

Technical Guidance

Stair nosings

Question

What type of stair nosings are acceptable on common stairs for compliance with the Building Regulations Part M?

Considerations

- Paragraph 9.5a of Approved Document M (England & Wales) recommends that all step nosings should be distinguishable through contrasting brightness.
- The statutory requirement refers to 'reasonable provision'. It would not necessarily be reasonable to require the nosings to be so clear that they could be distinguished by those with a very severe visual disability. That may only be possible by illumination, which is outside of the scope of the guidance in Approved Document M (England & Wales).
- The provisions are intended to apply in normal conditions (e.g. not a fire situation) where the stair is illuminated by either natural or artificial light.
- What constitutes 'distinguishable through contrasting brightness' is ultimately subjective but it can be achieved by nosings with:
 - different colours
 - different shades
 - different reflective properties.

Answer

Stair nosings should be distinguishable through contrasting brightness. This can be achieved by using nosings that have different colours, shades or reflective properties.

The objective test is for someone (with normal sight) to stand at the foot / head of the stair and be able to see the line of each nosing in the flight (whether in full daylight or artificial light).