

GRAB BAR BASICS

Grab bars serve a number of purposes. They can help prevent a fall, allow someone with limited mobility to access parts of the room more easily, and help facilitate transfer to toilets, tubs, and showers.

Tip: When shopping, look for ADA compliant grab bars and mounting hardware. The grab bars can be installed horizontally, vertically, or at an angle in order to attached to a stud.

Safety First!!

Make sure grab bar is not too far from the wall.

Horizontal grab bars are safest when spaced exactly 1-1/2" from the wall.

People often lean on grab bars for balance. If there is too much space, the person can slip and their arm or wrist can become trapped behind the bar, risking a broken bone. Less than 1-1/2" and knuckles can get stuck.

Avoid suction grab bars.



Suction type grab bars are designed to hold firm until they release. Unfortunately, they release randomly creating a fall danger to the user.

Many manufacturers specify that their suction cup grab bars should strictly be used for steadying purposes rather than supporting weight, but this is unrealistic.

During a slip or fall users instantly reach for a grab bar to hold onto for support without regard to whether or not it is intended to bear weight.

Install securely to wall studs

Grab bars need to be securely attached into studs or to a surface-mounted piece of wood that is securely attached to wall studs.

Cautions: Tubs with a fiberglass surround have an air gap between the wall and the surround. Don't install grab bars over these surround walls, because grab bars must be secured firmly to studs to be safe.

A grab bar is only as strong as its anchoring devices and the wall on which it is mounted. Grab bars should be inspected periodically to make sure their attachment to the wall is not loosening.

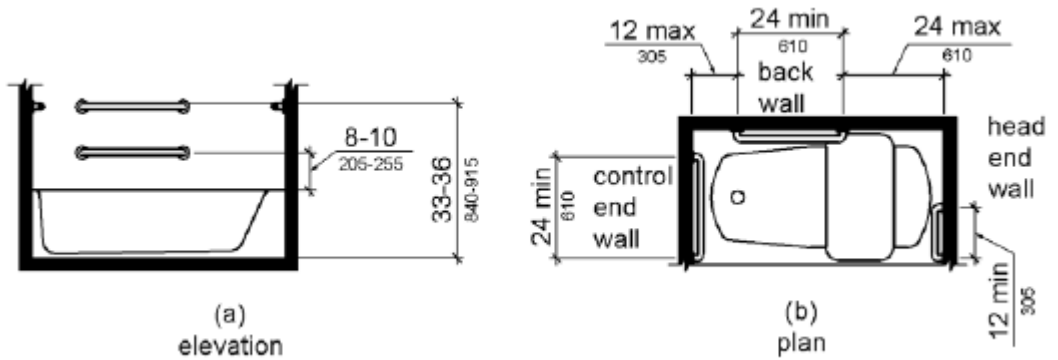
Placement Standards

Grab bars inside the tub, shower, or next to a toilet can make daily hygiene tasks safer and easier for users of all ages and abilities.

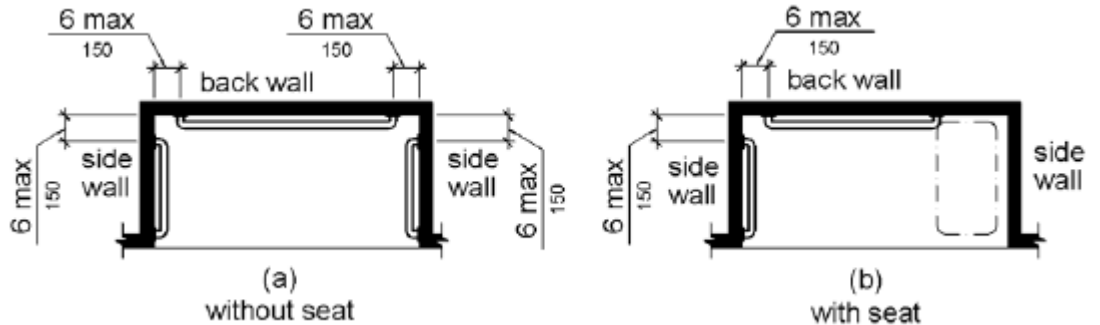
The following recommendations are from Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 2010 Standards for Accessible Design and American National Standards (ANSI), as adopted by the International Building code.

Tip: Per ADA, horizontal grab bars are mounted 33-36" above walking/standing surfaces.

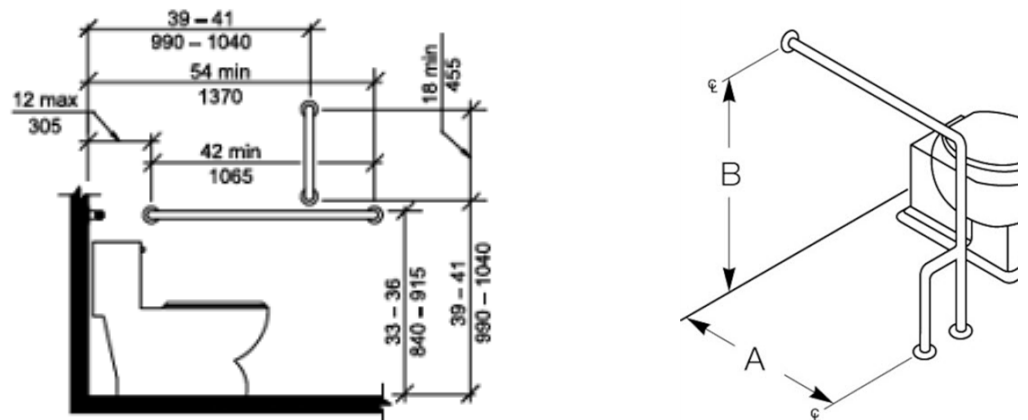
TUBS, where to add:



SHOWERS, where to add:



TOILETS, where to add:



Towel Bar Replacement

Replacing a towel bar with dual function grab bar can be an effective safety strategy.

If a person slips and falls, they may instinctively grab hold of the towel bar, risking fall and injury. Towel bars are meant to support the weight of a towel and not designed to catch the weight of a falling user or support a person with limited mobility.

When properly installed, grab bars can support several hundred pounds without breaking or ripping out of the wall. To handle this type of force, the grab bars must be firmly attached to studs.

Different Types of Supports

- Conventional wall-mounted grab bars provide the most support and are safest.
- There are a number of alternative applications that may be helpful as well. Use with caution as they require regular checking and maintenance for safety.

Tub edge clamp grab bar:

Tub edge clamp grab bars can provide assist when stepping in and out of a tub as well as getting up and down from an adjacent toilet.

Caution: Because is it a temporary mount, it can loosen and fail. For safety, check the tightening nut and rubber pads frequently.



Floor to ceiling mount support pole:



Floor-to-ceiling mounted grab bars can be placed nearly anywhere without depending on vertical walls for support.

If you do use this type of support bar, be sure to attach permanently at the floor and ceiling.

Permanent mounting is preferable to friction mounting, as the friction is often not enough to resist the torque applied during normal use.

Fold away:

Fold away (or flip-up) grab bars extend out into areas where wall-mounted grab areas cannot reach.

Models with a leg post are preferable as the folding bar alone is unable to withstand the torque of normal use.

As with the other permanent mounts, make sure the plate is installed firmly into studs.



Alternative Locations

The bathroom is the most common location for grab bars.

However, adding a grab bar by a favorite chair, beside a bed, in a hallway, or at a step near a door can provide additional assistance with balance and mobility as well.

At Landings and Doors



Next to a seat or bed



This information is modified from the SAIL Home Modifications for Aging in Place resource. For more information on general accessibility or to learn more about our HomeMAP assessments, please call SAIL at 907-586-4920.

Additional Resources:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, Department of Justice
- American National Standards Institute, ANSI: as adopted by the International Building Code
- <https://thehelpinghome.com/aging-in-place-at-home-definitive-guide-part6/>