

# INDOOR DEN BUILDING TIPS

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## 1. Bunk Bed Fast-Track

If you have a bunk bed or a cabin bed, you've got a ready-made den structure just waiting to be transformed into a cosy hideout. You simply need to tuck in some sheets and blankets around the top bunk to completely surround the bottom bunk or under-bed space and hey presto! Den-ready in seconds.

## 2. Seats Become Walls

Got a few dining room chairs or two sofas? Simply arrange them back-to-back with space in between for your den. Then all you need is a big sheet or blanket to drape over the top as a ceiling and you've got the beginnings of a den.

## 3. Table Tops

Tables act as all-in-one walls and ceilings, meaning you won't need as many sheets and blankets to finish off the main den structure. You can also join up lots of different tables to make quick den extensions - just add blanket walls and you're done!

## 4. Broom Roof

A few household brooms or mop poles make the perfect roof supports for a big den. You can place the broom across the top of your back-to-back chairs to give your blankets and sheets an extra bit of structure to drape over, preventing any unwanted sagging in the middle.

## 5. Rope Roof

Want to make a really really big den? Try tying lengths of rope or string across a few far-apart points (make sure they're strong and won't tip over) and then drape your blankets and sheets over the tops to create a roof.

## 6. Light it Up

Once your den is built you can add a hint of magic with a few strings of fairy lights. Use battery-powered lights as these give you greater amounts of freedom and are much safer to use for a den. You can wind them around your support ropes, drape them from your den walls or simply lay them around the edges of your den for a cosy glow.

## 7. Get Comfy

A den isn't a den unless it's comfy and cosy. Scatter the inside of your den with lots of cushions, pillows, duvets and soft toys to give you something soft and squashy to sit on and snuggle up with.

## 8. Just Add Fun

Dens are the perfect place for games, movie-watching, reading and midnight-snacking. Stock your den with a few tasty snacks and lots of fun activities for hours of entertainment in your new home-within-a-home. Don't forget the password!

# OUTDOOR DEN BUILDING IDEAS

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## 1. Use Ready-Made Structures

If you have family tents or if you have a climbing frame in your back garden, these make excellent ready-made structures to form the basis of your den. You can drape your sheets or tarpaulins over the top and add other structures onto the sides to make giant mansion dens (if you're feeling ambitious).

## 2. Garden Furniture Fortress

If you're struggling for a structure, garden furniture makes the perfect solution. If you have 4 or 6 garden chairs, try arranging them back-to-back with space in the middle. This provides a support structure for you to drape a sheet or tarpaulin over the top, creating an instant den. Garden tables also make the perfect starter structure; simply drape over a sheet and you've got a cosy hiding place with a ready-made roof.

## 3. Building with Branches

If you're lucky enough to live near woodland, you can go foraging for fallen branches and twigs to use as your outdoor den structure. Make sure these really are already on the ground, and don't be tempted to remove them from their trees yourself. Your den should not harm the natural world around you. The bigger branches can be leaned up against one another and tied to form a basic den structure, while smaller bendy twigs can be woven between to fill in the walls.

## 4. Waterproofing

The most challenging element of building outdoor dens is making sure they are waterproof, just in case the heavens open. With any luck you'll get a nice sunny, dry day, but it pays to be prepared. The best things to use for waterproofing your outdoor den are plastic sheets and tarpaulins, as these are completely waterproof and very easy to work with. Or, if you want your den to be completely natural, you can use leaves. The bigger and broader the leaves the better, but make sure these are already on the ground and you're not taking them off living trees. You'll also need lots and lots to make sure your den doesn't leak; try layering up leafy branches and twigs to fill the gaps.

## 5. Painting Personalisation

If you've created your den walls using cardboard or branches, why not give them a lick of paint to create a colourful, personalised look? You can paint your branches in all

kinds of colours or paint yourself your very own front door and some windows if you're using cardboard walls. Just make sure you only do this on a dry day and don't paint anything important like your garden furniture or climbing frames!

## 6. Something to Sit On

An upturned box or crate makes a surprisingly good seat or table for a little den, especially with an additional cushion or two. Spare pieces of cardboard also make excellent den flooring, providing a thick, clean and surprisingly comfortable layer of protection between you and the ground.

## 7. Light it Up

To make your outside den prettier and more practical in the dark, try adding battery or solar-powered fairy lights. You can dangle them from the roof of your structure or drape them over the top, or you can lay them out on the ground inside your den for a magical glow.

## 8. Something to do

What's your outside den going to be used for? Relaxing? Playing? Picnics? Camping? You can take your favourite games, books and activities out into your den for an extra adventurous playtime, or you can prepare some sandwiches and snacks for a cosy picnic in the garden. Or, if you're feeling extra brave and very sure of your waterproofing skills, you could go the whole hog and sleep outside in your den overnight (just make sure you have permission first!).

# TIPS FOR SAFE DEN PLAY: THE DEN COMMANDMENTS

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One moment, keen den builders! Here are a few very important rules to follow to make sure your den building is safe and fun for everyone:

1. If you're building an outside den, make sure you respect the environment and don't damage anything that's living there.
2. Only build your outside den in your own garden or somewhere you have permission from the person who owns the land.
3. If you use paint, only use water-based paint and don't try painting anything on a day where it might rain. And don't use paint if you're building your den on wild or public land.

4. Always tidy up after yourself when you're finished with your den and don't leave any litter. The best den builders leave no trace!
5. Make sure an adult is supervising your den building and aware of what's going on
6. Don't use anything too heavy as the roof or main structure of your den in case it falls; you don't want to get hurt!
7. Don't use anything breakable to construct your den, and don't take anything breakable inside your den. Accidents happen and sharp edges can cut you.
8. Make sure you ask your parent or guardian's permission if using any furniture to build your den
9. Don't use any electrical items to decorate or play with inside your den; wires and cables are a trip hazard and electricity can be dangerous if used wrongly.
10. Have fun, be safe, and *build the den of your dreams!*