ensure their products and their production meet these high standards.
- Each staircase has a unique label ensuring full traceability



**Further Resources** Visit the BWF Stair Scheme Website: [www.bwfstairscheme.org.uk](http://www.bwfstairscheme.org.uk) for a range of free downloads including our Staircase Design Guide, Detailed Installation Instructions, the new Site Managers' Checklist, Toolbox Talks, Homeowners' Checklists and a host of resources that are constantly updated and aimed at hassle-free staircase installations. If you are unsure of any terms or have concerns, please contact the manufacturer or BWF for clarity.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of advice given, the BWF cannot accept liability for loss or damage arising from the use of the information supplied. This risk criteria can be used for initial assessment purposes and covers general points, however, it should not be considered exhaustive. Always refer to the Building Regulations and if you are unsure of any terms or have concerns, please contact your manufacturer or BWF for clarity.