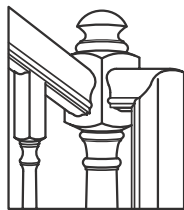
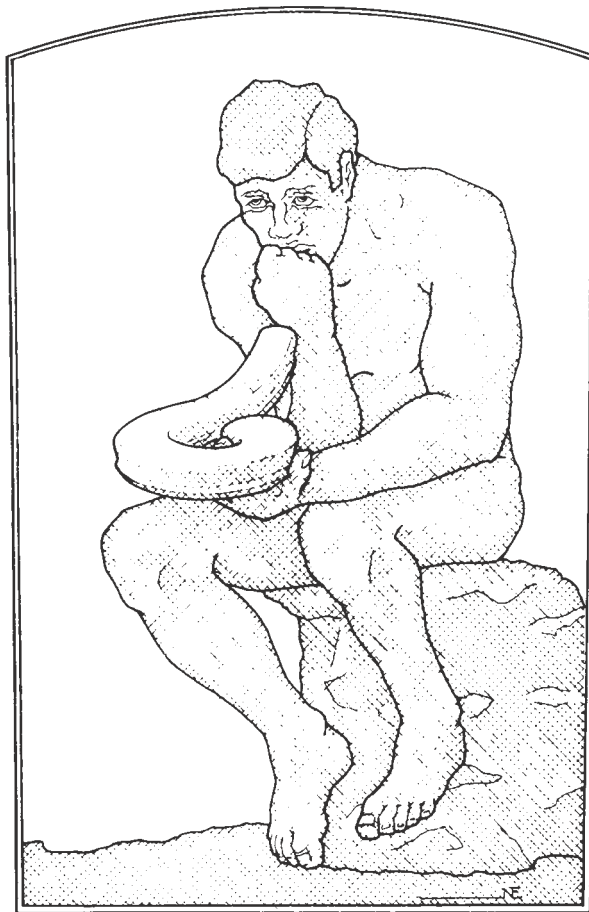
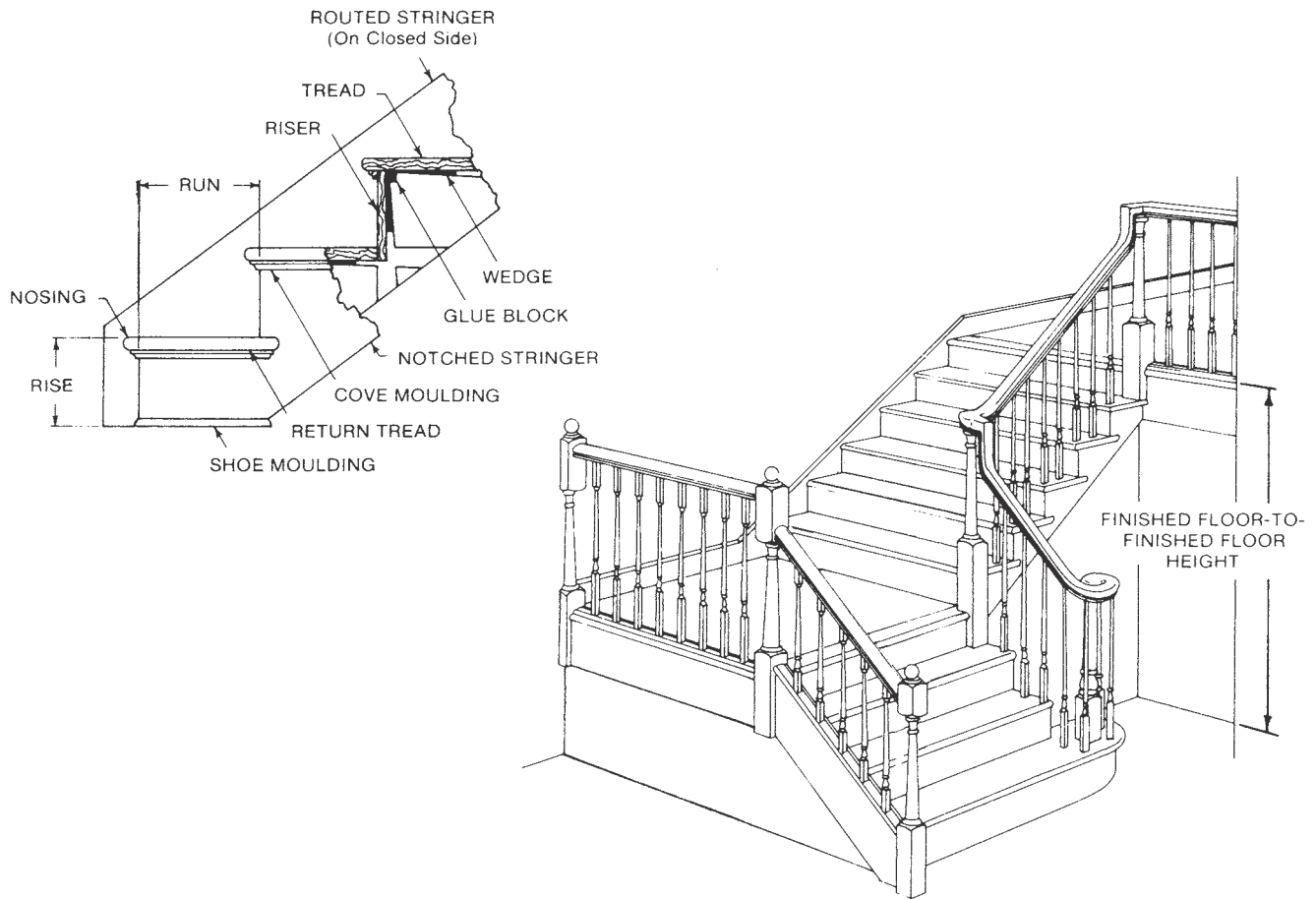


# GLOSSARY OF STAIR TERMS



***L. J. Smith***<sup>®</sup>  
***Stair Systems***





## INTRODUCTION

THIS GLOSSARY OF STAIR TERMS IS INTENDED FOR THE EXPERIENCED STAIR BUILDER AS WELL AS THE NOVICE. DRAWINGS FOR PARTICULAR TERMS ARE GENERALLY LOCATED TO THE RIGHT OF THE DEFINITION

**ANGLE NEWEL** - A landing newel with a very long lower square. It is generally used at a turn where the handrail must rise sharply, such as a landing using winder treads.

**APRON** - See STRINGER.

**BALUSTER** - A narrow, vertical member which helps support the handrail. Usually set on a 4" to 6" center or less.

**BALUSTRADE SYSTEM** - A collective term which refers to the newels, balusters and handrail on a particular stairway.

**BOX NEWEL** - A large, square hollow newel used in a post-to-post balustrade system.

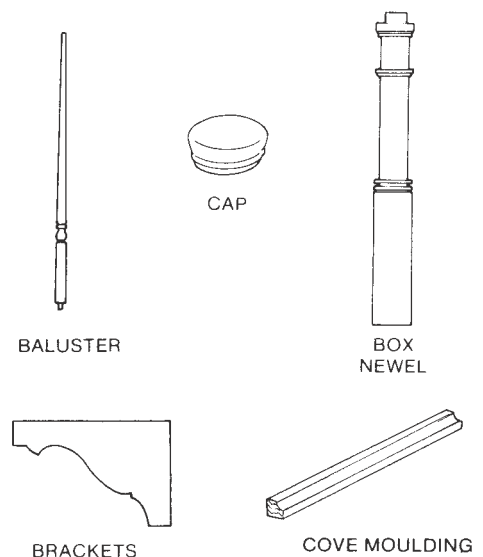
**BOX STAIR** - A stairway which is fully enclosed by walls and routed stringers on both sides.

**BRACKETS** - Also referred to as stringer brackets. Decorative pieces fastened to the outside of a stringer.

**CAP** - Used in an over-the-post balustrade system. That part of the fitting which widens in order to sit on a newel.

**CIRCULAR STAIRWAY** - A curved stairway which is mounted on stringers rather than a central pole.

**COVE MOULDING** - A decorative strip which, when attached to the underside of the tread nosing, covers the joint between the tread and riser.



CROOK - See TURNOUT

DOWEL - A long, cylindrical anchoring device at the base of some starting newels. The dowel rests on riser blocks.

FILLET - Strips, generally flat, which fill the plow between balusters on plowed handrail and shoe rail.

FINISHED-FLOOR-TO-FINISHED-FLOOR HEIGHT - The total rise of a stairway. Measured from the top of the finished lower floor to the top of the finished upper floor.

FREESTANDING - A stairway which is not supported by walls. Open underneath

GLUE BLOCK - A block of wood which is glued and screwed into the hidden side of the joint of a tread and riser. This is done for structural soundness and to eliminate squeaking.

GOOSENECK - A handrail fitting consisting of an up-easing, a vertical rail drop and a level cap. It is used at a landing or balcony to raise the rake handrail to the height of the balcony handrail.

HANDRAIL - The horizontal or rake member of a balustrade system. It sits on top of the balusters and is supported by newel posts.

HEADER - The floor joist, generally a 2 x 12, around the stairwell in the upper floor. The top riser of the stairway is attached to the header

HORSE - See STRINGER.

HOUSED - See ROUTED STRINGER.

KERF - A sawcut which does not cut the whole way through a piece. The backside of a starting step riser is often kerfed in order to bend it in the shape of the bull-nose tread.

LANDING NEWEL - A newel situated at a landing or balcony.

LANDING TREAD - Narrow tread nosing situated above the top riser or along the upper edge of a balcony. This gives the appearance of a tread at the top of the stairway

LEFT HAND - See STAIR DIRECTION.

LEVEL QUARTERTURN - A level handrail fitting which turns 90°.

LEVEL RAIL - Handrail which runs level along a landing or balcony

NEWEL POST - The major support for a balustrade system. Newels are larger than balusters and are located at the bottom and top of a stairway or at a turn in the handrail.

NOSING - The portion of a tread or landing tread which protrudes beyond the face of the riser

OPENING CAP - A handrail fitting at the start of a level balustrade system

OPEN STAIR - A stairway not boxed in by walls on either side.

OVERHAND EASING - A handrail fitting which connects the rake handrail with the level balcony handrail, without the use of a gooseneck

OVER-THE-POST - A balustrade system which utilizes fittings to go over newel posts for an unbroken, continuous handrail

PART-OPEN STAIR - A stairway which is mounted against a wall on one side and open on the other

PICKET - See BALUSTER

PITCH - See RAKE

PITCHBLOCK - The triangular piece of wood used for laying out the rise and run on stringers and trimming easement fittings

PITCH RAIL - See RAKE

PLATFORM - The landing which is the top tread on a spiral stairway. Intermediate landings are also often referred to as platforms

PLOW - The routed portion of a handrail or shoerail used for the inserting of square balusters. The gaps left between balusters are covered with fillet

PLUMB - Perfectly vertical, perpendicular with the floor

POST-TO-POST - Balustrade system in which the handrail is not continuous. The handrail is lagged into the face of a square-top newel

RAIL CONNECTOR SPLINE - A flat piece of metal which is used to connect handrail to fittings from the underside

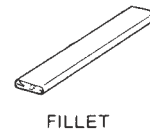
RAIL FITTINGS - Fittings are used in an over-the-post system for a continuous handrail appearance through turns and changes in elevation.

RAKE - The angle of ascent of a stairway. This is determined by the rise and run.

RETURN NOSING - Tread nosing applied to the outside of a miter return tread to cover end grain

RETURNED END - A handrail fitting, without a cap, which does not incorporate the use of a newel at the end of the balustrade.

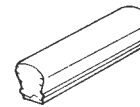
RIGHT HAND - See STAIR DIRECTION



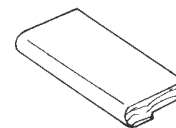
FILLET



GOOSENECK



HANDRAIL



LANDING TREAD



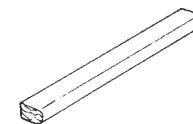
LANDING NEWEL



LEVEL QUARTERTURN



NEWEL POST



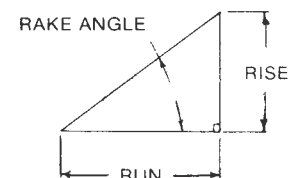
NOSING



OPENING CAP



OVERHAND EASING



PITCHBLOCK

**RISE** - The vertical measurement from the top of one tread to the top of the next tread.

**RISER** - The vertical component of a step which, along with the stringers, supports the treads.

**RISER BLOCK** - Starting newel supports hidden inside the bull-nose section of a starting step.

**ROSETTE** - A small, decorative piece used where a handrail dies into a wall.

**ROUTED STRINGER** - A stringer which has been routed out for the insertion of treads, risers and wedges.

**RUN** - The horizontal measurement from the face of one riser to the face of the next riser. This is also the depth of the tread without the nosing

**SHOE MOULDING** - A decorative strip used at the bottom of a baseboard or the bottom of the riser of the starting step.

**SHOE RAIL** - A piece running along the floor or atop a routed stringer which is plowed for the insertion of balusters and fillet.

**SHORT WALL** - The wall supporting the open side of a part-open stairway.

**SPINDLE** - See BALUSTER.

**SPIRAL STAIRWAY** - A curved stairway which is mounted on a central pole rather than on stringers.

**STAIR DIRECTION** - Either right-or-left-hand. Determined by the turn a stairway makes when facing it from the bottom.

**STAIRWELL** - See WELL OPENING.

**STARTING EASING** - A handrail fitting which is used at the bottom of a stairway with a starting newel

**STARTING NEWEL** - The newel used at the bottom of a stairway

**STARTING STEP** - The first tread and riser at the bottom of a stairway

**STRINGERS** . The supporting members which run the length of the stairway on which treads, risers and balustrade are mounted.

**SUB-RAIL** - A thin rail which is mounted on the underside of handrail and plowed for the insertion of square-top balusters.

**TANDEM CAP** - A straight level handrail fitting with a newel cap. Tandem caps generally are used on newels in long stretches of balcony handrail.

**TOTAL RISE** - See FINISHED FLOOR-TO-FINISHED FLOOR HEIGHT.

**TOTAL RUN** - The horizontal distance covered by the entire stairway

**TREAD** - The horizontal component of a step upon which one walks.

**TREAD SUPPORT** - A wooden support attached to the underside of a winder tread and the pole on a spiral stairway.

**TURNOUT** - A handrail fitting used on a starting newel which curves away from the stairway.

**UP EASING** - A handrail fitting which allows the handrail to gradually rise from the horizontal to the rake angle.

**VOLUTE** - A handrail fitting used on a starting newel which turns away from the stairway in a circular fashion

**WALL RAIL** - A handrail which is mounted on a wall and supported by wall rail brackets rather than newels or balusters

**WALL RAIL BRACKETS** - metal supports for wall rail

**WEDGE** - Wedges are coated with glue and used to drive treads and risers tightly into a routed stringer

**WELL OPENING** - The opening in the upper floor for placement of a stairway

**WINDER TREAD** - Tread with a greater run on one side than the other. Winder treads are used on Circular and Spiral stairways

**WOOD PLUG** - used for a finished appearance and covering drilled holes on newels and handrails



ROSETTE



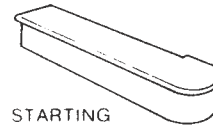
SHOE RAIL



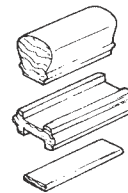
STARTING EASING



STARTING NEWEL



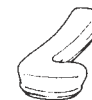
STARTING STEP



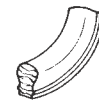
SUB-RAIL



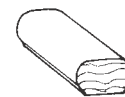
TANDEM CAP



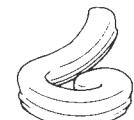
TURNOUT



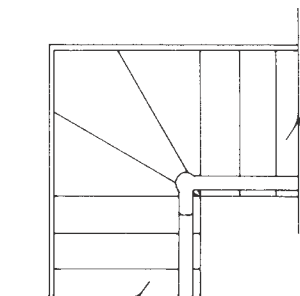
UP EASING



WALL RAIL



VOLUTE



WINDER TREAD