

WALKWAYS & RAMPS

Standards:

- The typical maximum slope for comfortable use with a manual wheelchair: 1:12. The ramp raises 1 foot across a distance of 12 feet.
- The typical upper rail height on a walkway or ramp is between 32 inches and 36 inches.

I believe in choice:

- There are no official regulations when it comes to creating a ramp in a private home, but navigating steeper walkways and ramps with a hand-propelled wheelchair would take too much muscle power. With an electric wheelchair a steeper ramp is possible (1½:12).
- It is nice to have an upper and a lower rail on a ramp so you have a choice where you put your hand.

Tips:

- Sloped walkways are not only for wheelchair users, they are good for everything on wheels, from shopping carts to strollers to bicycles.
- Test what feels good for you when you go out. Take a tape measure and record your experiences with rails. We all have different bodies and our home should fit us like a glove. Standards are a good place of departure but you are the judge. It pays off to be thorough and test what works for you like my client did.

Some other thoughts:

- Make sure walking surfaces are even. As we age, it becomes more difficult to react to obstacles on the ground. Even a little unevenness, something a young person might not even notice, can be treacherous for older adults. If you do not have a smooth walkway, mark the protrusions with some spray paint - not that pretty but a saver!
- In my client's outdoor shower, we installed a body dryer because toweling off proved to be a challenge as her MS progressed. There's no specific product that we recommend, but just googling "body dryer" could give you some ideas. Some options are plug-ins and easy to install.



TABLE FOR ONE

Dining Table:

- A 32-inch, round dining table feels perfect for one, easily accommodates two people and occasionally, a third. A center support, instead of four legs, provides more flexibility for seating. The so-called Tulip table, a replica of an iconic designer table is an option and available for about \$170.

Chairs:

- A typical dining table height measures 29 to 30 inches. The standard chair height is 17 inches. For older adults, a slightly higher chair height is often more comfortable. Adding a firm cushion offers a good fix to achieve that height. The ideal dining chair for comfortable seating is upholstered, has arms and a stable construction. If you are shopping your own inventory and don't have an upholstered chair, putting a nice blanket or sheepskin over the seat and back provides a more cushioned seating experience.

Table Lighting:

- Candles or a cordless table lamp provide not only beautiful light but also create atmosphere for an intimate dining experience. They make the placement of the table independent from any existing light source or outlet. Many restaurants use cordless table lamps; they range in price from \$30. upwards. Cordless lamps also avoid electrical cords that often become a trip hazard, especially in older homes with fewer electrical outlets.

Meals For One:

- If you decide to cook for yourself, here's a cookbook you might enjoy, *The Pleasure of Cooking for One* by Judith Jones, a renowned cookbook editor who "demonstrates that cooking for yourself presents unparalleled possibilities for both pleasure and experimentation." Alternatively, if you feel like treating yourself to a dinner prepared by somebody else occasionally, there are also plenty of meal delivery services available.

