

Dock design ideas for a residential waterfront

Plan boarding, access and service before you add furniture or finishes.

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Start with a movement plan. Draw how people travel from the house to the boat, where they carry bags and where they wait while someone boards. Then mark the service route for repairs. A calm waterfront design gives these tasks enough room without filling the whole permitted area.

Separate the functions

Keep the boarding route clear of seating and storage. Place ladders and equipment where they do not conflict with boat movement. Ask the designer to show water-level changes, gangway position and the boat's movement envelope. These checks must happen before a final furniture plan.

A narrow shoreline does not justify a long structure without permission. The British Columbia private-moorage guidance is a reminder to check land use before choosing the footprint. Your local authority sets the actual route for approval.

Choose a concept type

A floating layout may suit changing water levels, but anchoring and shore access still need design. A fixed or removable system has different foundations and seasonal tasks. Ask the contractor to compare practical constraints for the site rather than describe any system as suitable everywhere.

Use visual tools carefully

EZ Dock Designer and ShoreMaster Dock Builder can help explore product layouts. SketchUp can place a concept beside the house and landscape. Use these tools to ask better questions. They do not confirm bed conditions, structural loads, property boundaries or permission.

Keep the concept drawing clearly marked as a concept. Attach a list of assumptions about the boat, depth, weather exposure and services. Ask the design team to replace assumptions with measured information as work progresses.

Keep the handover simple

Prefer details that the owner can inspect and the service team can reach. Ask for concealed fixings and utilities to be documented. Review lighting, power isolation, drainage and rescue access with qualified designers. Select finishes after the access, maintenance and approval questions have clear answers.

Sources

- [EZ Dock, online dock designer](#). Public page fetched 2026-10-29. Publication date not stated unless shown on the page.
- [ShoreMaster, Docks, Boat Lifts & Waterfront Systems](#). Public page fetched 2026-10-29. Publication date not stated unless shown on the page.
- [Trimble, SketchUp](#). Public page fetched 2026-10-29. Publication date not stated unless shown on the page.
- [Province of British Columbia, Land use — private moorage](#). Public page fetched 2026-10-29. Publication date not stated unless shown on the page.

Frequently asked questions

Can a configurator produce permit drawings?

Treat the output as a concept unless the responsible authority and designer confirm otherwise.