

Universal Design in the Bathroom: Top 10 Areas of Focus

Creating a Safe, Stylish, and Accessible Space for Everyone



by Coley McAvoy

What is Universal Design? A Space That Works for Everyone

Imagine a bathroom that works for every stage of life—for your children, for your aging parents, and for your future self. That is the power of Universal Design.

It's a philosophy focused on creating spaces that everyone can use safely and comfortably, regardless of age, size, or mobility. It's not about a clinical or "medical" look; it's about blending elegance with practicality so your home is ready for anything. And can be used by basically, everyone.

THE HISTORY: Coined by architect Ronald Mace, this forward-thinking approach is guided by 7 core principles that a living space should adapt to you, and not the other way around.

The 7 Guiding Principles of Universal Design

1. **Equitable Use**
2. **Flexibility in Use**
3. **Simple and Intuitive Use**
4. **Perceptible Information**
5. **Tolerance for Error**
6. **Low Physical Effort**
7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use**

The Top 10 Ways to Universally Design your Bathroom

#1: Bathroom Access & Doorway

The most beautiful bathroom is useless if you can't get into it easily. Proper access is the foundation of a universally designed space.

Key Design Considerations:

- A hallway with a minimum clear-width of 36 inches.
- Doorways at least 32 inches wide.
- Lever-style door handles for easier operation.
- Outward-swinging or pocket doors to save space.

PRO TIP

Increase safety with a bathroom door that can be unlocked from the outside.



#2: Flooring & Bath Mats

Slips and falls are one of the most common causes of home injuries.



Key Design Considerations:

- Textured, non-slip flooring (matte tiles, smaller grout-line tiles).
- Eliminate unnecessary bath mats and rugs.
- If needed, use rubber-backed, low-pile mats.
- Consider heated floors for added comfort and quicker drying.

#3: Bathing (The Heart of the Bathroom)

Modern universal design offers safe and elegant solutions for bathing.

Curbless Showers:

Seamless entry—ideal for mobility devices.



Walk-In Tubs:

Low-step entry, hydrotherapy features, retrofit-friendly.

Key Safety Features:

- 5 ft. turning radius.
- Grab bars rated for 250–300 lbs.
- Adjustable and fixed shower heads.
- Anti-scald valves.
- Shower seat (built-in or portable).

#4: The Sink & Vanity

Vanities can be both accessible and stylish.



Key Design Considerations:

- Height: 32"–34" from floor.
- Knee clearance: 27" high x 30" wide.
- Floating vanities = clearance + modern look.
- Protect legs from hot pipes.
- Lever or touchless faucets preferred.



#5: The Toilet

Height, clearance, and transfer space matter most here.

1 Seat height: 17"–19" (comfort height)

Taller toilets make sitting and standing easier for most adults.

2 60" turning radius for wheelchair access

Ensures adequate space for mobility device users to maneuver safely.

3 Paper holder: 19"–36" from back wall

Positioned for easy reach without uncomfortable stretching.

4 Grab bars for stability

Provides support during transfers to and from the toilet.

#6: Grab Bars (Stylish Support)

No longer just functional—now beautiful, too.

Key Design Considerations:

- Securely mounted to support up to 300 lbs.
- Placed inside shower, near tub, by toilet.
- Designs double as towel racks, TP holders, or shelves.





#7: Cabinets & Mirrors

Accessibility includes storage and visibility.



Pulls instead of knobs

Easier to grasp and operate, especially with limited dexterity.



Pull-down shelves in uppers

Brings items within reach for all users.



Mirror height: ≤ 40 " above floor

Ensures visibility for seated and standing users.



Tilting mirrors

Accommodates different user heights.

#8: Counters & Colors

Contrast and safety go hand-in-hand.



Key Design Considerations:

- Ample counter space for accessibility.
- Curved counter edges.
- High-contrast color pairings: floors vs. counters, walls vs. fixtures.

EASY VISIBILITY = IMPROVED SAFETY

#9: Lighting & Ventilation

Critical but often overlooked.



Task + ambient + waterproof lighting layers

Provides appropriate illumination for different activities.



Motion night lights for nighttime safety

Prevents falls during nighttime bathroom visits.



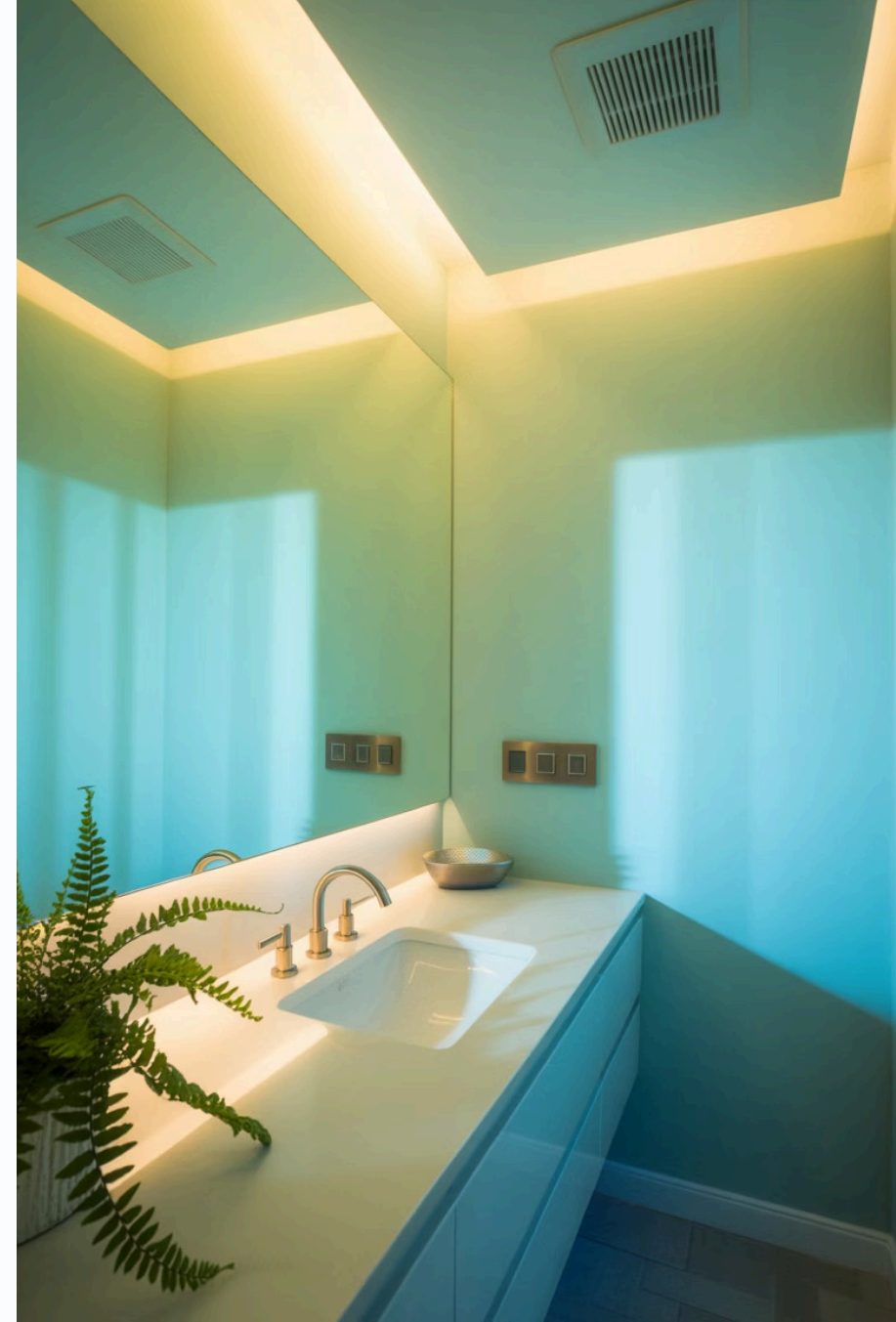
Rocker switches for easy operation

Can be operated with minimal dexterity or by using an elbow.



Quiet, efficient fans to fight moisture and mold

Maintains air quality and prevents damage to the bathroom.



#10: Budget & ROI (The Financial Benefits)

Universal design is a smart investment.

Higher Resale Value:

- Homes with accessible features sell for ~\$30K more and 14% faster.
- 76% of people 50+ want to age in place (AARP).

Financial Incentives:

- Colorado Home Modification Tax Credit: up to \$5,000 back.

Budget-Friendly Steps:

- Install grab bars.
- Use swing hinges.
- Switch to lever handles.
- Improve lighting affordably.

Take the First Step Toward a Future-Ready Home

Designing a bathroom that works for everyone isn't just a trend—it's smart, future-ready living.

You don't need to sacrifice style for safety or comfort for value. A universally designed bathroom delivers it all.

At HomePride Bath, we help Colorado homeowners create bathrooms that:



Look beautiful



Works for all ages and abilities



Increases home value



Qualify for financial incentives

Let's build a bathroom that serves your life—not limits it.

👉 [Schedule your free consultation now at HomePrideBath.com](https://HomePrideBath.com) No pressure. Just expert advice, tailored designs, and smart solutions for Colorado homes.