

29 Tips

Live Longer
& Safer in your
Home



 **accessible**
Home & Property Services Ltd.



Owen Barclay
accessible Home & Property Services Ltd.
Surrey, BC V4A 7E2
Phone: 604-323-6876
info@accessible.ca
www.accessible.ca

"Building safety and comfort into your home"

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AGING-IN-PLACE

A decision that we review periodically is whether we stay in our current home or move to one that is more appropriate. Many factors go into this decision and it is not made lightly. As we age, the factors of genetics, lifestyle and living environment play the biggest roles. By 55 years old, most people have decided where they want to live and age-in-place.

Universal Design is a term given to those products, services, and environments that are usable by as many people as possible regardless of age, ability or situation, and without need for specialized design. It is an invisible element when done well such as a walk-in shower. The best homes to age in are those built with Universal Design in mind.

As such, once we decide where we are going to age-in-place, consideration should always be given to products and services with respect to how they meet Universal Design standards and add to the safety, comfort and enjoyment of the homeowner and guests alike.

REPLACE ROUND DOOR KNOBS ---

1

Lever style handles are easy to operate with one hand, a fist, or elbow, and are perfect for those individuals with limited dexterity. Lever handles do not require twisting of the wrist or gripping. Door hardware is fairly easy to replace or plastic lever covers are also available.

COLLECT UP PET TOYS ---

2

Buster and Fluffy may be the best thing that ever came into your life. However, the toys that you let your pets play with and leave around become extremely dangerous, especially at night. Before you go to bed at night, collect toys up and put them out of reach until morning.

WELCOME HOME ---

3

Lighting at entranceways is very important. These areas should be well lit so both the lever and keyhole can be seen without light shining in your eyes. Make sure that the fixture has at least two bulbs so that some light is available if one bulb goes out. While you are at it, get one that is motion activated.

MORE LIGHT PLEASE! ---

4

There is a lot of talk about energy conservation and yes it is important. Energy savings are financial savings. Use compact fluorescents wherever possible. Make sure though that you have plenty of light where you need it. Another tip is to add task lighting under your kitchen cabinets. Ahhhhhh to see well!

IS THAT A RUNAWAY? ---

5

The approaches to your house do not need to be seen from outer space. However, some lighting along your footpath will make the journey a lot easier and safer. There are great solar powered products available that create enough light to see the way at night for you and your visitors.

WEATHER-STRIP, NOT WEATHER-S'TRIP'

6

Older homes lack integrated weather-stripping around the doorframe. The solution was a threshold-mounted strip requiring a higher step to get over it. Newer products now mount to the bottom of the door reducing the height of the threshold and removing a trip hazard.

7

Admittedly, handholds (grab bars) have traditionally looked unsightly and institutional. Usually installed in bathrooms, products have contrasted with beautiful designs that homeowners have worked so hard to achieve. Not any more!

The manufacturers of high end plumbing fixtures are now producing handholds in a variety of colours, textures and lengths that compliment almost any decor. Handholds should be installed professionally to avoid damaging surfaces such as tile and to make sure that they are well secured. They should be placed in locations that are convenient and that offer the best support. As relocating handholds can be a challenge, consult a therapist for ideal locations before installing them.

PLEASE TAKE YOUR SEAT ---

8

Consider having a fold down shower seat installed. Who would not like to sit down occasionally in the shower? The plumbing fixture manufacturers now have attractive designs to compliment your shower or bath. Weight requirements demand that they are well secured!

DO YOU 'WAND' IT? ---

9

While sitting down enjoying that shower, use that hand held shower wand that you installed. If you do not have one, there is an easy solution. Suppliers provide adapters that connect to your shower so that you can use either the wand or the showerhead. If planning a remodel, have your plumber install a diverter lower down and a separate hand wand. They will be easier to use.

LEVER HANDLE FAUCETS ARE GREAT! —

10

Round faucet handles create the same problem as doorknobs, only slippery when hands are wet. Lever-style are so much easier to operate, even with a wrist or back of the hand. You can replace the knobs of your existing faucet or replace the whole faucet with a single lever style that is even easier to operate.

BEWARE OF POISONS —

11

Red alert! Store all of your poisonous items well away from food products and in a separate area of the house. They can have an innocent looking label and nice fresh scent but can contain deadly ingredients. Take this tip a step further and write 'POISON' on the front (and back) of the container with a marker!

A KING'S THRONE

12

Is the seat of your throne (toilet) more suited to a Prince? Older toilet seats are about 14 - 15" from the floor. New models can be as high as 17". Still not high enough? Keep your existing toilet and consider installing a toilet riser at a lower cost. A riser raises your toilet by 3.5".

MOTION SENSITIVE HALLWAY LIGHTING –

13

The chances of someone tripping and falling increases dramatically in dark hallways. Install motion sensitive night-lights along the corridors. They will light the way for you when that late night snack urge hits or when Fluffy wants to come in. For houseguests who are unfamiliar with your home, these will be a welcome addition.

TRIM YOUR HEDGES AND SHRUBS —

14

Shrubs look great when they are first planted. Are they overgrown now? Shrubs planted too close to the house can reduce light entering your home, can damage the exterior finish, and hide possible intruders. Trimming them back will reduce maintenance and energy costs, improve your home value and keep the bad guys away.

ELECTRIC, WATER AND GAS SHUTOFFS —

15

Everyone in the home needs to understand where these shutoffs are located and what steps should be taken in the event of an emergency. Gas and water shutoffs are usually located in a utility closet while the electrical panel could be harder to locate. Go find them right now. If in doubt, call a professional today!

PAINT CONTRASTING COLOURS —

16

While visually appealing, painting walls and door openings different colours really helps people to locate door openings, especially in low light. White is great for trim and doors, as it is neutral. Walls can be painted more lively colours, which creates contrast and warms a room up.

INSTALL ROLLOUT KITCHEN CABINETS —

17

The reality is that the harder it is to access a cupboard, the messier it will be. Many kitchens come with fixed shelves on the base cabinets. Consider having them replaced with rollout shelves. It will be easier to find things in the cupboard and relieve a lot of the strain on your back and knees from trying to get into that awkward space.

INSTALL A HANDY PACKAGE SHELF —

18

Hands full when trying to get in the door? Build a small package shelf on the outside wall. It should be on the opening side of the door about 12" below the latch. By using the shelf, you will be less likely to drop packages or lose your balance.

KNOCK, KNOCK, WHO'S THERE? —

19

At a minimum, a door viewer (peep hole) should be installed in all doors where visitors need to be verified. A chain door guard should also be installed to further verify a visitor. Ensure that the chain lock is fastened with long, secure screws and that the chain joints are welded together. Even better is to have an audio/visual intercom system installed at the main entry door.

TWO HANDRAILS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

20

Most staircases are equipped with a single handrail. Consider having another handrail installed on the opposite side. It can offer support while going up the stairs and help to avoid a fall going down the stairs too.

NEED WIDER DOORWAYS? ---

21

Because of the design, an open door reduces the overall opening width by almost 2". You can regain the full opening width of an interior doorway by replacing your regular hinges with ones called offset hinges. When opened, the door will swing right out of the way, making it easier for furnishings, wheelchairs or walkers to get through.

REMOVE SLIP AND TRIP AREA RUGS —

22

We all know how an area rug seems to warm up solid surface flooring and dampens the sound, making a room more cozy. The reality is though that these rugs pose a very high trip or slip hazard. If you **MUST** keep them, underlay them with an anti-slip pad **AND** tape them into place.

LOCK IT UP TIGHT! —

23

Every door and window on the main floor or accessible by roof should have a security device on it. Intruders do not like to break glass. Locks that engage with the push of a button are easier to use. Locks with keys should be avoided in the event that the door or window needs to be opened when the key is nowhere to be found.

MAKE YOUR STAIRWAYS SAFE ---

24

Newly painted stairways into your home look great but they will be slippery! Add small amounts of sand to the paint before applying so they are not. Or if you've just painted, anti-slip compounds and tape strips are available to apply to the stair treads afterwards.

MORE SAFE STAIRWAYS ---

25

Stairways inside your home can also be dangerous. Try applying an aluminum nosing (a cap) to the leading edge of the stair treads. They simply screw on. These strips make the edge of each stair tread easier to see and have a ribbed surface so your feet get a better grip. They work well on carpeted as well as solid materials.

INSTALL SMOKE AND CO² DETECTORS —

26

Dollar for dollar these devices have saved more lives and injuries than any other appliance in the home. Change the batteries every time you set the clocks back or forward. Place detectors where you can hear them. The more, the better!

HELLO? HELLO? —

27

Phones can be very fancy these days. The features that they have usually mean that they have to be plugged in to work at all. Everyone needs at least one basic phone that does NOT require it to be plugged into an electrical outlet. That way it will almost always still work in a power outage. If you have more than one level in your home, have one on each floor.

DE-CLUTTER YOUR HOUSE TODAY! ———

28

Aside from enjoying your home more, having an organized and uncluttered home is safer. Your home will be easier to clean, will attract fewer creepy crawlers (or worse), and is less stressful. Spending just 5 minutes a day can do wonders. Set specific goals for each day. Start today with one cupboard or closet.

CLEAN OUT YOUR DRYER VENTING ———

29

Dryers use high heat to dry your clothes. Lint buildup blocks the airflow, creating more heat and using more energy. It can be a serious fire hazard. Clean out the lint trap on every load of laundry. Then have your ductwork checked annually for buildup that gets past the trap. This is an inexpensive job for a pro and worth the effort and savings!



Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist
Houses For Living. Homes For Life.

The National Association of Homebuilders in the USA awards the Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist (CAPS) designation to professionals who successfully complete a curriculum of design/build solutions, marketing and communications strategies, and business management. All of these courses are essential to understanding the aging-in-place market. It is the only certification of its kind in North America.

A CAPS professional is trained to identify, recommend, and offer aging-in-place solutions for individuals to continue living safely, comfortably, and independently in their own home. It is important to note that a professional with a CAPS designation is not a substitute for the important role of an Occupational Therapist, who is specifically educated and trained on assessing a person's specific needs.



Owen Barclay

Owen delivers a fresh perspective on the now booming Aging-In-Place market that includes tips for people who want to live longer and more safely in their homes. He is a Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist, with 25 years of business experience that includes home adaptations for seniors and the disabled. His company offers a range of services for clients who need professional assistance with their home modifications and maintenance. He is adamant that listening to and collaborating closely with clients and their Therapists is very important. Clients have a better chance of maintaining the independence that they want in their home as they age.

Owen emphasizes the importance of building safety in the home and that it is never too soon to implement universal designs solutions that work for everyone. Safe and functional homes can also be beautiful homes!

Contact us today: 604-323-6876

www.accessable.ca