

Survival Projects to Study This Winter: DIY Outhouse

Let's begin today's piece with the funniest statistic I've ever seen: **1.1 million Americans don't have a toilet...**

You can safely bet that I was thinking just what you were after reading this article: it's our God given right as free Americans living on the land to own a toilet, even if it's just an outhouse!

Yes, I am aware of the fact that going to an outhouse to take care of business during the cold winter months, especially if you live in, let's say...Alaska, doesn't sound very appealing, but something is still much better than nothing, right?

A DIY outhouse is a cool project for any homesteader, especially with the winter coming. I mean, if you have 2-3-4 months with nothing much else to do than watching the start of World War 3 on TV, you better put your mind and (later on, in the spring) hands to work. After all, idle hands (and minds) are the devil's playground.

With that in mind, today's article will provide you with some food for thought, i.e. some ideas and plans for building your own outhouse, because every man deserves a throne, right?

The Principles You Need to KnowThe general idea is that when nature calls, you must be prepared; everything revolves around this concept – preparedness.

Also, sanitation is very important. We're not animals, and learning the principles of DIY-ing an outhouse will make sure that you won't have to squat like a dog over a dirty hole dug in the mud in the rain when SHTF (literally speaking).

So, here are the four DIY outhouse basic principles, as I am

an expert in building latrines, 'cause I was raised in Arkansas where outhouses are still in use even today. Tere we go.

1. The most important thing when building an outhouse is **the legal foundation**. In our day and age, everything must be regulated with laws made by the good people in the federal government or at local level, because we're too dumb to know what is good for us. Basically, you should check with your local authorities (environmental officials or state health officials) to see if there are any laws and regulations to be followed unless you like to pay hefty fines or get arrested for breaking environmental laws, like warming the climate.

There are also local zoning and building codes and permits to take care of. I am very serious; some states and counties will require an impermeable concrete-made tank to be installed in your outhouse, to prevent the pollution of the countryside or water. That will make for building an outhouse a pretty expensive project, especially if you must transport the concrete-made tank to your desired location.

If you live in remote areas, not so densely populated and inhabited by sane folks, there may be no laws regarding this issue, but it would be wise to check it out before starting your DIY outhouse project. For example, in the state of Utah, outhouses or latrines are totally banned!

2. The next best thing is to do proper recon when **choosing the best spot** for your outhouse. Take a good look around your property and find a high ground for installing the latrine in such way that it sits as far as possible above the water table.

The best soil for building an outhouse is a well-drained sandy soil. If you build an outhouse on top of heavy clay soil, the human waste and liquids will not be able to seep efficiently into the ground. Also, the latrine must be located properly;

not too close from your residence (the smell can be nasty and the well water can be compromised) but not too far either (think about a cold winter night, it's 4 a.m. and 20 degrees F below zero, and you have a bad case of the runs hitting your guts). The location should also take into account easy access for septic service pump trucks, which regularly have only ~150-200 feet of hose.

3. Build a long-lasting, bomb-proof outhouse. By that, I mean you must build your manly throne house to last for generations so that your family, your children and your children's children will be able to enjoy and benefit from the outhouse experience. To accomplish that, you must use 2 by fours for the above ground structure, about sixteen inches on center. The materials used in the outhouse must be of high quality, like the ones you'd require for building a garage or your house: weather-proof siding, thirty-year shingles, specially treated lumber, waste-splash impervious materials below the "seat" level (for when SHTF), stuff like that.

The outhouse must endure the worst, so the pit liner must be made from materials that don't rot (such as chemically treated timber or concrete). Another idea would be to use a plastic or concrete (watertight) holding tank, which can be easily and perpetually filled/pumped, time and time again, without getting damaged.

To prevent foul smells and odor contamination, you must design the holding tank or the pit with proper ventilation and seal all the wood parts like a real pro! In most cases, the vent stack consists of a four-inch PVC pipe which runs all the way from the roof to the seat board.

4. Make your outhouse look cool, classy and attractive, like a palace of some sort. I mean, not everybody is as gun-ho about latrines as this writer is, so keep in mind that your visitors, hell, even your kids must go to the outhouse with smiles on their faces. Make your latrine look appealing,

alluring, and as inviting as possible. Put windows in it to let the light in! Try to build it in a place with a nice view over your real estate, especially if you're living in a beautiful countryside.

Obviously, for privacy reasons, you should put up curtains to screen the latrine's inhabitants from the view of others, but you got the general idea. Make your latrine a place in which spending time is nice and inspiring. Think ergonomic, size it with comfort in mind, for both small and huge users, with enough elbow room and what not.

Also think about people with disabilities and about ways to keep it clean without tremendous effort. Make enough room for storing large quantities of toilet paper and sanitation products, along with "reading" materials. If you want to go the extra mile, add power to your outhouse by installing a solar panel on the roof which can be used for powering a light bulb or even a small heating device for those chilly winter nights.

Let's DIY!

With the basics taken care of, let us concentrate upon the DIY part, shall we? A century old booklet claims that building an outhouse is an easy job, easily done by a fourteen year old boy of mediocre intelligence. However, back in the day, people used to DIY a lot, while nowadays we all take things for granted. In the worst case scenario, a plumber or a carpenter is a phone call away.

To begin with, the easiest way to build an outhouse is to first dig a big enough hole in the proper location, and afterwards to build the actual structure on top of it. That will require a good plan, time, skill, elbow grease and dedication, plus some money, depending on the complexity of the project. The cheapest way is to use recycled materials for the structure, such as iron shed for the roof and barn wood

for the walls. To elevate the front area, you can use mud/dirt for the supra-structure and flat rocks for making steps.

The size of the “hole” must take into account the traffic, i.e. how many people will use the outhouse. You can use a [composting toilet](#), instead of choosing to pump and dump your tank. This procedure is called DIYing a composting bucket toilet, and here’s a video tutorial exposing its “dirty secrets”.

Video first seen on [relaxshacksDOTcom](#)

Now, here’s another tutorial¹ which depicts the “journey” of building an outhouse at your off-grid cabin, starting from scratch, with the sky being the limit (it all depends on your imagination and budget).

Video first seen on [Redneck Homestead](#)

Here’s a Canadian guy bragging about his DIY latrine project (just the privy/thunderbox without the actual structure) using only reclaimed materials. He describes everything in a few simple steps.

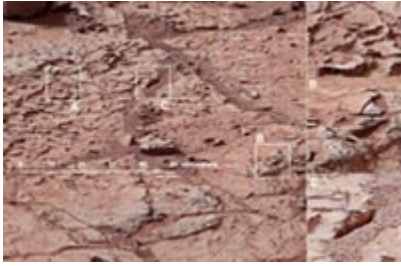
Video first seen on [Wolfmaan](#)

And, for the grand finale, here comes a video with the detailed/animated plans for the outhouse construction.

Video first seen on [Frank Vanh Nguyen](#)

Enough with the chit chat, just get to work folks! And if you have other ideas or comments regarding the DIY outhouse thing, feel free to comment in the dedicated section below.

Good luck, have fun! And share your experience using the comment form below!



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This

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References:

<http://theweek.com/articles/590312>