

25 BEAUTIFUL HOMES

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Insight

CREATING A MEZZANINE SPACE

Want to extend your square footage with a raised platform? Use these expert tips

Constructing a mezzanine – which literally means a low storey between two others in a building, typically between the ground and first floors – is a great way to gain extra space. Mezzanines are also useful design features for converted properties that weren't originally intended to be lived in, such as barns, stable blocks, churches and warehouses, since these buildings often have soaring, double-height ceilings. A mezzanine can add greater visual interest and create new floor space to be used for different purposes.

Form and function

Mezzanines can also be ingenious space-saving design solutions for smaller homes, especially in awkward-shaped layouts where rooms are small but ceilings are tall, or where the space is too restricted to allow for a loft conversion. In these cases, a raised platform could provide a cosy sleeping zone, an extra bedroom for guests, a light-filled office

or part of a double-height social area, with seating on two different levels.

Building advice

A mezzanine can be built on the ground floor for any function. The space should not cover more than 50 per cent of the room it is situated above. Different rules apply when building a mezzanine on the first floor, since it can't form a habitable room unless the floor level is 4.5 metres or less above outdoor ground level and has a fire-escape compliant window.

Keep the space bright by installing skylights. Decide how open the space will be. Opaque panels will give more privacy, whereas transparent glass helps create a visual link with the room below.

Access to the mezzanine provides design options, too, from conventional staircases to floating treads. If space is at a premium, a spiral staircase could be installed or even a fixed loft ladder with handrails. In a barn conversion, a wooden or wrought-iron staircase would fit well with a rustic design aesthetic.



PROFESSIONAL ADVICE



'Consider the functions of both the mezzanine and the primary living space before making a final decision about usage, and make sure that the use of each level does not

clash. For example, an upper level intended as a quiet study area may not be ideal when positioned over an open-plan living space where young children are playing.

Before commencing the building work, be sure to allow for a structural engineering assessment as well as architectural design. Check that any supporting structures can be accommodated within the existing building. Foundations may have to be bolstered or underpinned to support new point loads, and existing walls may also have to be strengthened.

Mezzanines are a good way to facilitate open-plan living, especially in contemporary schemes, as an elevated upper level is a perfect place to store everyday household clutter, which may not be visible from the primary living area below.

If both the upper and lower spaces are visible, the loose furnishings should complement each other. Soft textures can also help to make the mezzanine area quieter, if sound transfer between the two levels is a consideration.'

SANDY ANDERSON, BLOCK 9 ARCHITECTS

ADDRESS BOOK

■ **Planning Portal, planningportal.gov.uk**

The UK's official online guide to planning and building regulations for England and Wales

■ **Block 9 Architects, 0131 629 4950, block9architects.com**

Specialise in sustainable, environmentally sound buildings and design

■ **Woodford Architecture and Interiors, 01364 654888, woodfordarchitecture.com**
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A raised platform could become a home office



Use a mezzanine to make the most of tall windows



Create extra floor space in a double-height room



EXPERT EYE 'A mezzanine can make a cosy book nook or extra sleeping area. Opt for a rug and lots of cushions to add character and colour. If you're installing shelving, then integral LED lighting will add a beautiful glow'

SARAH WOODFORD, WOODFORD ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS