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The Railing Code & Style Guide

A free homeowner guide from railing.id

Building Code Requirements

Height requirements

- ☐ 36 inches minimum for residential deck railing
- ☐ 42 inches often required near pools or commercial settings

Spacing and load requirements

- ☐ Baluster spacing no more than 4 inches, per most codes
- ☐ Railing must withstand a specified lateral load
- ☐ Stair railing needs a continuous graspable handrail

Material Comparison

Wood

- ☐ Most budget-friendly and DIY-friendly
- ☐ Requires periodic staining or sealing

Metal & Cable

- ☐ Aluminum/metal: low maintenance, moderate premium
- ☐ Cable: unobstructed views, highest cost per linear foot
- ☐ Cable requires precise professional tensioning

DIY vs. Professional Install

DIY-friendly

- ☐ Wood kit railing with pre-made hardware
- ☐ Some aluminum kit systems

Better left to a professional

- ☐ Cable railing (tensioning is precision work)
- ☐ Anything affecting structural attachment points
- ☐ Installs requiring permit inspection

Ready to see your project cost?

Get a real cost range in 60 seconds at railing.id, and get matched with licensed local railing contractors for a free, no-obligation quote.

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