

Home Modification Products

“The good, the bad, the ugly”

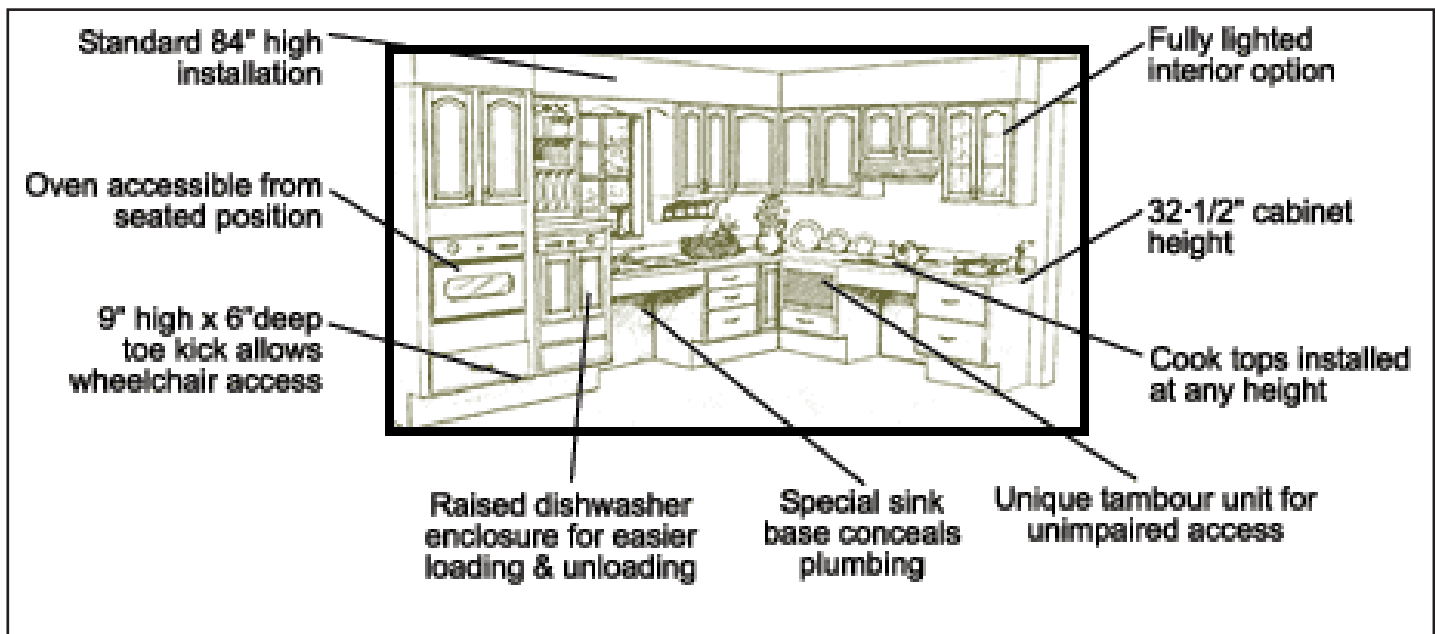


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“For three men, the civil war was not hell, it was practice” is the quote from the movie poster for the 1966 epic film starring Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef and Eli Wallach. Often when looking at home modifications, I am reminded about this movie and the five minute Mexican stand-off at the end....This is not meant as any disrespect to any of the wonderful contractors I know, but why do some home modifications have to be so ugly? A residential home or even a hotel with an accessible bathroom just does not have to resemble a hospital or a metal supermarket. I have been to some beautiful accessible homes and have been very impressed with grab bars and roll-in showers designed with aesthetics in mind.

Kraft Maid’s Passport Series offers improved usability and convenience, combined with fine design features at a more affordable price than expensive custom cabinetry. It has been carefully planned with universal design concepts in mind.

(<http://www.kraftmaid.com/whykm/index.cfm?navigationid=16000>)



The Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University (<http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/>) provides some great resources and ideas for modifying the kitchen, bathroom and outdoor environments. There are several manufacturers that make powered, height adjustable sinks and cabinets.

Personal care includes bathing, grooming, dressing, and use of the bathroom. Bathtubs and even some showers require stepping over barriers, often where footing is unsure. This has been an area of long-standing concern and a range of add-on chair lifts to assist the person in and out of tubs have been developed. Grab bars are also used, although they probably help more with balance than actual movement of the body using upper arm strength.

A sliding shower transfer system consists of an ergonomically designed wheelchair that disassembles into two



pieces weighing less than 45 pounds. This product is available from accessibleconstruction.com for approximately \$2000 and may be an alternative for someone that is living in a rental property or for someone who does not want a roll-in shower.



With its clean minimalist design, the Purist Hatbox (tank-less) toilet from Kohler (K-3492) illustrated in the picture above, opens the door to a new era of possibilities for providing some additional space in a small bathroom. However at \$3500, it makes you say "Oh crap!" There are several companies that now offer kits to cut down the wall of a bath tub

and make it a shower stall that make it easier for someone to transfer to.

(<http://www.thesafewaystep.com/>)

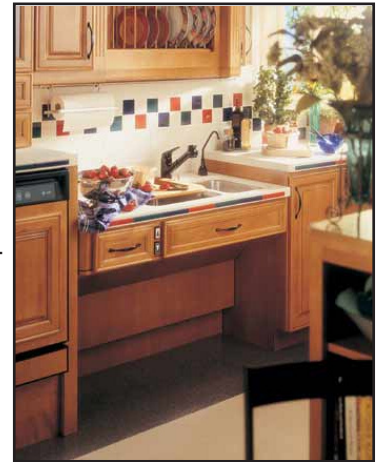
Height adjustable sinks and cabinets are becoming more common and affordable for both the bathroom and kitchen.

An accessible and safe living and work environment is fundamental to the quality of life of both older adults and younger persons with disabilities and chronic health conditions. Structural changes such as widening doorways or building an access ramp) can enhance the physical and sensory functioning of persons with disabilities and the elderly, and enable them to function independently, safely, and successfully in their home environments. Assistive Technology and home modifications can also help prevent secondary problems like accidents and falls, increase safety and independence, and reduce institutionalization, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for people with disabilities. www.homeautomation.com provides a number of devices to control various appliances and devices in the home remotely to increase independence and access.

General Ideas

- Door knocking devices, in addition to door bells, alert a person who is deaf or hard of hearing that someone is at the door. The device is hung on the inside of the door and flashes a light when a visitor knocks. The National Catalog for the Deaf sells these devices for between \$30 to \$80 each
- Protruding or low hanging objects, such as exterior porch lights or hanging baskets should be removed or relocated whenever possible to prevent people with visual impairments from injury.

- Braille indicators or labels on fuse boxes, entry phones, mailboxes, and washer/dryers assist a person who is blind to identify and operate the item. Labeling tape is found in hardware store and a braille can be purchased for \$30-\$40 from agencies that provide services for people with visual impairments.
- Swing clear hinges increase the width of the door. Clear door opening space needs to be 32" wide. You may have to widen the door frame to 32" to allow clear passage. Swing clear hinges range from \$15-\$30. Widening of a door frame may be closer to \$150.



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