ACCESS OPTIONS

What's the difference between a ramp, a threshold ramp and a lift?

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A threshold ramp smooths a lip of an inch or two, such as a door sill. A full ramp replaces one or more steps and needs a lot of length. A lift carries the person up vertically or along the stairs and fits where a ramp will not. The right choice depends on how high the rise is, how much space you have, and how the person moves.

At a glance

	Threshold ramp	Full ramp	Vertical platform lift	Stair lift
Best for	Door sills, sliding door tracks, small lips	Entry steps, porches, sunken rooms	Entries where a ramp will not fit, wheelchair users	Indoor staircases, people who can transfer to a seat
Rise it handles	A few inches at most	Up to 30 in per run, with landings	Several feet	A full flight
Space needed	Inches	About 1 ft of ramp per inch of rise, plus landings	A small footprint beside the steps	Along the stairs
Typical cost	$50 to $500	About $1,100 to $3,600 for most projects	About $3,600 to $15,900	About $2,000 to $9,000 straight; $10,000 or more curved
Needs power	No	No	Yes	Yes

Costs are national ranges from Angi's 2026 data and vary with site conditions, materials and installation.

Threshold ramps

These small wedges, usually rubber or aluminum, bridge a raised door sill or sliding door track. They are one of the most useful low-cost changes for walker, rollator and wheelchair users.

For public buildings, the ADA says a change in level up to 1/4 inch needs no treatment. From 1/4 to 1/2 inch it must be beveled. Anything over 1/2 inch must be treated as a ramp. At home, the goal is simpler: no edge that catches a wheel, a walker leg or a toe. The ramp must match the exact height of the sill.

Full ramps

The slope rule

The ADA standard for public buildings is a slope no steeper than 1:12. That means 1 inch of rise for every 12 inches of ramp, or about 1 foot of ramp for every inch of height.

Rise	Ramp length at 1:12	At 1:16	At 1:20
6 in (one step)	6 ft	8 ft	10 ft
14 in (two steps)	14 ft	18.7 ft	23.3 ft
21 in (three steps)	21 ft	28 ft	35 ft
30 in	30 ft	40 ft	50 ft

Work out your own ramp

The free Ramp Calculator at ramp.engineer does this math for your exact rise. It has two modes. One lays out an ADA-style ramp into a home or building, with landings, switchbacks and the total footprint, at slopes from 1:12 to gentler. The other solves ramp length, ground run, angle and grade for loading equipment into a vehicle. Use it to see how much space a ramp will take before you get quotes, then confirm the result on site. Disclosure: we built this calculator ourselves, and it is free to use.

Gentler is better when you have room

1:12 is the steepest allowed, not the best. The U.S. Access Board notes that gentler slopes work for more people. Rehabilitation guidance points out that some people find 1:12 hard and do better at 1:16 or 1:20. That matters for anyone self-propelling a manual wheelchair or a caregiver pushing one.

Other ramp basics

- Level landings at least 60 inches long at the top, bottom and any turns
- At least 36 inches of clear width
- Handrails on both sides when the rise is more than 6 inches, 34 to 38 inches high
- Edge protection so wheels cannot roll off the side
- A slip-resistant surface that drains, which matters in Florida rain

Modular aluminum ramps can be installed quickly and removed later. Wood and concrete ramps are permanent and may need permits.

Pre-built ramp options and what they cost

You do not always need a custom-built ramp. Several companies sell ready-made ramps that ship in sections or fold for travel, and some rent and install them. The prices below are what manufacturers and retailers listed in September 2026, before delivery, installation and any permit fees.

Type	Example product	Listed price	Best for	Watch for
Threshold ramp	EZ-ACCESS TRANSITIONS entry mats, ramps and plates	From about $50 to $103, depending on style	Door sills and sliding door tracks	Must match the exact sill height; rubber styles can shift
Threshold ramp	Prairie View Industries threshold ramps	About $69 for a 1/4 to 3/4 in rise; up to about $455 for a 48 in ramp with a 4 to 6 in rise (clearance listings)	Higher sills and single low steps	Clearance prices; regular retail may be higher
Portable folding ramp	EZ-ACCESS SUITCASE Singlefold, 2 to 8 ft	From about $170; rated to 800 lb	Occasional use, travel, a curb or one step	Short lengths are much steeper than 1:12 and usually need a helper
Modular aluminum ramp (home)	EZ-ACCESS PATHWAY 3G, 10 to 30 ft	About $1,865 for a 10 ft straight ramp; about $4,494 for 30 ft straight; up to about $13,900 with platforms and turns; rated to 1,000 lb	Entry steps and porches, long-term use	Needs level landings and room for its full length
Commercial-grade modular ramp	EZ-ACCESS PATHWAY HD, 24 ft	About $8,767 at a national retailer	Code-compliant access, heavy use	Higher cost than residential kits

Type	Example product	Listed price	Best for	Watch for
Rental with installation	Amramp (rents, installs and removes ramps)	Not published; free estimates	Short-term needs after surgery or a hospital stay	Check that a local office serves your area

How to choose

1. **Rent if the need is temporary.** After a joint replacement or a hospital stay, a rented modular ramp can be installed quickly and removed later. Amramp says installations can happen in as little as one day, with removal included.
2. **Buy modular if the need is long term.** Aluminum modular ramps do not rot, can be taken apart and moved, and can be extended later.
3. **Do not choose a ramp by the number of steps.** Choose by the rise in inches and the slope the person can manage. A portable ramp listed for "one to two steps" may be far steeper than is safe for a walker user or someone pushing a wheelchair alone.
4. **Count the landings.** A ramp needs a level landing at the top, the bottom and every turn. Platforms add most of the cost to a modular system.
5. **Ask about permits and your HOA.** Ask the installer whether your city or county requires a permit, and check whether your homeowners association must approve an exterior ramp.

Brands are listed as examples. Home Safety Solutions does not sell ramps and accepts no payments from ramp companies or installers. The Ramp Calculator at ramp.engineer is our own free tool.

Lifts

- **Vertical platform lifts** work like a small open elevator. The person rolls or walks on, and the platform rises. They fit where a ramp would be too long.
- **Stair lifts** carry a seated person along an indoor staircase. The person must be able to transfer on and off the seat safely at both ends.
- **Both need power,** so plan for battery backup during outages.

Who pays

Original Medicare does not pay for ramps, stair lifts or home elevators. Medicare's national equipment list classifies elevators and stairway elevators as convenience items. Some Medicare Advantage plans, Florida Medicaid's long-term care program and VA grants may help with some home modifications.

When to get an assessment

Before you spend thousands on a ramp or lift, make sure it fits the person and the site. We test how the person moves, measure the rise and space, and specify the solution a contractor can quote. Start with an Initial Consultation, a 30-minute phone call. Current prices are on our pricing page.

Sources

U.S. Access Board. Guide to the ADA Standards: ramps and curb ramps

U.S. Access Board. Guide to the ADA Standards: floor and ground surfaces

Ramp Calculator: Loading and Access Geometry (free online tool, built by Home Safety Solutions)

University Health Network, Toronto Rehab. Ramps for home access

Angi. Cost of a wheelchair ramp, wheelchair lift cost and stair lift cost

National Council on Aging. Medicare and stair lifts

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. NCD 280.1 Durable medical equipment reference list

EZ-ACCESS. TRANSITIONS threshold ramps, SUITCASE Singlefold ramp and PATHWAY 3G modular kit (manufacturer)

The Home Depot. EZ-ACCESS PATHWAY HD 24 ft modular ramp (retailer)

Prairie View Industries. Threshold ramps, clearance listings (manufacturer)

Amramp (rental and installation company)

Want a plan for your own home?

Every service starts with an Initial Consultation, a 30-minute phone call with Dr. L'HommeDieu.
Book at homesafety.solutions