

ARCHITECT'S CLINIC

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Making a bathroom splash

Q WE recently bought a nice semi-d house in a mature estate in Dublin. The previous owners put on a nice extension but never got around to upgrading the family bathroom. Do you have any tips?

A To achieve a bathroom that matches your needs, a series of basic design questions should be considered — including layout and ergonomics, floors and walls, sanitary wares and fittings, lighting, ventilation and drainage.

The first step is to ask yourself what you actually want in your bathroom and how you intend to use it. Consider the needs of everyone who will use it. The needs of someone living alone, or a couple, are completely different from the needs of a family bathroom. Even the age and mobility of the users may affect your choices and requirements. As an upgrade to a family bathroom, if you have a small children, a bathtub may be desirable, however, if you have teenagers, a shower may be more important.

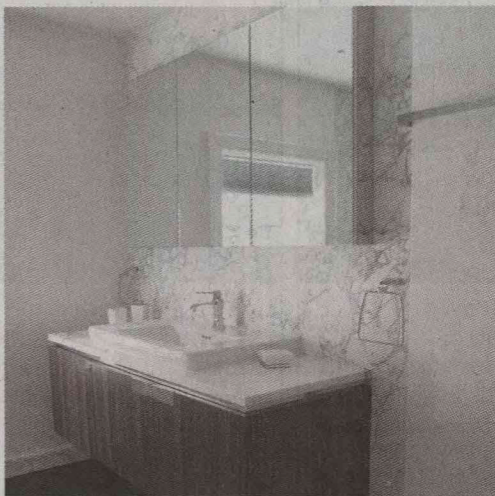
You always have more options in large and generous spaces. However, small bathrooms can be made to work if properly planned and if you know how to make the most of the space.

While the bathtub may have previously been considered the focal point in the room, with a family bathroom, focus should be given to the vanity area (single, double and counter space), storage and laundry options. There is no golden rule to positioning sanitary ware and different layouts can be made according to the dimensions of the room, however, the WC and bidet should be side by side or facing.

The standard bathtub is 1.7m in length and 80cm in width, so you should leave an activity space of approx. 1.1m x 70cm alongside it. A standard pedestal or washbasin is 60cm deep x 70cm wide and an activity area of approx 1m x 70cm in front would be required.

For a toilet, a space of 1.2m x 80cm is required with at least 60cm x 80cm in front of it. The same applies for a bidet if required; a comfortable shower is 90cm x 90cm. However, a variety of sizes and shapes can be found on the market for any of the above sanitary wares.

Brassware fittings are generally in polished



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chrome or stain steel but other materials and finishes can be considered. Natural stones, ceramic or porcelain tiles, wood and glass are generally used for walls and floors finishes. A good slip-resistant finish must be provided for the floor.

Bathroom lighting is strictly regulated according to a controlled lighting zone and you should always have the lighting installed by a qualified electrician.

Ventilation, which is vital in a bathroom, should also be carefully designed. Poor ventilation causes moisture, condensation and finally mould to walls and floors. Waste and water pipes may be difficult to move, however, in some instances, and with good design, they can be worked around.

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