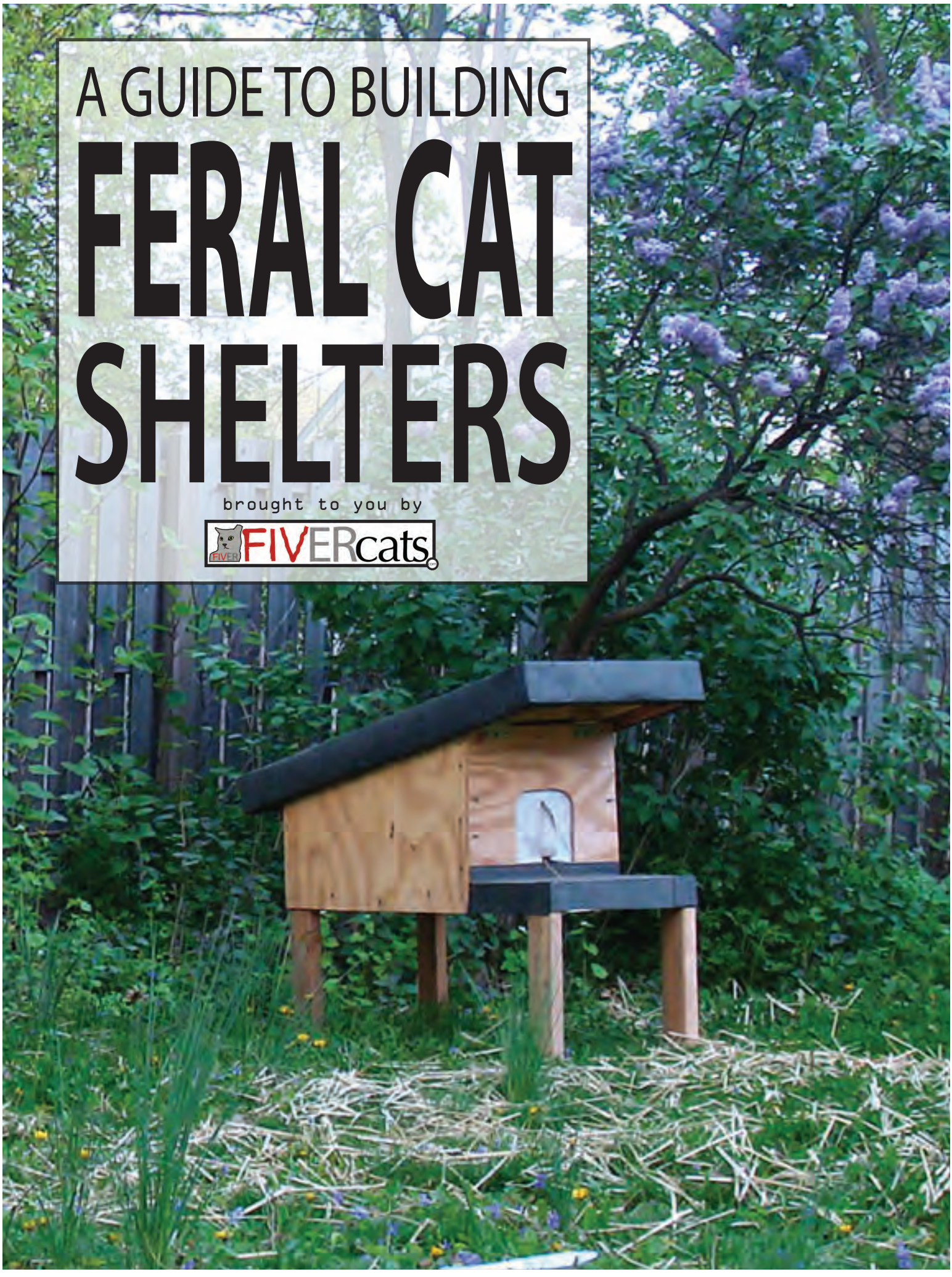

A GUIDE TO BUILDING
FERAL CAT
SHELTERS
brought to you by
FIVERcats

About Community Cat Shelters

Seeing community cats outdoors in the elements can be heartbreaking. Of course we would love to bring each and every kitty safely indoors, but some cats are feral and prefer not to live with people. The neighborhood where we live has no shortage of community cats who were spayed or neutered, ear tipped and are cared for by neighbors. One of the main feeding stations for the neighborhood is in our backyard, where we feed anywhere from 1 to 4 community cats daily. Providing shelter for community cats is important in all seasons, but particularly as the weather gets colder.

Since we took on the responsibility for caring for the cats, it seemed only natural to provide shelter for them as well, but we needed to find the right design.

Feral cats require three main principles to feel safe using a shelter. First, the shelter must be dry. Second, the interior must be warm. Third, the cat must have two ways in and out of the shelter so they don't feel cornered.

To keep things dry it is important for the cat shelter to be off the ground and above the probable snow level with a watertight roof. To keep the cat house warm it is stuffed with straw, which the cat makes into its own little nest. Straw is the perfect bedding because it has a very low moisture count and is a good insulator. In particularly cold climates, Styrofoam sheet insulation can be added to the inside floor, walls and roof to provide extra warmth. The escape plan is solved by including a front and back entrance built into each cat house.

The other consideration that matters less to the cat and more to the cat caretaker is accessibility. For this reason the roof of our cat house design is on hinges and can be opened to change the bedding or to access a cat that is hiding.

With these principles in mind, it is possible to make a successful cat shelter out of almost any material or design. As long as your cat house is waterproof, filled with dry straw, and has two entrances you can help your local community cats weather even the harshest winters.

The following building plans are available for free to help provide cats in need with shelter. To build these cat shelters you will need power tools. If you are unable to build the shelter yourself, we recommend reaching out to a local carpenter or handyman who likely has many of the materials around from other projects. The shelters built from these plans should last for many years. You should clean the shelter and change the straw every year just before the weather turns cold.

If you are not able to build a shelter using these plans, there are many other options to purchase cat shelters or build a simple shelter out of Styrofoam or Rubbermaid bins. Alley Cat Allies has an extensive list of cat shelter options at all skill levels as well as pre-made: https://www.alleycat.org/resources/feral-cat-shelter-options-gallery/

In addition to providing food, shelter and care, the most important way to help cats is to get them spayed or neutered to prevent more homeless cats. The ASPCA has a search tool for free and low-cost spay/neuter options nationwide: https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/low-cost-spayneuter-programs

FIVER Cats
http://fivercats.com
https://www.facebook.com/fivercats
info@fivercats.com

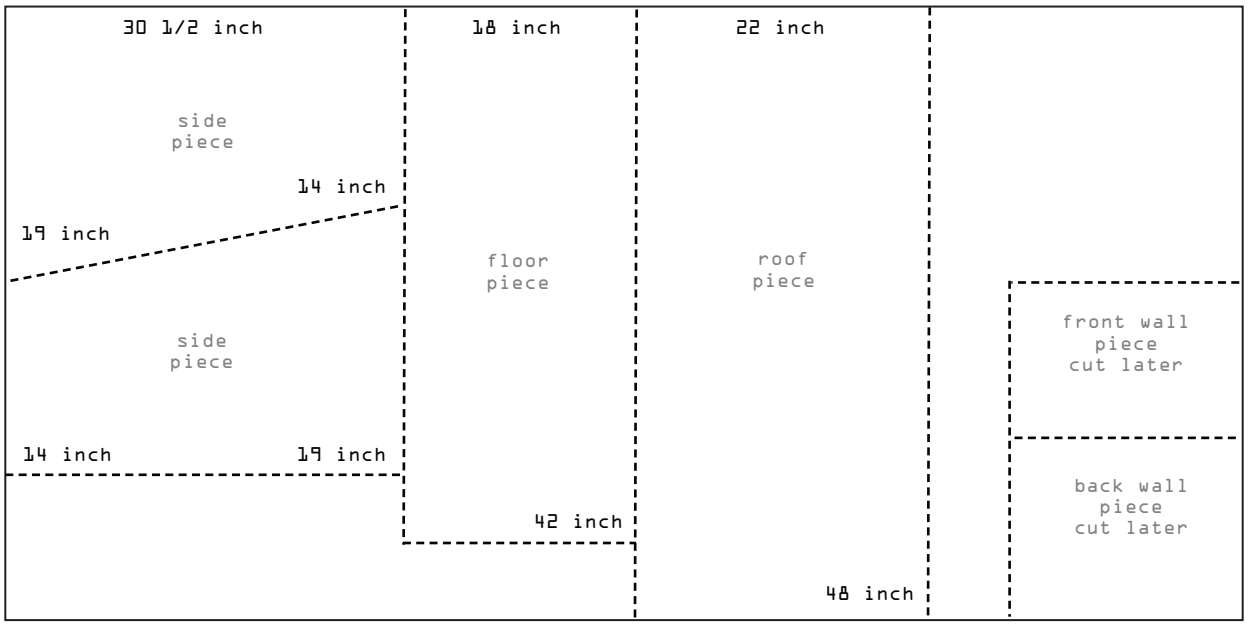
GETTING STARTED

MATERIALS:
four 8 foot 2x4s
two 8 foot 1x3
one sheet of 1/2 plywood 4x8 feet
one box of 2 1/2 inch coated deck screws
one box of 1 5/8 coated deck screws
one Roll of asphalt roofing material
two heavy duty outdoor hinges
one hook and latch set

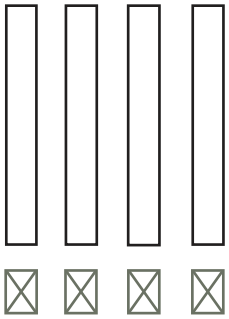
ESSENTIAL TOOLS:
tape measure
pencil
chop saw
circular saw
jig saw
cordless drill
chalk line

4x8 1/2 plywood

cut pattern for cat shelter

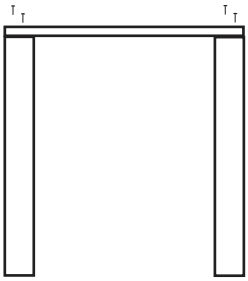


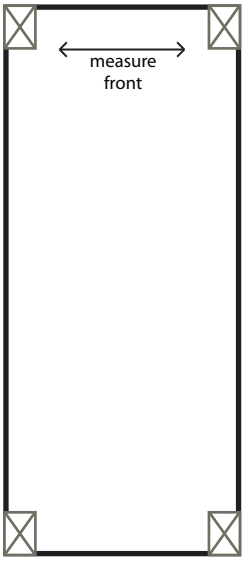
Draw this cut pattern on your sheet of plywood with a drywall square and a pencil. Use a circular saw to cut out the sides, floor and roof. Leave the front and back walls uncut. This extra piece will be used at a later stage of construction.



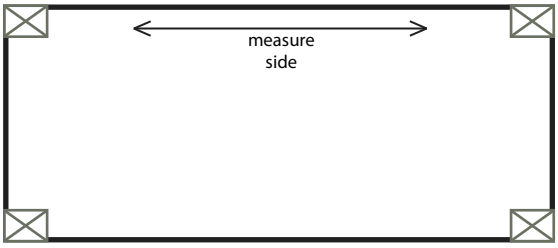
Cut four 2x4s at 18 1/2 inches for use as leggs

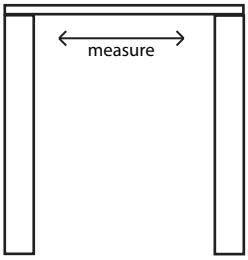
Drive 1 5/8 screws through plywood into legs

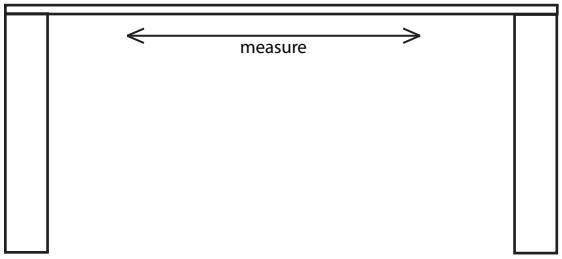


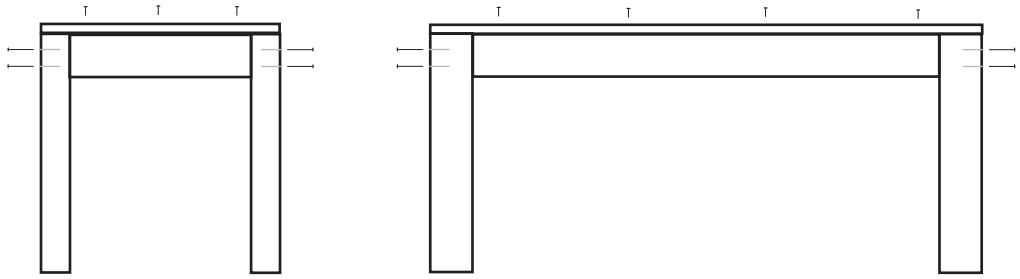


Measure the spaces between the legs. Cut 2x4 pieces to fit openings.

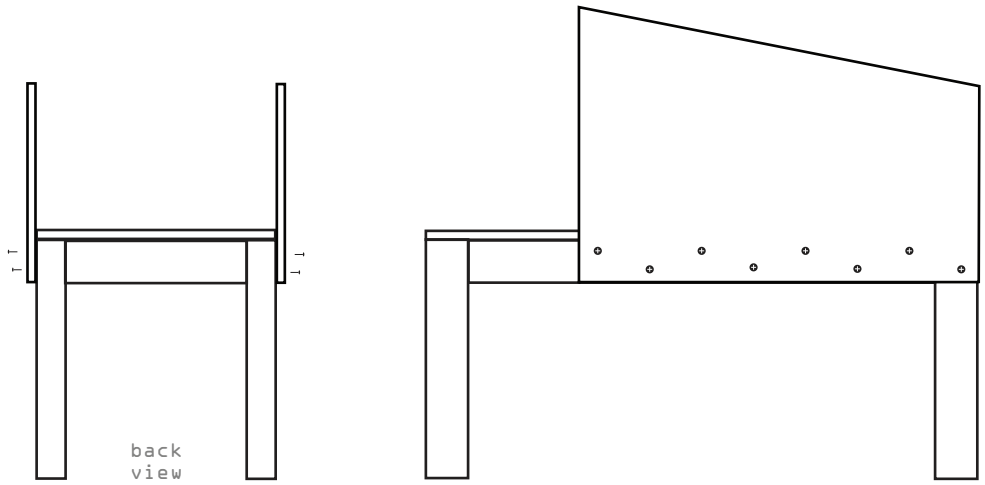




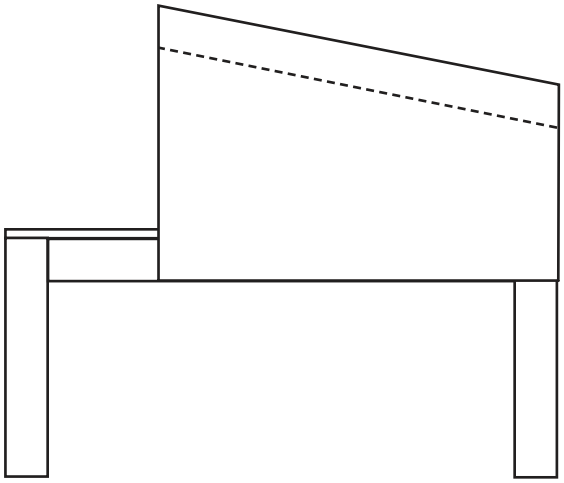




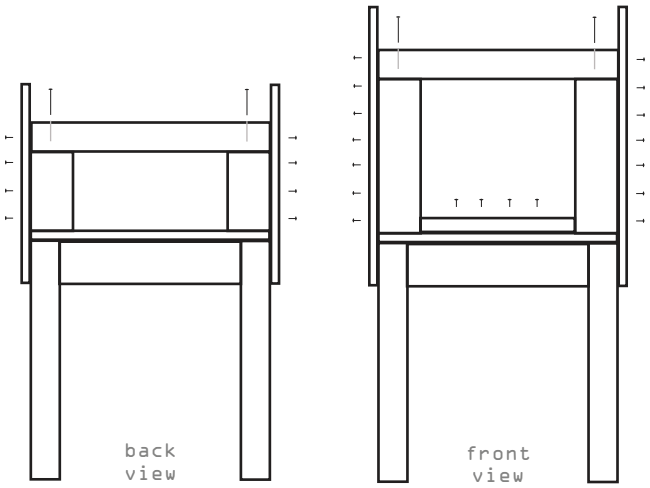
Drill pilot holes through legs as shown. Secure framing with 2 1/2 inch screws through pilot holes. Screw plywood down into framing with 1 5/8 screws. This should give you a nice solid base.



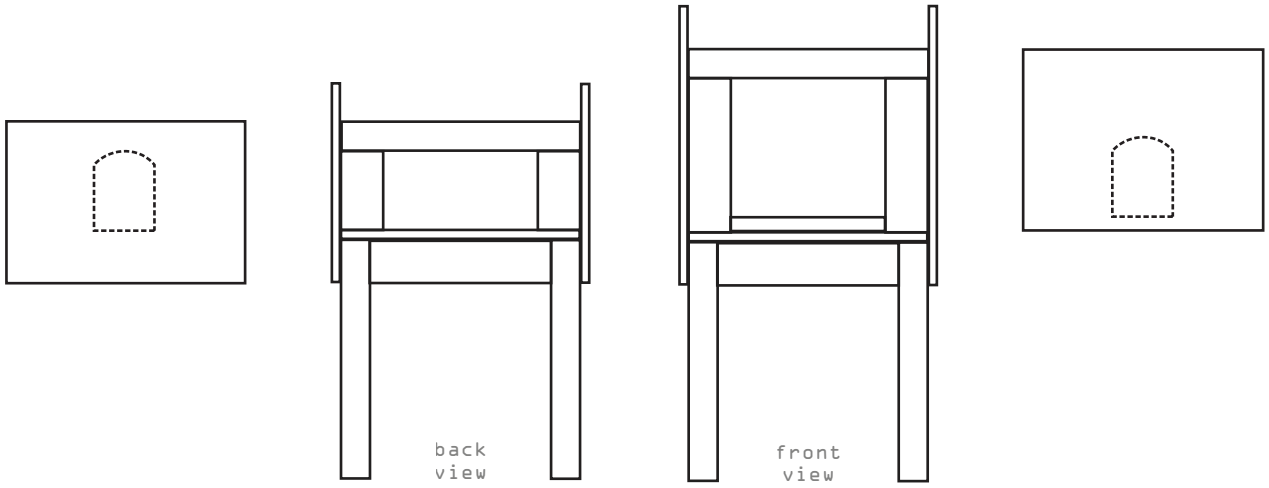
Attach side pieces as shown. Secure with 1 5/8 screws

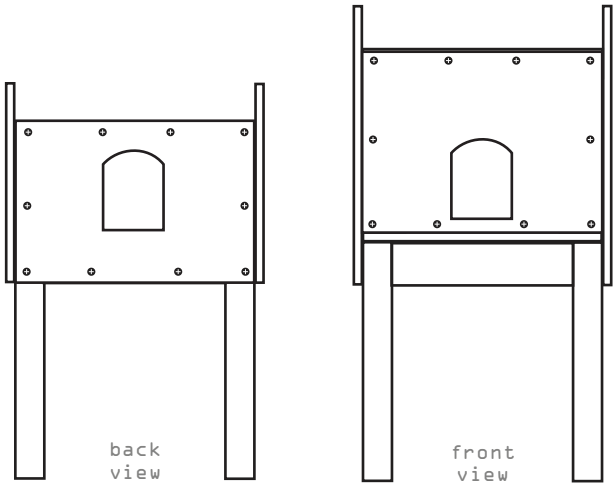


Measure down 1 1/2 inches on the side pieces. Strike a chalk line on the inside of the cat house as shown by the dotted line. This space will accomadate for the roof lid.



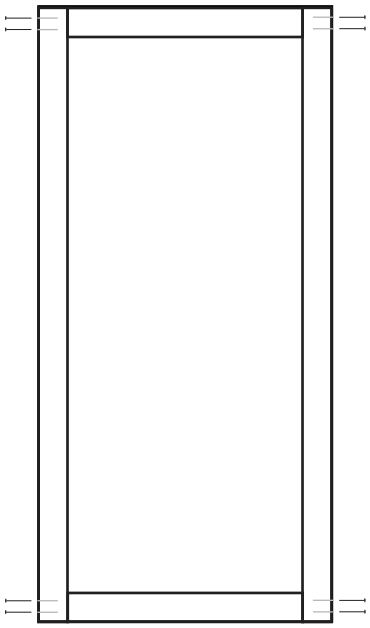
Frame back exit. Measure between side pieces and cut cross brace out of 1x3. Level sides and screw in cross brace under the chalk line with 1 5/8 screws. Measure between cross brace and floor, cut 2x4s to fit. Drill pilot holes as shown and secure cross brace to framing with 2 1/2 inch screws. Repeat process with front entrance, but use a 1x3 turned on its side as a framing footer as shown.

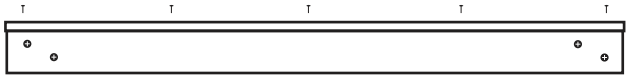


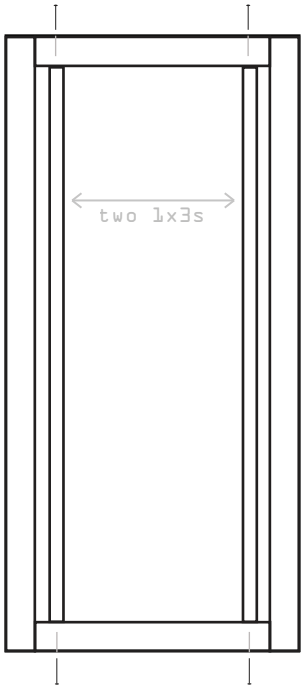


Use scrap plywood to cut front and back walls of cat house. Measure between framing to determine size. Place wall boards against opening and draw cat house door with pencil. Cat doors should be 6 inches high and 6 inches wide. Front door is flush with the 1x3 on its side. Back door should be flush with cat house floor. Drill a starter hole and cut out door with jig saw. Attach both walls with 1 5/8 screws.

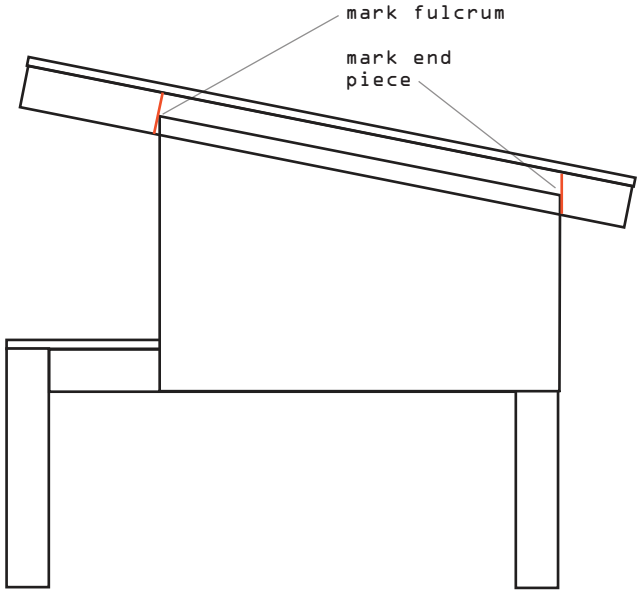
Cut 2x4s as shown to frame the roof lid. Attach flush with sides using 2 1/2 inch screws through framing and 1 5/8 screws through plywood. When outside framing is complete meausre inside length and cut 1x3s as shown to fit inside framing. Leave one inch space between 2x4 frame and 1x3. This gap will be where the lid fits around the walls of the cat house. Attach with 1 5/8 screws through plywood and 2 1/2 inch screws through pilot holes in framing.

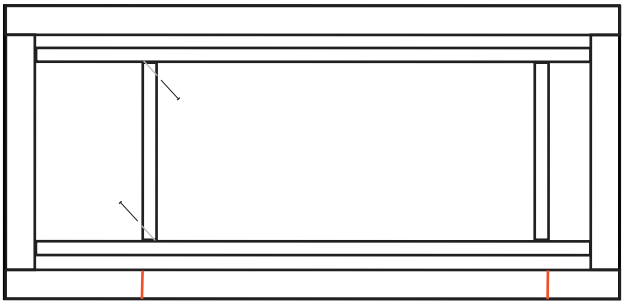




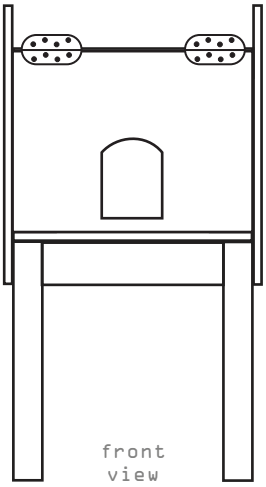


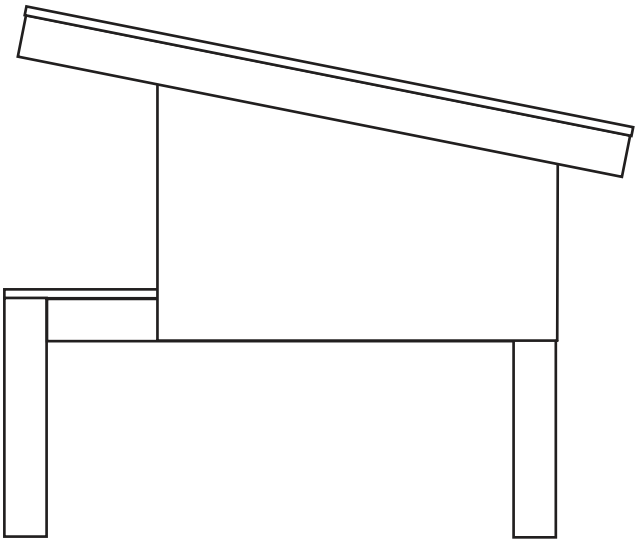
Place roof piece temporarily on cat house. Plywood sides should fit nicely inside roof framing. Adjust overhang size to shelter porch area, but not restrict hinged movement. Once you have determined correct overhang size place a pencil mark on the inside of the roof framing. Next, mark where the end piece will go as shown in diagram.



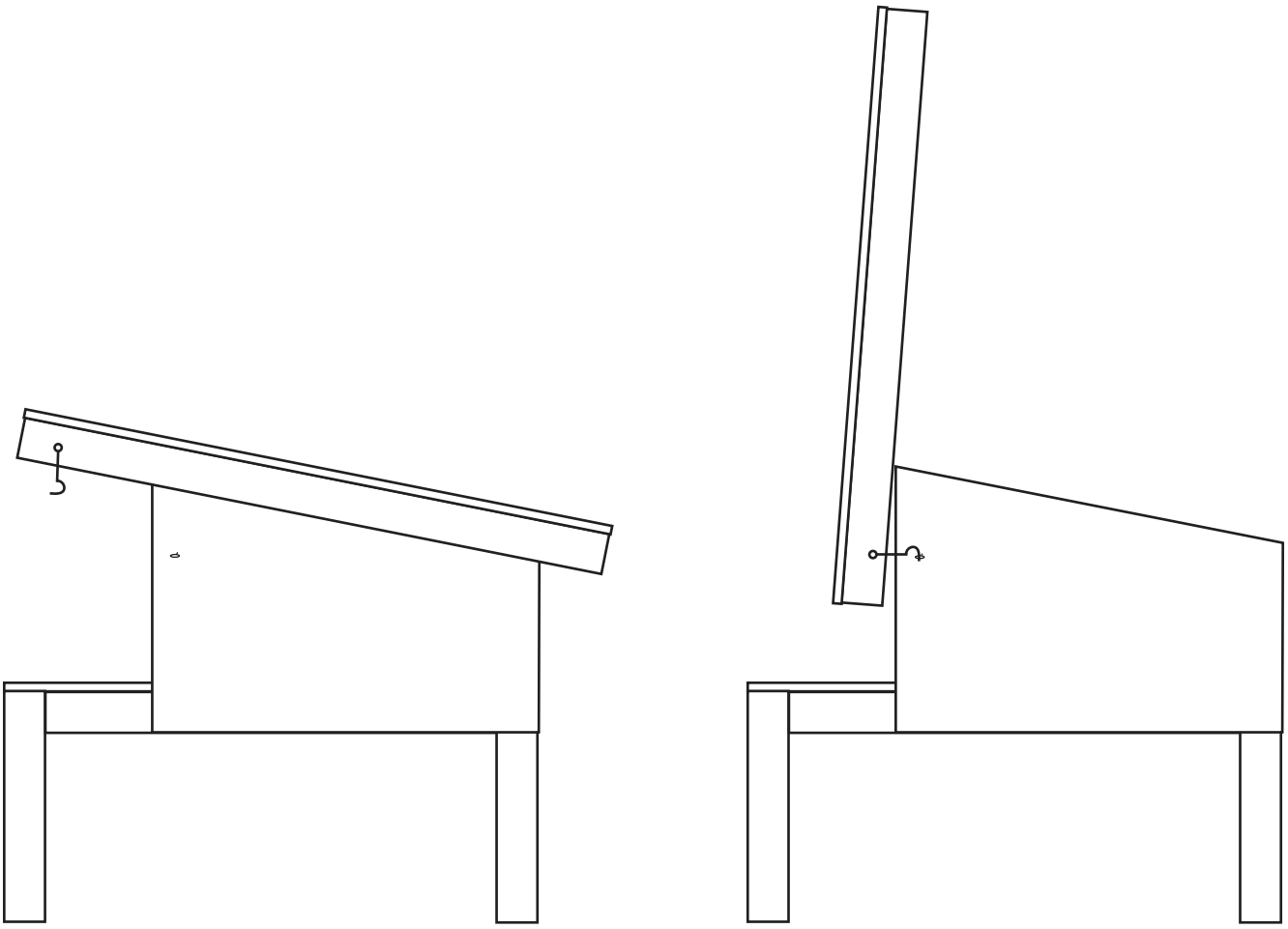


Lift lid off cat house preserving pencil marks. Cut 1x3s to fit between framing as shown. Screw in place with 1 5/8 screws through plywood. Use additional 2 1/2 in screws to toe nail the front piece in place.





Attach two hinges to the front wall at the fulcrum. Place the roof lid back on and line up the 1x3 cross brace with the hinges. Screw hinges into 1x3 cross brace attaching roof.



Wrap roof lid with roofing material as if wrapping a present. Staple underneath lid neatly. Use roofing material to waterproof deck area staple neatly as shown in pictures. Attach hook and latch to lid so roof doesn't fall when you have the cat house in the open position. Cut pieces of canvas drop cloth for use as door. Staple canvas pieces in place as shown in picture. Fill cat shelter with straw and sprinkle some catnip inside to attract ferals.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