

THE COMPLETE BUILDER'S GUIDE TO FLOATING STAIR DESIGN:

Tips and Insights On How To Add Revenue and Wow Clients

With a virtually limitless library of inspiration at their fingertips, homeowners are looking to make a statement with their design. From prominent elements like flooring to more detailed structures like staircases, homeowners want that “wow” factor that will be stunning for years to come.

As a builder, you have the opportunity to showcase design features that will help your clients impress their guests without constant maintenance or neverending remodels. One design feature growing rapidly in popularity is floating stairs: a space-saving component coupled with a bold aesthetic that truly stands out.

Some builders are afraid floating stairs will be a double-edged sword. While they offer a bold design component that homeowners love, they seem to come with their own unique set of worries: nebulous timelines, expensive materials, questions around code compliance, and inexperience with non-traditional installation. But are those fears grounded in reality?

We get it — the more variables you add to a build, the less you can control. That’s why our team at Viewrail created a complete guide to floating stair design. Today, we’ll bust the common myths surrounding floating stairs and offer builders a comprehensive review of design, looks, and features.

You’ll learn key questions to ask homeowners who are considering floating stairs. You’ll also find a checklist for determining what styles and configurations are best for their budget, design aspirations, and expected timeline.

Finding the right partner can simplify the entire process, creating a profit generator that leaves your customers happy. We’ll detail how we have honed our manufacturing process into a precision-engineered system that can deliver a custom floating staircase to your next job site in mere weeks — not months — and can be installed seamlessly by our team of experts. Ready to wow your clients? Let’s get started!

MYTH:

FLOATING STAIRS ONLY WORK IN CERTAIN DESIGNS

REALITY:

Floating stairs are completely customizable and extremely versatile. You can pair floating stairs with several different railing types like glass, cable, rod railing, and more. They work in both interior and exterior spaces and significantly help elevate the look of open spaces like entryways and atriums.



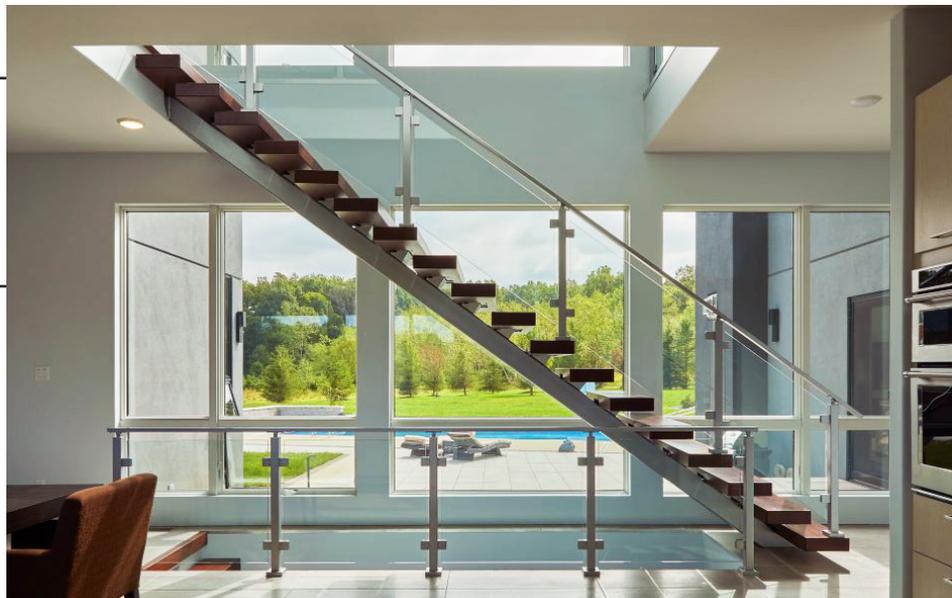
Floating stairs are a common feature in various modern home designs because they offer impressive style and strength and offer a minimalist take on stair design. Traditional stair designs often use more materials than floating stair designs. In a traditional staircase, two stringers sit underneath and on opposite ends of the stair treads as a form of support.

With lumber costs and scarcity issues rising, traditional stairs present additional costs in the current marketplace. As square footage is growing in price with increasing homeownership costs, traditional staircases also take up space that homeowners could otherwise utilize. It's a case of function over form — traditional stairs have limitations.

“In a typical construction project designed with typical staircases, the stringers, treads, and risers are made from the same plywood or lumber used to create the structure's frame. These lower-quality materials often need to be covered up to make way for the desired aesthetic homeowners want in their space,” says [Jeanette Pitts](#). “Unfortunately, creating interior walls for the sole purpose of hiding the materials in a staircase has many undesirable results. It creates a staircase with a footprint that is much larger than it needs to be.”

A [floating stair design](#) uses one stringer to support the steps, making them appear to be suspended in midair. Floating stairs can optimize visual space in interior designs because the stair assembly hides the supporting structure of the staircase without the additional materials that are used in traditional staircases. This design means fewer materials and additional square footage found under the stairs.

Homeowners have found ingenious uses for this freed-up space, including bookshelves, play areas, wine racks, and more. As a builder, you're always looking for value you can add to your client's homes — imagine adding valuable square footage paired with a unique, showstopping design to your final build.



HOW CAN FLOATING STAIRS BE DESIGNED?

There are a [few popular styles](#) of floating stairs to consider – the straight staircase, the L-shaped, or the switchback design – along with countless, customizable options for treads, handrails, railing infill, and finishes.



Straight



L-Shaped



Switchback

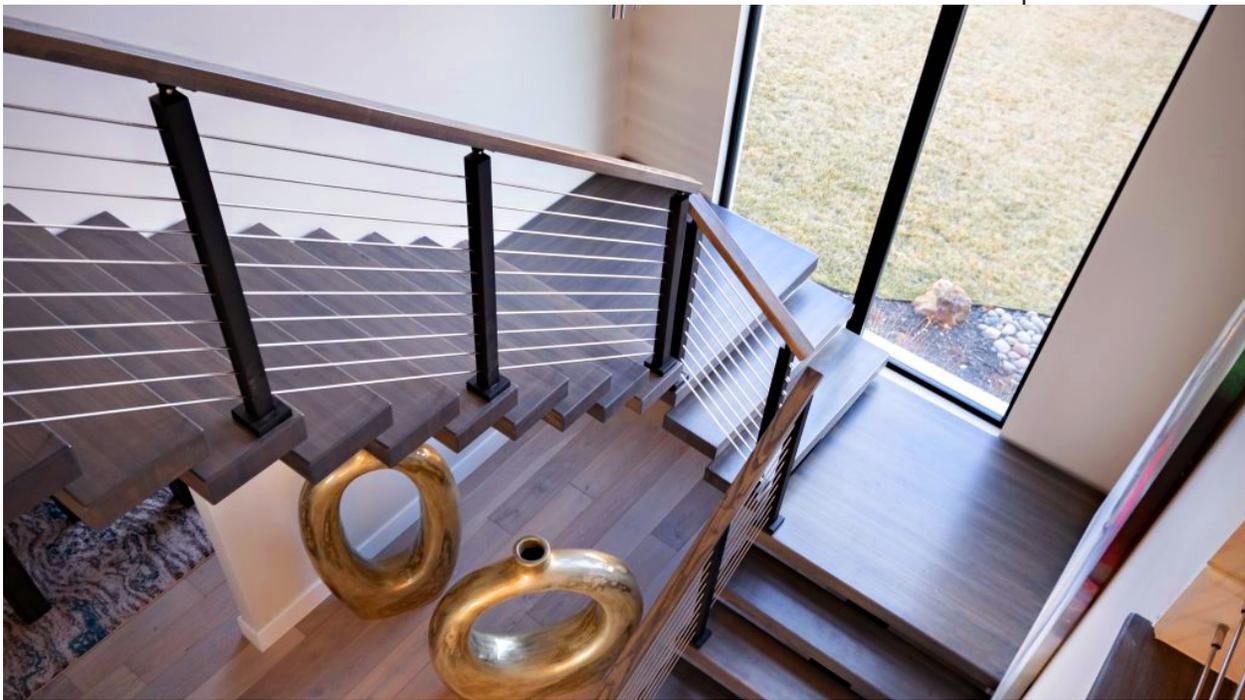
A floating staircase design makes a unique statement in any home's interior. Here at Viewrail, we help customers design their stairs for optimal visual impact. That's why customers like Brendan F. have said their staircase is "the centerpiece of [their] new home."

MYTH:

FLOATING STAIRS AREN'T CODE-COMPLIANT

REALITY:

Floating staircases are code-compliant and incredibly safe.



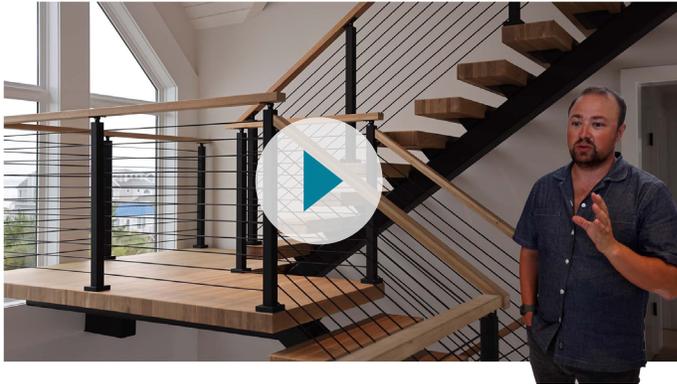
Many builders are used to installing railings on traditional staircases with a 4” separation, but floating stairs have a 6” separation. If builders aren’t used to that difference in sizing, it can make installation stressful.

Finding a partner you trust can help ensure your staircase is code-compliant. At Viewrail, our stair systems are built to exceed every state and local code requirement in the country.

Stairs, even traditionally styled, are one of the top areas to worry about in code compliance, with railings being tested the most strenuously. Our floating stairs are the first of their kind to be certified by the International Code Council (ICC), so you and your clients can both move forward with confidence when you work with us.

As a customer, you’ll receive ICC reports and can rest easy knowing that you’re going to pass any inspector’s code without having to worry about your Certificate of Occupancy. We adhere to the most extensive product and safety reviews, encompassing IBC (International Building Code) and IRC (International Residential Code).

Floating staircases are just as safe as traditional stairs with the right partner, the right measurements, and the right installation.



“Floating stairs can offer limitless style and visual impact to interior designs in ways that traditional staircases just can’t.”

— CHAD GESSIN

MYTH:

FLOATING STAIRCASES ARE TOO EXPENSIVE AND AREN'T WORTH THE MONEY

REALITY:

Depending on factors such as where you live, the cost of materials, the local fabrication team, and more, pricing will vary.

You may find that our prices are higher than quotes you've received from your local fabricator, but when you work with us, you're paying for more than materials and labor. Our prices reflect the value we offer: a faster timeline, complete control of our supply line, detailed engineering drawings and stamps, ICC reports, extensive product and safety reviews, 3D renderings, and more.

We help you conceptualize your entire building project before receiving a single product. Our processes are unmatched, and our efficiency brings your overall costs down compared to working with a local fabricator.



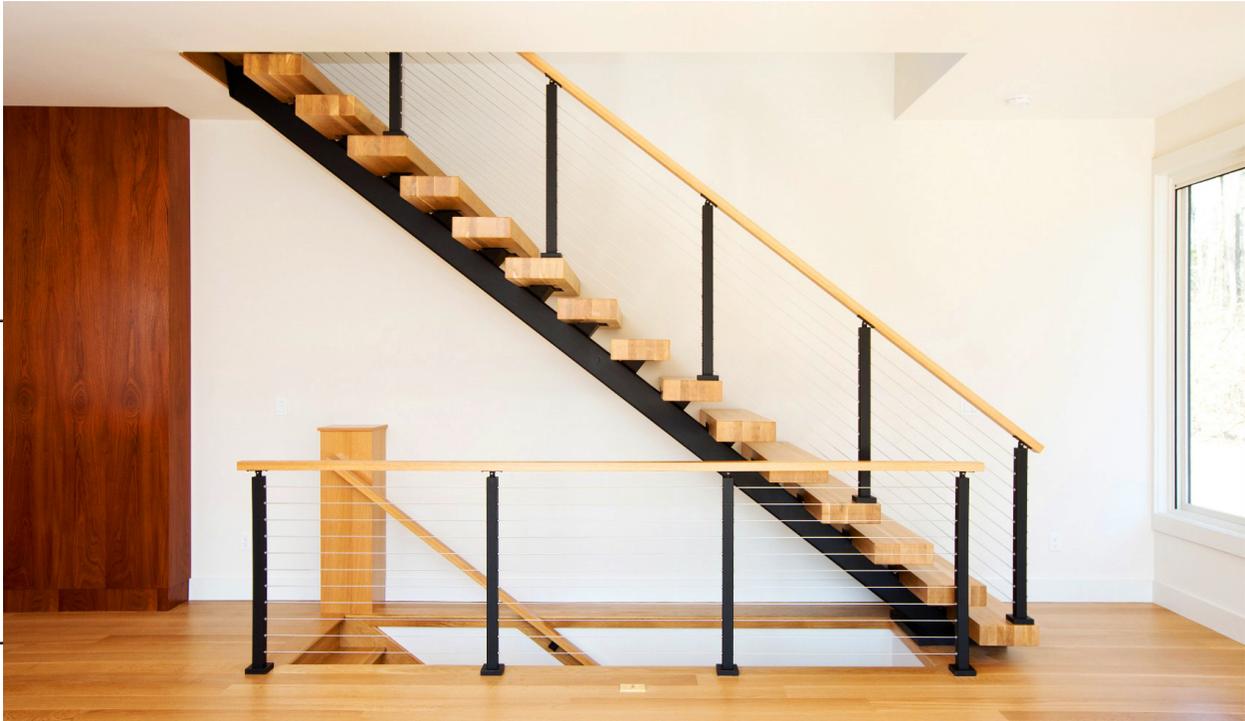
MYTH:

FLOATING STAIRCASES ARE HIGHLY CUSTOM AND RIFE FOR MISTAKES

REALITY:

Viewrail has revolutionized the floating stair design process. Even with Viewrail's methodical and efficient process, we still have a wide array of floating staircase products that offer tons of style options and plenty of freedom with design. You get efficient, functional customization that meets the same safety requirements as traditional staircases.

We deliver custom floating staircase materials to job sites in days, unlike the traditional timeline of weeks. In fact, we'll get your client's floating stairs designed, priced, ordered, and installed at least **five times faster** than other stair options. We help with the design, assembly, and shipping, making us the single source of materials, installation, and support for your next floating stair project.



We work directly with builders and homeowners to customize their staircase and allow them to see how the design will look in their space with 3D modeling. This prevents second-guessing and multiple callbacks and helps homeowners get the stair design of their dreams finished on or ahead of schedule.

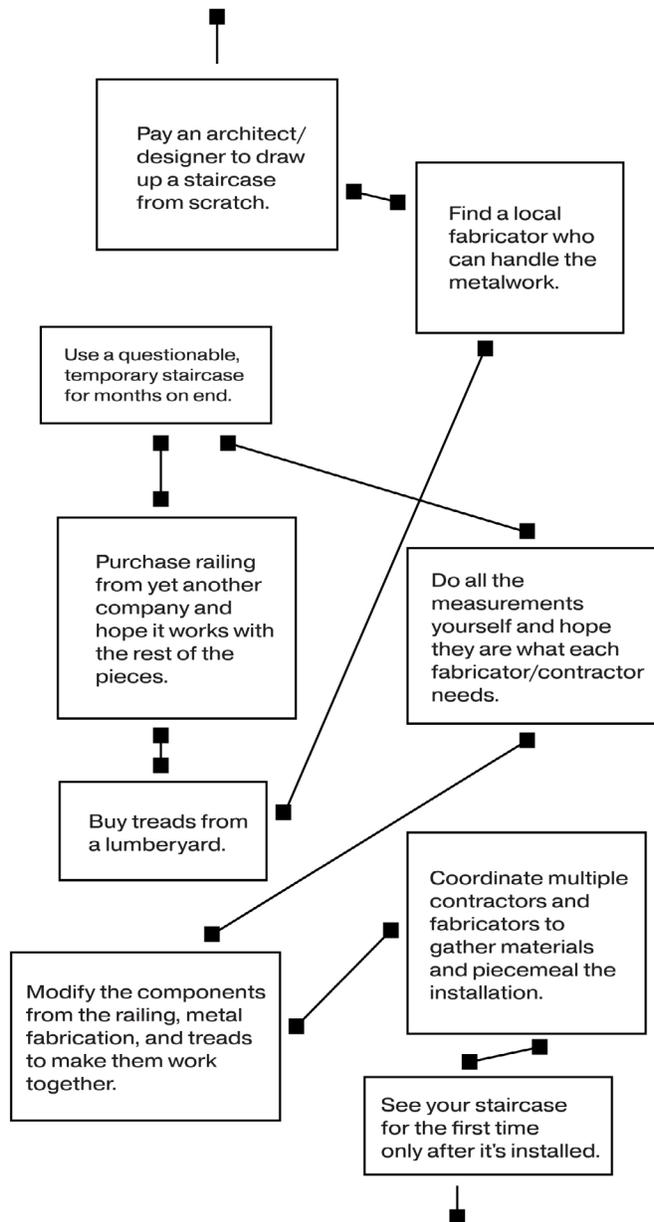
Check out our infographic detailing our efficient stair design process on the [next page](#).

OTHER STAIR
COMPANY



OLD WAY

NEW WAY



**DONE IN
112-168 DAYS**



1. CUSTOMIZE

Customize one of our 5 existing stair systems to suit your style and space.



2. MEASURE

One of our engineers comes to your space to take exact measurements.



3. VISUALIZE

Receive a 3D rendering of your system in your space within an hour of first measurements.



4. PRODUCE

We take care of all production and fabrication off-site so your space stays clean.



5. INSTALL

Our trained, certified technicians install your system in days, not weeks.

**DONE IN
18-25 DAYS**

MYTH:

FLOATING STAIRS ARE MORE OF A FAD IN TERMS OF MODERN DESIGN

REALITY:

Floating stairs have a proven track record in terms of style and performance. But how can you help your clients decide if this style of staircase is right for their home?

To help clients understand the value [of floating stairs](#), along with some challenges to look out for when selecting them, walk your homeowners through this list of pros and cons. It's crucial that you ask the right questions as you kick off a potential floating stairs project.



CHECKLIST:

FLOATING STAIR DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Aligning your homeowner's expectations with the reality of a build is important for any project, especially when you're working with floating staircases. Below is a list of questions to kickstart your discussions with homeowners before ordering a physical product.

1. Are you able to open up walls and add in blocking as required? Is there sufficient blocking for the header and footer?

This may be common sense to you, but it's a nice reminder, as inexperienced homeowners often don't have the expertise to think of details like this. Structural blocking considerations need to be made as early as possible in the design process.

2. Do the plans entail placing the floating staircase in a code-compliant location? Do you have the requirements for installing one of Viewrail's FLIGHT systems?

Floating stairs can offer limitless style and visual impact to interior designs in ways that traditional staircases just can't. But without proper planning, some floating stair designs might not be code-compliant — cantilever designs, for instance, often run into building code issues. It's key to check with local building jurisdictions in order to determine compliance.

Floating stairs can offer limitless style and visual impact to interior designs in ways that traditional staircases just can't. But without proper planning, some floating stair designs might not be code-compliant — cantilever designs, for instance, often run into building code issues. It's key to check with local building jurisdictions in order to determine compliance.

3. What's your aesthetic desire for your staircase?

Floating staircases are a different look than your traditional staircase, so be sure to review all the different styles and options available. With LED upgrades available, various wood species and metal options, several tread styles, and dozens of stain and finish offerings, the design possibilities really are limitless.

Walk through the home and really take in what the house looks like. Is it very traditional and historic in nature? Or does it lend to a more modern style? Even classic features can pair well with a modern staircase, but it really does depend on the house.

Viewrail offers sample boxes for your homeowner clients to feel in their hands and get their eyes on. If this sounds like something your clients would benefit from, reach out to your local sales rep for different box options to choose from.

We offer a wide variety of stains for all of our wood products, along with powder coat color options for all of our metal products. With more than 50 stain or powder coat options, homeowners will certainly be able to find something that works with their pre-existing pieces and decor. Our expert designers work diligently to ensure an elegant finish on every single one of our products.

4. Does your design style tend to change or remain the same for your home?

Asking this question is an excellent way to determine style preferences and helps you determine whether your client will be happy with a design choice long-term. If they're committed to a particular style, and that style meshes well with a floating staircase and rail system, you can easily convey the impact that the floating stair system will have on the home's overall design.

If the homeowner tends to change preferences, find out what standard aesthetics they find appealing to determine if a floating stair assembly will be versatile enough to propose. With the right accents and color pairings, floating staircases can meet numerous design styles.

Asking these questions will help show off the total value you can bring to the table and help the homeowner realize the long-lasting investment they are making by partnering with you.

5. How long do you plan on being in this home? Do you have young children or older adults living with you?

This question gets the homeowner thinking beyond the short-term. While floating staircases are code compliant and safe, they may pose certain challenges for those having to handle small children or those facing mobility issues. However, asking this question doesn't eliminate the possibility of a floating staircase. Viewrail offers multiple tread options to improve traction and clearances because safe use is of the utmost importance. But it does allow your client to see that you're prioritizing their safety over the entire lifecycle of the design choice and offering value beyond price.

Some homeowners may want to just tear out a spiral staircase and replace it with a floating staircase, which may not be possible because of the necessary angles, structural integrity, and more. Before you promise a floating staircase, make sure the architecture is something you can work with.

6. What other amenities, upgrades, or additions do you see for the home in the future? What's your wish list?

While homeowners can get overly excited during remodels, their budget and timeline may restrict what they can include in the build. Encourage them to think ahead and envision their future remodeling project plans. How will a floating staircase impact their future home dreams?

For example, the homeowner might want to add a new addition that increases their square footage or maybe remodel a room that requires tearing down a wall. How will those projects impact the assembly supporting the staircase? Will you have to add or remove supports?

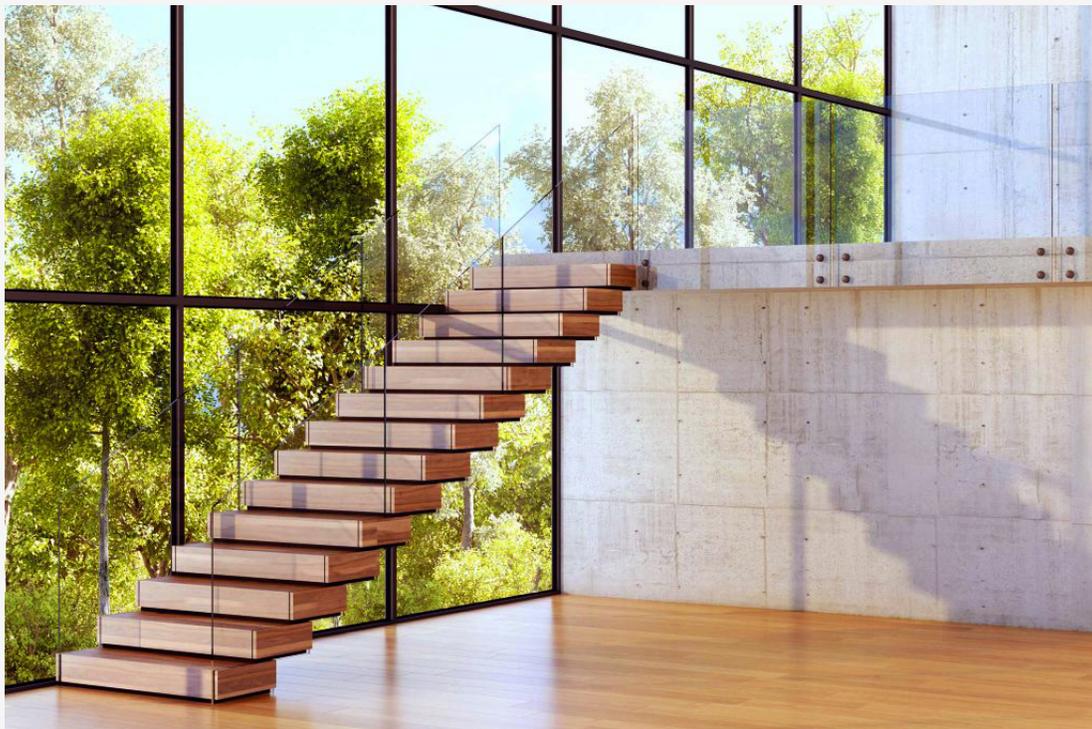
At Viewrail, we like to think of a customer as a customer for life. By using these questions, you can learn additional insights about your client and not only determine the best option but deliver additional value by listening and understanding their needs.

7. Is this within your timeline and budget?

This is a great question to ask both yourself and your client. The staircase — specifically the railing — is often one of the last things to be sourced in a project. Make sure that your clients are fully aware of every expense, even the ones nearing the end of the project agenda.

In addition, building materials are currently in high demand. The construction industry is booming, so any new construction projects will pose challenges for professionals who are already up against roadblocks like labor and materials shortages.

These setbacks alone might make it seem like there's no point in starting your stair design. Don't worry — there are still solutions to create a staircase that's a success.

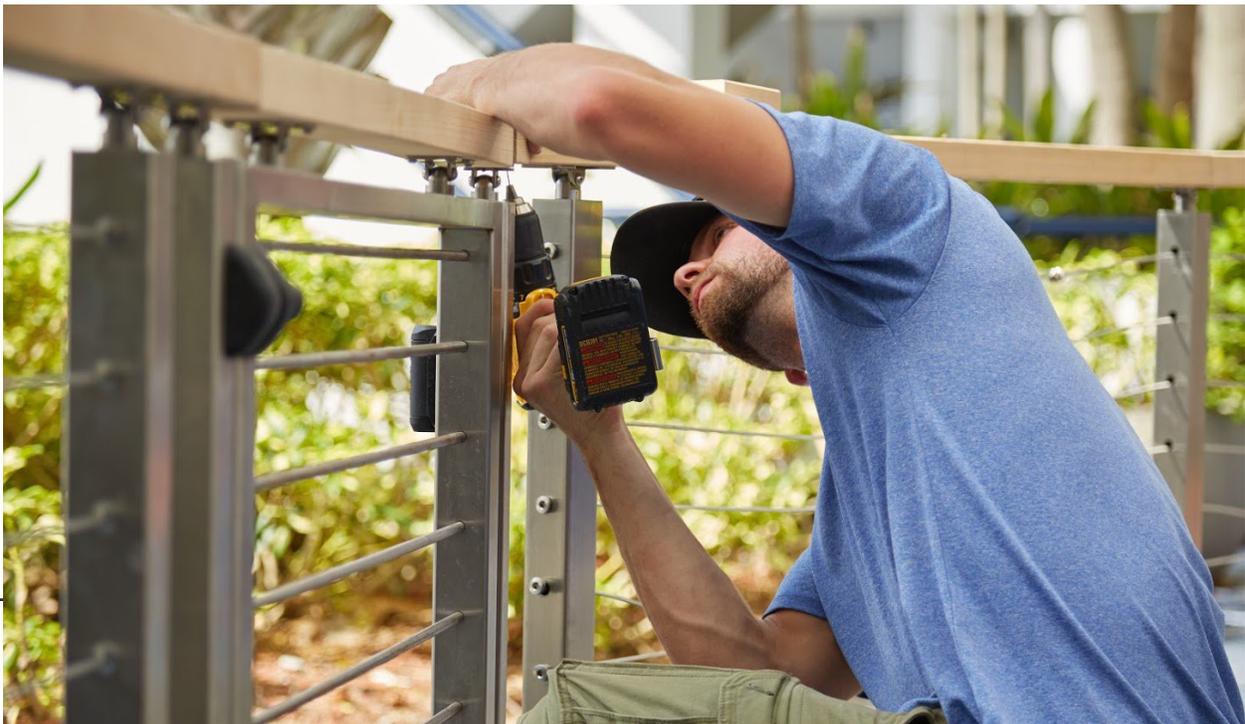


SUPPORT FOR BUILDERS

Our team offers builders a turnkey solution for floating stair designs. We provide customers with a full line of options for cable, glass, and rod railings. We'll also customize any product rather than try to make a stock product fit into your client's design.

We do all of our fabrication in-house and handle all floating stair installs ourselves. In addition to our quick lead times, we're also the single point of contact for your stair project. We are a partner for builders installing a floating stair design, and working with us results in a high-performing, [high-end staircase](#) that will elevate any home's design.

We work directly with builders and homeowners to customize their staircase and allow them to see how the design will look in their space with 3D modeling. This prevents second-guessing and multiple callbacks and helps homeowners get the stair design of their dreams finished on or ahead of schedule.



SUPPORT YOUR VISION

We know how many things can go wrong with a project build — whether it's a supply issue or struggles with installation.

We value our customers and recognize that your business depends on the success of our stair design. We'll help you achieve your customer's vision efficiently and without sacrificing your timeline, or your bottom line. Feel free to check out a few of our projects to see how we have helped elevate modern home designs and innovate staircase construction.

The truth is that you can add a profitable design feature that will not only wow clients, but eliminate inefficiencies when you work with Viewrail. We make floating stairs simple.

Get started on your project today — we'd love to help you [achieve your vision](#).

