



Hit the de



My first home: project 4

Kate gets decked out to give her tiny verandah a quick makeover, but discovers it has to be replaced completely

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My tired back deck could barely fit a table and two chairs on its peeling maroon boards, and was even more of an eyesore after my recent courtyard makeover. I assumed a simple decking re-clad job would do, but discovered rotting timber joists and splitting bearers under the old boards. It was time for a whole new deck!

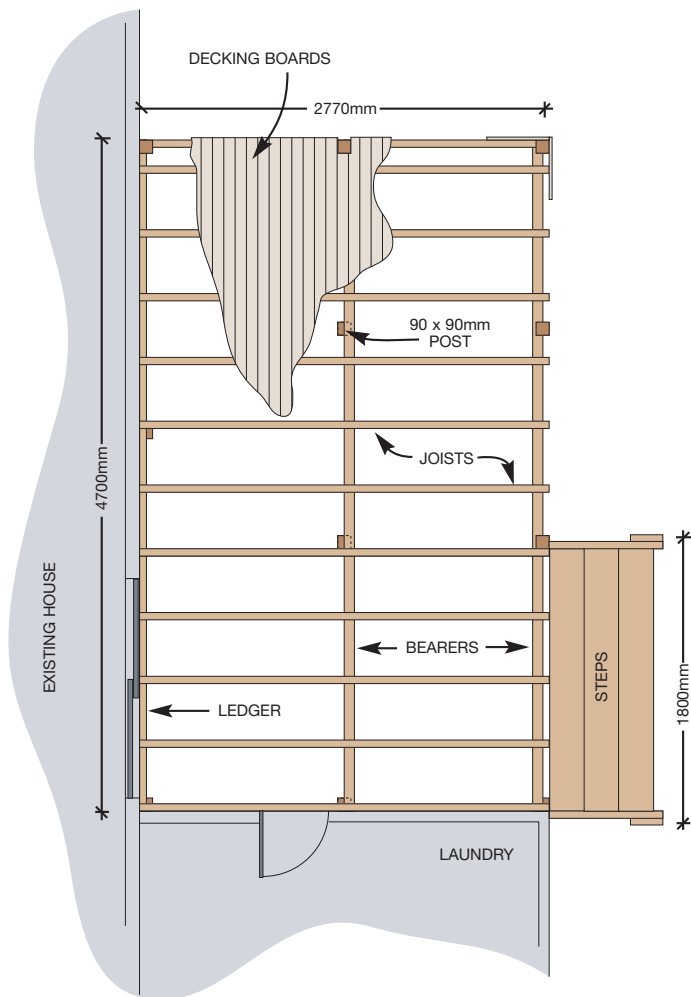
The new design

We decided to extend the deck further along the back of our house to make it more functional. It gets beautiful morning sun and looks out over the yard – a really great place to have breakfast. I kept the design simple, running stairs directly from the house to the yard, and using simple, open wire railings to create a sense of space. We decided to fix it to the house, rather than make it freestanding, to extend our living area. If only I could afford those fancy bi-fold doors.

“It’s a wonder our old rotting deck (above) was still standing! But rebuilding meant it could be made bigger and more functional.”

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We love the extra living space and spend more time outside.

Calling in the professionals

I'll admit to feeling daunted at the thought of building something that not only had to look pretty, but was an actual construction job. Any short cuts could end in disaster. I decided to seek some professional advice.

With the know-how of carpenter Dave, we double checked that I'd measured everything correctly. Dave then got stuck in and helped with all the initial heavy framework for the deck, such as fixing the ledger, the bearers and joists. This saved me needing to hire any big tools, and saved loads of time (not to mention giving peace of mind).

I finished by laying the decking boards, and painting and putting up the handrails. It was well worth a day or two of professional help!



Carpenter Dave put up the heavy framework.



1 Removing the old deck

Using a crowbar, we got stuck into lifting the cracked decking boards. Too easy! Or so I thought. Beneath the boards I found rotting joists and split bearers. This meant that the deck had seen better days and the whole lot would have to be replaced. Biting the bullet, we cleared the entire area and prepared to start from scratch.



A daybed with lots of cushions brings colour and comfort.



2 Measuring and setting out

The height of the deck was determined by the existing sliding doors to the house. We measured up from the ground to the bottom of the doors to set out the new design. I marked the shape of the deck directly onto the existing concrete slab, using a builder's square in the corners. The overall dimensions of the new deck determines how many bearers, joists and posts will be needed to support it, so it's important to get this part right.



3 Putting up the ledger

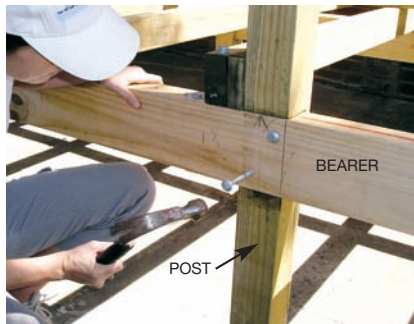
My first job was to set the height of the timber ledger. I marked along the top of it, allowing room for the joists and decking boards to sit just below the doorsill. Using a drill, we drilled holes for the dynabolts at 450mm centres along the ledger. With carpenter Dave's help, I then lifted the ledger away and drilled into the brickwork using a 12mm masonry bit. I tapped the dynabolts through the ledger and into the brickwork then tightened them up.



4 Posts and supports

As the deck sat over an existing concrete slab, there was no need to build footings. The posts sat in galvanised steel supports, which were dynabolted into the slab. I marked the housing positions for the bearers on the posts. Dave made a series of close cuts, using a circular saw, then cleaned out the housing with a chisel and hammer.

HINT Reseal any cut timber edges to prevent rotting. I brushed mine with Protim Reseal.



5 Erecting the bearers
Now for some heavy lifting. The bearers do what the name suggests – bear up the deck. I needed two big bearers to run parallel to, and at the same height as, the ledger. I positioned them into the notched-out housing in the posts, then drilled two offset holes through each bearer into the posts. I tapped in the cuphead bolts and then tightened the nuts with a shifter, to fix them firmly in place.



6 Putting up the joists
The treated pine joists, which sat perpendicular to the bearers and ledger, were cut to length. As the decking boards are to be fixed to these, we spaced them at 450mm centres and checked them for straightness with a stringline. We then fixed them in place with galvanised nails.
HINT Nail guns help get the job done much faster than hammering by hand.



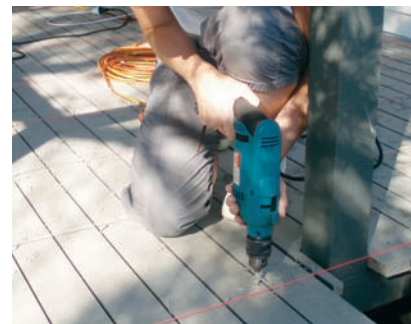
7 Installing steps
We needed three steps from the platform to the ground. These were beyond my basic skills, so carpenter Dave whipped them up for me. He used three lengths of 240 x 45mm treated pine for the treads and stringers (sides of the steps), which he housed out to accommodate the treads. Then 90 x 90mm timber supports were placed under the centre of each step to prevent any spring or squeaks. The stringers were sat in L-shaped post supports to keep the timber off the ground.



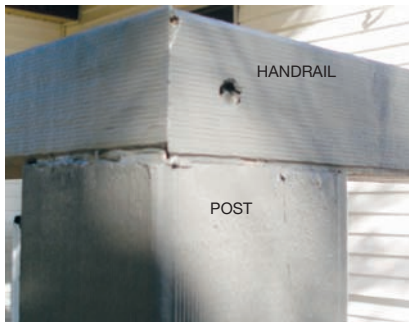
9 Painting under the deck
Now to swap that power drill for a paintbrush. Before the decking boards were positioned over the joists, I gave the tops of each, and the posts, handrails and steps, a coat of Taubmans SunProof Max in 'Woodland Grey', to protect the timber. Painting the tops of the joists prolongs the life of the treated pine and helps prevent rot.



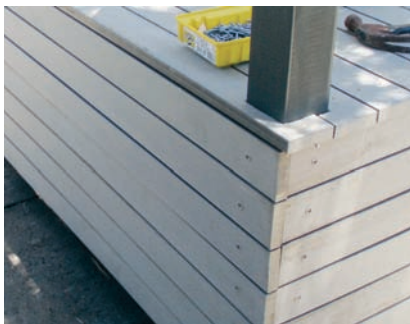
10 Laying the deck boards
Now for the fun part – laying the decking! After making sure that the first board was dead straight, and fixing it into place, I placed the remaining boards over the joists. Using a decking nail as a guide, I spaced them evenly, with a small gap between each. As I wanted to keep each line of screws perfectly straight, I ran a stringline up the centre of each joist as a drilling guide. I then pre-drilled holes for the screws with a 3mm twist bit.



11 Screwing and cutting
Before screwing in the decking boards, I used a countersinking rose on the pre-drilled holes, so that the head of each screw would sit neatly just below the decking surface. No tripping or catching toes! I fixed the boards along the joists using 65mm x 10g stainless steel decking screws. Time to trim the overhang! After fixing a timber straightedge as a guide for the saw, I ran it along the end of the deck to create a nice, clean edge, then gave the cut a quick sand to round it off.



8 Positioning handrails
After a day and half, Dave left and I set to work on finishing the skeleton deck, beginning with the handrails. These are normally positioned at 1000mm high, so I marked the posts at 960mm above the decking boards height with a straightedge and level. The excess of each post was removed with a circular saw. For the handrail, I cut two 90 x 45mm lengths of treated pine to fit over the posts and only had to mitre one corner so the two sides would fit together. I screwed this handrail to the top of the posts with 75mm x 10g screws.



12 Fascia to finish
Since the deck sat low to the ground, I decided to enclose the base with decking boards, for a tidy finish and to hide all the framework underneath. This was simply a matter of screwing the boards to the face of the posts. It completed the look of the deck and gave it a real sense of shape.

It's all in the details...



Easy balustrade

I used the Easy Fit Balustrade System (left) as it's a swageless system that doesn't require specialist tools. The wire looks modern and adds to the deck's sense of space. Made from 316 marine grade stainless steel, it won't rust in a hurry. **HINT** Tightening the wire swages may require extra muscle. It took us a couple of goes, as we hadn't tightened the housing to the head firmly enough and the wire kept popping out. Check that the wire is pushed as far into the head housing as possible, so the jaws have enough to hang onto when you tighten them.

Screw it!

I used stainless steel decking screws, which are a little more expensive but ensure longevity. They're countersunk square drive screws and come with a square drive drill bit. Very handy!



Suppliers

ITW Proline

Dynabolts, galvanised cuphead bolts, stainless steel decking screws and wire and Easy-Fit Balustrade System. Ask your hardware retailer for Zenith brand fasteners or visit www.itwproline.com.au

Modwood

Decking boards.
Call 02 8805 5000 or visit www.wpcdecking.com

Taubmans

SunProof Max low-sheen paint. Call 131 686 or visit www.taubmans.com.au



13 Fixing the eyelets
I decided to go for a wire railing for an open and airy feel. I first needed to fix small eye straps to each post to hold the strands of wire. To ensure the eye straps were spaced evenly down the posts, I made a timber template with hole locations for each eye strap. I then clamped the template to the post and pre-drilled the hole locations before attaching the eye straps in place. It saved lots of unnecessary measuring.



15 Fixing the wire swages
You may need an extra pair of hands for this job. Take the swageless balustrade fitting apart and feed the wire through the small jaw housing. Slide the jaws carefully into the swage housing so they can't be lost. Slip on the tiny pressure ring, then screw the head of the fitting into the jaw housing, making sure the wire remains firmly inside. Use a pair of spanners to make sure they screw together firmly, then wind the opposite swage to pull the wire taut.



14 Preparing the wire
Working out the length of the wire was tricky, as I had to allow for the length of the swages at either end. Make sure you do a test run on one strand of wire first before cutting the others to length! If the first strand fits perfectly, with the swaging in place, cut the others to the same length.



16 Finishing the new deck
Finally. After four long days of hard work (and a little help), the crumbling old deck had been transformed into a functional, outdoor living area. I set my timber day-bed outside to soak up the morning sun and added a couple of decorator features, including a pebble door mat and a wrought-iron wall feature for candle mood lighting. Who said building a deck was tough?

Modwood colours & finishes

Grey

Smooth

Brushed

Ribbed

After weathering

Redwood

Smooth

Brushed

Ribbed

After weathering

Tallowwood

Smooth

Brushed

Ribbed

After weathering

Choosing my decking

I wanted a lasting timber deck without any maintenance and discovered a great composite product called Modwood.

It's made from recycled timbers and plastics and looks just like natural timber but lasts longer. It doesn't require painting, oiling or staining and was easy to install.

The boards are termite- and moisture-resistant so they won't crack, rot or warp. Modwood comes in three natural colours of Grey, Redwood and Tallowwood in 5.4m and 4.8m lengths. It looks great and it's environmentally friendly!

It's available at most Bunnings outlets. For more information, visit the website at www.wpcdecking.com