

# UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN THE BATHROOM



*Making everyday spaces  
more accessible to everyone.*



# MAKING THE WORLD WORK FOR EVERYONE

It used to be, when people would think about how to create a home that would allow you to age in place, the picture that came to mind was very institutional. More like what we assume a nursing home would look like. Especially in the bathroom.

Universal Design — UD for short — is changing that.

In many ways, Bestbath® has been focused on Universal Design principles long before the term was popularized. As a result, we've become a leader in UD that allows people to design their bathroom space to be both functional and luxurious at the same time.

In this ebook, we'll share some of what we've learned about Universal Design over the years. It's a primer — but if you have questions, we're happy to make time to discuss the ideas of UD more in-depth. Our contact information can be found at the end of this book.

## What is Universal Design?

UD is all about making the physical world function better for everyone.

It often includes ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and ANSI (American National Standards Institute) compliant products, but UD certainly isn't limited by government regulations. It's its own philosophy, informing governments and industry groups but often going well beyond them.

## PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

A group of architects, product designers, engineers, and environmental design researchers from the Center for Universal Design (CUD) at North Carolina State University developed the following 7 principles to provide guidance when designing and manufacturing products or environments:

- 1. EQUITABLE USE.** The product or space is easily navigated and used by people of all abilities.
- 2. FLEXIBILITY IN USE.** The design works well for a wide range of preferences or abilities.
- 3. SIMPLE & INTUITIVE USE.** Use of the design is simple to understand, regardless of the person's abilities, language spoken, or experience level.
- 4. PERCEPTIBLE INFORMATION.** The design communicates necessary information to the user, regardless of the user's sensory abilities.
- 5. TOLERANCE FOR ERROR.** The design minimizes the danger to a person if they use the product incorrectly, or accidentally or intentionally misuse it.
- 6. LOW PHYSICAL EFFORT.** The design allows for the use of the product effectively with comfort and minimal effort.
- 7. SIZE & SPACE FOR APPROACH & USE.** There has been enough space allowed for proper use of the product regardless of a person's size, posture or mobility.<sup>1</sup>

## UNIVERSAL DESIGN:

*the approaches, ideas and materials used to make buildings, products and environments accessible to everyone, including older people, people with disabilities and those without disabilities.*

***Basically, everyone.***





## Common attributes of Universal Design in bathrooms

**Barrier-free showers.** One of the most dangerous actions in the bathroom is to step over a tub or other obstacle. Designing your shower to be barrier-free allows for safety. It also has a luxurious look, that more and more people want in their home. So it's likely to be a positive when selling your home.

**5 ft. of clearance in bathroom.** For a person in a wheelchair, the need for space to move around and maneuver is important. 5 ft. gives enough room for a 180 degree turn.

**Shower doors at least 36".** Easier for people of all abilities to access the shower, and can be part of a modern, luxury design.

**Hand-held showerhead.** Not only is this vital for people with limited movement, it can also make it easier to clean the shower. It's a win-win!

**Grab bars.** No matter what your age, grab bars can prevent slips and falls. It's easy to find a style that suits your decor, and they can easily double as towel holders.

**Shower seat.** Useful for all ages, it can be for more than just sitting. You can prop your foot on it while shaving, and use it for storage as well. Some even fold away when not in use.

**Easy to reach accessories.** A lot of injuries occur when stretching to reach the soap or shampoo. Placing shelves and accessories at the correct heights and distances can really help.<sup>2</sup>

## How much does Universal Design cost?

The simple fact is that Universal Design doesn't cost that much more than traditional designs when designed, engineered and planned for upfront. Unfortunately, most of us aren't aware of that fact.

The result is that most UD implementations these days are remodels. For most remodels, it will only cost around \$1,000-\$2,500 more for a 6 ft. by 8 ft. space to add the most advantageous Universal Design features.<sup>3</sup> Most realtors will tell you that kitchens and baths sell a home. If you add UD features to your bathroom remodel, it not only increases your buyer pool, but it gives you a high return-on-investment. Sometimes as much as 71%!<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Adding Universal Design Features to Your Bathroom: [www.houselogic.com/homeadvice/universaldesign/universaldesignfeaturesforbathroom/](http://www.houselogic.com/homeadvice/universaldesign/universaldesignfeaturesforbathroom/)

<sup>3</sup> Adding Universal Design features to your bathroom: [www.houselogic.com/homeadvice/universaldesign/universaldesignfeaturesforbathroom/](http://www.houselogic.com/homeadvice/universaldesign/universaldesignfeaturesforbathroom/)

<sup>4</sup> Houston's Return on Investment for Remodeling Projects: [www.remodelersofhouston.com/remodeling-ideas/houston%E2%80%99s-return-on-investment-for-remodeling-projects/](http://www.remodelersofhouston.com/remodeling-ideas/houston%E2%80%99s-return-on-investment-for-remodeling-projects/)

Even better, more and more manufacturers have caught on to the Universal Design trend. No matter what style you're after, there's a Universal Design approved feature that will match. For example, Bestbath offers UD-friendly options with the ability to customize tile patterns or even add custom ceramic or stone tiles.

## Baby Boomers and UD

In the past few years, there has been a \$6 Billion increase in spending on discretionary home improvements.<sup>5</sup> Baby boomers account for a large portion of those choosing to remodel their homes. That's because as Baby Boomers age, the popularity of UD has soared, as they've looked to stay put and age in place, enjoying the life they've built as long as they can.

Younger generations are also hopping on the universal design trend in their remodels, too. For them, it's often not just about aging in place. The contemporary look they're after usually includes many universal design features.

## UD and Rentals

The rental improvement and repair market was \$54 Billion in 2013.<sup>6</sup> For a large portion of this market, the idea of incorporating universal design features just makes good sense. After all, the ability to remodel and open up the types of renters you can attract is good for business.

Having a space that's up-to-date and on-trend can mean higher rental prices, and more money in the bank.

## Universal Design Certification

If you want to be sure the professional you're working with is knowledgeable in Universal Design features and requirements, you might consider asking if they are certified.

There are two certifications that are widely accepted:

- **Universal Design Certified Professional (UDCP)**
- **Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS)**

Both require the professional to complete training courses and pass a certification test. The main difference? UDCP is through the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, and CAPS is through the National Association of Homebuilders.

## ASK FOR UD BY NAME

*Designers have noticed a trend of their own: homeowners don't ask for Universal Design features up front, often because they don't know what is available. But once the benefits, modern look and lasting value of UD are explained, homeowners tend to veer more in that direction. So if you want Universal Design features in your bathroom remodel after learning more about it, take the lead and ask for them!*

## Universal Design and ADA Compliant

While many of the features included in Universal Design are also ADA Compliant, that does not mean that they are the same thing. Universal Design creates attractive features that work for everyone of any ability and any age. ADA Compliant features are specific to the needs of disabilities, and tend to have an institutional feel and appearance to them.

Grab bars disguised as towel holders, taller toilets, and hand-held showerheads mounted on glide bars are all features that not only make self-care easier, they can truly enhance the look and feel of your bathroom. Zero-entry showers with trench drains and many other Universal Design features add a touch of luxury to any bathroom.

Homeowners today rank the bathroom as second in the importance to their lifestyle, only topped by the kitchen. But those with different abilities, or older folks who want to age gracefully, rank the bathroom as the most important. The features there can allow for aging, independence and dignity. And that's something that we can universally agree on!

*There are so many options in the world of bathroom remodels. More options means better opportunities to get exactly what you want in your new space. Bestbath believes Universal Design features enhance the look and usability of your new bathroom, and we love educating people on the varied benefits of incorporating these elements. If you'd like to learn more about the options, reach out! Our contact information is at the end of the ebook.*

<sup>5</sup> Kitchen and bath upgrades leading remodeling recovery: [exclusive.multibriefs.com/content/kitchen-and-bath-upgrades-leading-remodeling-recovery](http://exclusive.multibriefs.com/content/kitchen-and-bath-upgrades-leading-remodeling-recovery)

<sup>6</sup> Improving America's Housing 2015 Key Facts: [www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/improving\\_americas\\_housing\\_2015\\_key\\_facts.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/improving_americas_housing_2015_key_facts.pdf)

# About Bestbath

Bestbath is a leading manufacturer of bathing products for people of all abilities. Our products — from walk-in tubs to traditional shower inserts — are designed to be functional and beautiful now, but also to be easily modified as needs and abilities change. Bestbath works closely with architects, commercial project developers and homeowners to ensure that our designs provide them with function and value today and for years to come.

**Better living begins with Bestbath.**



**BESTBATH PRODUCTS ARE MADE IN THE USA**  
and come with a 30-year limited warranty so you can  
relax knowing you're covered now and in the future.

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