

# Building Shelters for Outdoor Cats



**Feral Cat Initiative**

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# Super Simple Foam Box Shelter

This design really just requires a foam shipping box and an entry hole. You can get a box for free from a restaurant or seafood shop, or recycle your own shipping containers. The box itself is made of insulation and is waterproof, and the material is easy to cut using an ordinary kitchen knife. Simple additions make the shelter more durable and easier to hide.

## You'll Need:

- A foam cooler (minimum size 12" x 18" x 12")
- A measuring/straightedge tool
- A felt-tip marker
- A bread knife or narrow, fine-toothed saw
- All-weather adhesive caulk (squeeze-tube or one that needs a caulking gun)
- Weights (a heavy base glued or screwed to the bottom, bricks, rocks, or boards on the lid, etc.)
- *Optional: Heavy-duty duct tape, self-stick floor tiles, contact paper wallcovering, awning, camouflage or decorative paint, drain hole in the bottom, base to raise the entrance higher off the ground*



## Assembly:

- 1) Measure and draw a 5-inch diameter doorway on the front wall, off to one side and about halfway between the top and bottom of the box.
- 2) Cut the doorway with a knife or saw. *Tip: Save the cutout from the doorway to make an awning.*
- 3) Squeeze a ribbon of caulk all around the inside of the lid, then press the lid on to make it watertight.\*
- 4) After the caulk is dry, you can fill the shelter 1/3-full with straw bedding, add weights, and the shelter is done.

*\* If you want to add flooring and wallcovering, do that before gluing the lid on. For more details and ideas for finishing touches, see page 2.*

# Super Simple Foam Box Shelter *(Page 2)*

## Finishing Touches:

- To protect the floor from the cats' claws, cover it with self-stick tiles before you glue the lid onto the shelter. You can also use heavy-duty vinyl contact paper to protect the walls.
- For an easy awning, take the door cutout and squeeze caulk on one side, then press it onto the wall above the door.
  - To attach the awning more securely, use two toothpicks to make pilot holes in the awning and insert the toothpicks into the wall. Add the caulk to the awning and press it onto the toothpicks and against the wall.
  - For a flatter or wider awning, you can use a piece of 1-inch foam insulation board, cut to the desired size and secured with caulk and toothpicks.
  - For a very flat and secure awning, cut a flat piece of plastic that's about 1 inch deeper than you want the awning and insert it under the lid when you glue the lid on.
- You can use plastic-safe exterior paint to decorate or camouflage the shelter. Painting the shelter also protects the exterior from scratching claws.
- To prevent water and snow from accumulating on the flat roof, set the shelter on a slight angle. You can also poke a small drainage hole on one end of the bottom, using a drill or a 3-inch nail.



# Easy Plastic Bin Shelter

This shelter can last for years. It requires cutting and assembly, but you don't need special skills or tools. It can be made large or small, depending on the size of the storage bin you're using as the shell. When deciding how big a bin you need, remember that the interior space will be smaller than the inside of the bin itself because the floor, ceiling and four walls will be lined with 1-inch thick insulation board.

## You'll Need:

- A sturdy storage bin made of flexible plastic, with snap on lid
- 1-inch thick rigid foam insulation board
- Measuring tape
- Straightedge measuring tool (a T-square is great for this)
- A felt-tip marker
- A box cutter/utility knife or drill with a wide bit
- A bread knife or fine-toothed saw (hand or power tool)
- Heavy-duty duct tape
- Exterior-grade adhesive caulk for plastic, in a squeeze tube or one that requires a caulking gun
- *Optional: Self-stick floor tiles, contact paper wallcovering, camouflage paint*



## Assembly:

- 1) Use measuring tape to measure the inside of the bin at its narrowest points to determine the size of the floor, walls and ceiling. The bin may be wider than the bottom, so the walls don't have to be perfect rectangles and the ceiling may be bigger than the floor.
- 2) The foam board floor should cover the whole bottom of the bin, the walls should fit together snugly on top of the floor, and the ceiling should cover the tops of the walls. The ceiling should fit under the lid when it's snapped in place.
- 3) Measure and cut the foam board. *Tip: First make a pilot cut with the box cutter to help you make a cleaner cut with the knife or saw.*

# Easy Plastic Bin Shelter (Page 2)

## Assembly (cont.)

- 4) Draw a 5-inch diameter doorway on the front wall, off to one side and about halfway between the top and bottom of the bin.
- 5) Cut the doorway by making a pilot hole with a box cutter or drill, then cutting it with a knife or saw. *Tip: Save that plastic piece from the doorway if you want to make an awning.*
- 6) Squeeze some caulk on the bottom of the bin and press the floor board into place.
- 7) Rest the front wall board on the floor, against the front wall of the bin. Trace a doorway on it using the doorway of the bin.
- 8) Take the front wall out of the bin and cut the inner doorway using the box cutter and knife or saw.
- 9) Place the four walls in the bin, using caulk to keep the pieces in place and plug up gaps in the seams.
- 10) The ceiling insulation doesn't need to be glued on because the snap on lid will keep it in place. This also makes for easier maintenance.
- 11) To make the entry watertight, seal the gap between the doorways with heavy-duty duct tape.
- 12) After the caulk is dry, you can fill the shelter 1/3 full with straw bedding and the shelter is done. Or you can add a few finishing touches.

## Finishing Touches:

- For an awning, insert the plastic door cutout into the top of the doorway and secure it with duct tape. You can use the tape to soften the sharp edges of the awning and to add little side curtains. The tape sticks to itself and you end up with a sturdy awning.
- You can use plastic-safe exterior paint to decorate or camouflage the shelter.
- To protect the floor from the cats' claws, cover it with self-stick tiles. You can also use heavy-duty vinyl contact paper to protect the walls.
- This shelter may be fairly light, so we recommend weighing it down with bricks, stones, etc.



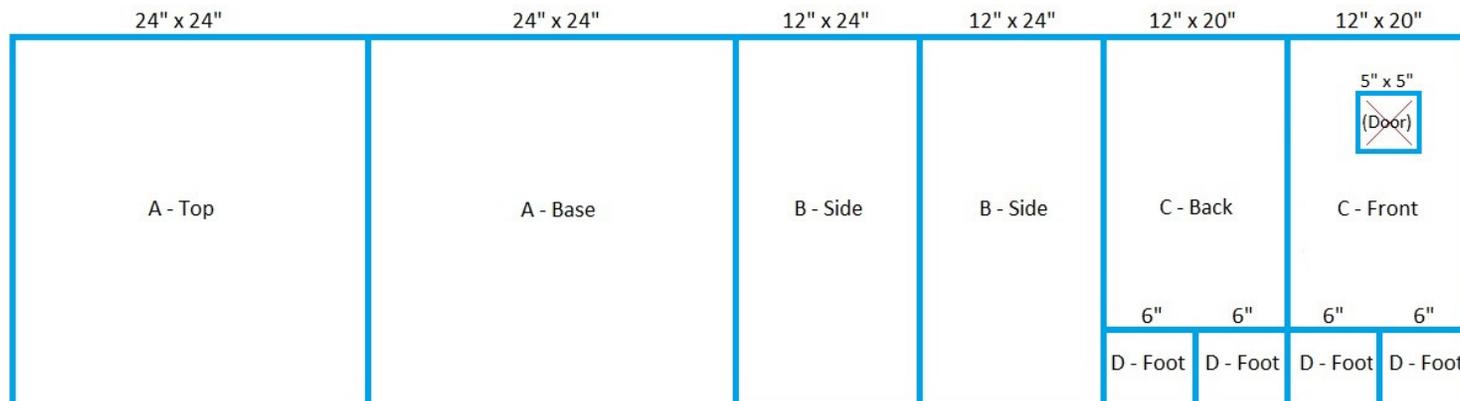
# Simple 2-Foot Foam Board Cube Shelter

*Designed by Karin Hancock, Long Island, NY*

This design really only requires a plastic ice chest cooler and an entry hole. The cooler is made of heavy-duty insulation sandwiched between layers of plastic, so it's warm and waterproof. The material can be cut using an ordinary kitchen knife. These coolers are usually on sale in colder months, just when the cats need them.

## You'll Need:

- A 2-foot by 8-foot, 2-inch thick foam insulation board
- A measuring/straightedge tool (a T-square is great for this)
- A felt-tip marker
- A box cutter/utility knife
- A bread knife or narrow, fine-toothed saw
- Exterior-grade, all-weather adhesive caulk for plastic (either in a large squeeze tube or a tube that needs a caulking gun – one tube should be enough)
- Long, thin nails, upholstery "T" pins or construction screws (3 inches long)
- *Optional: Self-stick floor tiles, contact paper wallcovering, camouflage paint*



# Simple 2-Foot Foam Board Cube Shelter *(Page 2)*

## Assembly:

- 1) Cut and label the pieces according to the pattern, and cut the door in the front wall (C) about 3 inches from the bottom. *Tip: First make a shallow pilot cut with the box cutter to help you make a cleaner cut with the knife or saw.*
- 2) Squeeze out a line of caulk on top of the base, 1 inch from the edge. Press a side wall (B) onto the caulk to glue it to the base.
- 3) Use the narrow side of one of the feet (D) or a ruler, to measure and mark a 4-inch recess at the front of the base. The front of the front wall (C) will line up with that line. Now squeeze a line of caulk an inch to the rear of the line on the base and continue up the inside of the side wall. Press the front wall onto the caulk and secure it to the side wall with nails.
- 4) Squeeze a line of caulk onto the base 1 inch from the rear edge, starting at the glued-on side wall and ending 2 inches from the opposite side of the base. Squeeze a line of caulk up the inside of the wall, 1 inch from the back end of the wall. Press the back wall (C) onto the caulk to secure it to the base and side wall. Insert a couple of the long nails to help hold the walls together as they dry.
- 5) Squeeze a line of caulk 1 inch from the last side of the base, and up the center of the edge of the back and front walls. Press the second side wall (B) in place on the caulk and secure it with nails.
- 6) *Optional: Before gluing the roof on, add floor tiles, wallcovering, and/or caulk any gaps in the seams between the walls and floor.*
- 7) Squeeze a line of caulk around the tops of the four walls and press the roof (A) into place, securing with nails.
- 8) Glue the feet (D) to the four corners of the base (A).
- 9) *Optional: Paint the shelter and the door frame using exterior paint that's safe for plastics.*
- 10) Once all caulk and paint are dry, fill the shelter with a layer of straw bedding (about 5 inches deep).



# Deluxe Simple Ice Chest Shelter

This design really only requires a plastic ice chest cooler and an entry hole. The cooler is made of heavy-duty insulation sandwiched between layers of plastic, so it's warm and waterproof. The material can be cut using an ordinary kitchen knife. These coolers are usually on sale in colder months, just when the cats need them.

## You'll Need:

- An ice chest cooler (minimum 36-quart size)
- A measuring/straightedge tool
- A felt-tip marker
- A box cutter/utility knife or drill with wide bit
- A bread knife or narrow, fine-toothed saw
- Heavy-duty duct tape
- *Optional: Awning, camouflage or decorative paint, drain hole in the bottom, base to raise the entrance higher off the ground*



## Assembly:

- 1) Measure and draw a 5-inch diameter doorway on the front of the cooler, off to one side and about halfway between the top and bottom.
- 2) To cut the doorway, first make one or more pilot holes at the corners, using the box cutter or a wide drill bit. This makes it easier to get the blade of your knife or saw in to finish the cut. *Tip: Save the cutout from the doorway to make an awning.*
- 3) To make the entry watertight, seal the exposed insulation in the doorway with heavy-duty duct tape, making sure the seams between the insulation and the inner and outer plastic shell are covered with tape.
- 4) At this point, you can fill the shelter 1/3 full with straw bedding and the shelter is done.
- 5) If you want to add an awning and other finishing touches, see page 2.

# Deluxe Simple Ice Chest Shelter *(Page 2)*

## Finishing Touches:

- For an awning, use a knife to peel the outer layer of plastic off the doorway cutout. Discard the rest of the cutout. Use the box cutter to make the awning smaller, if desired. Tape the awning to the top of the doorway with duct tape. Use the tape to soften the sharp edges of the awning and to add little side curtains. The tape sticks to itself and you end up with a sturdy awning.
- You can use plastic-safe exterior paint to decorate or camouflage the shelter.
- If the cooler has divider slots inside, you can easily create a windbreak “foyer”:
  - Measure the width and depth inside the cooler. Mark a piece of plastic sheet to this size, then mark a doorway in the windbreak sheet about halfway between floor and ceiling.
  - Cut the plastic using a fine-toothed saw (or with a box cutter, making shallow cuts until the plastic can be snapped apart cleanly).
  - Slide the windbreak into the slot nearest to the door. It can be caulked or sealed with duct tape at the bottom for extra waterproofing.
  - Fill the compartment inside the windbreak with straw.
- To prevent water and snow from accumulating on the flat roof, set the shelter on a slight angle.
- If you set the shelter on an angle, you can also drill a small drainage hole on one end of the bottom.

