

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO KIT STAIRCASES

Not so long ago, your only options for staircases were either simple timber flights from your local Builders Merchant or using the expertise of a joinery workshop for a made to measure staircase. Things have moved on rapidly with the arrival of the “kit” staircase to the UK – bringing a range of styles, sizes and colours, packed in component form and delivered direct to site for easy installation. These kits usually offer three formats – spirals, modular (straight, quarter turn or half turn), and alternate tread “spacesaver” stairs. So now you can offer your customers a real choice, whether they want a traditional or contemporary look for a main or secondary staircase.

But we all know about the problems of keeping within the Building Regs and Part K seems to have more than its fair share of “grey” areas for staircase designs. This can be a particularly tricky area when the kit staircases are imported from other EU countries where the regulations seem slightly more relaxed. So ask your supplier, who should be the expert on both kit staircases and the UK regs, to guide you through your options to make sure that you stay on the right side of your Building Control Department *and* your customer. In general terms, a kit spiral stair can be used to access a single room, as in a loft conversion, typically with a diameter of approx 1500mm, but the kit spirals are not available in large enough diameters to use as a main staircase where the regs demand a much larger spiral, usually between 1800-2100mm. The modular stairs are extremely versatile and can be used as secondary or main staircases offering a wide range of configurations from each kit package. The alternate tread “spacesavers” should only be used to access a single room in a loft conversion – and even then, some Building Control Officers have a strong dislike for them! And the kit stairs usually offer a maximum tread rise which is much higher than our UK regs allow – so ask your supplier to check how your chosen stair kit will work for your floor to floor height – don’t just look at the sizes printed on the manufacturer’s brochure or you could end up with big problems getting the project signed off. It’s never easy finding the time to source materials but try to look for a knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialist staircase supplier who will be able to provide you with technical support - and use them as a source of information and advice. This will help to cut down the amount of time you would have to spend on checking the regs and the specifications and will also build up your knowledge so that you can advise and guide your customers.

When it comes to installation, these kit stairs really come into their own. Most of them are designed for simple install with clear instructions and are delivered complete with a video where you can see the various stages of the installation process and get a good understanding of the general approach to take. This is not the time to take short cuts – the instructions should be clear and straightforward and *will* be the quickest and best way to install your staircase. One person installing the spiral staircases and “spacesavers” usually takes between 1 – 1 ½ days. The modular staircase can take about 1 ½ - 2 days to complete. And don’t forget to include the riserbars with the staircase installation; they fit between the treads to make sure that the gap between the treads is less than 100mm (to stop children under 5 getting stuck and injuring themselves). Again, your choice of supplier can make a difference to you here. Before you place your order, ask your supplier for advice on your project and judge them on their ability to offer clear and knowledgeable help. Don’t

worry that you're not the expert – *they* should be, and they should be very happy to advise and guide you. You may need to tap into this source of expertise before or during the installation and you should be comfortable that you will get the right response from them.

Once you've successfully installed your first kit staircase, you'll be converted! The quality of the stairs, the wide choice of styles, the quick installation – and the cost-effectiveness will guarantee that you'll be confident in using the kit stairs again and again.

But there may be projects which demand staircases beyond the package styles and sizes. There are design companies who specialise in one-off staircase of extremely high quality and with a matching price tag. However, there are also many pre-designed staircases available which offer a really wide choice of styles and materials. These are a more cost-effective way to bring superb quality and styling to your project and still create a unique and sensational feature for your project. Talk to your specialist staircase supplier and let them inspire you!

+ images

Klan dark dye1.jpg “Klan Spiral Staircase 1400mm diameter”

Kompact black.jpg “Kompact Modular L Format Staircase”

Karina white.jpg “Karina Spacesaver staircase”

Albini & Fontanot Genius 02 Q bianco_noce chiaro.jpg “Genius Square Spiral with Beech Treads”

Interbau NR030S11.tif “Multi-column Spiral with Nut Stained Beech Treads and Stainless Steel Balustrading”