

Creating Space High Up on Top

Loft conversions seem to be springing up in every street, so what's involved and how do you go about it? Loft conversions are easiest in houses with a high - pitched roof. This should give enough height to create a room which you can stand up in comfortably - it won't do you any good to stoop and no builder in his right mind would agree to work on such a project, unless all you want is a smartened up attic purely for storage. Before you start any work check with your planning office - often there are restrictions which you must respect. If there isn't enough height then sometimes your roof can be raised. This is obviously a much bigger undertaking and its vital you talk with your local planning authority about whether you can do this. If there's the height at the apex of the roof but the loft is too narrow then you may want to extend out the eaves with a dormer window which protrudes out of the roof. Again, you'll have to talk to your local planning authority about this. Of course if you are going to convert your loft into a bedroom or other useful space you'll want it to be easily accessible. And its not always obvious how to position a staircase from your top landing without making access to other rooms more difficult. This is one area where specialist loft conversion companies and designers really come into their own. Chances are they will have seen exactly your house's layout before and will know the most straightforward solution. So use their expertise rather than scratching your head for days trying to work out the stairway puzzle! Its important to assess what is the best use of space up in your loft. Of course this will largely depend on how much space you have and also on what you're lacking downstairs. Have you got enough bedrooms but nowhere for your teenage kids to hang out? Do you need an extra bedroom for visitors or your expanding family? If so would an extra bathroom be handy too? Have you decided to work from home and need an office away from the rest of the house? Or maybe you're a budding artist or musician who needs a dedicated space to practice your craft. Once you've decided on your needs you can work out an appropriate scheme and the trades you will require. If you're going for a bedroom and ensuite there'll be a fair amount of electrics and plumbing to sort out. If you're planning an office you may need more sophisticated electrics such as a broadband connection. If it's a music or teenage den you're after then soundproofing may be a good investment. Work out as much of this sort of detail as you can before calling in the experts. Also think about storage. If you have a pitched roof then you will have eaves. These are ideal for built in cupboards as they are awkward spaces that can't really be used for anything else. Built in cupboards or shelving will leave the rest of the space open rather than cluttered with cupboards or chests of drawers. Also consider dedicating the height and length of a whole wall to inbuilt storage. If the ceiling is high then a rolling ladder attached to a track provides easy access to cupboards up high. A bay window in the loft is a good area to place a favourite piece of furniture, or to build low storage with a window seat on top. Lofts are usually fairly dark places, so you'll need advice on lighting. Extra velux windows in the roof will let in natural light, as will dormer windows but again, talk to your planning authority before cutting out squares in your roof and replacing them with glass. If you want to create an art studio you'll want all the natural light you can get so ask a structural engineer to advise on how this can be achieved. Also think about lighting at night - whether you put in spots, pendants or wall washers you'll want a bright, airy environment, not gloom. Loft conversions can be a good investment, and are usually cheaper than moving to a bigger house. Think carefully about what you want to achieve, then get the experts in to transform your space.

About the Author

Expert home improver India Cooper highlights the appropriate steps to take when converting a loft. To find out more please visit <http://www.ratedpeople.com/find/loft>

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