

FREE DIY GUIDE · HOME & GARDEN

Plan Your First Backyard Shed

Step by Step

A plain-English planning guide for first-time builders: choosing size and style, checking local rules, picking a foundation, budgeting materials, and the build steps from floor to roof.

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planning decisions to make first

8

build stages, in order

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budget & materials worksheet

What will your shed be for?

A shed can add storage, a workshop, a garden room, or a quiet hobby space. Deciding what it's for first makes every other choice easier, from size to doors and windows.

Use	Typical size	Features to think about
Garden tools	About 1.2 x 1.8 m (4 x 6 ft) to 2.4 x 1.8 m (8 x 6 ft)	Wall hooks, shelves, a wide enough door
Lawn mower & bikes	About 2.4 x 2.4 m (8 x 8 ft) to 3 x 2.4 m (10 x 8 ft)	Double doors and a ramp
Workshop	About 3 x 3 m (10 x 10 ft) or larger	Windows for light, workbench, power (by an electrician)
Garden room or office	About 3 x 3.6 m (10 x 12 ft) or larger	Insulation, larger windows, comfortable floor

Common shed roof styles

- ☐ **Gable:** classic peaked roof, good headroom
- ☐ **Lean-to (pent):** single slope, simplest to build
- ☐ **Saltbox:** uneven slopes, extra space on one side
- ☐ **Gambrel:** barn style, extra loft storage

Tips on size

- ☐ Measure what you'll store, then add about 25%
- ☐ Leave room to walk in and turn around
- ☐ Check door width against your biggest item
- ☐ Bigger sheds may need permits; check locally

My shed will be used for...

And the size I'm aiming for.

Build, kit, or buy? Building from plans usually costs the least and lets you choose the exact size. Kits save cutting time. Ready-made sheds are fastest but cost the most and offer fewer choices.

Rules, location & foundation

Getting these right before you buy materials saves money and headaches later.

Check local rules before you build

- ❗ Is a permit needed for your shed's size or height?
- ❗ How far must it be from fences and boundaries?
- ❗ Are there homeowner association or society rules?
- ❗ Are there buried pipes or cables? Call before you dig

Choosing the spot

- ☐ Level ground that drains well, not a low wet spot
- ☐ Easy access with a path to the door
- ☐ Away from overhanging branches
- ☐ Room to work around all sides

Mark it out

- ☐ Use stakes and string to mark the corners
- ☐ Check it's square: measure both diagonals; they should match
- ☐ Live with the layout for a day or two

Foundation	What it is	Good for
Concrete blocks	Solid blocks set level on compacted ground, supporting a timber floor frame	Small to medium sheds, simple DIY
Gravel pad	A frame filled with compacted gravel; drains well	Most garden sheds
Timber skids	Treated timber runners on gravel; can be moved later	Smaller sheds
Concrete slab	Poured concrete base; very strong and durable	Workshops and larger sheds

Quick guide: a simple gravel pad

- ☐ Mark the area about 30 cm (1 ft) larger than the shed on every side
- ☐ Remove grass and dig out about 10–15 cm (4–6 in) of soil
- ☐ Build a level frame of treated timber and add landscape fabric
- ☐ Fill with gravel in layers, compacting each layer, and check it's level

Budget, materials & tools

A clear plan with a cutting list is the best way to control costs. Price everything before you start, and add about 10–15% for mistakes and extras.

Item	Notes	My cost
Foundation	Blocks, gravel, or concrete	
Floor frame & decking	Treated timber and exterior-grade boards	
Wall framing	Timber studs, top and bottom plates	
Siding	Exterior panels, boards, or cladding	
Roof	Rafters, roof boards, felt, and shingles or sheets	
Doors & windows	Hinges, latch, lock, and glazing	
Fixings & finish	Screws, nails, brackets, paint or stain	
Extra 10–15%	For waste, mistakes, and surprises	

Basic tools

- ☐ Tape measure, square, and pencil
- ☐ Spirit level and string line
- ☐ Circular saw or hand saw
- ☐ Drill-driver and bits
- ☐ Hammer, clamps, and a sturdy ladder

Safety gear

- ☐ Safety glasses and hearing protection
- ☐ Work gloves and sturdy boots
- ☐ Dust mask when cutting
- ☐ A helper for lifting walls and roof parts
- ☐ Read every tool's safety instructions

Ways to save money

- ☐ Pick a standard size to reduce timber waste
- ☐ Compare prices at 2–3 suppliers
- ☐ Ask about delivery bundles and offcuts
- ☐ Borrow or rent tools you'll rarely use
- ☐ Reuse old windows or doors in good condition
- ☐ Build in dry weather to avoid damage

The 8 build stages

Every shed is built in roughly the same order. Follow detailed plans for your exact design, measurements, and cutting list.

1. Foundation

DAY 1

Prepare and level the base. Take your time; a level, square foundation makes every other stage easier.

2. Floor frame

DAY 1-2

Build the floor frame from treated timber, check it's square, and fix the floor boards on top.

3. Wall frames

DAY 2-3

Build each wall flat on the floor, with openings for the door and windows, then lift and brace them.

4. Roof frame

DAY 3-4

Cut and fit the rafters or roof trusses. Check every one is evenly spaced and secure.

5. Roof covering

DAY 4

Add roof boards, waterproof felt, and shingles or roof sheets, working from the bottom edge up.

6. Siding

DAY 5

Fix the siding or cladding to the walls, keeping it level and leaving the openings clear.

7. Doors & windows

DAY 6

Hang the door, fit the windows, and add trim, a latch, and a lock.

8. Finish

DAY 7

Paint or stain all exposed wood, add a ramp or step, and set up shelves and hooks inside.

Organize & maintain your shed

A well-organized shed is one you'll actually use. A little yearly maintenance keeps it dry and solid for many years.

Smart storage

- ☐ Pegboard or hooks for hand tools
- ☐ Wall racks for rakes, spades, and brooms
- ☐ Sturdy shelves for pots and supplies
- ☐ Labeled bins for small items
- ☐ Keep chemicals high, sealed, and out of children's reach

Yearly maintenance

- ☐ Check the roof for damage or leaks
- ☐ Re-paint or re-stain exposed wood
- ☐ Clear leaves and gutters
- ☐ Oil hinges and check the lock
- ☐ Keep plants and soil away from the walls

Week	Simple shed project plan	Done
Week 1	Decide use, size, and style; check local rules; choose the spot	☐
Week 2	Choose detailed plans, make the materials list, and get quotes	☐
Week 3	Order materials, prepare the site, and build the foundation	☐
Week 4	Build: floor, walls, roof, siding, doors, and finish	☐

Need detailed plans? Step-by-step plans with measurements and cutting lists make the build far easier. See [My Shed Plans](#) → (more on page 7).

Keep it dry: a slightly overhanging roof, a raised floor, and gaps for air to flow under the shed help prevent rot and keep your tools dry.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Get detailed shed plans

This guide helps you plan. To actually build, you'll want detailed plans for your exact shed size and style, with measurements, diagrams, and a materials list. Here's a large collection of shed plans worth a look.

RECOMMENDED PLANS

My Shed Plans

Many shed designs

Plans for different sizes and roof styles.

Step-by-step diagrams

Drawings and instructions to follow as you build.

Materials lists

Know what to buy before you start.

Digital download

Print the plans or view them on a tablet.

[See My Shed Plans →](#)

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Happy building,

Uday Chandra

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