

# Outdoor Living Spaces



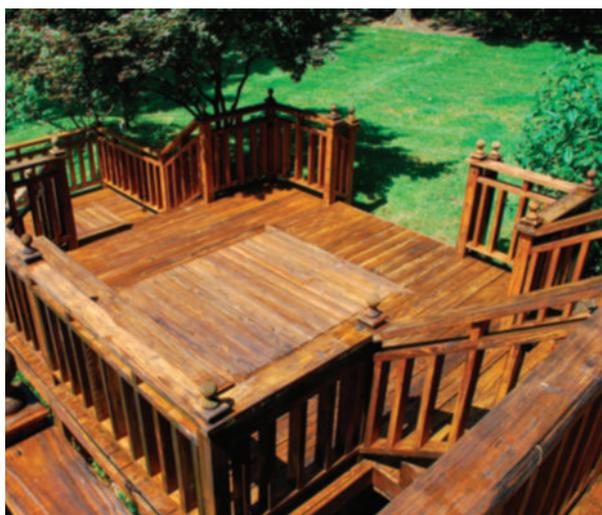
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Don't think of it as a deck or patio ... think of it as outdoor living space.

Many homeowners today see outdoor living space as a must-have amenity, because a well-planned deck or patio can add a lot of enjoyment to their home.

## 1 Design your outdoors as an extended living space

Your outdoor living space serves as an extension of your home. And a deck, patio or porch doesn't have to be boxy in design. By incorporating differing textures, materials, level changes, handrails, dramatic lighting and the right furniture, you can clearly define areas for eating, socializing and relaxing.



## 2 First question - deck or patio?

Certain factors can help determine if a deck is more suitable than a patio for your home.

1. **Capacity.** How much weight will your deck or patio need to hold? Either can be beefed up to hold a huge spa, but that may sacrifice the aesthetic you want.

2. **Climate.** If you decide on a deck, will the deck become too hot to walk on in summer? If it's a patio, will snow and rain runoff create a problem on the solid patio surface?
3. **Site considerations.** Flat, level ground can be ideal for a patio, but rough, sloping terrain almost always dictates a deck.

## 3 Space-planning tips for a deck

To help determine the size of your new deck, consider how you plan to use it. If you like to entertain, you'll need a large deck with lots of seating. If you plan to grill out on occasion, and perhaps dine at a bistro-style table with two chairs, a smaller deck will do.

A family of four that's comfortable dining around a 5-foot-long table will need twice that much space to push back chairs about three feet and safely walk around the table.

You should also preserve some green space in your backyard to achieve the "communing with nature" feel a deck provides. And avoid adding a deck that is so large the maintenance becomes overwhelming.

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## Determining your deck design

For continuity, you can match the architectural style of your house to the new deck. For example, a dark-colored deck with a white balustrade railing and a dark rail cap would complement a traditional-style home. A deck stained



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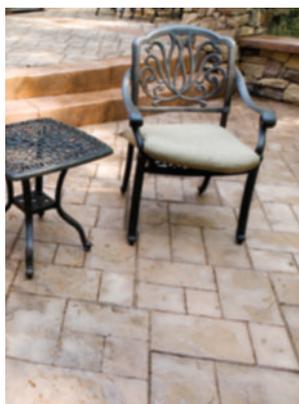
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in a single color with clean lines and sharp angles might suit a contemporary home.

## 5 Choosing your materials

**Wood decking.** The low cost, availability and rot resistance makes pressure-treated pine and fir popular decking choices. However, even with the periodic maintenance that is absolutely necessary, warping, twisting, shrinking and swelling will still occur. Other species such as red cedar, redwood and tropical hardwoods are more durable and have no chemical treatments, but maintenance is still required and these options can be pricey.

**Composite and vinyl decking.** These materials require less maintenance than wood and are more resistant to insects, warping and splintering. Although many of these materials don't shrink or swell, some can expand in hot, sunny climates. They can also be much more expensive than wood, especially if coordinating railings and balustrade systems are used.



**Patio pavers.** Brick, stone and concrete pavers are available in a range of styles and colors and are extremely durable. Very little maintenance is required from the homeowner, but significant site preparation may be needed to ensure proper placement, grade and drainage.

**Patio concrete.** No longer just a drab gray slab, concrete is available in a wide variety of colors and patterns. Designs are nearly limitless.

A periodic resealing may be required, but otherwise an occasional pressure wash is the only maintenance required.

## 6 Give guests something attractive to lean on

While railings are an important safety feature, they can also double as a decorative accent that takes your deck to a whole new level. You can finish out your deck with color-matched composite railing components and accessories for a seamless look, or contrast in colors to create visual interest.



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## Power up the lighting options

To complete your outdoor space, deck and patio lighting can extend the hours of enjoyment long after the sun goes down, as well as serve as a design element. Today's lighting innovations include post cap lights that generate a warm glow around railings, under-the-handrail lighting, subtle surface lights that install flush into flooring areas, and stair riser lights for improved safety.

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## 8 Outdoor decorating

How you enhance your deck is a matter of personal style, but it's best to keep the structure of the deck simple and nearly neutral, the same way you might decorate a room inside your home. Adding punches of bright color with removable cushions, umbrellas and plants means the deck will be ready for resale at any time. It will be the ideal canvas for staging a neutral palette quickly and without much expense.