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STAIRWAYS

Ascend to new style heights with a statement staircase. Here are six ideas and all the know-how you need

1 PAINTING AND STAINING

The most straightforward way to update stairs

'Preparation is key to a great finish,' says John Hague at Holman Specialist Paints (holmanpaints.co.uk). First use a cleaner or degreaser, then fill any cracks in the woodwork with good-quality filler and sand to a level finish. If the existing paint is peeling, it's best to sand back to bare wood and start again. Floor stains (used on these treads, right, by Studio Niels) will enhance the natural grain of timber; a second coat will darken the shade. Always seal with a protective lacquer. Alternatively, use a primer then cover with a specialist floor paint, as in this pale-blue project by stylist Tessa Hop (below). Semi-gloss is easier to keep clean, while a satin finish is perfect for a low-key look.



2 LAYING CARPET

Carpet helps to create a warm welcome, as well as a strong visual impact

'The staircase is the ultimate high traffic area, so choose a quality 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent nylon blend, which is hardwearing and also stain resistant,' says Rupert Anton at The Carpet Foundation (carpetfoundation.com). 'Opt for a twist pile rather than a loop, which is more slippery and can open up when it's bent over the nose of the stair. Also, be sure to use a good underlay over both the tread and the riser to reduce wear.'

In terms of colour, darker shades will be more forgiving, but bear in mind that a hallway is somewhere you can use a bold pattern that might overwhelm in other parts of the home – such as this 'Cube' design by Ben Pentreath (right; £98 per square metre, Alternative Flooring; alternativeflooring.com). It's also possible to have carpet bound to create a runner, or choose a readymade flat weave design. These tend to be supple, so are easy to fit. When buying a runner, purchase a few more inches in length than you require and tuck the excess under at the bottom – when it starts to wear, shift it up to help prolong its life. ➤

