



## Build Your Best Friend a Home

Is it time for your dog to get his own place? Why not build him or her a doghouse? Most dogs adapt well to outdoor living as long as they have access to shelter.

Of course, your best friend should have high quality living accommodations — the next best thing to your own house. Though you probably aren't a skilled home builder, you will find building a home for your four-legged family member a great way to exercise your creativity.

### **So follow these steps for building a doghouse and make your canine 'one happy camper.'**

Build a doghouse that fits your dog. The bigger the dog, the bigger the doghouse. When your dog is standing up, measure her from the top of her front shoulder to the ground. Then tell her to sit and measure her from the top of the head to the ground. These measurements will help you figure out the dimensions of the doghouse. A dog should fit snugly into its house. If the doghouse is too large, it won't help keep the dog warm. And for obvious reasons your dog will not be able to move in a house that's too small. Think comfort.

Insulate the doghouse. A doghouse should protect your animal from the elements and keep him warm. Use weatherproof plywood exterior panels to build the outside walls. Then insulate the walls, floor and ceiling with 1.5 inch Styrofoam sheets. For inside paneling, use hardboard or similar material.

Paint the doghouse black or white. If you live in a cold climate, paint the doghouse black. Black doghouses absorb heat and stay warmer. But if you live in a warm climate, paint the doghouse white. The color white reflects heat, keeping the doghouse cool.

Make sure the doghouse is portable. You might not want the doghouse to sit in the same spot during the winter as it does during the summer. With a moveable doghouse, you can protect your dog from the effects of sun, shade and wind.

Use cedar, wood chips or shredded newspaper (rather than straw or blankets) for bedding in your dog's house.

Make the doghouse a "one-bedroom." Separate the doghouse into two rooms, one of which can serve as the sleeping compartment. The wall decreases air circulation and, therefore, keeps the sleeping area warmer during the winter. Make the wall removable for better air circulation during hot summer months.

Elevate the doghouse on bricks or cinder blocks to keep the floor dry.

To build a doghouse, you will need plywood for the walls, roof and floor. You will also use Styrofoam insulation, a door sill, shavings or straw bedding, and cinderblocks to make a platform. And to hold the insulation panel over the sleeping area, you will need a 2" x 2" frame for the roof ceiling.

You might want to get house design plans before starting to build your doghouse. Try looking on the Internet for plans, check out books at your local library or see what is in stock at your area bookstore. Doghouse plans and instruction books will give step-by-step directions for building the house. They will also list pointers on designing your dog's house to fit your climate. For example, cold-climate doghouses should have flat roofs.

Outdoor living is not for every dog. If your dog is old and has lived inside your house for a number of years, it will not adjust to living outside, even with a doghouse. Acclimatize your dog to outdoor living when it is young

and the weather is warm. And once your dog starts sleeping in a doghouse, she should stay there. Don't bring her into your house on some nights and leave her in the doghouse on others because then she will never fully adjust to outdoor living.