

## House Measurement: The ANSI Standard

In 1996, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) adopted a standard for measuring single-family residential buildings, called the American National Standard Z765-1996. The ANSI standard bases floor area calculations on the exterior [foundation] dimensions of the building at each floor level, including all interior walls and [deducting] voids. "Finished area" is defined 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, sometimes referred to as "Gross Living Area" (GLA), is space that is intended for human occupancy and is:

1. Heated by a conventional heating system or systems (forced air, radiant, solar, etc.) that are permanently installed in the dwelling - not a portable heater - which generates heat sufficient to make the space suitable for year-round occupancy;
2. Finished, with walls, floors and ceilings of materials generally accepted for interior construction (e.g., painted drywall/sheet rock or paneled walls, carpeted or hardwood flooring, etc.) and with a ceiling height of at least seven feet, except under beams, ducts, etc. where the height must be at least six feet four inches [Note: In rooms with sloped ceilings (e.g., finished attics, bonus rooms, etc.) you may also include as living area the portion of the room with a ceiling height of at least five feet if at least one-half of the finished area of the room has a ceiling height of at least seven feet.]; and
3. Directly accessible from other living area (through a door or by a heated hallway or stairway).

### Areas **NOT** included:

Basements and Below-Grade Floor Areas - Even if the below-grade areas are fully finished, they are not part of the finished floor area according to **ANSI** standards. However, appraisers generally consider fully finished basement room(s) in their GLA calculations even if reported separately.

Attics, Lofts and Low Ceilings - Level ceilings must be at least 7 feet high, and at least 6 feet 4 inches under beams, ducts and other obstructions. 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. If it does not meet these requirements, then report the area as "finished attic" or "partially finished attic". 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's not part of the finished floor area regardless of the ceiling height.

Detached Rooms, Guest Cottages, Mother-in-Law Units & Dwelling Units - According to the ANSI standards, finished areas which are not connected to the main residence by a finished hall or stairway must be listed separately. If you have to leave the house to get to the room, it's not part of the finished floor area.

### Townhouses:

As an attached dwelling, it is not possible to measure all of the exterior walls of a townhouse. It is necessary to measure a townhouse from the inside, and to do this it is the same as measuring the second floor of a detached, single family house. Add in the thickness of the exterior walls as you measure each "exterior" wall. (6 inches for a typical exterior wall, 3 inches for the "common wall", that is, the wall that two units will share. An end unit townhouse will only have one common wall, but an interior unit will have two common walls.

### Condominiums:

A condominium unit is defined as "The absolute ownership of a unit in a multiunit building based on a legal description of the airspace the unit actually occupies, plus an undivided interest in the ownership of the common elements, which are jointly owned with the other condominium unit owners." As the owner of a condominium only owns the airspace of the unit, only the interior floor space is measured (exterior wall thickness is EXCLUDED).