

Brassware

This is arguably the most important piece of equipment in the bathroom - without the tap there is no control of water flow. Taps and mixers are sometimes given the overall term of 'brassware.'

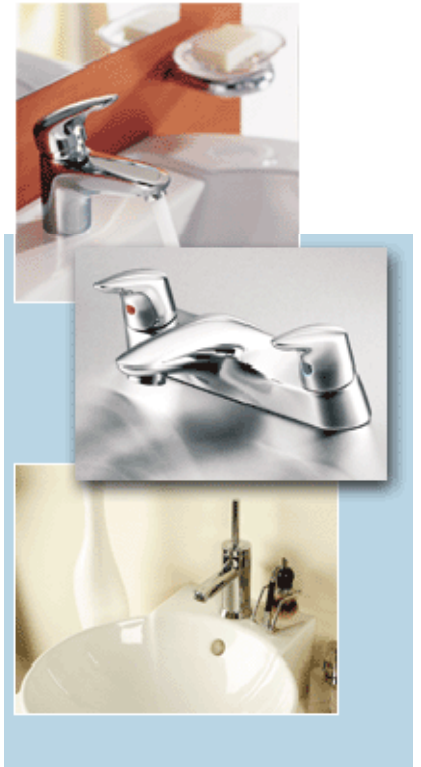
A tap is a valve for controlling the release of water from a hot or cold supply pipe. In the UK the word is used for any everyday type of valve, particularly the fittings that control water supply to baths and washbasins.

Tap designs range from the very traditional, with 'cross head' handles Image 044 to the ultra modern designs with very stylish and sleek single levers having sharp lines and gorgeous curves.

Today most taps are supplied in brass or metal alloy with a chrome plated finish. The fashion for gold plate, gold finish, coloured or mixage (gold and chrome mix) finishes is waning.

Modern taps with ceramic disc mixing valves work better with the relatively high water pressures found in modern domestic pressurised plumbing systems. The use of 'gravity fed' water systems, which are common in older properties, tend to mean that the flow rate from modern taps can be rather low.

The installation of taps to a domestic or commercial water system is governed by the UK Water Regulations 1999 and plumbers should be fully trained in their use.



Features and Benefits

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Benefit</i>
Bath / shower mixer	Convenient solution for a bath filler and combined shower. Cost effective for a shower over the bath. Can be thermostatic.
Dual flow taps	Prevents unequal water pressure causing operating problems. More hygienic since water supplies are kept separate.
Monobloc mixer tap	Compact design, blends hot and cold water in a single body.
Pillar taps	Traditional separate hot and cold taps which do not blend the water. Useful where water supply pressures are unequal.
Pop up waste	Eliminates need for separate plug and chain.

Checklist: What to look out for/ things to ask about

- Company pedigree – for how long has the manufacturer and retailer been trading. Is the manufacturer a member of any trade organisation such as the BMA?
- Customer service – what does the manufacturer and retailer offer?
- Guarantee – what length of warranty and what conditions does the manufacturers give?
- Maintenance – are the taps easy to maintain. Will they need a specialist to repair them or can they be repaired by a good DIY enthusiast.
- Minimum Water Pressure – what minimum pressure do the taps require to give a good flow rate and will they work with your domestic plumbing system?
- Spare parts – what is available and for how long in the life of the product?
- Standards – do the taps conform with British Standards BS1010, BS5412, and BS12540. Do the taps perform as they should with given water pressure and flow rate? Is the chrome surface to standard and how will you know it will not peel off?



Frequently asked questions

Q Which taps are the most water-efficient?

A As a general rule spray mixer taps deliver less water than a conventional pillar tap, so they may be described as more efficient. But the flow of water has to be balanced against the users experience. A tap would be useless if it was highly efficient but only gave a dribble. Recent developments in tap and valve technology now mean that they are available with “click stops” which help the users to gauge how much water is being used.

Q What are the minimum and maximum operating water pressures for taps?

A Usually, a minimum of 0.1 bar water pressure is required but some products require as much as 3 bar. Always check compatibility of your chosen taps with your domestic plumbing system before purchase. Ask your supplier or plumber for help or read the brochures carefully. Most taps are designed to withstand water pressures of up to 10 bar maximum.

Q I don't understand the word BAR. What does it mean in regard to taps?

A Water pressure is measured in three common units: Bar, PSI (pounds per square inch) and Metres Head. So 1 Bar equals 10 Metres Head which equals 14.5 PSI. Bar tends to be the most common unit of measurement

Q What is best for cleaning chrome plated taps?

A Warm soapy water and a soft cotton cloth is best. Never use abrasive compounds or abrasive sponge pads. Once the surface of the chrome is scuffed it cannot be repaired. Limescale deposit may be removed with the juice of a lemon.



Q What manufacturing standards cover domestic taps?

A Three British Standards apply to taps. BS5412, which sets standards for performance. BS1010 for dimensions and compatibility. BS12540 for plating standards.