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How to construct garden steps by [Seolncr](#)

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Steps present as ideal an opportunity for beautifying the outdoors as any other item on your landscaping agenda. Materials which can be used vary from round-cut logs to concrete, brick or stone.

Standard step dimensions for outdoors should be the same as for indoor steps, particularly in areas frequently used. The tread should be 10 inches deep and the risers about 7 1/2 inches.

Treads should be 1/4 inch lower in the front than they are in the back to permit drainage. For any steps other than those made of rounds of logs, a good foundation is essential. The foundation should extend 6 inches below the frost line.

Concrete is an often-used material for steps, although it is not always the most attractive. A simple form can be constructed of a series of boxes, of 1x 6- or 1x 8-inch scrap lumber, each box the same width but 10 inches shorter than the box for the lower step.

The boxes are placed one on top of the other, and held together by outside lathing cleats. Corners should be well braced. Use 1 part Portland cement to 3 parts sand and 6 parts gravel. The cement is poured and the step tops are levelled by using the flat edge of a board.

If you use pre-cast concrete blocks, the need for forms for step construction is eliminated. The cost is about the same as building steps of poured concrete, although the jobâ€”especially for a one-man operationâ€”is easier.

It is important to bond the blocks together well and you can obtain good appearance by applying a thin overall coating of concrete.

Brick steps are built in the same manner as concrete blocks, although more masonry skill is required. A layer of gravel is first laid over the subsoil as a foundation. The weakness of brick steps is the many joints that are required.

In constructing stone steps, the principle difficulty is finding the stone. While this presents no problem at all in some areas, in other areas stone must be purchased, and when this is true, stone steps are by far the most expensive type to build. They are also among the most attractive.

Stone steps can be built without masonry bonding, if large enough stones can be found. The principles of dry-wall construction will apply. If steps are freestanding, mortar must be used. The foundation must be prepared as for brick steps.

The concrete used to make beds for the stones must be placed carefully to keep a good pattern. Levelling must be done precisely (the string level is recommended).

It is best to remove spilled mortar from stones while it is still wet, because when it is dry it presents a problem. Dry mortar, however, may be removed by using muriatic acid.

Wooden rounds cut from large logs make a beautiful and easily constructed set of steps. The bottom round is set in the earth, and the next one placed to partially cover it, leaving a riser. The ground is filled in under the upper round and firmly tamped, and this procedure is followed to the desired height.

Informal wooden steps can be used for long slopes where there is no need for real steps but it is too steep for just a path. Ramp steps can be made with risers of large stone flags, logs or squared timber.

The paths that lead to the steps should have the same width as the steps. The ramps should not rise too rapidly, the largest rise being 3/4 inch per foot.

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