Choosing and Fitting Grab Rails

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Helpline: 0300 999 0004
Introduction

The aim of this fact sheet is to provide information on the types of grab rails available to help with specific difficulties, and details about their useful features and positioning.

Although primarily used in the bathroom and toilet, grab rails can be positioned anywhere in and around the home to provide support. Conveniently placed rails will provide help in four ways:

- to push or pull against when standing up
- to provide a steadying support while sitting down
- to provide a firm grip when transferring from one position to another
- for balance when standing, walking or dressing

Most are attached to the wall, although floor to ceiling rails are available. The type required will depend upon the situation and the hand or arm strength of the person. A combination of vertical and horizontal rails is often helpful.

For up-to-date product and supplier information, please contact our equipment helpline, open Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm. Tel: 0300 999 0004 (calls charged at your standard land line rate even if you are phoning from a mobile).

Alternatively you can write to our letter enquiry service or contact us via e-mail at advice@dlf.org.uk. To help us give you a concise and informative reply, please provide us with as much detail as possible. Include information on the difficulties you are having and any solutions you have considered, including equipment ideas.

Where to get help and advice

Before making any decisions about buying equipment, or making alterations, it is advisable to contact a community Occupational Therapist (OT), based at the local social services/social work department, who may come and assess your daily living needs. He or she will advise on possible solutions and may be able to provide some items of equipment on loan. They may also give advice on grants that may be available to help with the cost of any adaptations.

It may be important that you have an individual assessment as there are many factors that can affect what is appropriate for you. For example, grab rails may not be appropriate if the wall is too far from the toilet or they may not be suitable for installing on the walls in your home. Thus you may wish to discuss your difficulties with a health care professional before considering purchase of this kind of equipment. You can contact your local social services and ask about an occupational therapy (or trusted assessor) assessment. GOV.UK is a website that should be able to provide information on how to go about this.

If you would like a private appointment with an occupational therapist, you can obtain details of local Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered private occupational therapists from the ‘College of Occupational Therapists Specialist Section A Independent Practice’ (COTSS-IP) website: www.cotss-ip.org.uk or phone their enquiry line: 0207 989 0681.

Information and advice on design issues is available from the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) which keeps a database of architects, surveyors and similar professionals with experience of designing for disabled people, and has a number of useful publications and design sheets (see Useful organisations).

Funding equipment

Grab rails can be expensive, hinged fold down rails can cost over £100. Charitable trusts may sometimes provide funding for equipment. A useful resource is www.turn2us.org.uk, a website that allows you to search for organisations that give grants, including for equipment and other services. You can refine / filter your search by specific health issues such as ‘physical disability’, ‘ageing’ or ‘rheumatism’. If you’re over 60, Charity Search

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is a free service to help you find a grant-giving charity www.charitysearch.org.uk. Charities will only give awards in accordance with a predetermined criteria, so it is important that you carefully select the trusts you apply to.

Most libraries hold directories of suitable funders in their reference section, such as the The Directory of Grant Making Trusts

The Grants for Individuals website is run by the Directory of Social Change and lets subscribers search for grants but is intended for organisations searching for funding for individuals. http://www.grantsforindividuals.org.uk

Try equipment before you buy
If you decide to buy equipment privately it is best to try and compare the different ranges first. You may have an equipment demonstration centre near you where you can visit to view and try out ranges of equipment. You will receive impartial advice to help you choose appropriately. However, centres may not display examples of all the equipment in this factsheet. You will need to contact your nearest centre to find out what they have and to book an appointment. Contact details for your nearest equipment demonstration centre can be found on the Disabled Living Foundation’s web page Equipment Demonstration Centres in the UK.

Be cautious of sales people who try to persuade you to buy equipment that may not meet your needs fully or is over-priced. Buying from a company that belongs to a trade association, such as the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) may give you some reassurance. BHTA members have signed up to a code of practice governing standards of customer service (see Useful organisations).

You don't have to pay VAT on products designed for disabled people if you have a long term illness or disability, or are terminally ill. Mobility shops may automatically sell you equipment without charging you VAT, but you may have to ask. Individuals with a temporary injury such as a broken arm or hip do not qualify for VAT relief. For more information, and to check for any changes in the regulations visit the GOV.UK, VAT relief on products and services for disabled people webpage or the HM Revenue & Customs reduced rate VAT webpage (their Charities Helpline covers VAT relief for disabled people: Telephone: 0300 123 1073).

Disabled facilities grants (DFGs)
A disabled facilities grant may be available for some home adaptations including major adaptations such as extensions and structural work to accommodate fixed hoists, stairlifts, downstairs bathrooms, shower units etc. If this type of adaptation is needed, a local occupational therapist (OT) will come to assess your needs and then contact the relevant council departments. Applications for grants should be made via the OT to the local councils.

A means test (including household income and household savings over £6,000) is used to decide how much financial assistance can be provided. Depending on the outcome of the test, the amount of assistance offered can vary from 0-100% of the cost. Disabled children under 18 can get a grant without their parents’ income being taken into account. You must own the property or be a tenant (or be a landlord and have a disabled tenant) and you must intend to live in the property during the grant period (currently 5 years). A ceiling of £30,000 in England (£36,000 in Wales) will normally be put on each DFG, irrespective of your assessed contribution. Please note that you may not receive any grant if you start work on your property before the council approves your application.

For more information on Disabled Facilities Grants, visit the GOV.UK website.

Provision of equipment
You may be eligible for a free assessment with social services which may include the provision of certain aids or minor adaptations. However, there are eligibility criteria based on an assessment of need and you may have to pay towards the cost of equipment. The criteria and charging policies vary between authorities. If you are eligible provision may include:

- bath boards and seats;
grab rails;

■ shower seating

National catalogue prescription scheme

In some areas of the country a prescription scheme for equipment is in operation. There is a 'national
catalogue' of equipment that may be provided by prescription although local areas can choose which of these
items they will include in their schemes. This is part of the Department of Health’s Transforming Community
Equipment Services (TCES) programme. There are a range of grab rails on the national catalogue that can be
provided via prescriptions. If you receive a prescription for one of these items you take your prescription to a
local accredited retailer who will provide you with the item. Alternatively you can 'top-up' by paying extra for an
item that does what the prescribed item would do but offers extra features or perhaps you prefer its
appearance. Thus the scheme is designed to encourage choice and control. The national catalogue website
grab rail listing can be viewed at http://new.national-catalogue.org/specs-and-tariff This factsheet will go
through a range of equipment and mention when there is a relevant national catalogue specification for that
type of equipment, as it may be provided by prescription.

Types of grab rail

There are many types of grab rail. The main types are briefly introduced below before going into greater detail
about grab rails and their use in specific areas of the home.

Straight rails

These are wall-fixed rails which run in one direction only. They can be fixed in a
horizontal or a vertical position, or at an incline / angle. There are specifications for
grab rails in the national catalogue which operates equipment prescriptions in certain
parts of the country (see above) with the codes GR02 Metal 30cm, GR03 Metal 45cm,
GR04 Metal 60cm, GR09 Plastic 30cm, GR10 Plastic 45cm, GR11 Plastic 60cm.

View our impartial list of straight metal grab rails at the web address below or ring our helpline


View our impartial list of straight plastic grab rails at the web address below or ring our helpline


Angled rails and right angled rails

These are also wall-fixed rails, but are set at an angle. The top
portion is usually fixed in a vertical position. The lower, angled
part acts as a forearm support whilst pulling up or with a 90° bend
to give both a horizontal and a vertical handhold. This enables
the user's body weight to be distributed through his/her forearm
which may be helpful for someone with painful hands or wrists.

View our impartial list of angled rails at the web address below or ring our helpline

**Floor to ceiling rails**

These are vertical rails which are attached to both the floor and the ceiling. In older sheltered housing they were often positioned on the outer edge of the bath to provide support when turning round to step in or out.

View our impartial list of floor to ceiling rails at the web address below or ring our helpline


**System rails**

These are rails which can be put together to provide customised support over a large area, e.g. round a bathing area. They attach to the walls and can be cut or ordered to the required length. Bends and angles can be fitted where required.

View our impartial list of system rails at the web address below or ring our helpline


**The finish of the rail**

The finish of the above rail may be important from an aesthetic point of view and also for the grip surface it provides.

**Polished / chrome finish**

This finish is attractive and hard wearing but can be quite slippery to hold, especially when hands are wet.

**Epoxy / paint / plastic finish**

This provides a warmer feel to rails, is hard wearing and will reduce the effects of condensation. A choice of colour allows for a colour contrast with the wall for users with low vision or for co-ordination of bathroom accessories.

**High contrast**

If you have low vision, it may be helpful to choose grab rails in a colour that contrasts with the wall it is to be installed on.

**Slip resistant / knurled / ribbed finish**

This is a moulded / coated, textured surface which provides extra grip even when wet. This finish may be uncomfortable for those with sensitive hands.
Positioning of grab rails

Correct positioning of grab rails is important to ensure that they provide the support, where necessary, to perform specific tasks. The ideal position for you will depend on your own unique needs, preferences, measurements and home environment. The guidelines below are for general guidance only and further details apply in specific areas of the home.

Horizontal rails

These may help when pushing up from sitting and provide support when lowering, e.g. on to a toilet. Most people find it easier to push down on a rail rather than pull on one, so horizontal rails are more commonly used.

Inclined rails

Rails that are fixed at a slight angle to the horizontal may assist someone with weak or painful arms or wrists to support his/her forearm on the rail whilst pushing up, thus spreading the body weight over a larger area.

Vertical rails

These may assist when pulling up into a standing position.

Angled rails

For a person who needs a steadying support (e.g. to stand from a bathboard to shower), a rail can be placed at an angle of 45° up and away from the user. This keeps the wrist in a neutral position. It is not necessary to lean far forward to grasp the rail at the lower end, and the hand can travel up the rail to maintain the support once the person is standing.

Getting in and out of the bath

Grab rails in a bathroom should have a ribbed or textured surface to give extra grip when wet.

The following dimensions are taken from Part M of the Building Regulations, The College of Occupational Therapists, British Standard 8300 and DLF’s Trusted Assessor training (see references). However, they are general recommendations and should be used only as guidance, other personal factors such as your height and bathroom environment should be given priority:

Horizontal and inclined rails

When standing from a sitting position in the bath you may find it helpful to hold one horizontal wall-fixed grab rail (placed above the bath) with one hand and use the outer rim of the bath with the other hand to push against.

- A rail can be fixed horizontally to the wall 7.5 to 10 cm above the bath rim (see dimension c in diagram). It should start 20 cm from the tap end of the bath (dimension a) (COT, 2006, NBS 2010).
- Alternatively part of the rail can be fixed at an angle of 13° upwards towards the head end of the bath to provide an inclined support. See dimension c or diagram 26 on page 63 of the building regulations.

These horizontal rails can be used in combination with a bath board (please refer to our Bathing Equipment factsheet). The user may benefit from holding the rail while they sit on the board, turn and lift their legs in / out
of the bath.

**Vertical rails**

- When stood in the bath: A rail (at least 50cm long) can be fixed vertically on the wall, 60cm from the tap end of the bath (dimension b in above diagram), with its lower end 20 cm above the bath rim. This is most likely to be of use when stood in the bath (perhaps whilst showering) or when standing from a bathboard over the bath (COT 2006, NBS, 2010).

- Transferring into the bath: A rail which attaches to both the floor and the ceiling on the outer edge of the bath may provide support when the person is turning round to step in or out. It is recommended that it should be sited 40 cm from the tap end of the bath where it can be reached from a sitting position in the bath. However, its position is likely to be in the way of someone using a bath board, or bath transfer bench, when they swing their legs in / out of the bath. These rails should be fitted by experienced installers, as they take a lot of weight and ceiling fixation can be complicated.

- Transferring into the bath: If the end of the bath head rests against a wall and there are no obstructions outside the bath (e.g. the sink or toilet) then a vertical grab rail could be installed to hold onto whilst stepping in / out of the bath. The rail should be mounted at a height that the user can comfortably reach whilst stood both from outside the bath and from in the bath.

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View our impartial list of straight grab rails at the web address below or ring our helpline

http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/group.php?groupid=568

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View our impartial list of floor to ceiling poles at the web address below or ring our helpline

http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/group.php?groupid=733

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**Other types of support**

**Bath side rails**

**Floor-mounted**

These are screwed to the floor and also clamp onto the side of the bath. They can be adjusted to the thickness of the bath sides, and some models are adjustable in height. A vertical loop projects above the bath's sidewall and is held when stepping in / out of the bath. The fixings need to be checked on a regular basis and tightened when necessary. Side rails are likely to be in the way of someone using a bath board, or bath transfer bench, when they swing their legs in / out of the bath. The national catalogue which operates equipment prescriptions in certain parts of the country (see above) has a code for these rails - GR14.
**Bath-mounted**

These only clamp onto the side of the bath and can be adjusted to the thickness of the bath sides. Some models are adjustable in height. As with the floor mounted bath side rails a vertical loop projects above the sidewall which is likely to be in the way of someone using a bath board, or bath transfer bench, when they swing their legs in / out of the bath.

As these rails attach solely to the bath itself great care needs to be taken to ensure that the fixing mechanism, usually a screw system, remains secure. This needs to be checked on a regular basis and tightened when necessary. They are not recommended for attaching to a plastic / acrylic bath as there is a possibility that the surface may crack. Rails should be both bath- and floor-fixed for full stability.

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**View our impartial list of floor and bath-fixed rails** at the web address below or ring our helpline


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**View our impartial list of bath fixed side rails** at the web address below or ring our helpline


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**Cross-bath rails**

These fix to the wall behind the taps and rest on the bath rims. When sitting in the bath, the rail will be directly in front of the person at about chest height. In this position it will provide stability whilst in the bath. The rail should only have downward pressure applied so the weight is taken by the bath rim, it is not designed for the user to pull on to sit down or stand up from the base of the bath (Pain et al. 2003).

Ensure that the wall is strong enough to take the weight of this type of rail. Care should be taken that the user never bends down underneath the rail (e.g. to reach their feet) when sat in the bath as they could trap their head under the rail.

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**View our impartial list of cross bath rails** at the web address below or ring our helpline


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**Tap-fixed rails**

These also rest on the bath rims but clamp around the bath taps and are therefore only as strong as the tap fixtures. Taps are not designed to withstand a full body weight pulling against them. The rail should only have downward pressure applied so the weight is taken by the bath rim, it is not designed for the user to pull on to sit down or stand up from the base of the bath (Pain et al. 2003). These rails fold down to rest on the bath rim and can be folded up against the wall when not required.

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**View our impartial list of bath rails** at the web address below or ring our helpline
Further guidance on equipment for use in the bathroom is available in the DLF factsheet Choosing Equipment for Bathing.

### Getting in and out of the shower

The following specifications are recommended in Part M of the Building Regulations. However, they should be used only as a generic guide when the users are not known. When an individual user is known / for someone in their own home personal factors such as the height of the person should be given priority:

**Horizontal rails**

- Folding armrests or safety rails attached either side of the shower seat can help to prevent somebody sliding off a wet slippery seat (BSI, 2009). A rail can be fixed on to the wall at the side of the shower seat, approximately 20 cm above the height of any seat. This may be used for help when standing and may assist wheelchair users to pull on to transfer across onto the seat from a wheelchair. See diagram 22 on page 59 of the building regulations. [http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR_PDF_AD_M_2010.pdf](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR_PDF_AD_M_2010.pdf)
- In shower cubicles it may be useful to have an additional horizontal rail fixed on the wall opposite the shower seat at a height of 1m from the ground if it can be easily reached from the seat.

**Vertical rails**

- A vertical rail at least 50 cm long can be fixed at the entrance to the shower compartment for use when stepping in / out of the cubicle. The rail should be mounted at a height that the user can comfortably reach whilst stood both from outside the cubicle and from in the cubicle.
- Vertical rails can be installed on the wall opposite a shower seat. The lowest fixing should be fixed 80 cm above floor level. However, the distance between the front of the seat and the rail must be less than 55 cm if it is to be used successfully.

### Getting up and down from / to the toilet

As the options below illustrate there are many different types of equipment available to assist in transferring on and off the toilet. It is important that you select the equipment that is safe and appropriate for you. We therefore recommend you arrange an assessment with an appropriate health care professional to discuss your difficulty standing/sitting on the toilet.

It may be important that you have an individual assessment as there are many factors that can affect what is appropriate for you. For example, some equipment may not fit if there are pipes running along the wall at the back of the toilet. Raised toilet seats vary in their maximum user weights, and grab rails may not be appropriate if the wall is too far from the toilet. Thus you may wish to discuss your difficulties with a health care professional before considering purchase of this kind of equipment.

Grab rails by the toilet are often fixed to the wall alongside the toilet, but if this is not possible (due to the toilet being too far from the wall, a partition wall or a radiator being in the way), then a drop down rail that extends from the wall behind the toilet could be used (see below).

**Straight grab rails**

As a general guide there are two options for wall mounted rails by the toilet. If you have the same strength on
both sides of your body it may be a good idea to have supports fixed on both sides of the toilet so that you can use both arms.

- **Using one rail:** The rail is fitted starting at a point about 1 inch (2.5 cm) forward of your knee and about 2-3 inches (5-7 cm) above your elbow (when seated on the toilet with your arms down against your side), at an angle running at 45 degrees forwards and upwards away from you (DLF, 2014). This may help you to support the weight of your arm whilst pulling with your hand higher up the rail. See above diagram.

You may prefer to have two rails:

- A **vertical** rail for support when standing from the toilet (this can provide a hold for pulling up from if you have strong upper limbs). The lowest point of the rail could be 6–8 inches (15–19cm) in front of the knee while seated on the toilet (approx 30 cm in front of the edge of the toilet pan) and 2–3 inches (5–7cm) above the inside of the elbow crease (DLF, 2014). Part M of the Building Regulations suggests that the rail should be at least 60 cm long and can be fixed to the wall at a height of 80 cm above the floor (NBS, 2010). If you place your hand where the rail would be, you can check that the position is correct for you, and that the rail is sufficiently far forward to maintain a stable position once standing.

- A 60 cm long **horizontal** rail 68 cm from the floor beside, and extending in front, of the toilet pan for use when sitting down on the toilet. This rail can be horizontal or set at an angle of upto 15 degrees (NBS, 2010). Alternative suggested measurements are a minimum 50cm long rail, at a height of 60 cm from the floor, with the rear fixing 40cm from the wall at the rear of the toilet (COT, 2006)

Before fitting the rail/s sit on the toilet and check you can reach the points where you intend to install them. Check the distance between the toilet pan and the wall. If you have to lean sideways to reach the rail, it may not provide appropriate support. Therefore a drop down rail fitted to the back wall, a wall to floor rail or a toilet surround frame may be more appropriate (DLF, 2014). The measurements are a general guide only, the ideal location of the rails will depend on your individual size, reach and toilet location. See the above advice about individual assessments with an occupational therapist or trusted assessor.

If you are a man and you wish to use the toilet standing, then a vertical rail placed just in front of your knuckles when your arm is held at a right angle may steady you.

Drop down rails can be used where there is no adjoining wall next to the toilet.

**Drop down hinged rails**

These rails are useful when there is no suitable wall on which a standard grab rail can be fixed, or where space is a problem. In areas where there is a wall on only one side of the toilet, they can be used in combination with a fixed rail to provide support on both sides but can be folded up out of the way to allow access for a wheelchair user or helper. They may be wall mounted (at the back of the toilet) or floor fixed if the supporting wall is not strong enough.

These provide a horizontal bar in their lowered position. They should be fitted at waist/elbow level and approximately a fist width away from your thigh when sat on the toilet.

There are specifications for drop down rails without legs in the national catalogue which operates equipment prescriptions in certain parts of the country (see above) with the codes GR06 76cm, GR12 53cm and floor
Wall-mounted

Some hinged wall-mounted rails can be supplied with a support leg which rests down on the floor when the rail is horizontal, transferring some of the load from the wall to the floor. The national catalogue code for a hinged wall mounted rail with a support leg is GR01.

View our impartial list of drop down wall-mounted rails at the web address below or ring our helpline


Floor-fixed

View our impartial list of drop down floor-fixed rails at the web address below or ring our helpline


Wall to floor rails

These are static right-angled rails that attach to the wall behind the toilet and the floor in front of it. Like hinged drop down rails they are useful for providing support and stability where there is no adjacent wall but they cannot be lifted back out of the way.

View our impartial list of floor rails at the web address below or ring our helpline


Toilet surround frames and toilet seats with frames

If there are obstructions beside the toilet, such as a radiator, or the walls are not suitable for installing rails possible alternatives to rails are available. These include tubular toilet frames which are designed to provide horizontal support for pushing up from a toilet, or for steadying the body when lowering onto a toilet. The frame, which stands over the top of the toilet, can either be free standing or fixed to the floor. It is essential to fix it to the floor if you have poor balance or co-ordination, or you push down more heavily on one side than the other.

View our impartial list of toilet seats with frames at the web address below or ring our helpline

http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/group.php?groupid=1778

Rails for stairs and corridors

Long handrails
Most staircases have a handrail on one side although this may not extend to the full length of the staircase. Most DIY stores sell handrails which can be used to extend the existing handrail all the way up the staircase if it is required. Adding a handrail to the other side of the staircase will provide more support where needed. Long lengths of rail are available and may also be installed along corridors.

A wide range of finished hand rails are available from DIY chains for you to choose from. A plain 5cm mop head cross section softwood rail may be used. It is recommended that it is run continuously from the bottom to the top of your flight of stairs (including the perimeter of any landings). The handrail should be allowed to continue past the top and bottom steps by 30cm (COT, 2006, DLF, 2014). The height will depend on your needs, often at the same height as an existing banister rail. This is usually between 90-100cm above the pitch line of the stairs (COT, 2006), 90-110cm (NBS, 2013a).

The handrail should have a fixing at least every 100cm and no more than 15 cm from each end. It may require mounting on a pattress or backboard (see ‘Fixing grab rails’ below) which is then secured to the wall (COT, 2006).

**Newel rails**

Newel rails are designed to turn through 90 degrees around the newel post (the upright post of the stair banister). They provide a continuous grip as the user reaches the bottom or top of the stairs and turns the corner. They are available in a range of sizes.

Please note that left turning and right turning Newel rail models are available. Which one you require depends on which way your staircase turns after the newel post.

There are specifications for Newel rails in the national catalogue which operates equipment prescriptions in certain parts of the country (see above) with the codes GR07 Left Handed and GR08 Right Handed.

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View our impartial list of stair rails at the web address below or ring our helpline
Further guidance is available in the DLF factsheet Choosing Equipment to get Up and Down Stairs

Grab rails at a main entrance

Grab rails at a main entrance may be installed to assist you when ascending or descending steps to enter your home.

Standard straight metal or plastic grab rails can be used (see diagram on right) but offset or cranked rails are also often used (see diagram on left). The offset angle is designed so that you can step up to and pass through the doorway without releasing your grip on the rail. Alternatively the rail is occasionally fitted the other way around with the handhold away from the doorway when a traditional straight grab rail would be too close to your door handle or lock.

The ideal height for the rail will depend on your height and reach, personal preference and the structure of the door frame or wall. As a general rule the bottom fixing of a 45cm long vertical rail may be positioned 79cm above the internal floor (see dimension a) (COT, 2006). There is a specification for an offset grab rail in the national catalogue which operates equipment prescriptions in certain parts of the country (see above) with the code GR05.

Fixing of grab rails

Grab rails are only as strong as the wall to which they are fixed and the fixings that are used. Unfortunately many modern houses which were built as cost effective, thermally efficient buildings do not have internal walls that are ideal for the installation of wall fixtures such as support rails and shower seats. You will need to ensure that you are using the correct type of fixing for the material of the wall.

Traditional bricks and concrete blocks

- Good quality traditional masonry and bricks should cause no problems if the recommended fixtures and procedures are followed. A plasterboard or tiled surface should not affect the fixing, although ensure that
the whole depth of the fixing is supported by the masonry.

- Most dense concrete blocks are strong enough to support rails. However, care should be taken as their composition may make it difficult to drill a straight hole through them.

**Lightweight aerated and hollow bricks**

- If the wall is made of lightweight, aerated and hollow brickwork, even the most appropriate fixings may not be able to withstand the loads which can be suddenly applied to rails and hinged arm supports.
- The insides of the hollow blocks are often filled with a polystyrene type insulating material which will not provide enough support for fixtures screwed into it.
- Similarly, aerated concrete blocks, which are often used in bathrooms and toilets as the waste pipes are carried through their cavities, are made of a very lightweight substance which limits their fixing support qualities. Supporting fixtures should be attached to this type of wall using specific wall mounted support products or battens.

**Partition and stud walls**

- Even if a partition or stud wall is physically strong and stable and has a suitable flat surface to take a grab rail, the addition of a pattress or backboard on the wall is advised when fixing a grab rail to it.
- This should be a flat, unknotted piece of wood, which is screwed into the vertical joining pieces of the partitions. The grab rails can then be attached to the board. The College of Occupational Therapists recommends a 144mm x 19mm board / pattress with its external corners well rounded and the board itself fixed to the wall at least every 90cm (COT, 2006).
- Particular care should be taken when attaching rails to domestic sandwich partitions, e.g. plasterboard with a hardboard facing.

Fixing to UPVC plastic door frames should be avoided as the frames are unlikely to have the necessary internal materials in the required area to support a grab rail’s fixings.

When rails are installed outside or in a bathroom and are likely to become wet consider using brass or chromium-plated screws to avoid the formation of unsightly rust stains (COT, 2006).

For help finding local competent traders, such as carpenters or handymen, who could fit a grab rail and whom meet relevant standards you could visit trustatrader.com. In many areas Age UK run a handyman scheme. For a small charge, and if you are over 60, this scheme may be able to assist with small jobs such as fitting grab rails, spy holes in your door, replacing tap washers, and fitting smoke alarms or telephone extensions. To find your local Age UK service click here.

**Electrics and grab rails**

When installing a grab rail the installer should ensure there is no possibility that any metal part which may be touched by you, including fixing screws, will come into contact with electric cabling. They should follow BS7671 The IET Wiring Regulations. The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) publishes IET Wiring regulations to promote safety and reduce the risk of injury from electrical accidents. [http://electrical.theiet.org](http://electrical.theiet.org)

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**References**


therapists: London - (Type 2)

Disabled Living Foundation (2014) Trusted Assessor Training Course handbook, Disabled Living Foundation: London - (Type 2)


For more information on the Types of Evidence, please visit http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/scenario.php?csid=276

Useful organisations

British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA)
New Loom House
Suite 4.06
101 Back Church Lane
London, E1 1LU
Tel: 020 7702 2141
Fax: 020 7680 4048
Email: bhta@bhta.com (and bhta@bhta.net)
Website: www.bhta.net

The British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) is the UK’s largest healthcare association. Members of the BHTA sign up to a code of practice designed to ensure the public can trust that members will give a good service, and a high standard of behaviour.

Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE)
70 South Lambeth Road
London SW8 1RL
Telephone: 020 7840 0125
Fax: 020 7840 5811
Textphone: 020 7840 0125
Email: info@cae.org.uk
Website: www.cae.org.uk

The Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) is the UK’s leading authority on inclusive design. Their aim is to help secure a built environment that is usable by everyone, including disabled and older people.
Foundations is the national body for Home Improvement Agency and Handypersons Services, providing support to over 200 home improvement and handyperson service providers in England, covering over 80% of local authorities. Their core objectives are to: develop the capacity of the home improvement agency sector; represent the sector to government and other stakeholders, and to maintain a database of home improvement agency services for the general public.

Gov UK
Website: www.gov.uk

GOV.UK is the website for the UK government. It's the best place to find government services and information. GOV.UK has a section devoted to providing information for older adults and individuals with a disability.

Planning Portal
Website: www.planningportal.gov.uk

Planning Portal is the first port of call for anyone wanting to find out about the planning system in England and Wales. Its aim is to provide a one-stop-shop supplying answers, services and information to anyone involved in the planning process - from home owners and businesses to planning professionals and Government officials. Further guidance and regulations about access to and use of buildings (Part M): www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/approved

Rica
G03, The Wenlock
50-52 Wharf Road
London N1 7EU
Telephone: 020 7427 2460
Fax: 020 7427 2468
Email: mail@rica.org.uk
Website: www.rica.org.uk

Rica (formerly Ricability), the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs, are a national research charity dedicated to providing independent information of value to disabled and older consumers. Their reports are based on rigorous research and provide practical information needed by disabled and older consumers. They have a number of articles relating to the bathroom and grab rails: http://www.rica.org.uk/search/content/grab+rails

Which?
2 Marylebone Road
London
NW1 4DF

Released December 2014, Version 1.2
Helpline: 0300 999 0004
Which? is a brand name used by the Consumers’ Association. It promotes informed consumer choice in the purchase of goods and services, by testing products, highlighting inferior products or services, raising awareness of consumer rights and offering independent advice. Which? have produced a useful using the bathroom guide: www.which.co.uk/elderly-care/housing-options/using-the-bathroom

**AskSARA**
If you would like further advice regarding daily living equipment related to choosing equipment for everyday living you could try relevant sections of AskSARA. AskSARA is our free online guided advice tool. AskSARA will ask you questions about yourself and your environment and then offer relevant advice, product suggestions and supplier details.

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Age UK http://www.ageuk.org.uk/work-and-learning/technology-and-internet/ Call 0800 169 8787

BBC Webwise: http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/ Call 08000 150 950


Go On: http://www.go-on.co.uk/ Call 0800 77 1234
UK online centres, The Quadrant, 89 Parkway Avenue, Parkway Business Park, Sheffield, S9 4WG

UK Online Centre: http://www.ukonlinecentres.com/

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