

A Guide to Preserving the Value of Your Home

THE HOMEOWNER'S HANDBOOK



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Section 3: Walls— Supporting the Roof and Keeping the Weather Out

Walls are divided into two types: bearing walls and non-bearing walls. Non-bearing walls are also called partition walls.

Bearing Walls

As discussed in the “Overview,” bearing walls carry the load (weight) of the home. Most exterior walls on homes are bearing walls because they support the roof above them, as shown in Photo 1-15 (above). Some interior walls also may be bearing walls if they support floors or part of the roof.

If you have an older home, your bearing walls may have been built with brick, stone masonry, or lumber. Today, if a bearing wall is made of masonry material, it is likely to be cinderblocks. Brick is still popular on exterior walls; however, today the brick is more likely to be used as a veneer rather than as a structural component.

Lumber-framed bearing walls are still popular today and commonly use 2-inch by 4-inch or 2-inch by 6-inch boards. However, other options exist. Some home builders now use finger-jointed studs, Photo 1-16 (right). Finger-jointed studs are made through a process where shorter lengths of wood are glued together and cured into longer lengths. Finger-jointed studs have the same, or greater, strength as traditional lumber.

A third option for building bearing walls is called “post and beam.” Post and beam framing is popular for its ability to allow large areas of glass walls and can provide an open feeling to a living space by allowing expansive ceilings.

Non-Bearing Walls

A non-bearing wall means just that: a wall that does not bear or carry a structural weight, Photo 1-17 (right). It simply acts as a divider or screen to provide privacy or to keep out the weather. Non-bearing walls can be framed with lumber or built of brick, block, steel studs, or stone masonry. Floating walls also fall into the category of non-bearing walls.



1-15 Bearing walls support the roof



1-16 Finger jointed studs



1-17 Non-load bearing wall
(note that it does not support the ceiling)

The Homeowner's Handbook was created to help you understand how your house was built and to preserve its value. It contains basic construction concepts for your home, identifies steps you can take to prevent problems, develops a schedule for routine maintenance, and suggests equipment that can safeguard you and your home.



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