

Bathroom Fixtures & Finishes

It's hard to imagine life without the bathroom. Yet, it wasn't until the early 20th century that the bathroom became common in most homes. Since then, it has evolved from the three standard fixtures of bathtub, toilet and lavatory to include such luxuries as whirlpools and bidets.

Although the bathroom is the smallest space in the house, its planning requires the most attention. It's important to get the location of all the fixtures right because they're fixed and moving them can be difficult and costly. Plumbing also plays a role in the placement of fixtures. For economy, the fewest number of pipes is used. The result is that most bathrooms have all the fixtures on one wall or on two walls.

Included is information to help you make a wise decision about fixtures and finishes.

PLANNING TIPS

- Door opening should not impede use of any fixtures
- All receptacles should meet local code requirements
- Allow for 6" between fixtures to facilitate cleaning
- Flooring finish should be slip-resistant
- Provide general and task lighting
- Allocate adequate storage space
- Privacy should be accommodated
- Proper heating and ventilation are required by natural and/or mechanical means

Bathtubs

Space Requirements

- Minimum clearance of 30" required in front of tub
- Faucets should be accessible from outside tub
- There should be no more than one step to enter tub
- Grab bars should be installed for safety

Planning

- Placement beneath window should be avoided
- Wall surround must be waterproofed, options include ceramic tile, plastic laminate and fibreglass

TYPES

Rectangular Bathtub

- Standard size is 60" x 30", other sizes also available
- Typically fitted into a corner and enclosed on three sides
- Standard contemporary bathtub



Corner Bathtub

- Fits into corner and allows for alternative configuration of fixtures
- Average size is 54" x 54"
- Acrylic is most common material owing to moulding ease
- Works well in bathrooms where typical rectangular tub will not fit

Freestanding Bathtub

- Traditional Victorian tub is enjoying a revival in modern reproductions
- Roll-top tub is supported by ball and claw feet
- If purchasing an antique, ensure you receive appropriate hardware as modern hardware may not fit

Contoured Bathtub

- Commonly made of acrylic and fibreglass
- Shape is more organic than other tubs with cinching in at middle
- More comfortable than standard tubs

Whirlpool Bathtub

- Also known as Jacuzzi or spa
- More costly than other tubs
- Nozzles at sides create motion of water to aid in relaxation

Sit-In Bathtub

- Square and taller than ordinary tubs, inspired by Oriental soaking tub
- Good solution for small bathroom
- Provides easier access for disabled and elderly

MATERIALS**Enamelled Cast-Iron**

- Traditional bathtub material
- Expensive and durable
- Water cools quickly
- Non-abrasive cleaner is required



Enamelled Steel

- Shape is moulded from steel then coated with vitreous china or porcelain enamel
- Less expensive and lighter alternative to enamelled cast-iron
- Structure is sound and rigid

Acrylic

- Allows for unusually shaped bathtubs
- Less rigid than other materials
- Resists chipping and any scratches can be removed with sandpaper
- Retains warmth of water longer than other materials

Fibreglass

- Endless possibility of shapes can be moulded
- Most luxurious and expensive of all materials
- Hand-built in layers
- Avoid abrasive cleaners as can discolour surface

Showers**Space Requirements**

- Minimum dimensions are 32" w x 32" w, but 54" w x 36" w accommodates all body movements
- Minimum clearance of 30" is required in front of shower
- Shower door should swing into bathroom
- Showerhead should be within arm's reach

Planning

- Popular choice for convenience, speed and economy of water
- Floor of shower should be non-slip and as wide as possible
- Walls around shower must be waterproof using ceramic tile, plastic laminate or fibreglass
- Can be integrated into bathtub or can be its own enclosure
- Good solution for bathroom where bathtub won't fit

TYPES**Prefabricated Stall**

- Self-sufficient unit with door
- Simplest to install
- Shapes include: square, rectangular or angled with diagonal front
- Usually made of acrylic or fibreglass



Custom-made Stall

- Materials must be waterproof
- Common materials used include glass block, acrylic and stone
- Any shape can be created

Prefabricated Pan

- Stall without the enclosing walls
- Used for custom-made units, prefabricated stalls or on their own
- moulded out of plastic, terrazzo or chipped stone

ENCLOSURES**Shower Curtains**

- Most common and inexpensive enclosure
- Easy to maintain and clean
- Waterproof and washable

Screen

- Made of plastic or glass
- Connects to side of tub and prevents water spillage to minimize splashing
- Can be full- or half-length of bathtub
- Can be made of two or three parts that are hinged or folded up

Door

- Produced of safety glass or plastic
- Can hinge, pivot, fold or slide open and shut

Lavatories**Space Requirements**

- Minimum clearance required in front of lavatory is 30"- 42"
- Minimum clearance from centre of lavatory to side wall is 12"
- Should be mounted 32"- 36" from floor
- Deep shelves should not be placed above lavatory
- Typical sizes range from 12" x 31" to 22" x 44"



Planning

- Most-used fixture in bathroom
- Mirror, storage and lighting should be provided in close proximity
- Largest size lavatory possible should be selected

TYPES

Pedestal Lavatory

- Two-piece unit consisting of bowl and stem
- Stem supports bowl and also conceals plumbing
- Takes up less floor space good for small bathrooms
- Bowl requires wall installation

Wall-Mounted Lavatory

- Suspended directly from wall exposing pipes
- Good choice for small bathrooms where floor space is precious
- Can be mounted at any height

Countertop Lavatory

- Bowl is installed into countertop or vanity unit
- Cupboards below provide storage and conceal plumbing
- Single piece countertop and sink are possible by moulding of acrylic or Corian

MATERIALS

Vitreous China

- Traditional material that is hard-wearing, hygienic and easy to clean
- Heavy, requires sufficient support
- Enamel finish should be cleaned with liquid cleanser, abrasive will damage
- Used for pedestal

Metal

- Cast-iron with enamel finish: heavy and requires good structural support
- Pressed steel: finished with enamel and used for countertop basins
- Stainless steel: Hygienic and hard-wearing material

Acrylic

- Can be moulded into integrated sink and countertop unit
- Colours are limited



- Surface may scratch, but these are easily removed with sanding
- Water will maintain its warmth for longer than other materials

Fibreglass

- Unlimited colour range
- Typically moulded into countertop and bowl
- Won't maintain shine like other materials

Toilets

Space Requirements

- Minimum clearance required in front of toilet is 24"
- Minimum clearance required from centre of toilet to obstruction on either side is 15"
- Toilet paper holder should be located at 26" high and 12" beyond front of toilet

Planning

- Almost all toilets are made of vitreous china, which is hygienic, resistant to stains and easy to clean
- Needs to be located near main stack
- Standard height is 15"
- Consider models that conserve water
- Can be floor or wall mounted

TYPES

Close-coupled Unit

- Tank sits directly behind bowl without touching wall
- Space saver with neat appearance

One-piece Unit

- Tank and bowl are integrated into one unit
- More expensive than others
- Common construction for wall-mounted models

Mechanisms

- Siphon-jet: Common modern flushing mechanism, fairly low noise
- Siphon-vortex: Most expensive and quietest flush
- Reverse-trap: Moderately noisy flush, better than wash-down
- Wash-down: Was common at one time, but no longer used, noisy flush



Bidets

Space Requirements

- Minimum clearance required in front of bidet is 24"
- Minimum clearance required from centre of bidet to obstruction on either side is 15"
- Soap and towel should be within reach

Planning

Standard fixture in Europe that is gaining acceptance in North America

- Should be located next to toilet
- Standard height is 15"
- Usually made of vitreous china for hygienic qualities

TYPES

Over-the-rim

- Basic model
- Hot and cold water fill over the rim like a lavatory

Below-the-rim

- More sophisticated and expensive
- Hot and cold water fill from top of the rim down

Mounting

Wall-suspended

- Aesthetically cleaner application
- All plumbing is hidden behind wall

Freestanding

- Plumbing is visible
- Bidet stands on floor

Floor Finishes

Planning

- Material used on floors must be waterproof, durable and easy to clean
- Must be slip-resistant when wet
- To make floor area look larger, select a pale or medium colour
- To make floor area look smaller, select a darker colour



MATERIALS

Stone Tile

- Can be heavy, check to ensure floor can support load
- Most common materials are granite, slate and terrazzo
- Hard wearing but can be cold underfoot
- Marble should be limited to details as it becomes slippery when wet and is damaged easily
- Requires professional installation

Ceramic Tile

- Most popular of floor materials
- Durable, water resistant and requires minimal maintenance
- Can be cold underfoot
- Can be used on walls and around fixtures
- Non-glazed tiles offer best slip resistance than glazed

Resilient

- Warm to the touch with a bit of bounce
- Economical choice
- Variety of materials available in tile or sheet form
- Sheet form is better as there are no gaps for water seepage
- Impervious to water, durable and easy to clean

Carpet

- Should not be permanently fixed wall-to-wall, should be able to lift for drying
- Use only synthetics like nylon or polyester
- Natural materials like wool will rot from the moisture
- Look for bathroom specific carpets
- Non-slip, soft and warm
- Becomes dirty easily
- Consider rugs as alternative

Wall Finishes

Planning

- Materials must stand up to moisture and heat
- Should be easy to clean
- Easiest way to redecorate bath



MATERIALS**Paint**

- Most economical of all finishes
- Solid colours or decorative paint techniques can be used
- Gloss and semi gloss paints are best
- Gloss surfaces are easier to clean than flat finishes
- Flat paint is less resistant to water and is harder to clean
- Semi gloss is best bet because it collects less condensation than gloss paint

Wallpaper

- Must endure exposure to water and humidity
- Should not be used in shower surround
- Select vinyl or plastic-coated wallpapers which are more resistant to moisture than standard wallpapers
- Moderately expensive
- Wallpaper should never be used on the ceiling

Ceramic Tile

- Easy to clean, durable and waterproof
- Can be used throughout bath, especially in areas in contact with water including bath and shower surround
- Grout used between tiles should also be waterproof
- Expensive but will last a lifetime

Source: House & Home

