

Practical Tips: SAFETY BARS

Standards:

- General: Thanks to the American with Disabilities Act(ADA) and building code requirements for public spaces there are very precise standards for the installation of safety bars around toilets and bathtubs/showers. This is a good place to start since these standards have evolved over many years. Here is the link to a [government website](#) that explains ADA requirements with diagrams. Most of us though may only install one safety bar at the long side of the shower/bathtub and one along the toilet plus maybe a shorter vertical grip or hold for getting in and out of the shower/bathtub.
- Length: Typical length for safety bars in showers/bathtubs and along a toilet are 48”.
- Height: Typical height is between 33” and 36: to the center of the bar.
- Diameter: Typical diameter is between 1.25 and 2”. This is a comfortable circumference to grip.
- Distance from wall: The typical distance from the wall is 1.5”. That gives enough space for your hand between the bar and wall without scraping your knuckles.
- Mounting: It is best to mount the grab bar into blocking behind the wall board, either a stud or plywood that spans between studs (what builders call blocking). This is the right thing to do when remodeling a bathroom. For an existing bathroom with a tile wall, there are installation videos on youtube that show how to secure a safety bar to a wall assembly of tile and sheetrock rather than a blocking. Here is [an example](#) and [another](#) one

I believe in choice:

- If you have a beautiful piece of driftwood that is long enough, use it and mount it with stainless handrail brackets. It is an additional stimulant and delight to feel the texture or quality of a natural material.
- There are many safety/grab bars on the market, two of my favorite ones are the ['barre'](#) from the Kohler Choreograph series and the [Latitude by Gatco](#).

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Tips:

- Even though there are standards that are a great guide for what works for many people, we are all different so it is worth checking to make sure what height feels best for you for a safety bar. Every inch makes a difference.
- A short, vertically mounted safety bar or grip such as a climbing hold is often useful for balance when stepping in or out of a bathtub
- A [bathtub handle](#) that clamps on to the rim of the tub is also helpful as support for the tricky action of stepping in and out of the bathtub.

Some other thoughts:

- A safety bar is a useful bathroom accessory at any age and should be in every bathroom.

