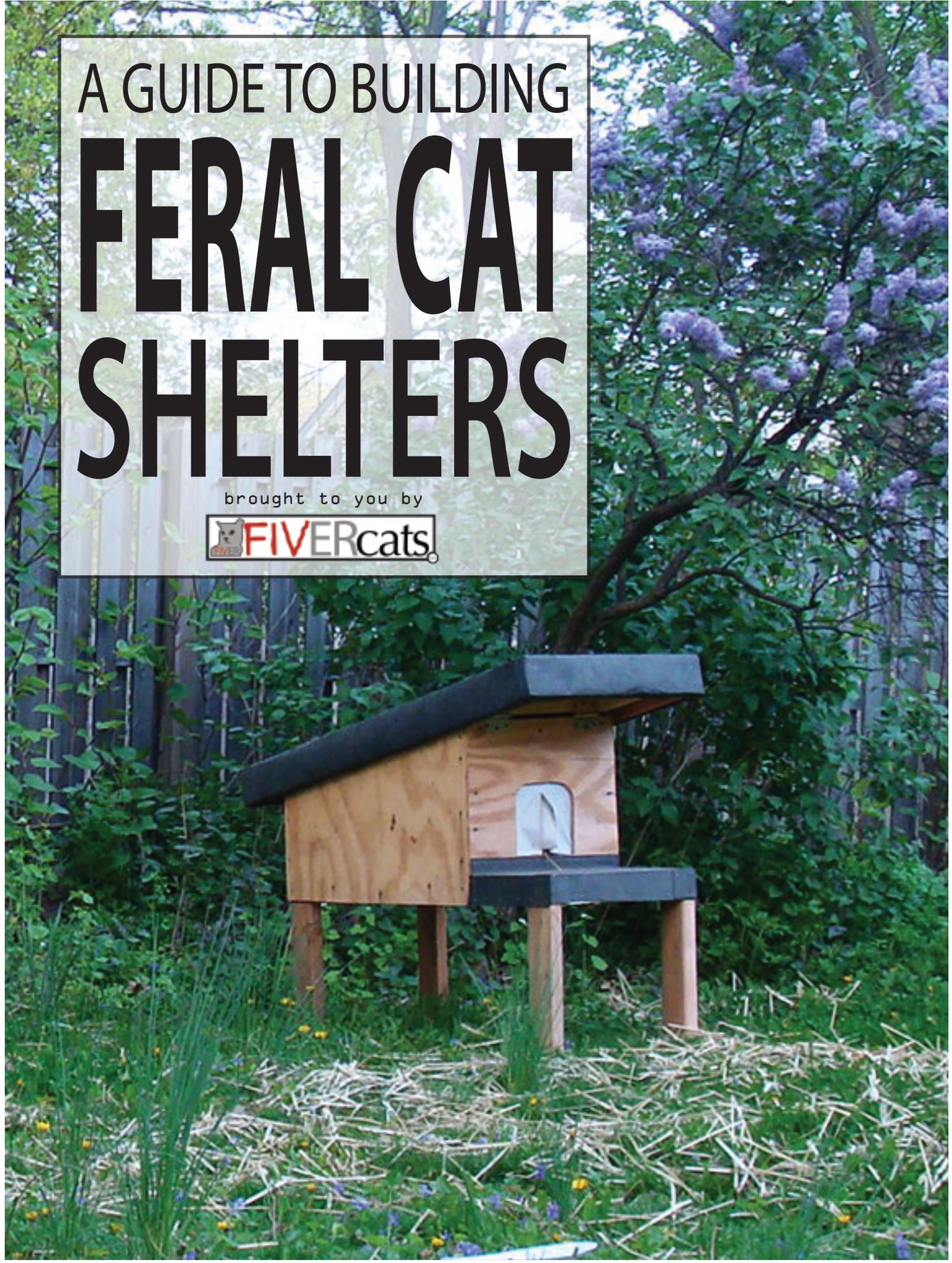


# A GUIDE TO BUILDING **FERAL CAT SHELTERS**

brought to you by



## About Feral Cat Shelters and Community Cats

Witnessing feral cats struggling outdoors in the elements is tough to watch. The neighborhood where we live has no shortage of community cats, many of whom are ear-tipped and well-fed by local caretakers. For the most part, these cats stick close to their feeding stations. One of the main feeding stations for the neighborhood is in our backyard, where we feed anywhere from 1 to 4 feral cats daily.

We took over the responsibility of feeding these animals and providing shelter is an important part of caring for feral cats. Anyone who has ever done construction knows that there is infinitely more than one way to build a house. Materials, design, size and shape are all subjective to the needs of the occupants of the home. In order to build a house, it is first important to know the needs of the inhabitants, in this case cats, who will live there.

Despite their wild nature and resourcefulness, cats are often unable to fend fully for themselves. They are subject to the dangers of weather, cars, humans and other animals. They breed indiscriminately, if left unaltered, and can be seen as a nuisance to the community. Providing food, water, shelter and medical care to community cats goes a long way for their safety.

Please ensure unaltered community or feral cats are spayed or neutered and identified with an ear-tip (a blunt edge to the cats' ear, done by a veterinarian during the altering surgery). Rabies vaccinations help keep both humans and animals safe. Regular feeding and daily fresh water, along with shelter from weather and danger, give cats a home-base where they can meet basic needs.

### Providing Shelter for Outside Cats

Feral cats require two main principles to feel safe using a shelter. First, the shelter must be dry and well-insulated to stay warm throughout the winter. Secondly, the house must have two entry/exit points so the cats can escape predators and 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. To keep the cat house warm it is stuffed with straw, which the cat makes into his or her own little nest. Straw is the perfect bedding because it has a very low moisture count and is a good insulator. 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 tender is accessibility. You don't want to construct a cat house where an injured cat is unable to be rescued. For this reason, the roof of our cat house is on hinges and can be opened to change the bedding or to access a cat in need of help.

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, your community cats will be in a better position to weather the winter.

### About the FIVER Cat Shelter Plans

About a year ago, we made a quick video about the care and maintenance of our feral cat houses. The response was overwhelming and we received frequent requests for building plans. The following diagrams are a response to this outpouring, but are in no way the final say on feral cat houses. We don't claim that they are the best possible design or that these plans will work for you. What we can say with certainty is this model of cat house has served our feral colony for over three winters while remaining structurally sound and completely dry on the inside.

These plans will not be for everyone. To build these cat shelters you will need a well-stocked workshop and experience with power tools. If you lack these skills, please do not attempt to build this cat house. There are plenty of other options on the internet for purchasing cat shelters. The following diagrams are merely a record of how our cat houses were made. We hold no patents or claims and are not liable for any injuries sustained while implementing our designs. We make these plans available unrestricted and free in the hopes that people will share them and that feral cats all over the world will enjoy the benefit.

Visit [fivercats.com](http://fivercats.com) for more information and to download a copy of these plans.

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# GETTING STARTED

## MATERIALS:

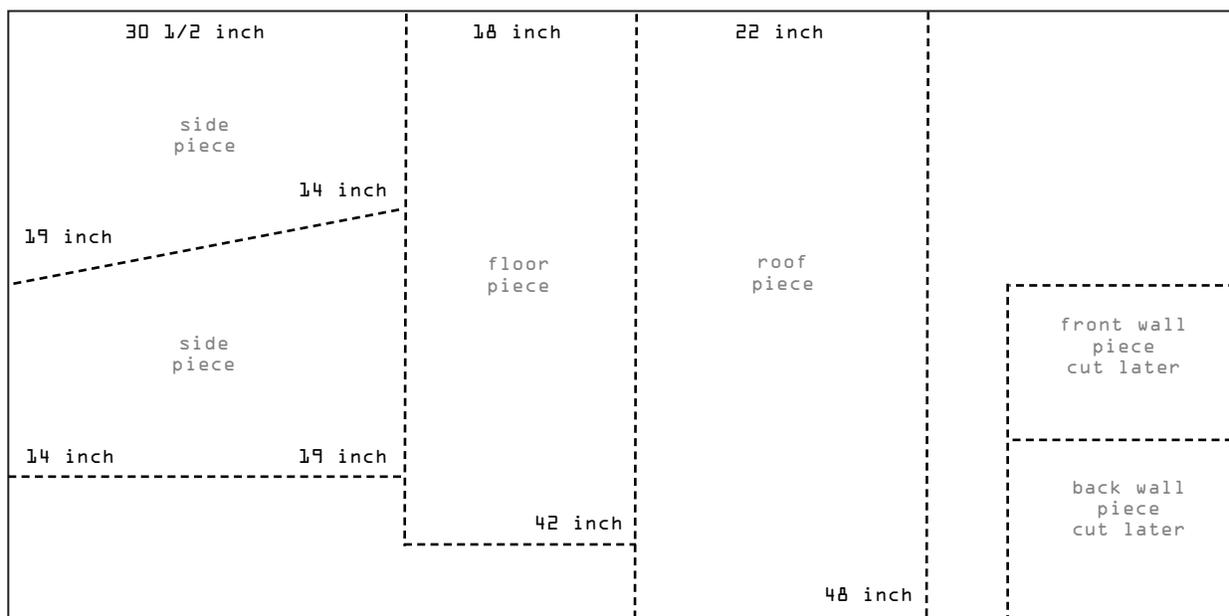
five 8 foot 2x4s  
two 8 foot 1x3s  
one sheet of 1/2 plywood 4x8 feet  
one box of 2 1/2 inch coated deck screws  
one box of 1 5/8 coated deck screws  
one Roll of asphalt roofing material  
two heavy duty outdoor hinges  
one hook and latch set

## ESSENTIAL TOOLS:

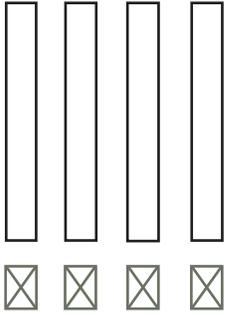
tape measure  
pencil  
chop saw  
circular saw  
jig saw  
cordless drill  
chalk line

## 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.

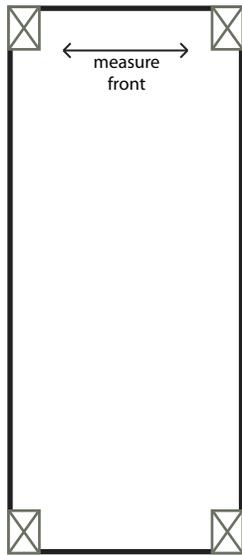
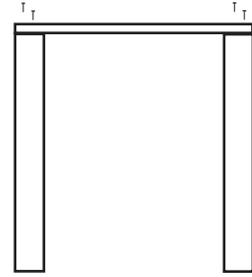


Cut four 2x4s  
at 18 1/2  
inches for  
use as legs

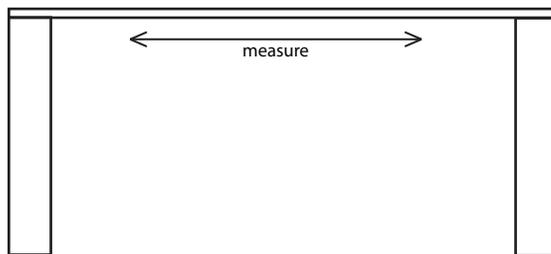
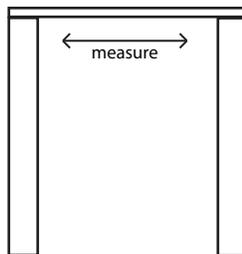
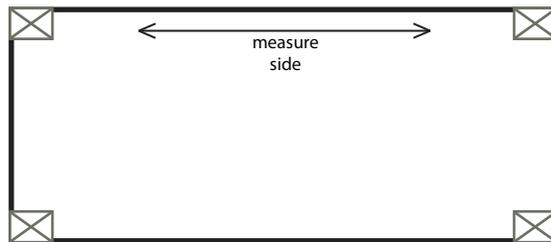


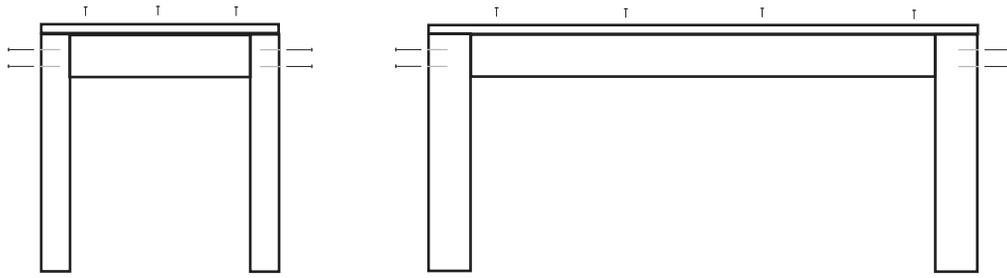
floor  
piece

Drive 1 5/8  
screws  
through  
plywood  
into legs

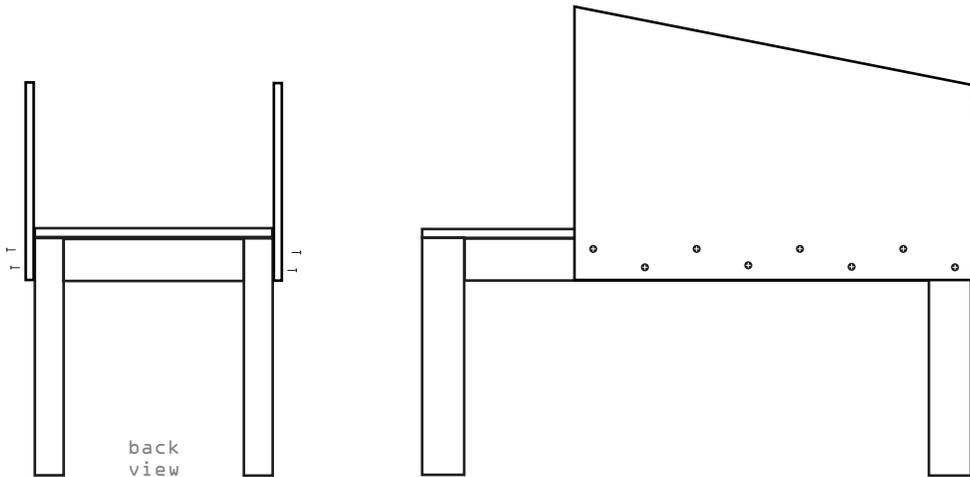


Measure the spaces  
between the legs.  
Cut 2x4 pieces to  
fit openings.

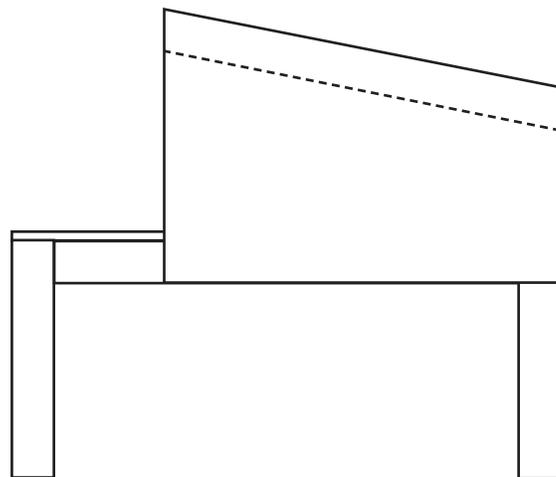




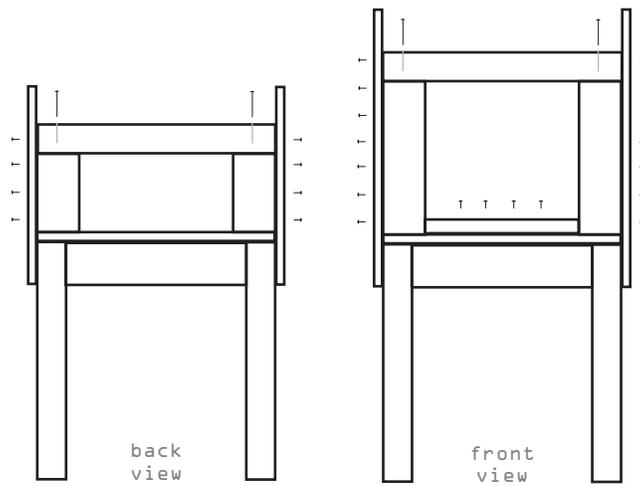
Drill pilot holes through legs as shown. Secure framing with 2 1/2 inch screws through pilot holes. Screw plywood down into framing with 1 5/8 screws. This should give you a nice solid base.



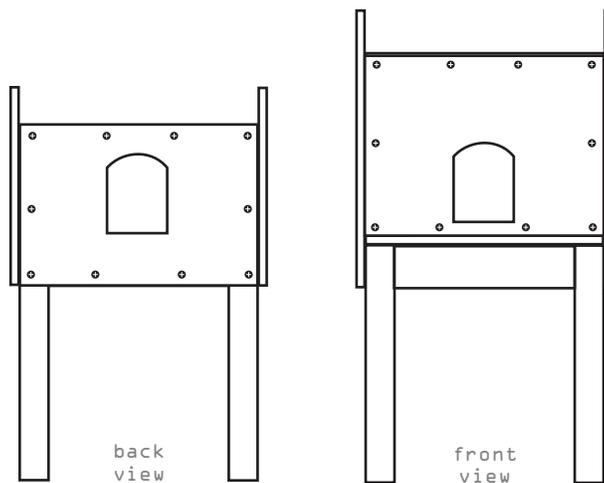
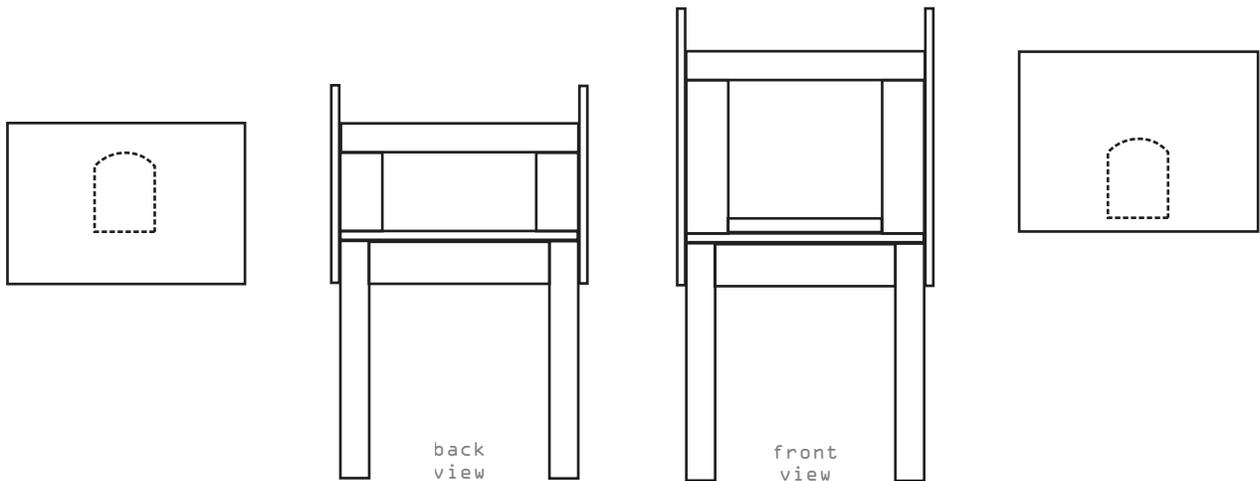
Attach side pieces as shown. Secure with 1 5/8 screws



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 accommodate for the roof lid.

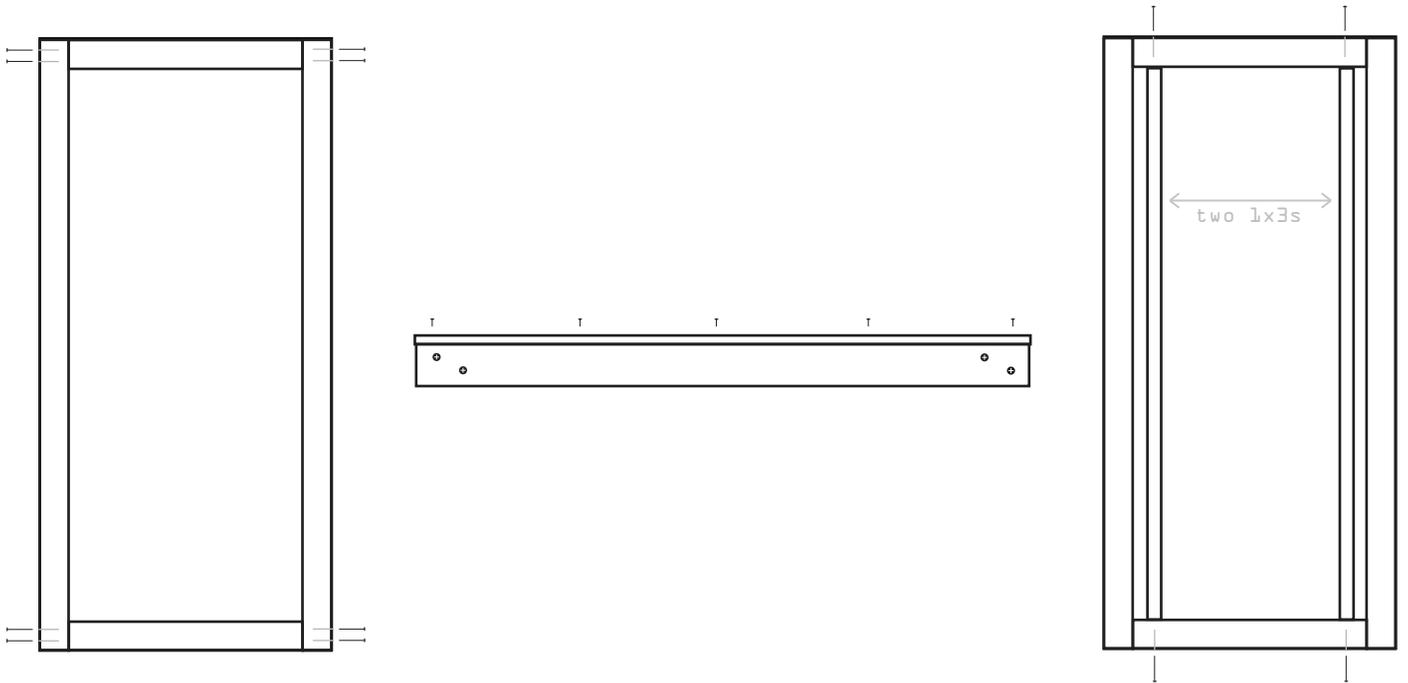


Frame back exit. Measure between side pieces and cut cross brace out of 1x3. Level sides and screw in cross brace under the chalk line with 1 5/8 screws. Measure between cross brace and floor, cut 2x4s to fit. Drill pilot holes as shown and secure cross brace to framing with 2 1/2 inch screws. Repeat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

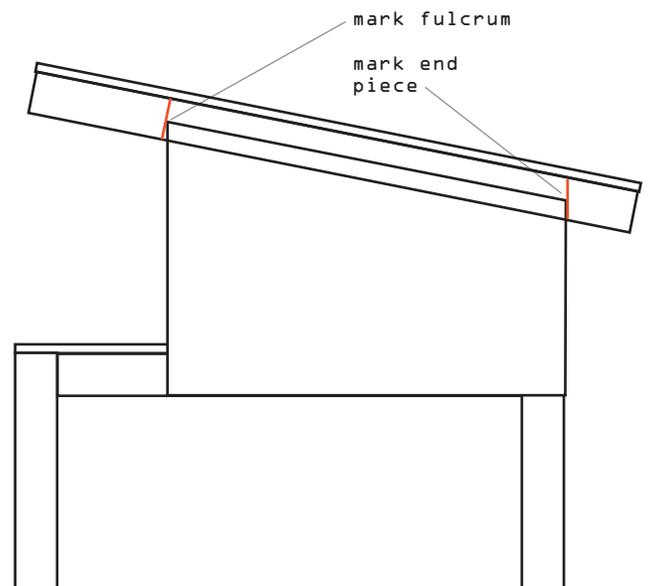


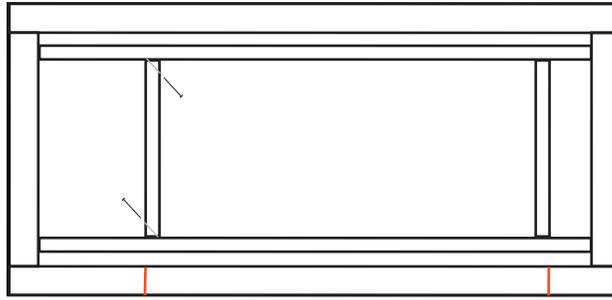
Use scrap plywood to cut front and back walls of cat house. Measure between framing to determine size. Place wall boards against opening and draw cat house door with pencil. Cat doors should be 6 inches high. Front door is flush with the 1x3 on its side. Back door should be flush with cat house floor. 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, measure 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.

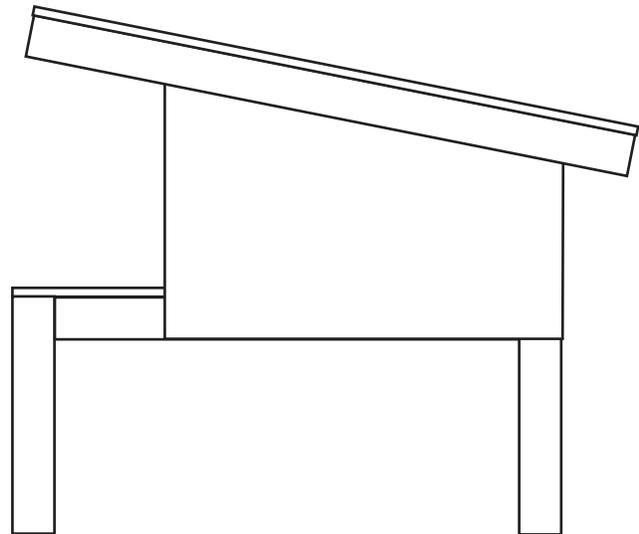
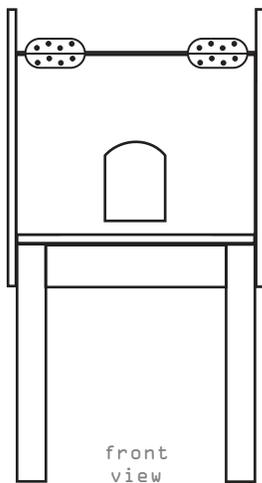


Place roof piece temporarily on cat house. Plywood sides should fit nicely inside roof framing. Adjust overhang size so that it shelters the porch area, but doesn't restrict movement when the hinges are attached. Once you have determined correct overhang size, place a pencil mark on the inside of the roof framing. Next, mark where the end piece will go as shown in diagram.

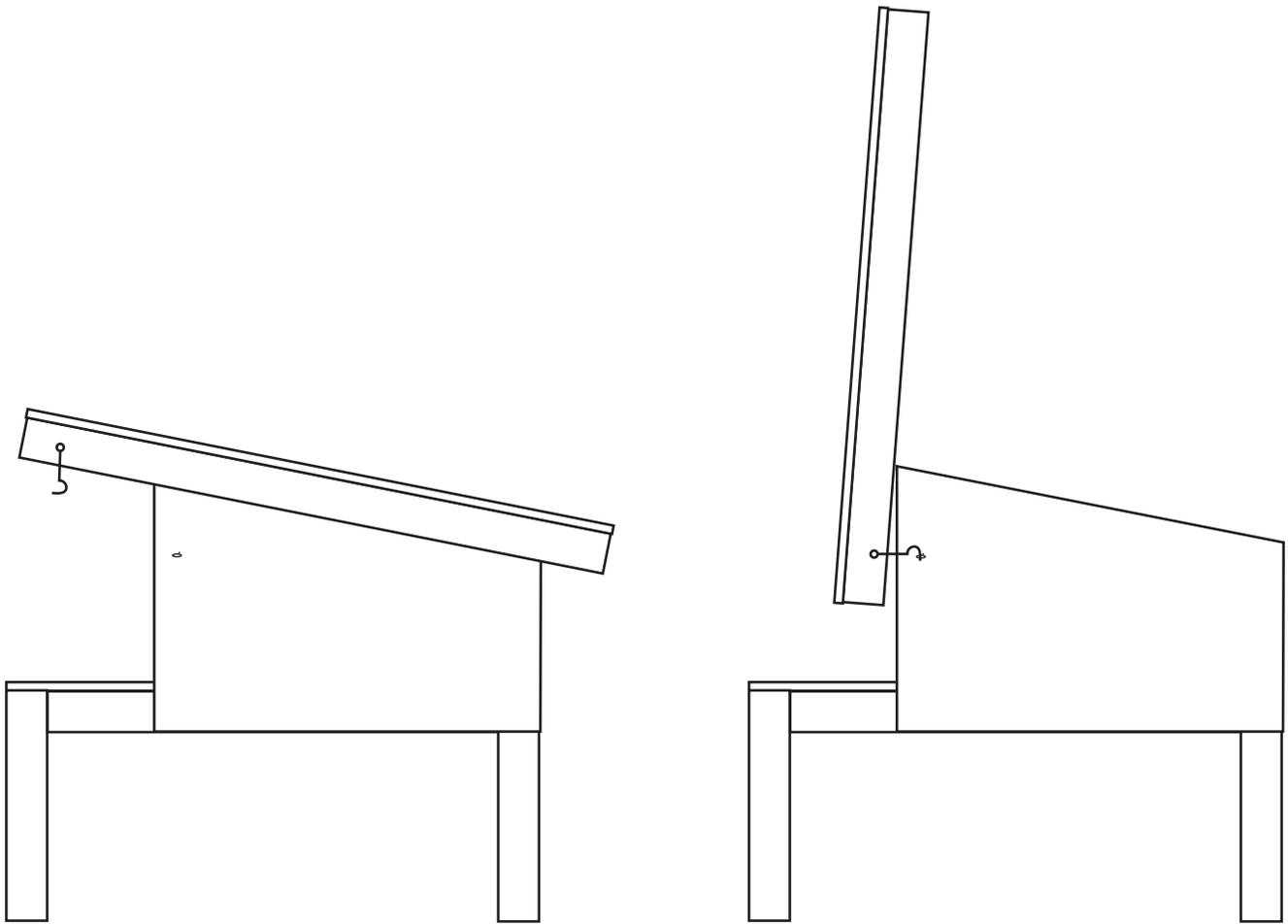




Lift lid off cat house preserving pencil marks. Cut 1x3s to fit between framing as shown. Screw in place with 1 5/8 screws through plywood. Use additional 2 1/2 in screws to toenail the front piece in place.



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 flaps. Staple canvas pieces in place as shown in picture. Fill cat shelter with straw and sprinkle some catnip inside to welcome cats in need of shelter. Provide daily fresh food and water. Spay or neuter all current and newly arriving cats.





 **FIVER**cats

