



**This information will give you a general overview and a rough guide to what's involved in building a deck. Please find specific information relating to your own project and follow all instructions provided by suppliers and manufacturers of the tools, equipment and materials you will be using.**

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Local council regulations.
- Special regulations for bushfire-prone areas.
- Method and sequence of construction will vary depending on the specifics of your site, plans and your skill level.
- Review installation guides and tips etc. Are you confident you can manage?
- Will you do all the building yourself or have tradies help with parts?
- If uncertain of how to proceed, consult an expert for guidance.

## PURPOSE - THE DECK IS FOR ...

- Extending the living area of your home.
- Levelling a sloping block.
- Making a play area for children.
- Creating an entertainment area or outdoor kitchen.
- Accessing better views.
- Adding value to your home.

## DESIGN - WHAT LOOK DO YOU WANT?

- Width of boards.
- Type of timber/composite etc.
- All boards same or varying width.

- Spacing between boards.
- Parallel boards or laid out in a design.
- Finish and colour.
- Stairs.
- Multiple levels.
- Railings etc.
- Freestanding or attached to existing structure.

## BUDGET

Work out a budget with all your requirements in mind.

- Type of timber.
- Size of deck.
- Tools, equipment and materials like screws and bolts, concrete, stirrups etc.
- Make an allowance for unexpected costs.
- Use of tradies.
- Skip hire.

## LEVEL OF ONGOING MAINTENANCE

Depending on level of exposure, finish used and level of use, some decks will need to be re-finished every couple of years.

## LOCATION

- Direction of sun.
- Best views.
- Exposure to neighbours and street.
- Access to house especially kitchen and living room.
- Prevailing winds.
- Local climate etc.

## TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT REQUIRED MAY INCLUDE:

- Pencil or marker.
- Tape measure.
- Square.
- Metal rule.
- Spirit levels.
- String line.
- Impact drill (for drilling into brick walls/masonry etc).
- Masonry drill bits.
- Power drill with screwdriver bits.
- Timber drill bits.
- Dyna bolts.
- Galvanised nails, bolts, screws etc.
- Shovel or post-hole digger.
- Saw.
- Chisel.
- Circular saw.
- Hammer.
- Nail gun.
- Saw horses.
- Safety equipment (gloves, dust mask, steel-capped boots, eye protection and ear protection etc).

## CONSTRUCTION METHOD OF YOUR DECK WILL DEPEND ON:

- Size.
- Type.

- Height off the ground.
- Strength.
- Usage.
- Freestanding or attached to existing structure.
- And many other variables determined by your site and circumstances.

## PRIORITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

- Eco-friendly.
- Child-friendly.
- Non-slip decking.
- Budget.
- Type of use, weight, etc.
- Poolside.
- Fencing required.

## TO START

- Look in magazines and online etc for ideas.
- Sketch a design.
- Mark on ground with spray paint or flour.
- Take precise measurements.
- Draw deck to scale.
- Get advice on type of support structure required.
- Note the number, location and dimensions of posts, bearers and joists.
- Complete a project plan detailing time, materials, people required etc.
- Work out a timeline for all steps of your project allowing for drying/curing time. Make allowances for delays eg rain.
- Rent, borrow, buy all tools, equipment and supplies for a safe and successful job.
- Select , check references then book tradies if required.
- Hire a skip if required.
- Have everything ready, laid out and organised before you begin work.

## CONSTRUCTION

### 1. THE BASICS ARE:

- Stumps/posts or brackets set into the ground, generally in concrete footings.
- Ledger boards.
- Bearers are secured to posts and ledger boards (if being used).
- Bearers installed running parallel to decking boards.
- Joists secured at right angles to bearers.
- Decking boards laid at right angles to the joists and screwed or nailed in place.
- Concealed attachment methods are available, so nails or screws aren't visible in boards.

### 2. GENERAL

- Install any bowed timbers with the bow facing up.
- Depending on the size and complexity of the deck you may need to know some timber joins and use tools like chisels to cut those joins.
- Ensure all timber and other hardware is strong enough and designed for the purpose you are using it for.

### 3. SITE PREPARATION

- Clean, tidy and level where required.
- Remove any plants or grass.
- Add a layer of gravel for drainage and keeping site clean following footprint of deck.

### 4. BASIC DECK USING EXISTING STRUCTURES

- Retaining walls etc can be used as a base for bearers and removes the need for some posts.
- Install and level bearer/s attached to existing structures, add footings later where required.
- Deck frame can be prefabricated with joists then lifted it into place on bearers.
- If some posts are required, raise and level the frame with temporary supports.
- Attach posts or brackets to frame and pour concrete into post holes to secure.
- Allow concrete to cure.
- Finish by adding decking boards.

### 5. STARTING FROM SCRATCH

- For larger more complex jobs install all posts/stirrups first ensuring they are all the same height and cement in place.
- Build deck up from there adding the bearers, joists and then boards to finish.

### 6. ATTACHING TO WALLS OF HOUSE

- Where attaching deck to an existing structure like a house wall, use ledger board secured to the wall at same height as joists will be located.
- Pre-drill ledger, level against wall and mark wall for holes to install dyna bolts.
- Use masonry drill bits with hammer drill function for brick etc.
- Install flashing to protect house or other walls from water damage.
- Secure ledger to wall.

### 7. FOOTINGS

- Measure up and set out string lines to determine the position of post holes.
- Mark positions with spray paint or flour.
- Dig post holes.
- Use a second set of string lines and a string line spirit level to determine the height of posts, (if using ledger board, it will determine the post height).
- Work down from finished height of decking boards to calculate required position of bearers.
- Position posts or stirrups at correct height.
- Pour concrete into post holes, allow concrete to set.

### 8. BEARERS

- Any deck over 1.8 metres requires bearers.
- Get bearers as level as possible.
- Skew nail (hammer nail into timber at an angle) bearers to stumps or attach pre-drilled bearers to stirrups with coach bolts.

## 9. JOISTS

- Joist hangers can be used to attach joists to ledger board. Make sure they are flush with ledger.
- Use a template to get gaps between each joist even.
- Skew nail the joists to the bearers.
- Check levels at each step.
- Use noggings between joists for extra strength if required.

## 10. BOARDS

- Use something like a bullet head nail to get gaps between boards exactly the same.
- Line up the cuts of each board with a joist. Boards need support at ends for strength.
- Scatter joins for a less artificial look.
- Pre-drill boards if using nails or screws (not for concealed attachment).
- Secure boards to joists with screws or nails, ensure they are flush with deck.
- Alternatively, follow instructions for hidden fixing methods.
- Frequently check that all boards are running parallel as you lay them.
- Once boards secured, carefully trim any overhang at ends of deck with circular saw.
- If you have not laid boards out so they fit the deck evenly spaced apart, rip the last board down to fit the remaining gap and secure it to the joists.

## 11. FINISHING

- Oil.
- Stain.
- Varnish etc.
- All-in-one finishes also available.
- Select the appropriate finish according to level of traffic, exposure to the elements and colour desired etc.

## SAFETY ADVICE

When working with timber, particularly treated timber, always follow these precautions:

- Wear gloves, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt at all times.
- Wear goggles and use a dust mask or respirator to avoid inhalation of airborne wood dust when sawing, machining or sanding timber.
- Work in a well-ventilated area, wherever possible.
- Protect cuts or abrasions from sawdust.
- If sawdust comes into contact with skin, wash immediately.
- Food and drink should never be left where sawdust can settle.
- Wash hands before you touch food or smoke.
- If you have leftover scraps of treated timber, don't burn them.
- Don't let children or pets play with treated timber scraps or near sawdust.
- Dispose of the wood according to local regulations for handling toxic materials.
- **For more safety tips see:**  
[DIY safety](#)  
[Working with timber](#)

## FOR MORE DIY TIPS AND ADVICE VISIT

- [Domain's DIY special feature](#)

All the information provide is general in nature and should only be used as a rough guide when planning your project. Learn the appropriate skills and consult the relevant experts for the specifics of your project. Follow all manufacturer instructions for tools, equipment, materials etc. Use all safety equipment and techniques appropriate for your project.