

# SQUARE FOOTAGE – METHOD FOR CALCULATING: ANSI Z765-2003

(A voluntary guide created through cooperation of the American Institute of Architects, the Appraisal Foundation, the Building Owners and Managers Association, the Manufactured Housing Institute, the National Association of Realtors, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, HUD and others.)

## General

The ANSI standard establishes a consistent method of calculating the “Square Footage” or “Floor Area” of detached and attached single-family houses. The “Finished Square Footage” of a floor or house is defined as the qualifying Finished Area per this standard for that floor or house.

The standard defines the Square Footage of qualifying Finished Area or Finished Square Footage using the exterior dimensions of the building at each floor level, and including the areas of all interior walls and voids. The thickness of any corner trim pieces or greenhouse windows that do not have a corresponding floor level are excluded. For attached units, the outside dimension is the center line of the common walls. Internal room dimensions are not used in this system of measuring.

Measurements are taken to the nearest inch or tenth of a foot. The Finished Square Footage of a house is rounded to the nearest whole square foot and listed separately for above-grade finished and unfinished square footage and for below-grade finished and unfinished square footage.

## Finished Area

**Definition.** The ANSI standards define Finished Area as an enclosed area in a house suitable for year-round use, embodying walls, floors, and ceilings that are similar to the rest of the house.

Finished Area is not required to conform to any requirement for light and ventilation. (Unlike the term **Habitable Space** often used by established building codes to describe a room or space that has as one of its requirements a specified amount of natural or mechanical light and ventilation sources.)

**Garages and Attached Unfinished Areas.** Garages, attached or detached, are specifically excluded from the Finished Area. Use the interior wall surface of an attached garage wall as the outside wall of the house. Anywhere finished and unfinished areas are adjacent on the same level, the Finished Square Footage is calculated by measuring to the exterior edge or unfinished surface of any interior partition (sometimes a wood stud or other framing member) between the areas.

**Finished Areas Connected to the House.** Finished areas that are connected to the main body of the house by other finished areas such as hallways or stairways are included in the Finished Square Footage of the floor that is at the same level. Finished areas that are not connected to the house in such a manner cannot be included in the Finished Square Footage of any level. Finished areas above garages are included in the Finished Square Footage that is at the same level in the

main body of the house, but only if they are connected to the house by continuous finished areas such as hallways or staircases.

**Chimneys, Bay Windows.** Include any features that protrude beyond the exterior finished surface of the outside walls that (a) have a floor on the same level as the floor of a Finished Area and (b) meet ceiling height requirements, such as some chimneys and bay windows.

**Stairs.** If there are stairs, include them and their landings on every level they serve. Further, stairs that descend to an unfinished basement are included in the Finished Square Footage of the first level regardless of the degree of finish of the stairs or the degree of finish of the area around the stairs. In addition, areas beneath stairs are included in the Finished Square Footage regardless of the distance between the stairs and the floor below or of the degree of finish of that area. There is no specified height requirement under stairs.

**Open Below.** When there are openings to the floor below, subtract the opening from that level.

**Porches.** Exclude any areas, such as porches and converted garages, that are not finished or heated the same as the rest of the house.

**Split-Level.** For split-level designs, measure each level. You can lump multiple floor surfaces into one level if they are within two feet of each other.

**Lofts and Attics.** Lofts and finished attics must be accessible by a conventional stairway or other access to be counted. If you can only reach the loft by climbing a ladder, it is not part of the finished floor area regardless of the ceiling height.

**Low Ceilings.** Level ceilings must be at least 7 feet high, and at least 6 feet 4 inches under beams, ducts and other obstructions. There is no height restriction under stairs. If a room has a sloped ceiling, at least one-half of the finished floor area must have a ceiling height of at least 7 feet. Otherwise, omit the entire room from the floor area calculations. If a room with a sloped ceiling meets the one-half-of-floor-area-over-7-feet requirement, then include all the floor space with a ceiling height over 5 feet.

## **Finishes**

**Interior.** Wall and ceiling finishes include but are not limited to painted gypsum wall board, wallpaper-covered plaster board, and wood paneling. Floor finishes include but are not limited to carpeting, vinyl sheeting, hardwood flooring, and concrete floors with decorative finishes but do not include bare or painted concrete. Decorative finishes are long-lasting or permanent components of the slab produced by such methods as chemical staining, integral coloration of the concrete, scoring, or stamping that modify the texture or appearance of the slab.

**Exterior.** Exterior finishes include but are not limited to masonry or masonry veneer; wood, aluminum, or vinyl siding; or gypsum wall board when used on the exterior wall common to an attached garage.

## **Unfinished Areas**

Finished areas that are not connected to the house, and Unfinished Areas like porches, balconies, decks, and similar areas can not be included in the Finished Square Footage but may be listed separately, measured from the exterior finished surface of the house to the outer edge of the floor surface area or exterior surface, and calculated by using the method referenced in the standard.

## **Plans-Based Method**

If the calculation of Finished Square Footage is made from the plans of a proposed house, the Statement of Finished Square Footage must include a declaration similar to the following:

**“Finished square footage calculations for this house were made based on plan dimensions only and may vary from the Finished Square Footage of the house as built.”**

## **Interior Rooms**

This standard does not cover the dimensions of rooms within single-family houses. However, room dimensions are typically measured between interior finished surfaces rather than between exterior finished surfaces as described in this standard.