

Section 12: Building Your Own Tiny House

If you have decided to build your own tiny house, it can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. Your individual level of building experience will determine how much you need to learn to successfully complete your house. There are several steps to building a tiny house and a variety of tiny houses you might consider building. You might attend a workshop to learn all there is to know on tiny house building. To start you'll need to determine what you will be using your tiny house for, if you have a permanent location you might consider building on a foundation, if you'll need to move locations, a tiny house on wheels is a good choice. Whether you build a tiny house on wheels or a tiny house on a foundation, there will be similar steps to the building process. The following steps are part of the building process you'll have to follow.

1. Design and Layout

The tiny house design and layout phase is vitally important to your tiny house building process. Of course, logistics, solar, plumbing, and other tiny house construction steps are key too, but in the end, it all comes down to taking the right amount of time to research and plan. You can set yourself up for success by creating a strong, research-based tiny house construction plan before you even start to build. This will include considering what your tiny house will be used for, where it will be located and who will be living in the tiny house.

Foundations and trailers. You'll have to choose between a foundation or a trailer, there are pros and cons to each type of tiny house. A tiny house on a foundation will need a piece of land to build. If you don't have a permanent place to build your tiny house a trailer might be the right choice for you. Tiny houses on wheels are great if you dream of traveling, and might be the better option for you.

2. Find a Place to Build Your Tiny House

If you have a piece of land already, you have a place to go ahead and build. Whether it's at the edge of a property or your backyard, you have a place to start. If the lot is an issue, you might consider a tiny house on a trailer. You'll want to do your research and think about which build is best for you.

3. Build the Floor

You'll want to use standard lumber to build your tiny house floor. If you are building on a trailer, use it as your tiny house foundation. Secure your tiny house to the foundation, reinforcing the joints and probable weak points. With your floor foundation secured, you can sheath the lumber with plywood or OSB (oriented-strand-board). They are both super sturdy but OSB costs less.

4. Framing the Walls

After building the floor the next step is to give your tiny house shape or structure. You can use metal bracing to keep the walls together. The metal bracing will be hidden later within the interior walling once the tiny house is complete. The metal braces will do their job from within the interiors of the tiny house walls. Sheath the walls with plywood or OSB.

5. Framing the Roof and Installing the Roof Material

With the tiny house walls set up, your tiny house will start to take shape. The next step is the roofing. If you are new to construction you may want to use a simple roof design. Once the tiny house roof frame and sheathing are done, you can put on the roofing material for keeping the rain out. Use standing seam metal for long-lasting tiny house roofing. If you have more building experience you can try and install a steeper and more complicated roof.

6. Wrapping Up your Tiny House

Next, you'll need to wrap the tiny house with a house wrap. This step adds a breathable material that is used as added protection for the tiny house. House wrap allows moisture to be released while keeping the interior of the tiny house dry and protected from weather elements. This will help your tiny house withstand the weather.

7. Installing the Windows and Doors

The trick to properly installing doors and windows is all in the measurements. It is important that the windows and doors be flawlessly square and level. This is important for both aesthetic purposes but also for the doors and windows to last. If you are new to construction you may enlist the help of professionals to get the job done perfectly.

8. Cladding, Trimming, Painting, and Caulking Exterior

You are getting close to completing your tiny house project and these finishing touches to the exterior are just as important as the other steps. You'll want to seal any cracks and gaps with caulking and you may use pre-finished building materials to sheath the house. This way, you won't have to add another layer of cladding or siding.

9. Plumbing

You can choose to do the plumbing yourself or hire a professional for you. Plumbing is slow and meticulous, there is no room for mistakes and it can get tricky. Plastic plumbing is recommended but you may opt for the classic copper plumbing. Copper costs less but is harder to work with.

10. Rough-In Electricity

This step is also complicated and will need some expert advice. If you're a beginner in construction, you'll want to go with a professional to avoid dangerous mistakes.

11. Insulation

Foam board insulation is recommended for tiny houses. It is best to use low-VOC for healthier interior air quality. You want to make sure to fill every nook and cranny with plastic sheeting and spray foam.

12. Interior Sheathing

With the plumbing, electricity, and insulation in place, the next step is walling. Most people use wood for their tiny house interiors but you can also choose to use drywall. It costs less and provides added protection from fire.

13. Interior Stain and Painting

This is an easy step you can do yourself, and it's gratifying to see your tiny house transformed. The good news if you pick a color that you don't like, it's a small space so you can easily change it up. Many people opt for lighter colors as they make a small space feel spacious, but this is up to you.

14. Finish Electric and Plumbing Connections

Install the electrical and plumbing connections. Make sure that you still meet safety codes even though you will most likely not have to get an inspection for your tiny house.

15. Flooring

Cover the subfloor with the material of your choice from wood, tile or vinyl, depending on your budget, lifestyle, and preference. Pre-finished wooden floors are highly recommended.

16. Kitchen

You can install the kitchen yourself or get a professional to install it for you. There are plenty of kitchen cabinets to choose from, so you'll want to go with a style that best suits you.

17. Bathroom

Like the kitchen, you can install and finish the bathroom yourself, or get someone to finish it for you.