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# Baths & Bathing

*A comprehensive guide to ensure you select the perfect bath for your suite*



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# History of the bathtub

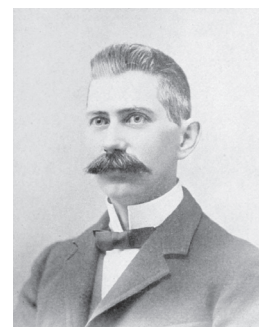
## *A brief overview from 3300 BC to the present day*

Documented early plumbing systems for bathing go back as far as around 3300 BC with the discovery of copper water pipes beneath a palace in the Indus Valley Civilization of ancient India. Evidence of the earliest surviving personal sized bath tub was found on the Isle of Crete where a five foot long pedestal tub was found built from hardened pottery.

The clawfoot tub, which reached the apex of its popularity in the late 19th century; had its origins in the mid 18th century, where the ball and claw design originated in Holland, possibly artistically inspired by the

Chinese motif of a dragon holding a precious stone. The design spread to England where it found much popularity among the aristocracy, just as bathing was becoming increasingly fashionable. Early bathtubs in England tended to be made of cast iron, or even tin and copper with a face of paint applied that tended to peel with time.

The Scottish-born entrepreneur David Buick invented a process for bonding porcelain enamel to cast iron in the 1880s while working for the Alexander Manufacturing Company in Detroit. The company, as well as others including Kohler



*The Scottish-born entrepreneur David Buick invented a process for bonding porcelain enamel to cast iron in the 1880s*





Company and J. L. Mott Iron Works, began successfully marketing porcelain enameled cast-iron bathtubs, a process that remains broadly the same to this day.

Far from the ornate feet and luxury most associated with clawfoot tubs, an early Kohler example was advertised as a “horse trough/hog scald, when furnished with four legs will serve as a bathtub.” The item’s use as hog scald was considered a more important marketing point than its ability to function as a bathtub.

In the latter half of the 20th century, the once popular clawfoot tub morphed into a

built-in tub with a small apron front. This enclosed style afforded easier maintenance and, with the emergence of coloured sanitary ware, more design options for the homeowner.

Coloured baths were introduced to the US market in 1928. Over time, the influx of such design options, coupled with styles which were easier to clean and care for, led to the near complete demise of clawfoot-style tubs. They have seen something of a revival thanks to new materials and processes but, in the 21st century sleek modern styles predominate.

## **Historically, two main styles of bathtub have been common:**

### **Western style:**

Bathtubs in which the bather lies down. These baths are typically shallow and long.

### **Eastern style:**

Bathtubs in which the bather sits up. These are known as ofuro in Japan and are typically short and deep (see photo on previous page).



# Different types of baths

The types of bath which you are likely to come across - and which account for over 99% of UK sales - are standard (single or double-ended) baths, shower baths, freestanding baths, corner baths and whirlpool baths. Which you choose should probably depend as much upon practical factors, such as the amount of space available, and who the bath is primarily for, as on fashion.

Few of us are lucky to have bathrooms large enough to

accommodate every luxury, hence floorspace is perhaps the most obvious restricting factor to consider.

Less obviously, do you have room for false ceilings, floors or walls? Smart bathroom suites with components which all fit flush against the wall look great, but it needs to be possible to get behind them. This can affect your configuration of the bathroom as a whole.

## **A. Double-ended standard bath**

These baths are usually rectangular with internal slopes at both ends and the taps in the centre of one of the long sides.

## **B. Single ended standard bath**

These are usually tucked efficiently into a corner, and thus supplied with panels for one end and one long side. Being placed away from a corner, however, makes access especially easy, which is great for parents and carers.

## **C. Shower baths**

These have a wider, flat bottomed shower area within a conventional bath. Ideal if you shower more often than you bathe and don't have room for a separate bath and shower. Available in left or right handed versions. Squarer styles are usually referred to as L-shaped, rounder styles as P-shaped.



### **Freestanding baths**

A freestanding bath in the middle of a large room makes a big, beautiful statement. Of course, both water and waste pipes need to get to it, usually via space under the floorboards or, especially if the floor is

concrete, within a raised floor. Most freestanding baths are either modern in style, like the one shown here, or old-fashioned roll-top cast iron baths, such as the one shown on page two.

#### **D. Freestanding bath**

Modern acrylic freestanding baths such as this are double-skinned to incorporate built-in waste, overflow, feet and baseboard. Almost all require freestanding taps.



### Corner baths

Corner baths serve different purposes. Classic corner baths have sides of equal length. By going across and *into* the corner, they are larger, which is great for bathing more than one person at a time, or if you just like a roomy bath.

Offset corner baths have sides of unequal length. This maximises the bathing space whilst occupying less of the total available space.

Finally, corner freestanding baths offer a stylish and practical way to fit what looks a

freestanding bath, into a corner. They are less suited to an overhead shower than most offset corner baths.

#### Left or right-handed?

Offset corner baths and p-shaped shower baths are left or right-handed. To be sure which you need imagine the bath is in place and you are standing at the foot of it looking towards the shower end. If the wall is immediately to your left, you need a right-handed bath.

#### E. Corner freestanding bath

A practical, space-efficient way to get the freestanding look.

#### F. Offset corner bath

These fit efficiently into left or right hand corners of the bathroom as required. Remember to check which, when you order.

#### G. Classic corner bath

A space-efficient way to enjoy a big bath. Large corner baths often offer whirlpool or spa options (see next page).



### **Whirlpool and spa baths**

'Whirlpool' is a general term for the two different methods of activating water in a bath: spa and whirlpool.

A whirlpool bath has jets around the sides of the bath. Water is drawn from the bath by a pump, mixed with air and returned through the jets at high pressure. The mixture of air and water and flow rate is adjusted by a control panel located on the rim or by remote control.

A spa bath pumps just air up, through the bath water, via jets located in the bath. Again,

the flow rate is governed by a control panel or remote control.

Both whirlpool and spa baths offer the hydrotherapy benefits of dilation of blood vessels in the skin and underlying tissues. This is good for the health of the skin, whilst the varying pressures of the warm water soothe and relax your muscles.

Some also have coloured lights, the colour and changeability of which can be controlled to soothe or energise as desired. This is known as chromatherapy.

#### **H. Whirlpool bath**

Whirlpool baths use high pressure jets to pump a mixture of air and water through the bath water. Some even have changing coloured lights which can be adapted to suit your mood.



# Different types of bath materials and their features

## *Moulded Acrylic Baths*

### **Material**

Acrylic baths are moulded from a single acrylic sheet and reinforced for strength and rigidity. Generally reinforcement is provided by spraying glass reinforced plastic (GRP) to the underside.

The baths are manufactured from a range of acrylic sheets having different thicknesses typically 4mm, 5mm or 8mm. As a rule, the thicker the sheet, the less GRP reinforcement is needed on the underside.

### **Cradle**

A steel or wooden frame supports and strengthens an acrylic bath from the underside. The cradle has adjustable feet for levelling on uneven floors. The cradle forms part of the bath package. It is usually

packed with the bath and requires assembling prior to installation. However, some acrylic baths come with cradles ready assembled, speeding up installation.

### **Baseboard**

The baseboard comes fixed onto the underside of the bath. Often, it is fully encapsulated and covered with GRP. The baseboard itself is usually made from a strong plastic or wood based composite. The purpose of the baseboard is to give strength and rigidity to the base of the bath, making it able to withstand the uneven pressures of typical use, especially when users get in and out of the bath.

### **Adjustable Fixings**

Acrylic baths are supplied with adjustable feet which serve two

functions. They allow the bath to be levelled during installation and they enable the height to be adjusted within a limited range.

### **Wall Fixings**

When wall fixings are supplied by the manufacturer it is important that they are used. Their purpose is to prevent movement or 'play' at the point where the bath meets the wall. Any movement of the bath relative to the wall can lead to leakage, particularly if a shower is used over the bath.





## Cast Iron Baths

A classic feature of many a traditional bathroom, genuine cast iron baths are now a rarity, despite having a number of advantages including:

- Immensely strong
- Completely rigid
- Very long lasting
- Always look good
- Easy to clean

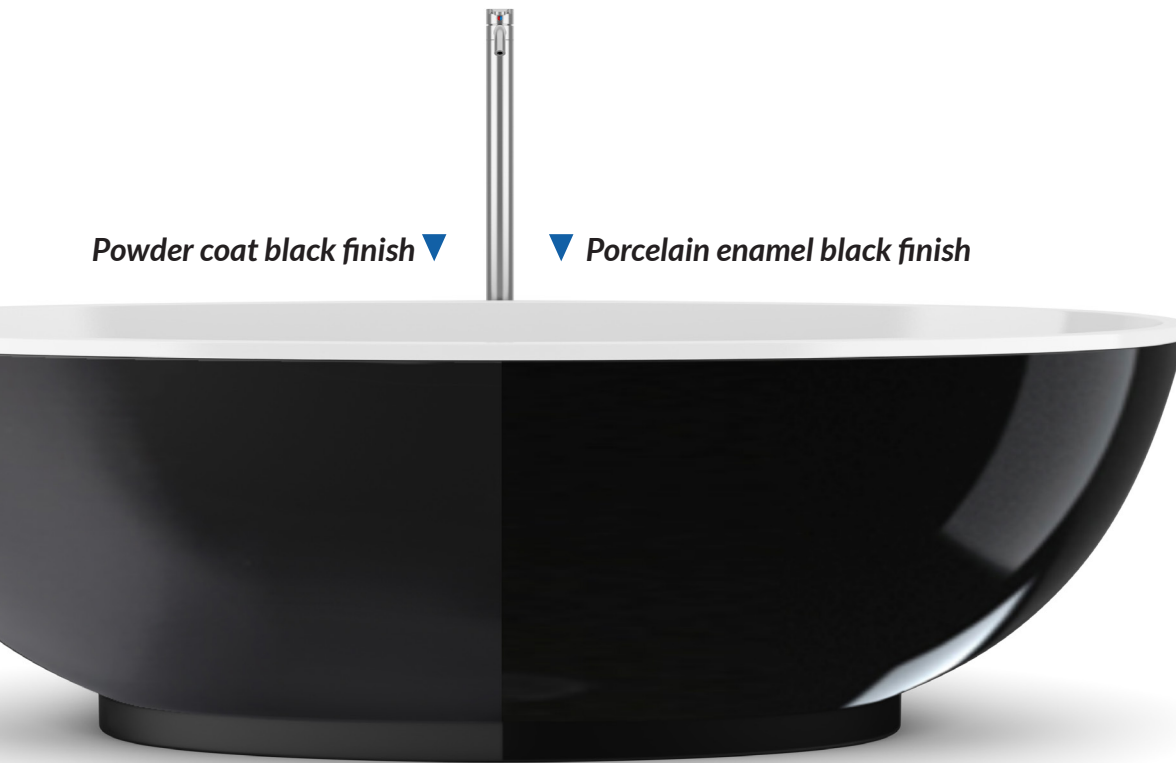
Less positively, they are incredibly heavy and absorb a great deal of heat. The

weight issue is exacerbated because, unlike many modern freestanding baths which use hidden cradles to spread the load of both the bath and its water, traditional cast iron baths focus all of their weight on four, quite pointed, feet.

Similarly, whilst steel baths, too, will quickly absorb some heat from the water, they are rarely as thick as a cast iron bath and, having panelling, are effectively insulated.

Couple these factors with the typically high cost of a cast iron bath, and it is perhaps not surprising that they have fallen from favour.

They do look terrific, though.



*Powder coat black finish ▼*

*▼ Porcelain enamel black finish*

## Porcelain Enamel Steel Baths

### Material

Steel baths are pressed from a steel sheet to form their shape. From pressing, the bath is taken through a cleansing process to ensure the perfectly clean surface needed to accept the enamel coating.

The vitreous porcelain enamel coat is applied by spraying. Baths are then fired at a very high temperature to make a strong chemical bond between the steel and the enamel.

### Support

Porcelain enamel steel baths have inherent strength and generally do not need a supporting cradle or a baseboard.

### Feet

Porcelain enamel steel baths are

supplied with adjustable feet. They allow levelling on uneven floors and some adjustment of the installation height.

Fundamentally, porcelain enamel is a form of glass bonded to metal at high temperature. It is the highest quality, most durable and sanitary finish available for metallic surfaces.

### The advantages are:

- Smooth and evenly finished
- Resistant to chipping and abrasives
- Easy to install, generally having no cradle
- Good rigidity
- Resistant to acids and alkalis
- Capable of supporting heavy weights
- Long lasting (flame proof, fade proof, corrosion resistant)

### Standard Baths

Porcelain enamel steel baths are normally rectangular in shape and are available in a wide range of sizes. Panels are usually supplied in plastics to finish the front and ends.



## Maintenance & FAQs

### Is the quality of Acrylic baths as good as others?

All acrylic baths are designed to give many years of reliable service. They all should meet BS EN198:2008 so their quality is guaranteed, and they are less costly to produce because of lower raw material cost and the manufacturing process.

### What is the best way to clean an acrylic bath?

A soft cloth and soapy water is all that is needed to get a good finish. Rinse with clean water and wipe dry.

### If I choose my bath from one supplier and the wash basin and toilet from another, will the colours match?

Even whites vary, so this is possible but not recommended. Make sure you are committed only after seeing them together.

### I like to soak in the bath, which bath keeps the water temperature warm for longest?

Acrylic baths have good insulation properties and keep the water warmer for longer.

### Which type of bath gives most choice of style?

Acrylic baths have good design flexibility and are produced in the widest range of styles.

### My bathroom has limited space, what are the options for fitting a bath?

Several manufacturers produce baths with the smaller bathroom in mind. Consider a shower bath.

### Are colours available in porcelain enamel steel?

Yes, though the range is very limited in comparison with that for acrylic baths.

### Will my local domestic water supply stain my porcelain enamel steel bath?

Porcelain enamel steel and acrylic baths are highly resistant to staining by water soluble materials. Cast iron baths can be affected over lengthy periods. Cleaning after use reduces the risk of staining.

### Can I change the position of my taps to accommodate a different type of bath?

Yes, provided the supply pipes can reach them, usually under floor boards or via the space between the bathtub and its outer panels.

### I wish to install a bath with taps mounted on the wall, are baths available without tap holes?

Yes, most manufacturers have baths in their range with no pre-cut tap holes.

## How do I make sure that I have a water tight seal between the bath and the wall?

Follow the instructions from the manufacturer. Importantly, use the wall brackets if provided to fix the bath to the wall. A silicone sealant can be used to make a neat seal. A good tip is to fill the bath with water before applying the sealant.

## Is it better to fit the bath panels before or after the bathroom flooring is laid?

Generally speaking the flooring should run under the edge of the bath. Fitting the panel on top of the flooring gives a neat finish.

## Do baths come with a guarantee?

All sold in the UK are guaranteed for at least one year. Many Plumbworld.co.uk baths are guaranteed for longer - some for as long as 25 years.

## Do whirlpool baths need a special water supply?

No, whirlpool baths utilise standard hot and cold supplies found in all households.

## Are whirlpool baths expensive to run?

Not really, because they use the heat in the water more efficiently, therefore there is less wastage of energy.

## Are whirlpool and spa baths very noisy?

No; if installed correctly they should work quietly and efficiently.

## Do I need a big bathroom for a whirlpool bath?

No, they are available in a full range of sizes, all the plumbing and the pump is usually hidden beneath the bath or within an airing cupboard so they don't take up more space than a standard bath.

## Do whirlpool baths need specialist fitters?

Yes. They are best installed by professional plumbers / electricians.

## Do patterns in the bottom of baths prevent slip?

No. Water plus soaps, shower gels, shampoos, etc. cause slipperiness. Consideration should be given to the use of wall grips and/or anti-slip mats to provide assistance in preventing slip.

## Acrylic Bath Maintenance

### We recommend that you:

- Clean up immediately after use to stop a build up dirt and scale.
- Use warm soapy water, CIF cream cleaner or Domestos multi-surface cleaner.
- Fix dripping taps to reduce the likelihood of any staining or build of lime scale.
- Minor scratches can be polished out with a mild polishing compound such as Brasso, but test with a small, less prominent area first.

### We recommend that you do not:

- Leave soap and shampoo pools, these can cause permanent stains.
- Never use household or commercial cleaning chemicals with bleach incorporated it can damage the acrylic.
- Do not use scouring products which might scratch the acrylic.



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