

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY
Cooperative Extension Service

12/12/67

Mary M. Holthouse, Extension Information Specialist

EDITORS: New Extension Bulletin

Safety, comfort and convenience in the home you will live in after retirement are more important than ever before. How to judge the suitability of your present home, one you are remodeling, or are considering renting or purchasing is made easier by a new circular written by Bernice Strawn, Extension home management and equipment specialist at Oregon State University.

The ten-page booklet provides checklists on the location and orientation of the home, safety factors to look for in steps, walks, floors and other construction details, desirable features in kitchen and bathroom arrangement and equipment, and other details of the house and its furnishings that should be considered by individuals or couples approaching the retirement years.

H. R. Sinnard, chairman of OSU's Department of Architecture, and Harriet K. Sinnard, assistant professor of home management, were consultants in preparation of the circular.

Entitled "Homes for Senior Citizens," the publication is available on request at county extension offices.

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE—OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

CORVALLIS, OREGON

AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, AND 4-H CLUB WORK

Greetings:

The enclosure is from the Cooperative Extension Service of Oregon State University, Corvallis. This educational service is a joint project of the State University, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and your county government.

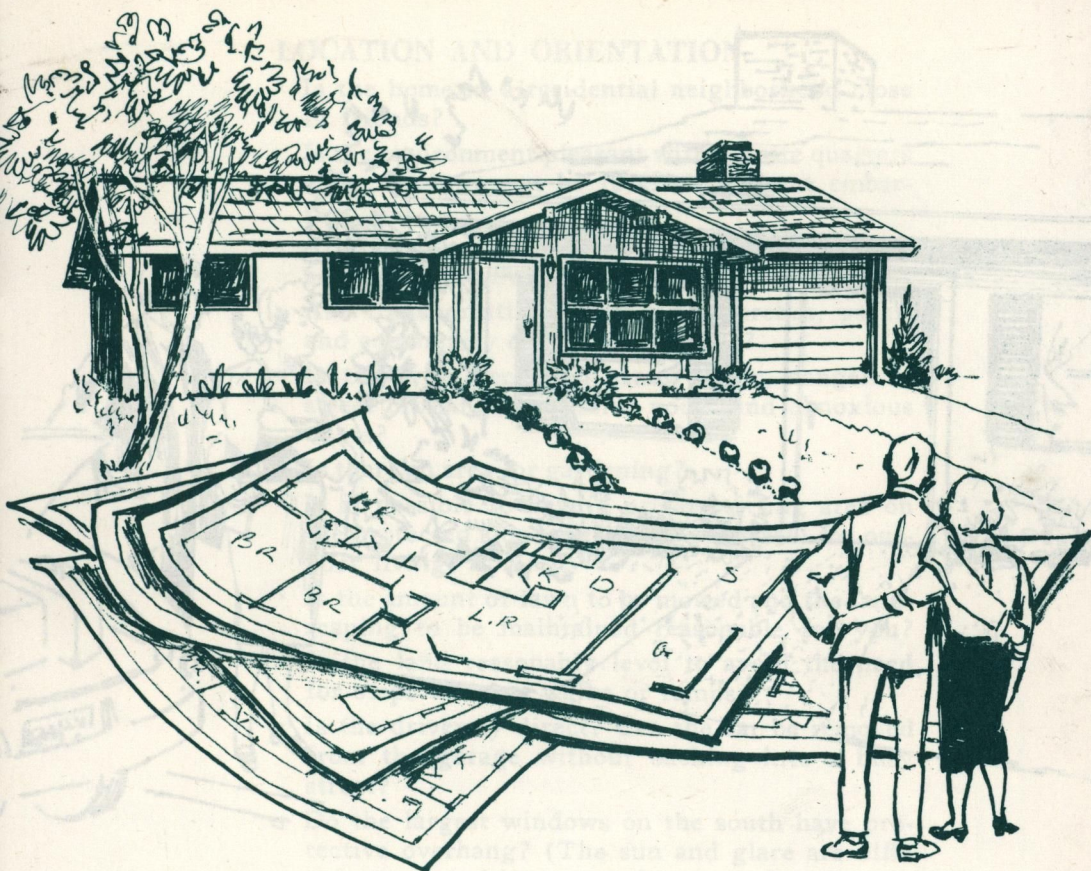
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James E. Williams
James E. Williams
Information Specialist

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Homes for Senior Citizens

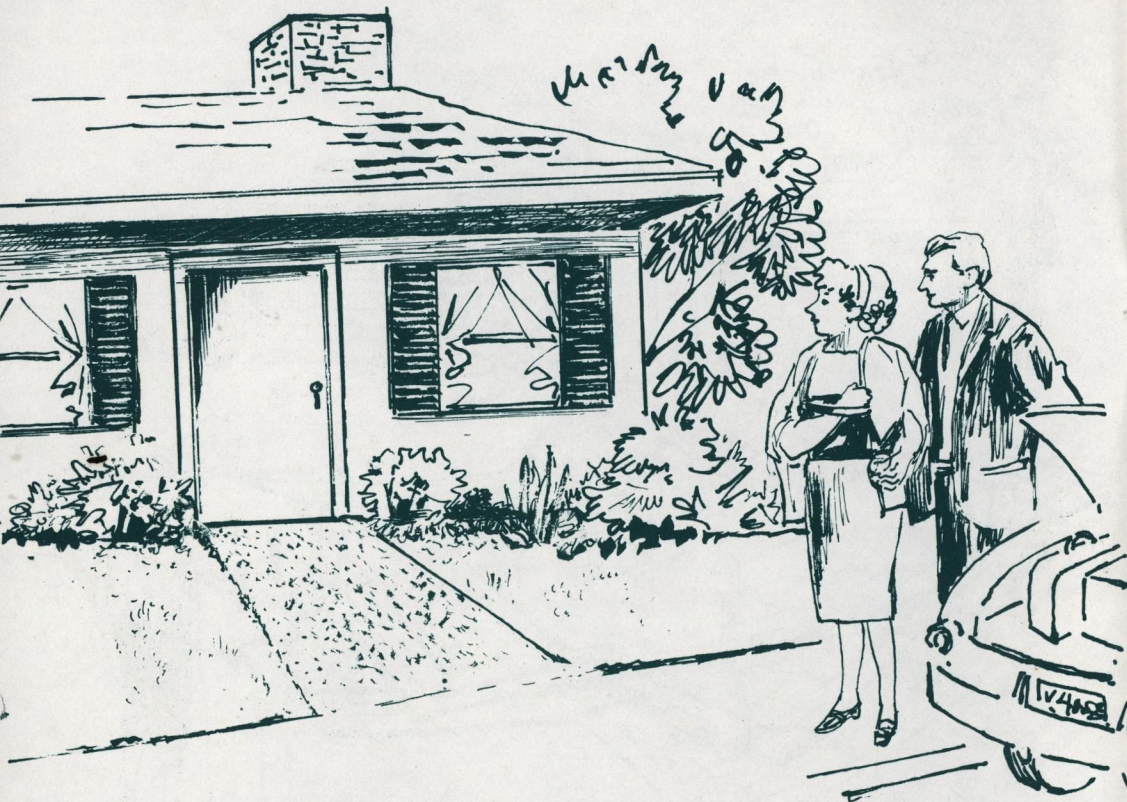
-- A Check List --

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A COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PUBLICATION

OREGON • WASHINGTON • IDAHO



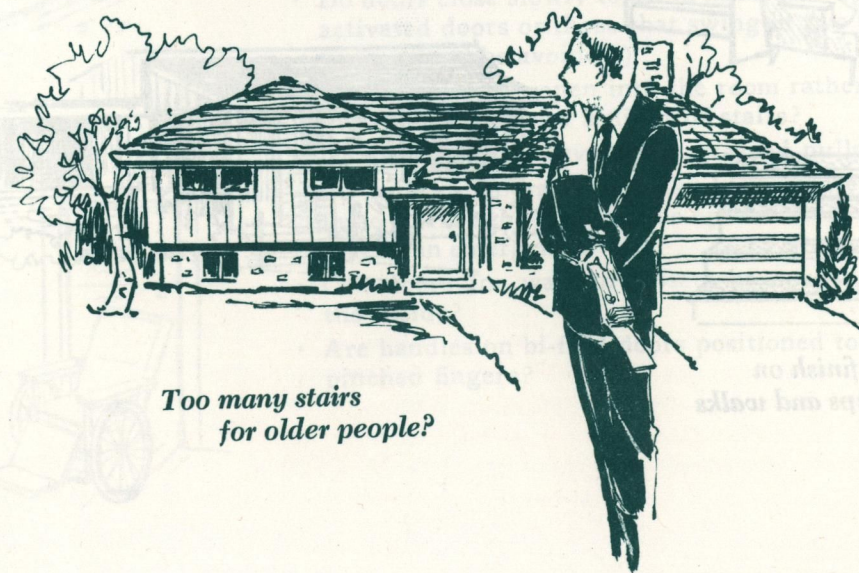
Safety, Comfort, and Convenience

When planning or remodeling a home where you will live after retirement, safety, comfort, and convenience are more important than ever before. The points listed below are as near ideal as possible and are based on available research. For most people, economy of maintenance is essential and some compromises are to be expected.

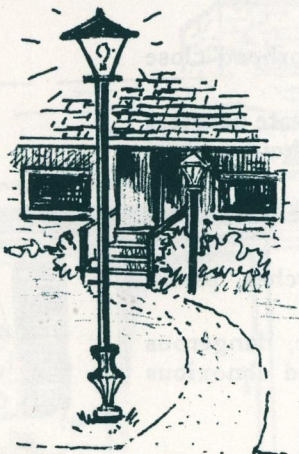
Checking the points listed in this circular should help you to decide about the suitability of the home where you now live, changes to consider, the selection of a new house, or the choice of a retirement home. Do not overlook the fact that retirement is a changing state which may alter your housing needs.

LOCATION AND ORIENTATION

- Is the home in a residential neighborhood close to friends?
- Is the environment pleasant with private quarters where visitors can be received without embarrassment?
- Are the ages of other people in the neighborhood acceptable to you?
- Are transportation, shopping, churches, parks, and community centers convenient?
- Is the area free from heavy traffic, dangerous street crossings, excessive noise, and obnoxious odors?
- Is there an area for gardening?
- Is it possible to have a private sitting area on the protected side (preferably not west) for outdoor living?
- Is the amount of lawn to be mowed and the landscaping to be maintained reasonable for you?
- Is the land reasonably level to avoid the need for steps or steep walks or ramps?
- Is the driveway direct? Can the car be removed from the garage without backing into a busy street?
- Do the largest windows on the south have protective overhang? (The sun and glare are difficult to control in west and east windows.)
- Is there a pleasant view from the living areas? Can you see the activity of other people?

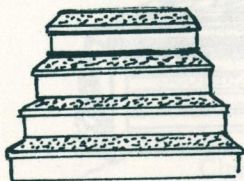
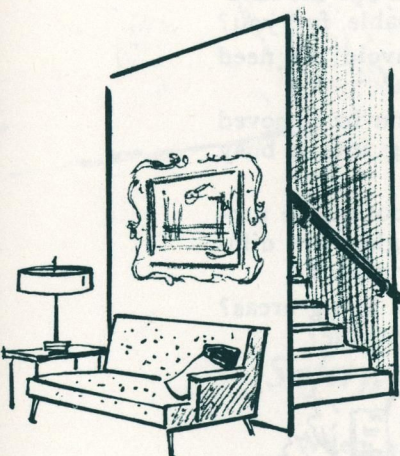


*Too many stairs
for older people?*

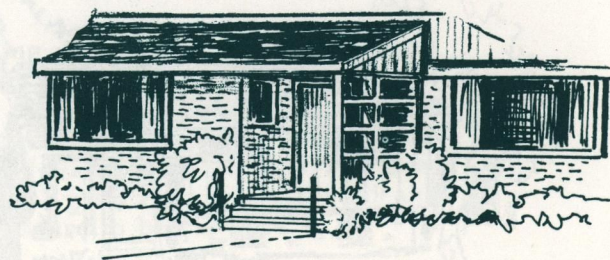


STEPS AND WALKS (Eliminate steps if possible)

- Are steps, walks, and street well lighted? (It is a good idea to check these points at night.)
- Do walks, steps, and patio have a rough finish to reduce slipperiness when wet?
- Have precautions been taken to locate walks away from downspouts and eaves to avoid accumulation of water or ice in freezing weather?
- Is there an outside platform, undercover, at least 5 feet square, between the top step and the door?
- Are all indoor risers and treads of uniform size? (Seven inches high and an 11-inch step recommended.)
- Do ramps for wheelchairs have a satisfactory incline? (Between $\frac{1}{4}$ inch per foot and 1 inch per foot.)
- When outdoor steps are necessary, are three or more risers included? (Six inches high and a 12-inch step.)
- Are living, sleeping, and work areas on the same level to save climbing stairs?
- Are abrasive treads or carpet used on stairs to prevent slipping?
- Is the slope of land and paving a minimum of 2 percent to allow for good drainage? (One-fourth inch per foot.)

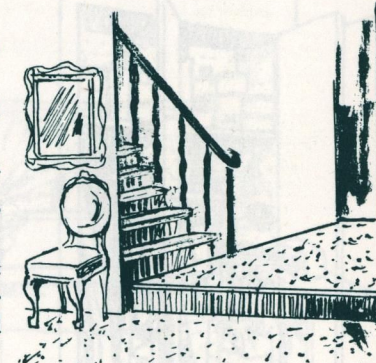


*Rough finish on
steps and walks*

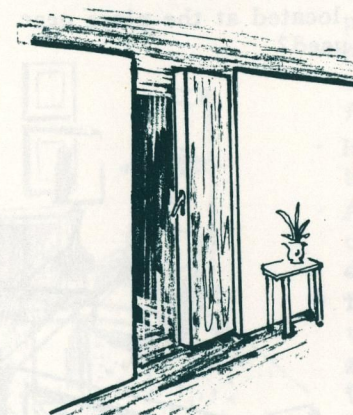


FLOORS

- Are there changes in floor level or obstructions on the floor which might cause accidents?
- Do sliding doors and partitions have tracks at the top only and not on the floor?
- Have door thresholds been eliminated? (Weather stripping can be put on the bottom of the door, not on the floor.)
- Are kitchen and bathroom floors of easily cleaned skid-resistant materials, such as unglazed ceramic mosaic tile or unwaxed vinyl or vinyl asbestos?
- Do floors in living areas provide sure footing and comfort? (Wall-to-wall carpet, cork, and vinyl are suitable. Floor covering should be non-allergenic and not create static electricity.)



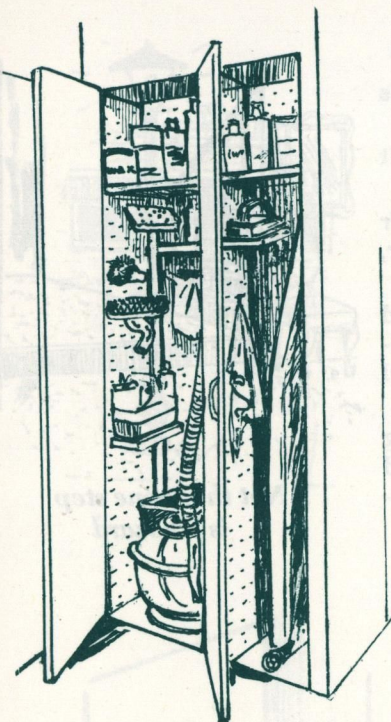
*Not this—one step
is a hazard*



HALLS AND DOORS

- Does the width of door openings provide a minimum of 30 inches *clearance* for a wheelchair? (This would require a 32-inch door—a 36-inch door is desirable.)
- Are the halls straight, at least 3 feet, 4 inches wide, and free of projections?
- Do doors close slowly to avoid hazards? (Spring-activated doors or those that swing in two directions should be avoided.)
- Do hinged doors open into the room rather than into halls or toward a flight of stairs?
- Do sliding doors have easily grasped pulls?
- Do interior doors with locks have a safety release so that the door can be opened from either side in an emergency?
- Can doors for walk-in closets be opened from the inside?
- Are handles on bi-fold doors positioned to avoid pinched fingers?



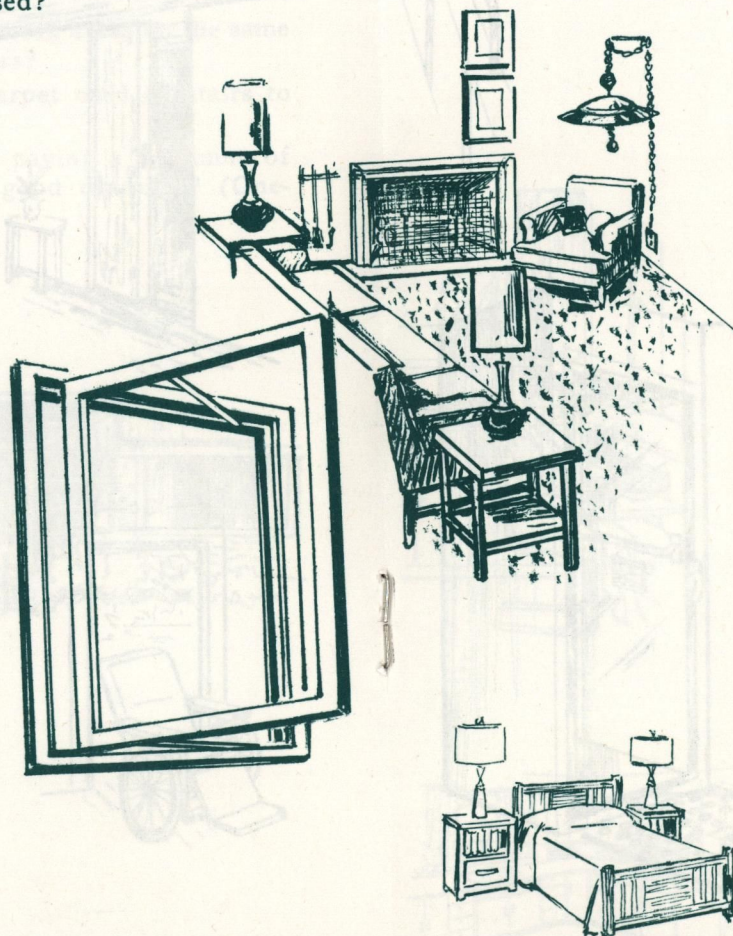


STORAGE

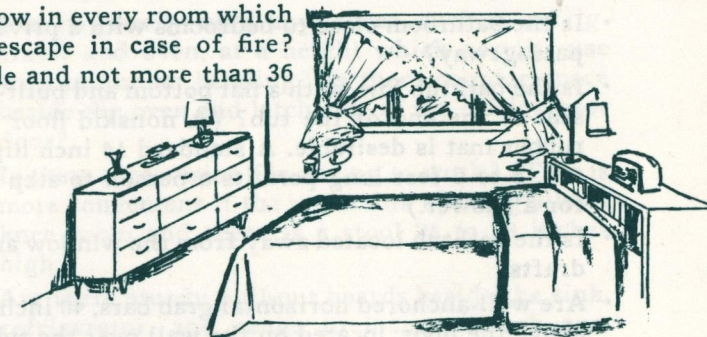
- Is there sufficient storage space which can be reached without stooping?
- Is storage space accessible without climbing on a chair or stool? (Kitchen and closet shelves should have a maximum height of 72 inches and the lowest fixed shelf should be 26 inches above the floor in cabinets with doors. Drawers below the 3-foot level are desirable.)
- Has storage been provided for garden equipment and tools?
- Is there storage for hobby supplies at a convenient location?
- Are wardrobe closets at least 28 inches deep inside the doors?
- Is there a cleaning closet about 24 inches wide and 20 inches or more in depth (front to back)?
- Are the storage areas located at the place near where supplies will be used?

WINDOWS

- Is the window area in each room at least 10 percent of the floor area—preferably 20 percent for the living area?
- Are window walls a light color and sunlit walls a darker shade to reduce contrasts of brightness?
- Do windows open and close easily? (Crank-operated hardware is desirable.)
- Are all windows cleanable on both sides while safely standing inside? (A casement window with each section a maximum width of 2 feet and equipped with a casement adjustment-type opener is one kind that meets this requirement. The adjuster permits the window sash to stand at right angles to the wall in the middle of the opening, allowing a person to reach both sides of the glass while standing inside.)
- Has hardware, such as cranks on casement windows, been selected so that it does not project into the room?
- Are screens removable from the inside?



- Is there at least one window opening in every room that is visible from a low seat or from the beds?
- Is there at least one window in every room which opens enough for easy escape in case of fire? (Minimum, 24 inches wide and not more than 36 inches above the floor.)

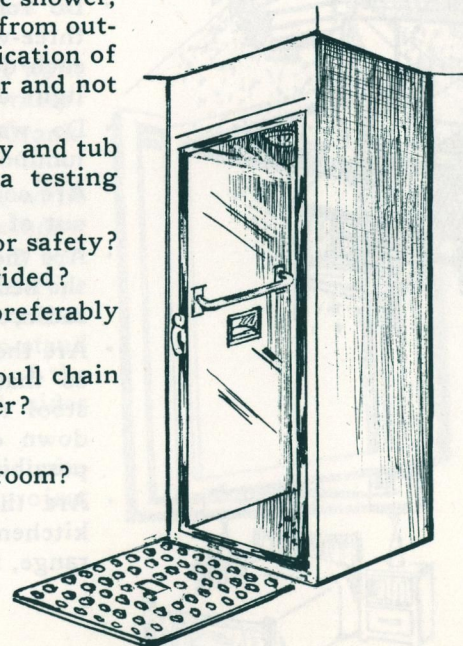
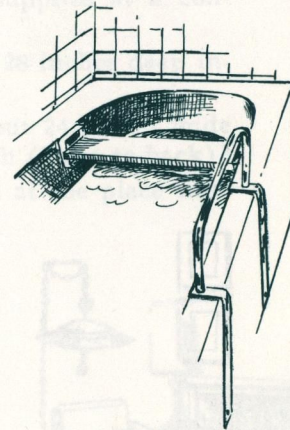
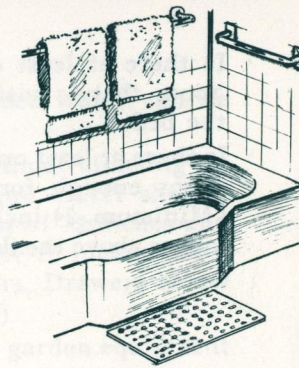


LIGHTING AND WIRING

- Are there lights inside the front part of closets and storage areas? (Not over shelves or clothes poles.)
- Are convenience outlets 28 to 32 inches above the floor and placed so they do not interfere with furniture?
- Have night lights been provided in the bedroom-bathroom area?
- Are lights for general illumination in all rooms controlled by a switch located directly inside the door?
- Do rooms with more than one entrance have three-way switches or low voltage switches at each door? (These make it possible to turn the light on or off at each door.)
- Do wall switches which control lights have luminous cover plates?
- Are convenience outlets in the bathroom located out of reach of the tub or shower?
- Are there convenience outlets and switches near the bed for heating pad, electric blankets, lights, radio, and so forth?
- Are there enough wall outlets for portable lamps so that ceiling lights, which require use of a stool to change bulbs, can be avoided? (Pull-down ceiling lights or wall brackets are also possibilities.)
- Are there at least three light sources in the kitchen to light the sink, work counters, and range, in addition to general light?

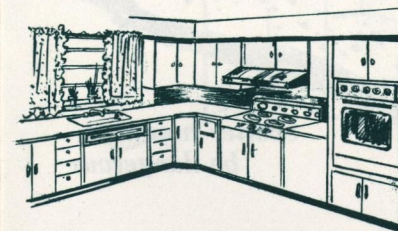
BATHROOM

- Is there sufficient space for a second person to assist another?
- Is the bathroom close to bedrooms with a private passageway?
- Is the bathtub low, with a flat bottom and built-in seat at the end of the tub? (A nonskid floor or rubber mat is desirable. A standard 14 inch high tub, 5 to 6 feet long permits a person to step in for a shower.)
- Is the bathtub located away from the window and drafts?
- Are well-anchored horizontal grab bars, 40 inches above the floor, located on the wall over the tub? (A portable grab bar can be installed over the edge of the tub to help a person getting in and out.)
- Are the towel bars sturdy enough to use for a grab bar in an emergency? (The height should be about 40 inches above floor.)
- Is the shower stall adequate in size (about 3 feet by 4 feet)? Does it have a seat, a nonskid floor, and a well-anchored horizontal grab bar 40 inches above the floor?
- Are faucet handles easy to grip and turn? Are they free from sharp-pointed edges?
- Is there an automatic mixing valve in the shower, located so that it can be easily reached from outside? Is it well marked for easy identification of direction to turn for hot and cold water and not directly under the shower head?
- Are there mixing faucets in the lavatory and tub arranged to deliver mixed water to a testing point?
- Are all clothes hooks above eye level for safety?
- Has safe storage of medicine been provided?
- Is mechanical ventilation provided, preferably with a timer switch?
- Is there an emergency push button or pull chain for a call bell within reach of the bather?
- Is there some one to answer the bell?
- Is there supplemental heat in the bathroom?



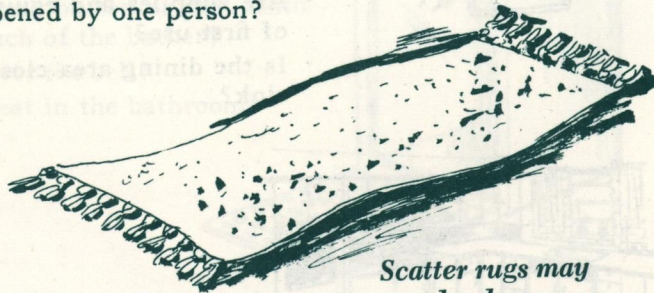
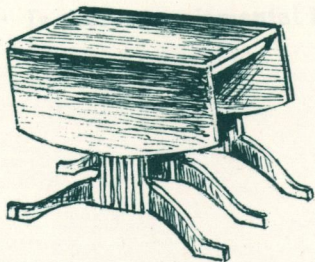
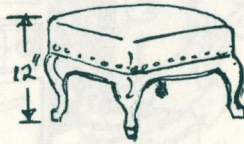
KITCHEN

- Is there a single-lever mixing faucet at the sink for easy control?
- Are frequently used appliances, such as refrigerator and oven, at a height which permits use with minimum bending? Is there counter space beside the oven and latch side of the refrigerator door?
- Is there a provision for sitting to work? (This is more convenient if the undersink opening allows knee room and there is a stool 24 to 28 inches high.)
- Are there sturdy pull-out boards beside the sink, refrigerator, and range to increase work surfaces and for sit-down work?
- Is garbage removal simplified to save trips outdoors?
- Are work counters well lighted, without shadows, and at a convenient height?
- Are wall cabinet interiors well lighted (either natural or artificial light)?
- Are edges and corners of cabinet doors and appliances rounded? (Wall-cabinet doors, when open, should not project beyond the edge of the work counter.)
- If gas equipment is used, is it vented to the outside?
- Is adequate work counter space provided, including at least 12 inches at either side of the range so that pans will not be accidentally knocked off?
- Is the gas range located away from curtains and windows that open?
- Are range switches easy to use and identify with the burner or unit they control? (Switches at the front are more easily seen and safer than those on the back splash.)
- Is storage at a safe and convenient height?
- Are supplies and equipment stored at the point of first use?
- Is the dining area close to the cooking area and sink?



FURNISHINGS

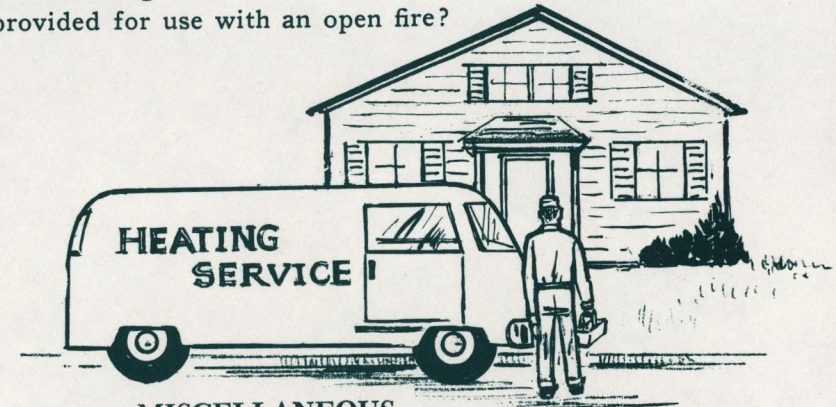
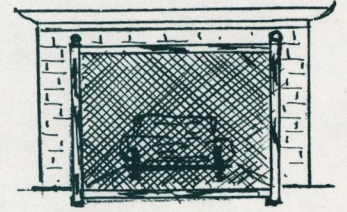
- Have throw rugs and rugs with free edges been eliminated?
- Do tables and other furniture have rounded edges?
- Do chairs, sofa, and tables stand firmly on the floor without sliding when leaned upon?
- Is furniture light enough in weight for moving if necessary?
- Are seats of chairs and sofas the right height and depth for the person using them to easily sit down or get up?
- Are foot stools no higher than 12 inches? (Higher stools can cause back strain and are a safety hazard.)
- Are the arms of chairs made of wood to save wear and tear or else padded with fabric which is easy to care for and easily replaced?
- Are upholstery fabrics the sturdy and tightly woven type which will shed dirt and take hard wear?
- Do drawers and doors of storage chests open and shut easily and have stops to prevent pulling them all the way out?
- Are chests shallow in depth so that contents are visible and accessible?
- Are beds firm with plenty of free space around them? (In general, avoid convertible beds because of the strength and agility required in making them up.)
- Is there room for a bedside table by the bed with a telephone and pull-cord alarm in case of emergency?
- Is there space and connection for a television in a desirable location in relation to other furniture?
- Is there space for a small dining table to seat four, such as a drop leaf, gateleg, or extension table which is easily opened by one person?



Scatter rugs may be dangerous

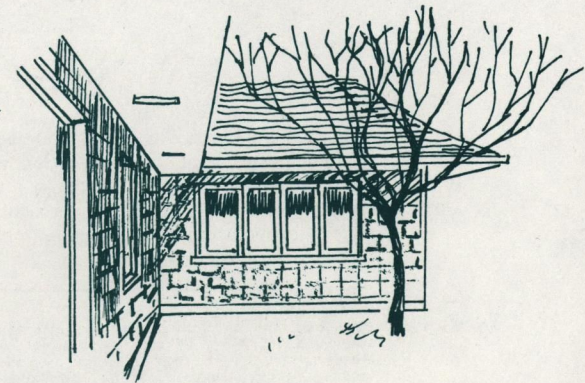
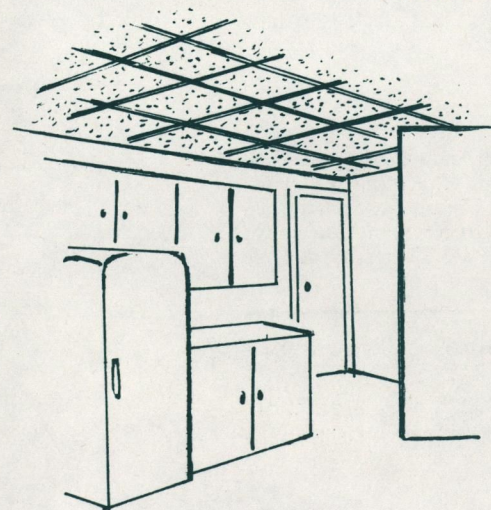
HEATING

- Will the heating system maintain an even temperature of 75 to 80 degrees in every room?
- If there is only one thermostat, is it located in the room where temperature is most important? Is it away from windows, lamps, television, and located where the sun will not shine on it in winter?
- Are thermostat dials easily read?
- Does the heating system require a minimum of attention and maintenance?
- If electric, kerosene, or gas room heaters are used, have they been checked by a service man each year for overheating?
- Is a screen provided for use with an open fire?



MISCELLANEOUS

- Is noise reduced by acoustical materials?
- Do exterior materials need little or no upkeep?
- Have dust-catching interior trims been avoided?
- Is there a fire alarm system?



FURNISHINGS

HEATING

Will the heating system maintain even temperature in every room?
 temperature of 75 to 80 degrees in every room?



If there is only one thermostat, it is located in the room where temperature is most important.
 Is it away from windows, doors, television, and the sun will not shine on it in winter?

Are thermostats easily reached?

Does the heating system require a minimum of attention and maintenance?

If electric, kerosene, or gas room heaters are used, have they been checked by a service man on electric (if electric) or gas (if gas) safety?

Is a screen provided for use with an open fire?

Are there any other things to consider?

What kind of fuel is used?

What kind of fuel is used?

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Prepared by Bernice Strawn, Extension home management and equipment specialist, in conjunction with H. R. Sinnard, chairman, Department of Architecture, and Harriet K. Sinnard, assistant professor of home management, Oregon State University; and in cooperation with Washington State University and the University of Idaho.

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