

Ladders for Boats and Docks: What Should You Be Looking For?

Ladders for Boats and Docks: What Should You Be Looking For?



Choosing a Dock and Boat Ladder: What Should You Be Looking For?

Interest and demand for boating continues to [reach record highs](#) as we make our way through 2022. Whether you find yourself at a lake or a beach, soon it will be time for summer fun in the water!

But wait—if you plan on taking a dip, you need to make sure you can safely get out of the water and back on your boat or dock. You don't want to swim without an exit plan and we don't want anyone to slip and hurt themselves!

That's why having a great dock and boat ladder is critical. It is easy to overlook how important they can be... until yours breaks and you can't use it, somebody is injured, or it is generally hard to use.

Not sure what you need to look for? Don't worry; we cover everything you need to know so you can find the best boat ladders and dock ladders. We will ensure that you have a safe and fun summer.

Finding the Best Dock Ladder

When browsing your [options for a dock ladder](#), you'll want to find one that can safely hold any user and prevent accidents. To do so, you'll need to consider who will be using the ladder and which materials might be best.

The Best Materials

Dock ladders need to be made from durable materials as they'll constantly be exposed to the elements. Unless you plan on replacing your dock ladder every season, buying one made to last is the best option.

Durable materials like polyethylene (PE) and aluminum are ideal for dock ladders. Polyethylene has many applications, and it is commonly used to make containers, bottles, toys, and more.

Aluminum is also used in many industries, and it has supreme corrosion resistance. Keep in mind that aluminum alloys will react differently to saltwater than freshwater, so make sure the ladder you're buying is suited for the type of water you're using it in.

Who Will Use the Ladder?

For older adults, anyone with mobility issues, or kids, you should choose ladders with wider footing. Narrow ladders are tougher to climb and easier to fall off balance. Wide ladders with plenty of footing help the user maintain their balance, reduces the risk of slipping, and reduces injuries.

Slips and falls account for [more than one million](#) hospital visits per year. And although most slips and falls are on the ground, you can seriously injure yourself slipping on a dock ladder as well.

Don't forget about weight capacity! Ladders with higher capacities can hold most users without putting undue stress on the ladder. We want to avoid stress on the attachment points to prevent damage to your dock or boat.

Number of Steps

Don't skimp when it comes to the number of steps.

If you're installing a ladder on a dock, you should have at least two or three steps below the water level. An easy way to figure out how many steps you need is to measure from the dock to the water and divide that number by the step height.

Having extra steps makes getting out of the water much easier. Tall, older, and inexperienced swimmers will especially appreciate the help. Even for great swimmers an extra step is extra convenience.

Types of Dock Ladders

There are a few differences between the types of ladders out there for your dock.

Lifting Ladders vs. Stationary Ladders

Stationary ladders don't move once installed. They remain submerged and attached to the dock.

Lifting ladders, flip-up ladders, and swing ladders allow you to take the ladder out of the water at any time. This will protect it from the elements, prevent undue corrosion, and prevent slippery algae and other marine growth.

Unless it is always swimming season where you live, you may want to remove your dock ladder completely at the end of the season. This will keep it out of the elements while you aren't using it and extend the life and protect the looks.

Choose whichever option suits your needs best. Both options make great choices, so it's mostly a matter of preference.

Other Types of Dock Ladders

Straight dock ladders are a budget-friendly option with a simple and standard design. These ladders have safety handrails and come in various styles, including different numbers of steps. Most commonly, you'll see designs with between three to seven steps.

Stair dock ladders are perfect if you plan on having people coming in and out of the water often. The design features extra-wide steps, perfect for people that might have trouble with traditional ladders; also great for pets.

Floatstep ladders are similar to traditional step ladders. The main difference is that they lift up when not in use, so you can keep them out of the water in the off-season.

Lift dock ladders are ideal for stationary docks. You can raise the rungs of the ladder up and out of the water when not in use and easily lower them down when you need them.

Do you have a finger pier or dock finger? If so, you'll appreciate the compact design of a finger pier ladder. This style maximizes dock space, but it doesn't have handlebars, only hand grips, so be careful when entering and exiting the water.

Choosing the Best Boat Ladder

Boat ladders are [the perfect accessory](#) to allow you to enjoy your pontoon or any other boat to the fullest. Stop whenever you or your passengers feel like jumping in the water to cool off. With the right boat ladder, they can climb in and out with ease.

Choosing the best boat ladder involves weighing many of the same considerations as a dock

ladder, but there are also a few more factors.

Ladder Considerations

One factor you should consider is using an aluminum ladder stand-off. Finding options with enough room behind the ladder makes it easier to grip and gives you extra room for toes and fingers. This will really help some swimmers.

Are you replacing an existing boarding ladder? If so, make sure that you choose a style that uses the same mounting location.

Portable or Fixed?

Fixed boat ladders permanently attach to your boat. Portable ladders are designed to attach to your boat as needed.

A fixed ladder is a good idea if you like to 'cove-out', 'tie-up, or any other reason that your passengers will often dive or swim from the boat. Portable ladders work well if you only plan to swim occasionally, and they're ideal for boats without swim platforms.

Specialty ladders are designed for specific purposes, such as diving and safety.

Number of Steps

When you choose a boat ladder, you have to consider the number of steps, similar to choosing a dock ladder.

Ladders with only three steps can be tricky to use in the water, especially for anyone taller, heavier, older, or those with mobility issues. For these passengers, we recommend a ladder with at least two to three rungs underwater. If the water is choppy from wakes or waves you will want to error on the side of a longer ladder.

Keep in mind that ladders require that you raise them for storage before you plan to move on.

Ready for a Day in the Water?

These tips will help you choose the best boat ladder and dock ladder! Now you can kick off summer the right way and have safe and fun adventures in the water any time you want!

Check out our selection of [dock ladders](#) and [boat ladders for sale](#) to prepare for a fun day in the water. We have a wide selection of ladders and accessories to meet all your boating needs.

If you have any questions, please [reach out to us here](#). We want to help you find the best dock or boat ladder to meet your needs!