

House Helper Question: November 20, 2007

Question:

I added several rooms last year and built a nice two level deck off the rear. The deck is made from Trex boards and the 4" x 4" posts are the standard wood posts. My problem is that several of the posts have twisted at the top leaving gaps at the railing level. Is there a fix for this?

Posts have a tendency to split and twist as the sun dries and cures the wood. Unfortunately, once the wood has twisted there is no way to straighten it. The good news is that, after the curing process, it will not get any worse. The least expensive solution is to live with the gaps the way they are until additional maintenance work needs to be done to the deck. If this is not an option, there are three other solutions, none of which are simple.

Purchase 4x4 Trex post sleeves to match your decking. Cut your railings back to accommodate the additional thickness of the post sleeve. Slip the post sleeve over the 4x4 and attach to the deck floor. To plumb, shim the top of the sleeve to the 4x4 but do not securely attach the sleeve to the 4x4 unless you are sure it has stopped twisting. Reattach the railings with Trex Railing Support Brackets.

If the 4x4s are not severely twisted, make a 3 1/2"x 3 1/2"x 1/2" filler block which you will attach to the side of the post at the point where the railing attaches to the post. Hold the block against the post resting on top of the railing and mark on the railing the angle provided by the block. Cut off the railing at this angle and slip the block between the railing and the post. Attach securely. This does not fix the posts, but fills the gap created by the twisting.

Remove the twisted posts and replace them with Number 1 Grade KDAT material, and then reattach the railings. Again, the new posts may twist over time as well. This process may be very difficult depending on how the twisted posts are attached to the deck and the railings.