



## **Specifications for Constructing a Deck**

### **Railings and Handrails**

Railings must be installed on any deck that is 30 inches or more from the surrounding surface and on at least one side of a stairway leading to the deck. The top of the handrail should be at least 34 inches but not more than 38 inches high. The same height rules apply to stairs, and the inspector measures the handrails from the nose of the stair tread. The handrail, itself, must be easy to grip, with a minimum diameter of 1 ¼ inches and a maximum diameter of 2 ¼ inches. Two-by-four boards shall not be used as a handrail; however a two-by-two will meet code for a handrail. Some large decorative handrails are permissible as long as their design offers a finer recess that allows secure grasping.

### **Baluster Spacing**

Balusters, the vertical guards that support the handrail, must be installed close enough that the space between them is no greater than 4 inches. Installed balusters should withstand 50 lbs. of pressure exerted over a 1-square foot area.

### **Support Posts**

The structural integrity of the railing depends heavily on the posts that support the rail structure. These posts should be no farther apart than six feet on the flat deck and no farther apart than 5 ½ feet on stairs. When the rail is complete, the top of the rail should withstand 200 pounds of pressure from any direction.

### **Bottom Rail**

Some balusters connect to the decking, while others connect to a bottom rail. If you're using a bottom rail, it shall not sit more than four inches about the deck surface. Like baluster space, this code is necessary to child safety, and shall be enforced.

### **Inspections**

The Building Inspector shall inspect plans to ensure that they meet or exceed local building codes before issuing a permit, and he shall perform random inspections during the construction of the deck.

