

Railings and Stairs

For years, deck builders and their clients were satisfied with plain wood railings. That changed when manufacturers began offering composite, vinyl, and aluminum parts; cable railing components; and accessories such as post caps with low-voltage or solar-powered LED lighting. Kits that package all the parts and pieces for a railing section in one box simplify installation. But deck builders who are willing to mix and match rail components can give their projects a unique look and differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Regardless of whether prepackaged at a factory, assembled from components from different manufacturers, or fabricated on-site the traditional way using wood, railings should meet or exceed code. Pay particular attention to guard-post installation—critical for railing safety—as well as to the little details, such as allowing space under bottom rails to sweep debris off the deck and providing top rails that are wide enough to accommodate drinks.



Column Wraps

Azek's cellular PVC column wraps have interlocking joints that simply press together. Three of the panels are connected with taped seams and fold around a structural support, while the fourth panel locks into place. The column wraps are sized to fit around structural 4x4, 6x6, and 8x8 posts and available in 10-foot lengths, which can be trimmed to fit shorter posts. They come in white and may be painted. The wraps have a 25-year limited warranty. Prices range from about \$90 for a 4x4 wrap to \$180 for one that fits an 8x8 post. Azek Building Products, 877.275.2935, azek.com



Cable Rail Connectors

The Cable Connection's Ultra-tec line includes a variety of double-tensioner connections for cable rail systems. According to the company, all other retail cable kits have a single tensioner on one end and a non-tensioning fitting on the other, which is fine for straight runs and those with one right-angle turn (providing two posts are used at the corner). But by adding a second tensioner, a single cable run can go around two 90° corners. Versions are available for mounting on the inside or the outside of the posts, for both metal and wood posts. The Cable Connection, 800.851.2961, thecableconnection.com



Versatile Railings

Westbury aluminum railings come in several architectural styles, in lengths from 3 to 8 feet and with rail heights of 36 and 42 inches. Available features include square and round spindles, tempered glass infill, locking gate latches, and angle swivel mounts for stairways. Components come in a dozen standard powder-coated colors as well as custom colors. Satin and textured finishes are available. The company's continuous aluminum handrail is ADA-compliant and comes in a variety of rail lengths. Digger Specialties, 800.446.7659, diggerspecialties.com



Euro-Style Railings

Dolle Prova railings are designed around a slim European aesthetic, not surprising for a company based in Denmark. The modular system can be configured in 18 different combinations with a variety of infill materials, such as tubing and stainless steel cable. Designed for durability, components include aluminum posts and railings (beech wood for interiors), and stainless steel fasteners, fittings, and anchors. Prova railings were recently introduced in the U.S. and are represented by The Dillon Group in Minneapolis. The company promises quick lead times and will help with layout design. Dolle Prova, 855.365.5387, dolleusa.com



A Rail With a View

A rail system with Duradek's Panorama Posts incorporates $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch tempered glass panels and no top railing for a less-obstructed view. The powder-coated aluminum posts can be attached to the outside of the deck or mounted on the surface; the glass between posts can be set at an angle of as much as 30°. Posts come with a 20-year warranty. They can be manufactured to any height and are available in eight standard colors and more than 180 custom colors. Duradek, 800.338.3568, duradek.com



Aluminum Railing Kit

The aluminum components of Feeney DesignRail aluminum railing kits are designed to create a 42-inch-high residential railing with a maximum distance of 6 feet between posts. The powder-coated finish comes in eight standard colors and more than 200 custom colors. Intermediate pickets are drilled for Feeney's steel cables. Stair-rail components can handle slopes of between 29 and 34 degrees. Infill options include pickets, horizontal or vertical cable, and glass. Feeney says its aluminum parts contain a minimum of 70% reclaimed materials and are recyclable. They come with a 10-year warranty. Feeney, 800.888.2418, feeneyinc.com



Wrought-iron Balusters

Wood balusters are functional and inexpensive, but some clients want a more formal look for their deck railing, fence, or garden gate. Decorative wrought-iron panels, like those from Outwater, can add a sophisticated touch to an otherwise plain expanse. Installation is not plug and play, however. The metal panels come unfinished and should be sandblasted or otherwise cleaned of rust, wiped down with a solvent, and topped with a rust-inhibiting primer and enamel. The decorative panels come in a number of styles, ranging in price from about \$100 to \$450 each. Outwater Plastics Industries, 800.631.8375, outwater.com



Traditional Style

Bellaire aluminum railing is a slimmer version of Specrail's industrial-rated railing. Components include a $1\frac{3}{4}$ - by $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch breadloaf-profile top rail, a $1\frac{1}{2}$ - by 1-inch bottom rail, and $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-square pickets. The 2- and $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-square posts are available in 36- and 42-inch heights (as well as custom heights) and three wall thicknesses—.06, 0.0875, and 0.125 inches. Accessories include ball caps and post lamps. Bellaire railing comes in 6-foot sections, powder-coated in white, black, or bronze. Specrail, 800.243.6256, specrail.com



Cable Railing System

The Atlantis RailEasy cable system includes patented cable and tensioners made from type 316 stainless steel for corrosion resistance. Standard rail heights are 36 inches and 42 inches (custom heights also are available) and recommended cable spacing is 3 inches on-center. RailEasy is designed for use with new or existing wood posts; in some cases, metal posts can be used. For straight runs with intermediate posts every 4 feet—to minimize sagging—and a tensioner at each end, cable may be up to 48 feet long. A planning guide is available at the company's website. Atlantis Rail Systems, 800.541.6829, atlantisrail.com