

# Five Ways to Implement Universal Design in Your Home

Whether you're raising a young family or beginning to enjoy an empty nest, the design of your home should meet your changing needs. Families looking to customize their homes to suit their lifestyles both now and in the future can easily implement universal design techniques.

Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design at a later point in time. Universal design enhances traditional design by incorporating elements that offer comfort, convenience and ease of use.

Multigenerational families and first-time home owners alike will appreciate the often simple and inexpensive changes that make homes livable for all household members, regardless of age or ability. Homes with universal design are more user-friendly, require lower maintenance and complement an easy-living lifestyle.

Here are five ways to implement universal design in your home:

1. Widen your doorways and hallways to accommodate strollers or relatives who might use a wheelchair. This allows everyone and everything to move more easily in and out of the house, and from room to room. Experts recommend 36-inch wide doors and 42-inch wide halls and stairways.
2. Build a stepless porch entry that will increase access and convenience without compromising aesthetics.
3. Install non-slip surfaces on floors and bathtubs to help everyone stay sturdy on their feet.
4. Install handrails on steps and grab bars in bathrooms to provide more support for household members of all ages.
5. Use lever door handles. This easy-grip hardware allows family members and guests to more effortlessly open and close doors. Plus, you can switch out your faucet and drawer handles with C-shape or D-shape hardware for even greater ease of use.

Home building and remodeling professionals who have earned the Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS), Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR) or Graduate Master Remodeler (GMR) designations have received training on how to build or renovate a home so that the occupants can live in the home safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of their age or ability level. They have been taught the strategies and techniques for designing and building aesthetically pleasing, barrier-free living environments. While most CAPS professionals are remodelers, an increasing number are general contractors, designers, architects, and health care professionals.

To learn more about universal design or to find a home building or remodeling professional in the Roanoke Region, contact the Roanoke Regional Home Builders Association (540/389-7135).