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# Standard Terminology of Railing Systems and Rails for Buildings[1]

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## 1. Scope

1.1 This terminology consists of terms and definitions pertaining to railing systems and rails for buildings, and in particular, terms related to the standards generated by ASTM Committee E-6 on Performance of Building Constructions.

1.2 The purpose of this terminology is to provide meanings and explanations of technical terms, written for both the technical expert and the non-expert user.

1.3 This terminology is one of a group of special terminologies subsidiary to the comprehensive Terminology E 631.

1.4 Terms are listed in alphabetical sequence. Compound terms appear in the natural spoken order. Where definitions herein are adopted from other sources, they are exact copies. The source is identified at the right margin following the definition and is listed in Section 2.

## 2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*

E 631 Terminology of Building Constructions[2]

E 935 Test Methods for Performance of Permanent Metal Railing Systems and Rails for Buildings[2]

E 985 Specification for Permanent Metal Railing Systems and Rails for Buildings[2]

2.2 *ANSI/ASSE Standard:*

A1264.1 Safety Requirements for Workplace Floor and Wall Openings, Stairs, and Railing Systems[3]

## 3. Terminology

3.1 *Terms and Their Definitions:*

**baluster, baluster bar,** *n*—one of a series of closely spaced, upright, and parallel infill members of a balustrade, located between top rail or handrail and bottom rail or tread or floor beneath balustrade. Synonym for **picket.**

**baluster casting**—an ornamental cast element attached to a baluster. Also, cast element designed to attach baluster to top and bottom rails.

**baluster railing system**—a system consisting of posts, balusters, top rail, and bottom rail.

**balustrade,** *n*—a railing system consisting of a row of balusters capped by a rail or handrail.

**bottom rail**—the lowest member of a railing system, supporting balusters or panels, if any.

**building,** *n*—a structure comprising a partially or totally enclosed space, erected by means of a planned process of forming and combining materials. **E 631**

**cap,** *n*—a fitting or plug used to close the end of a pipe, tubular post, newel, or rail.

**cap rail**—a secondary railing element, often a handrail, fastened to the top rail of a railing system. (Syn. *rail cap*.)

*collar*, *n*— Synonym for **escutcheon**. **E 631**

*cover flange*— Synonym for **escutcheon**. **E 631**

*cover plate*—Synonym for **escutcheon**.

*cover ring*—Synonym for **escutcheon**.

**drop cap**—the cover of a railing post or newel that is exposed to view, usually below the stair stringer or floor. **E 631**

**easement,** *n*—the curved portion of a rail and handrail forming a transition in the vertical plane between the horizontal and inclined sections of a handrail.

**escutcheon,** *n*—a protective or ornamental cover located at the termination of a post, baluster, or rail against a tread, floor, or wall. (Syn. *collar, cover flange, cover plate,* or *cover ring*.)

*expanded metal*—See **screen**.

**finial,** *n*—an ornamental piece on the top of a post, newel, or railing; frequently in the form of an urn or pineapple, and so named. **E 631**

**flange,** *n*—a flat plate or formed piece at the end of a railing or rail element for attachment to the adjoining construction or supporting member.

*grab bar*—Synonym for **grab rail**. **E 631**

**grab rail**—a short length of rail located for safety or convenience to assist a person in movement at a specific location. (Syn. *grab bar*.) **E 631**

**guardrail system**—a railing system, providing protection for building users against accidental fall and injury, located at or

[1] This terminology is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E6 on Performance of Buildings and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E06.56 on Performance of Railing Systems and Rails for Buildings.

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[2] *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.11.

[3] Available from American Society of Safety Engineers, 1800 East Oakton Street, Des Plaines, IL 60018-2187.