

How to Cut Stair Spindles for Sloped Bottom Rail

For exterior wood balustrades, we recommend the use of our Sloped Bottom Rail. This has a 15 degree slope to it, which helps shed water and prevent rot at the base of the spindles.

We get asked all the time – “Should I use a flat bottom rail on the stairs?” You could, but you don’t need to. We recommend using sloped bottom rail on the stairs as well, so it matches the rest of your system. Cutting the compound angle in the spindle is pretty easy, as you’ll see here.

With the right tools, to cut porch stair spindles is a fairly simple task.

You’ll need to cut the angle on the ends of your stair spindles on site during installation. It is not done here at our shop. This is because every stair is slightly different, and cutting the angle on site avoids potential problems with the installation.

We recommend the use of a table saw and miter gauge.

Set the angle of your table saw to 15 degrees (to match the angle of the sloped bottom rail).

Next, set the angle of your miter gauge, which will slide in the slot provided on your table saw, to the angle of your stair rail.

Raise the saw to 1/2 the width of the spindle so that it cuts half way through the thickness of the spindle.

It is best to use a miter gauge with a length stop, so each spindle will be exactly the same length.

You’ll need to first cut the angle on one side, then shift the miter gauge to the opposite angle for the other side.

There are a few different ways to do it, and each finish carpenter will have their own tricks. But this should work well.

Try it on a few scrap pieces first, and soon you’ll be proud to show off your work on your porch stairs.

