



What is an **ADA Ramp?**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a landmark civil rights legislation granting equal access to public and private accommodations for people with disabilities. Within the legislation are guidelines for the safety requirements for ramps.

While these guidelines are designed for public and

commercial buildings and do not dictate residential ramps, they are inclusive for the largest base of users.

Understanding the elements of an ADA-compliant residential ramp will allow you to know which guidelines you should stick to, and which you can be flexible with.



Guideline: Ramps should have a slope of no more than 1:12 (4.8°)

One of the most well-known guidelines for an ADA ramp is the 1:12 rule. For every inch of elevation, you should have 12 inches of ramping, which is a 4.8° angle. This ratio leads to a slope that allows people self-ambulating in manual wheelchairs, people using canes or walkers, and people pushed up the ramp to have a slope that isn't too challenging going up the ramp and doesn't create a slide going down.

► **HOW CLOSELY DO I NEED TO FOLLOW THIS GUIDELINE?**

National Ramp advises that you stick to 1:12 as much as is feasible for your current and future mobility needs as well as the safety and comfort of others who will use the ramp. If you use a power wheelchair or scooter, the manufacturer's guidelines may allow for a higher slope. While you can go up to the allowable incline for your mobility device, we strongly discourage any incline higher than 1:8.

Some people who self-ambulate in a manual wheelchair may find 1:12 to be too difficult for them and will opt to use a longer ramp. And if the distance to the landing surface, such as a driveway or sidewalk, is further than where 1:12 ends, a longer ramp may be chosen.

► **HOW DO I KNOW HOW COMFORTABLE 1:12 IS?**

Try using the ramps in your municipally-owned buildings. Those should all be ADA-compliant ramps (contact the building department or the Department of Justice if there aren't ramps, or if you suspect the ramps are not compliant). See how comfortable you are navigating those.

Alternatively, you can purchase a level with a digital readout and check the slopes of ramps you navigate (4.8° is the readout you are looking for).

Guideline: Flat, level surfaces are needed at the top and bottom of the ramp

Safety for a ramp user goes beyond the ramp itself. Level surfaces are needed as you enter and exit the ramp from both directions. You want to make sure that you're not navigating through mud or soft ground at the bottom of the ramp, and a level surface at the top is necessary when the ramp is starting at the door, so you can safely turn around and lock your door.

ADA guidelines require that the flat surface be as wide as the ramp itself when you are going straight, and a minimum 5'x5' when turning.

► **HOW CLOSELY DO I NEED TO FOLLOW THIS GUIDELINE?**

You may not need a full 5'x5' clearance to turn around comfortably, or you may need more room if your device is wide or long. Either way, you want to be comfortable when you're entering and exiting the ramp as well as when you're on it.

If your entranceway is too narrow to allow for a 5'x5' platform, consider using level ramping until you can reach a turn platform. While it's not the most convenient option, sliding down the ramp while trying to unlock your door isn't convenient either!



Guideline: Changes in direction should have a level surface with a minimum of 5'x5'

The ADA accomplishes two things with this guideline. It's removing both tight turns as well as turns that curve. So, circular ramps are left for parking garages, and not acceptable layouts for ramps.

As turning is more difficult than straight movement, a level surface for turning allows you to focus on one element at a time.

The 5'x5' clearance will give users with most mobility devices a comfortable turning radius so that they do not hit the ramp with the wheels of their device on turns.



► **HOW CLOSELY DO I NEED TO FOLLOW THIS GUIDELINE?**

While the ADA is not the rule at home, this regulation provides safety provisions for you and your mobility device and should be followed as closely as possible. Some smaller turning platforms may be appropriate when dealing with space restrictions, depending on the user's mobility device.

More users may find themselves requesting larger turn platforms than smaller ones. Users with long scooters or wide power chairs often have difficulty making the 5'x5' turn without hitting their wheels on the corners of the platform. To maintain the integrity of their mobility devices, they may choose a 5'x6' or 5'x8' platform instead. Users who are frequently transported via EMS may also consider choosing a layout with as few turns as possible, and making those turns as wide as possible for ease of transportation.

Guideline: Ramps should have a 36" clearance between grasping handrails

Where handrails are in use (any ramp above 6"), the distance between handrails should be a minimum of 36". The 36" clearance means that most ramp users will be able to fit on the ramp, and they will be able to grab either handrail for needed support.

► **HOW CLOSELY DO I NEED TO FOLLOW THIS GUIDELINE?**

All National Ramp residential lines come standard in 36" widths, complying with this requirement. For those users with wider mobility devices, the Liberty Series™ aluminum modular ramp is available in a 48" width. Our commercial line, the Latitude Series™, is available in 48" and 54" widths, as required by local regulations.



Guideline: There should not be more than 30 continuous feet of sloped ramping

A ramp can be hundreds of feet long, if that's what is needed, however, no particular ramp run (the length of ramping between level landings) should be more than 30' long. Sometimes the ramp run is stopped by a turn platform, and sometimes a rest platform is used.

The rest platform allows a user (and their caretaker) a safe place to stop if they become weary.

► **HOW CLOSELY DO I NEED TO FOLLOW THIS GUIDELINE?**

Straying from this guideline depends entirely on the length of ramp run, and the mobility device.

If you use a power chair or scooter, a resting platform may not be necessary within 40'. But also keep in mind others that will be using the ramp who may appreciate a place to rest.

If your ramp slope is significantly less than 4.8°, a rest platform may also be omitted as the ramp slope won't be as difficult for all users.



ADA guidelines exist to be as inclusive as possible to a wide variety of users with disabilities. Your individual needs may allow for variations of the guidelines that will still allow for a safe ramp. However, when considering straying from ADA guidelines, consider your future needs as well as those of other ramp users.

Note: National Ramp offers these suggestions for information purposes only, and we take no responsibility for determining what constitutes a safe ramp for any particular user.

