



Follow standard sheet material sizes when designing your shed

How to build a shed in 10 steps

Sally Coulthard

1 Site the shed

First, find an area that's big enough to fit the shed and

relatively level. You can tackle uneven ground with concrete foundations or adjustable piles, although any more than a difference of 15cm between the highest and lowest levels starts to get complicated and expensive. The ground also needs to be relatively firm and not springy or boggy, which can affect the foundations. Other things to take into account include trees, natural light and privacy.

2 Choose your foundations

As a general rule, the more expensive the outlay on your foundations, the longer your shed will last. Three of the most common are: timber bearers (also called skids), which are cheap but will eventually rot; piles or feet, which can be adjusted to deal with an uneven ground surface (a bit like a kitchen floor cabinet); or a concrete base. The last option is the most expensive, but a must if you want to use heavy machinery.

3 Create the floor

Design your shed around standard sheet material sizes to reduce the amount of cutting and waste. We used three 12ft x 8ft sheets of 18mm plywood, or you could also use OSB (oriented strand board). For the floor frame, 4in x 2in timber is robust enough to take the weight of the shed. We also insulated between the floor joists with 7.5cm of rigid insulation — essential if you want to use the shed all year round.

4 Frame the walls

Make life easier for yourself and used glazed double doors. That way, you won't also need a window. This means you could have three clear walls, which is not only simpler to build, but also frees up space for shelves and other internal features. The wall frames need to be thick enough to take the weight of the roof, high winds, and allow you to hang structures from inside; we used 3in x 2in timber and filled the walls with more insulation.

5 Get the roof on

A mono-pitch roof means fewer complicated angles and cuts to figure out. Cheap sheds use felt as a roof covering. That's fine, but consider a rubber roof covering instead. It's a big sheet of thick UV-resistant rubber that you unroll and glue down onto the roof surface. Architects have been using them for years. They're not expensive, they're



Hang as much as possible from the walls to make the shed cosy



Dark colours work well for sheds

environmentally sound, easy to fit and — being slate grey — look pretty good too.

6 Doors and windows

Invest in a good set of lockable double-glazed French doors — they'll let the light flood in, keep in the heat and provide

you with a cracking view of your garden. We designed the shed so it doesn't need a window, but if you want extra ventilation or the option of an additional window, there are some excellent small, off-the-shelf double-glazed options that can be fitted into the frame before the shed gets clad.

7 Cladding

From corrugated sheet material to waney-edge cladding, sliced straight from the tree, each material will give a different feel to your garden room. We opted for

timber cladding, as it's easy to fix, inexpensive and readily available, but even within this option there are lots of different profile choices such as feather-edge, shiplap or, like we've used, tongue and groove. You can also fix your boards horizontally or vertically, both of which give a different feel to the shed.

8 Electrics and wi-fi

The shed electrics should use armoured cable, be connected to your house via the consumer unit (fuse box), and have their own circuit breaker in case something goes wrong. Get a registered electrician to work out what size cable you'll need and to fit it. And check the wifi router in your home has enough range to reach the

shed — if not you might need a range extender or a powerline adapter that sends the signal through your electricity cable instead.

9 Stoves and heating

A woodburner will transform your shed in winter, but there are fundamental safety issues that you'll need to address: one is building regulations (there are specific rules about stoves in sheds); the second is ventilation (you must fit a permanently open vent and a carbon monoxide alarm); and third, most sheds need no more than a 4kw stove (or you'll be far too hot). Instead consider an electric radiator — newer models are often very energy efficient and controllable via wifi.

10 The finishing touches

Dark colours work brilliantly in small spaces — deep rich colours can create a retreat that feels inviting, relaxing and spacious. If you want a light and airy workspace, you can be surprisingly creative with whites and neutrals. Brilliant white is often a harsh, cold paint colour, so play with warm greys, off-whites and yellow-based neutrals. And keep the floor space clear. Hang as much as possible from the walls, from pegs and hooks to fold-down desks and generous storage. It'll keep the space from feeling cluttered.

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