Deck Railings 101

A whole article dedicated to deck railings is hardly glamorous, but theres more to them than you think. Not only do railings reflect the style of the home, but they are required safety features. Here are some tips for deciding what type of deck railing design best suits your situation.Top Rails– Wood top rails (usually 2×4 or 2×6 lumber), can be installed flat or on edge.– Top rails installed over top of the vertical posts result in a stronger railing.– Top rails installed between posts are not as strong. The posts must withstand the most of any force.– A smooth and continuous top rail over the post tops defines the perimeter of a deck. Posts– Posts can be mounted on the exterior of the rim joist (posts will protrude above the top rail) or inside the rim joist. A rim joist is the 2×8 lumber used on the sides and ends of a deck.– Posts that protrude above the top rail at each section draw the eye toward them.– Detail posts by adding a cap or make every other post larger or wider. Post Caps– Post caps provide a professional look to posts that protrude about the top rail. They are available in many styles, from simple to ornamental.– Lighted post caps provide added safety and decoration at night.Balusters– Balusters (also called pickets or spindles) are the vertical members between the top and bottom rails.– Wide balusters create a more confined space ideal for obscuring a view or for reflecting the heavier structure of the home itself.– Thin balusters create openness and accentuate a view. Alternate narrow and wide balusters to create an interesting visual contrast.– Aluminum, steel or wrought iron balusters are less obtrusive. The inherent strength of the material means they can be thinner and provide a more open view.– Baluster spacing should not exceed 4 from inside edge to inside edge, but check with local building codes to be sure. In addition, most building codes prohibit horizontal balusters because they facilitate climbing. Panels– Glass panels capitalize on views.



– Semi-transparent panels provide privacy while allowing for maximum light.– Louvered panels between posts are a very contemporary look.– Side panels with matching siding stucco provide privacy. Color– Stain the top rail or posts a different color than the balusters Wilmington tree cutting to draw the eye towards them.