

# Homeowner's Guide

## Walk-In Shower Design Ideas and Remodeling Tips



McClurg

## Forward

---



One of today's most popular bathroom design trends is a walk-in shower. Why? Most people prefer a shower to a bath and walk-in showers can be installed in almost any bathroom.

Part of the appeal of a walk-in shower over a shower-tub combination is that it's safer. You won't have to step over a tub side, which is typically 16 inches high, and walk-in showers are easier to clean.

Accessories can be added for comfort such as bench seating, grab bars, wall jet sprays and rainfall showerheads. Walk-in showers can be designed with or without doors depending on your preference.

**So, where do you begin?** When we meet with customers we begin by asking a number of questions to help us (and them) understand what they **NEED** and what they **WANT** in their new bathroom. We ask them to describe what they like about their current bathroom. We also ask them about problems or obstacles they have with the current layout. Then, we help them set priorities, which will factor into the project budget.

We have prepared this **homeowner's guide** to address questions we often hear from customers as they consider a walk-in shower. You'll learn about the three primary types of walk-in showers, requirements for thresholds and multiple showerheads, options for ventilation and lighting, and more. We also invite you to visit the [photo gallery of walk-in showers on our website](#) for more design ideas.

We hope you will find this information helpful. We would welcome your questions and comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brian Ciota'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Brian Ciota  
Vice President & Co-Owner

# Table of Contents

---

1. Frequently Asked Questions About Walk-In Showers .....	4
2. Types of Walk-In Showers .....	6
3. Low or No Thresholds.....	9
4. Multiple Showerheads and Body Sprays.....	10
5. Accessories .....	12
6. Ventilation and Lighting .....	14

# 1. FAQs about Walk-In Showers

---

Here are five questions homeowners often ask about walk-in showers when planning a bathroom remodeling project. Consider these questions and make notes to share with your contractor to help plan and design a walk-in shower that best meets your needs.

## 1. How much does a walk-in shower cost?

One of the first questions homeowners ask about a remodeling project is “How much will it cost?” Costs will vary depending on the extent of the project. Some bathroom remodels are updates where a homeowner may want to replace tile and fixtures within the existing floor plan and all mechanicals (wiring, plumbing, heating, ventilation) are in working order. Other remodels involve gutting and reconfiguring the bathroom layout, updating mechanicals, upgrading fixtures, new cabinets and other elements.

The [selection of products](#) also influences cost. The cost of wall tile, countertops, and cabinets can vary widely. The cost of fixtures can range from modest to high-end. So, what should you budget? We recommend reviewing our article “[How Much Does a Bathroom Remodel Cost?](#)”, which addresses this question in detail.

## 2. Will replacing a tub with a walk-in shower impact my home’s resale?

While resale data doesn’t appear to support the case for or against replacing a bathtub with a walk-in shower, realtors continue to debate this question. Realtors seem to agree that there should be at least one bathtub in a home to appeal to a range of buyers, however, resale value can also depend on the demographics in your community. Buyers age 50+ and young first-time buyers seem to prefer a walk-in shower in the master bathroom.

## 3. Can a walk-in shower fit in the space I have for a bathroom?

In most cases, the answer is yes. A walk-in shower can be installed in a corner or in a space that is at least 36-by-36 inches. Shower bases come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Custom tile or a poured base can be made to fit almost any space. A contractor can provide advice and options for installing the right walk-in shower unit to accommodate your space.

## 4. What type of maintenance does a walk-in shower require?

The biggest maintenance issue for walk-in showers is the door. Cleaning a shower with glass doors can be a chore, especially if it has sliding doors. Hinged doors are preferred to sliding doors for their ease of maintenance.

## 1. FAQs about Walk-In Showers

---

### 5. What are the advantages of a walk-in shower without doors?

[Doorless walk-in showers](#) address several concerns we typically hear from homeowners looking to replace a bathtub and/or shower. One concern is always **ease of maintenance**. Homeowners want a bathroom that is easy to clean and requires minimal care of surfaces. Showers with doors have frames where debris, soap scum, calcium and mildew can build up and are difficult to clean.

Another concern is **ease of access**, particularly for family members with compromised mobility who have difficulty using a confined shower. Thresholds can be an inconvenience for door-enclosed showers and cause tripping. Glass sliding doors can be obstacles when they stick or run off their glides. Showers without doors can alleviate these concerns.

Eliminating the shower door can help **optimize space** in a small bathroom because you don't have to factor in the door swing in determining the placement of other fixtures. In a large bathroom, the shower location becomes a "shower room" when separated by a partition wall of tile or glass.



[Doorless Walk-in Shower with Block Glass Walls](#)



## 2. Types of Walk-In Showers

---

The [design of your shower](#) will depend on the space of your bathroom. There are **three types of walk-in showers** to consider:

### 1. Custom Walk-In Showers

Custom walk-in showers offer the most design options. They can be tailored to fit almost any bathroom space. A variety of materials can be incorporated into the design such as tempered glass, block glass, marble, solid surface, tile and granite.

Custom walk-in showers can also be designed to minimize upkeep. Consider this as you choose a base or flooring for the shower, the enclosure and doors. A tile shower enclosure is easier to clean if you use larger tiles in the surround. Larger tile means less grout to clean. [Walk-in showers without doors](#) with tile surfaces wipe down easily.

If you want a walk-in shower with doors, and have a bathroom space where door swings will not present a problem, consider hinged doors. Hinged doors can be wiped down with a glass cleaner and debris build up in the frame is less of a problem. Another popular option for custom walk-in showers is a [wall/base kit from Onyx](#). Onyx produces bases in many shapes and sizes that will fit virtually any space. They also offer configurations for [showers with and without doors](#).



Doorless Walk-in Shower with Marble Tile Walls  
and River Rock Tile Floor  
[www.McClurgTeam.com](http://www.McClurgTeam.com)

## 2. Types of Walk-In Showers

---

### 2. Prefabricated Shower Bases and a Separate Surround

[Prefabricated shower pans or bases](#) are available in many materials including stone and acrylic. Prefab bases can be combined with prefabricated shower surrounds or custom surrounds made from materials such as quartz, granite, travertine and tile.

Some homeowners are using acrylic prefab shower bases with custom surrounds because of the durability of acrylic and its easy maintenance. Acrylic is seamless, slip-resistant and will not crack like tile flooring may in a shower, plus there is no grout to clean. Prefabricated bases are also less expensive than a custom base.



Neo-angle Walk-in Shower with Prefabricated Base

## 2. Types of Walk-In Showers

---

### 3. Prefabricated Walk-In Shower Stalls

[Prefabricated shower stalls](#) are made of fiberglass finished with acrylic or a polyester gel coat. They come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors. Most are square or rectangular with an open side for a door or curtain. There are also corner units. This is the least expensive option for a walk-in shower.

Prefab shower stalls come in several models for assembly. One-piece units are large and sometimes difficult to get into a room. Two- or three-piece stalls make the logistics of moving the unit easier. Some units may contain a shower base while others may require a separate base. Doors are usually purchased separately. Options include a shower bench, soap dishes and storage shelves, grab bars and offset controls placed away from the water stream to minimize the risk of scalding.



**Prefab Walk-in Shower with Hinged Glass Door**



### 3. Low or No Thresholds

---

Many homeowners prefer the look and style of a walk-in shower with no threshold or a low threshold. It's also a design feature recommended for individuals who use a wheelchair or have impaired mobility.

The shower base or floor design is important for a walk-in shower without doors. Because there is an opening to the rest of the bathroom, the flooring needs to be designed to contain water. Your best option is either a custom fabricated shower made from a solid material such as [Onyx](#), or a custom tiled shower floor.

To eliminate the threshold, a sloped floor is required in the shower, which both of these options allow for. Water should drain easily and not puddle on the floor.



**Doorless Walk-in Shower with No Threshold**

## 4. Multiple Showerheads and Body Sprays

---

If you're looking to create a spa-like experience in your walk-in shower, consider multiple showerheads and wall mount body sprays.

- **Rainfall showerheads** are larger than standard showerheads and are positioned directly above the user. They can be wall or ceiling mounted and may require an extension.
- **Hand-held showerheads** are great for their maneuverability and massage features. They are often used in combination with rainfall showerheads or standard fixtures.
- **Wall mount body sprays** can be installed on opposite walls to provide a massage-like shower experience. Body sprays can be adjusted to provide a range of water flow from gentle mist to jet spray. They can be installed with rainfall or standard showerheads as well as with hand-held units.



## 4. Multiple Showerheads and Body Sprays

---

Keep in mind that showers with multiple showerheads use more water than a standard shower and may require changes to your water supply lines, water heater and/or drains. Standard showerheads typically use about 2.5 gallons of water per minute (gpm). Water saving showerheads will use 2.0 gpm or less. Body sprays can use 1.6 gpm or more each.

- **Water supply lines** are usually either ½ inch or ¾ inch lines at your shower. If you have good water pressure, the larger line will supply greater water capacity to your showerheads, which may be needed depending on the configuration of your multiple showerhead system.
- **Hot water supply** is also a factor. If the design of your new system exceeds the capacity of your water heater, you may need a larger tank.
- **Drainage** may also need to be expanded to accommodate your new system. This may require installing a larger drain for your system or installing two drains.



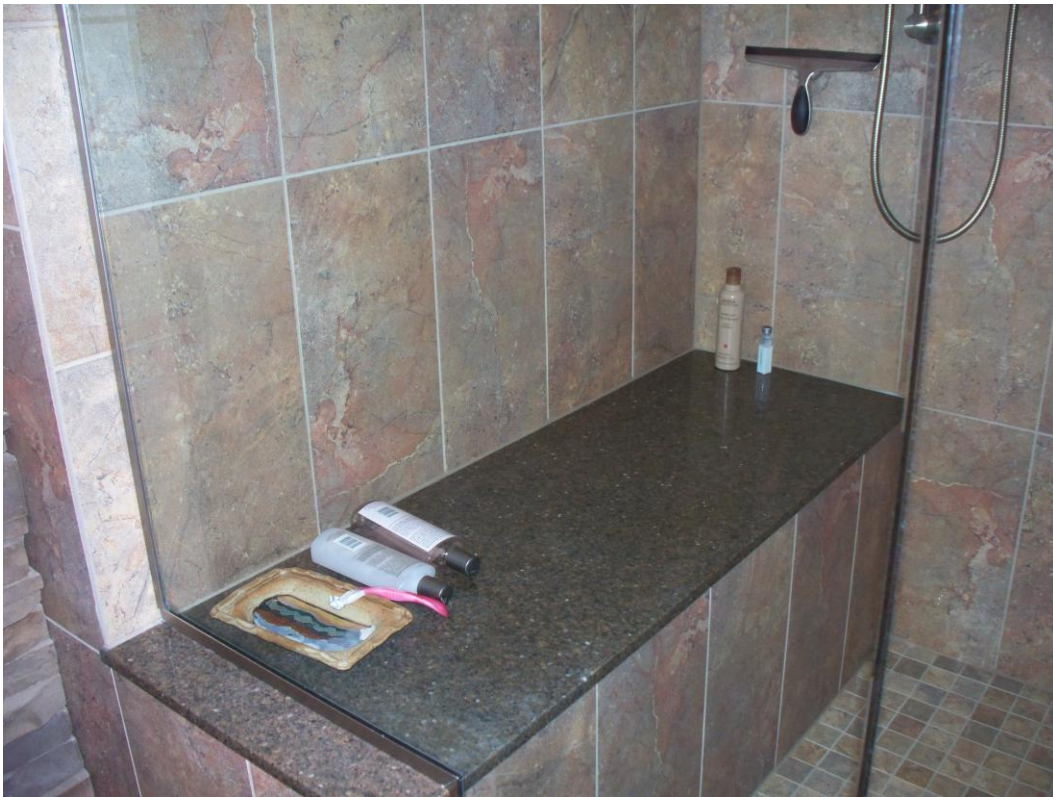


## 5. Accessories

---

### Add a Shower Seat

You will find portable [shower seats and benches](#) in a variety of materials - teak, acrylic, metal and plastics. We prefer [built-in seats and benches](#) for both the function and aesthetics. Built-ins won't shift and are made of materials that are easy to clean such as acrylic, tile, solid surface, quartz and granite. Built-in seats can also be scaled to the space in a shower stall and can be placed along a wall or in a corner.



### Create a Stunning Tile Design

A stunning tile design doesn't have to be complicated. Classic [white subway tile](#) is still popular among homeowners and will stand the test of time. Glass mosaic tile is being shown in contemporary bathroom design as an accent or a field tile. Glass mosaic tile looks great when paired with travertine, [glazed wall tile](#), [porcelain tile](#) or even river rock tile. Black and white tile is also a classic bathroom design trend.

## 5. Accessories

---

### Add a Niche or Built-in Shelf for Shampoos and Soaps

Built-in shower shelves and niches are an asset in any shower stall. Built-ins are sturdy and can be placed where access is optimal. We don't recommend caddies or pole shelving because they can shift due to the weight of bottles, require frequent replacement and they are difficult to clean.



### Add a Grab Bar for Safety

[Grab bars](#) have changed over the years and are now incorporated into the design of bathrooms for function and safety. If you've travelled recently you may have noticed them in hotel bathrooms (or not noticed them because they look like towel bars). Grab bars come in varied shapes and sizes. One practical use of a shower grab bar is for foot care or shaving legs. Install a small bar about six inches off the shower floor to serve as a footrest.



## 6. Ventilation and Lighting

---

Two important functional issues to address in any [bathroom update or remodeling project](#) are proper ventilation and lighting. Many bathrooms are small spaces susceptible to mold due to the humidity caused by using showers and tubs in a confined area. Fans help to control this problem.

**Walk-in showers without doors** do not require any special [bathroom ventilation](#). New bathroom ventilation fans feature better blade design and high performance motors that are more efficient and quieter. There are also models that offer low-level lighting and/or a night light. If the walk-in shower space is large enough, ventilation and lighting can be installed in the ceiling outside of the shower stall. You may wish to consider using a bathroom fan with a humidity sensor.



**Bathroom Ventilation and Fan Lighting**

## 6. Ventilation and Lighting

---

Here are some of the features you'll see in **new bathroom ventilation and fan/light products**:

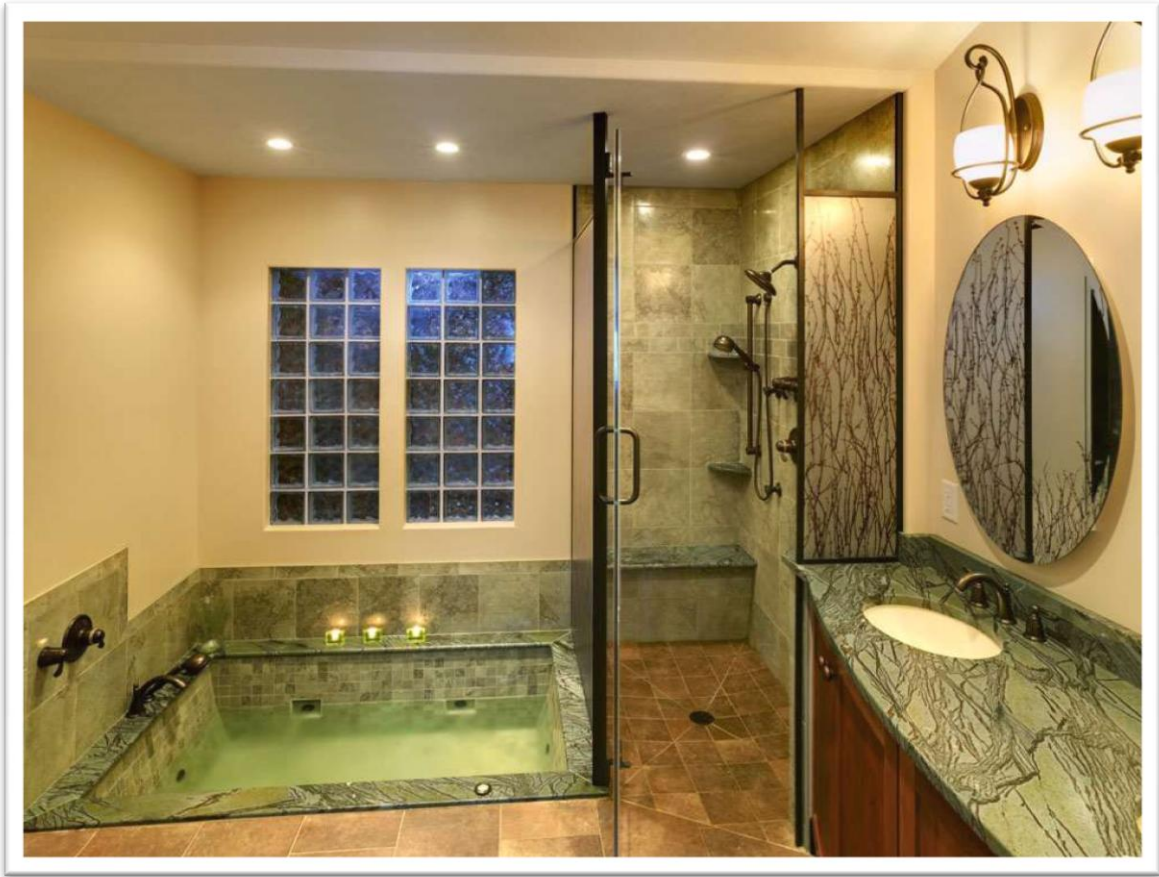
1. New fans are up to **65 percent more energy efficient** than standard fans.
2. New fan/light units are [ENERGY STAR-qualified](#) and equipped for **LED or compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs**, which replace standard incandescent bulbs. LED and CFL lights use up to 75 percent less energy.
3. Models now include **low-profile grilles** that blend into ceilings. The grilles also have superior light lenses that disperse light to reduce the number of lights needed in the room.
4. Fan/light units are available with **humidity sensing** options that turn on automatically when humidity rises then turns off when humidity returns to normal levels.
5. The units are UL listed for **safe use over bathtubs and showers** when connected to a GFCI protected circuit.
6. Manufacturers offer **decorative flush mount** fan/light models with attractive glass globes and a variety of finishes.

Among the products we recommend for bathroom ventilation and lighting is [Broan-Nutone](#). They have been in the business of manufacturing ventilation fans for nearly 80 years and offer more than 50 ENERGY STAR-qualified models.

Broan-NuTone also offers a model, [LunAura](#), which uses LED lights. LunAura fans provide ambient lighting, including ambient blue lighting, to create a spa-like environment in a bathroom. LunAura fan/lights have a night light feature that is energy efficient and emits a blue light.

Another product we recommend is the ["Whisperlite" fan/light made by Panasonic](#). This unit is quiet and provides bright lighting with a 32-watt compact fluorescent bulb and 4-watt nightlight for safety. It also has a built-in damper to prevent back draft that brings cold outside air into a bathroom.

Talk with your contractor about installing fans and fan/light units. **Please note: it is very important when a fan is vented that it is NOT vented into the attic or soffit.** It must be vented to the exterior, otherwise all of that moist air can build up and cause mold or rot.



**McClurg**

60 East Main Street • Marcellus, NY 13108 • 315-673-2051  
© 2014 McClurg. All Rights Reserved.

McClurg. Design Build Remodel Repair  
[www.McClurgTeam.com](http://www.McClurgTeam.com)