



# Hey Girl

YOU CAN BE  
HANDY  
TOO!

A beginner's guide to  
becoming a DIYer  
by One Handy Momma

written by Nneka Mosley

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# Disclaimer

Let's get the legal stuff out the way ;)

I am not a professional. I am sharing information I've learned first hand over the years. Please take safety precautions when operating tools and always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Please consult with a professional contractor when appropriate.

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# Hey Girl



If you are new to my world, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Nneka (pronounced Ne-neck-ah) also known as One Handy Momma and I'm so happy you are here! Over the years, I've come across a lot of women who want to get into doing DIY projects and the #1 question they all have is "Where do I begin?"

If you purchased this eBook, there's a good chance that's exactly how you feel too. But have no fear, your DIY bestie (me) is to the rescue ☺. And now that you have this beginner's guide in your possession, you will no longer have to ask that question!

What I've done with this eBook is combine all the information I've learned throughout the years into one place to make it easy for you to get started. And if you're anything like me, your time is limited so I purposely made this a quick read and something you can come back to whenever you need. So buckle up and get ready to learn! I guarantee if you really get into this DIY thang, this will only be the beginning! You'll be a DIY Rockstar before you know it!

Nneka

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“You never know  
what you’re  
*capable*  
of doing  
until you  
try!”

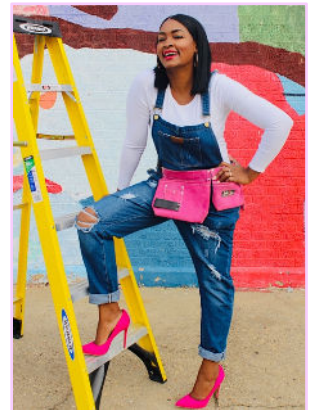
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# Becoming One Handy Momma

I'm Nneka...a life long creative who's also a wife and working mom of 4. I like to joke that I came out the womb ready to create so it's in my blood 😊. But seriously, I'm the daughter of a former teacher who's a creative as well so when I say it's in my blood, it's literally in my blood!

Ever since I can remember, I've been drawn to using my hands to create. I've dabbled in almost everything spanning from painting to floral design to sewing to fashion design to cosmetology to upholstering furniture to graphic design to building...the list can go on and on. Have I been great at everything? Of course not, but that's not the point.

The point is I will try to DIY pretty much anything. However, over the years I've learned this can be both good and bad...cue my wedding 😬. Something in me told me I could be the event planner, decorator, florist and hair stylist for my own wedding. And yes, it sounds just as ridiculous to me right now as it probably does to you. The fact that I thought it was a good idea still baffles me. In hindsight, I would have done things a lot differently if I had a do over. Everything turned out great, but let's just say I was on the verge of passing out during our rehearsal dinner 🙄. We'll save that story for another time!



## Foundation

People often wonder how I got into DIYing. And while I've always been intrigued with woodworking, actually getting into it came a bit later in life for me. As a kid, I just knew I'd become a doctor. Then it switched to wanting to be a hair stylist and then I wanted to get into fashion design. Finally, I landed on going to school for marketing. I had dreams of becoming a big exec in NYC with an assistant who responded to all my requests by saying "Right on top of that Rose." Now, if you totally got that reference and immediately knew the 1991 movie that line came from, gold star for you!

If that completely went over your head, thank you for officially making me feel old lol. Don't worry though, I won't hold it against you 😊.

(Btw, that was a famous line from the movie, *Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead*)

After graduating college, I packed my bags and moved from my hometown, Petersburg, VA to Philadelphia, PA to start my career in sales. I had my plan all laid out and was laser focused on climbing the corporate ladder to become a successful marketing executive.

## A business is born

One day, while sitting in my apartment with nothing to do, I decided to dust off the sewing machine my mother gave me as a Christmas gift. The one I let sit in the box for almost a year because I was intimidated to learn how to use it. I figured I already knew how to hand sew so that was good enough. I actually thought it would be too hard to learn to use. Boy am I glad pushed past that thought!

*And while we are on that subject, think about how many times we talk ourselves out of trying something new just because it seems too difficult or unattainable. But every time we push past that feeling, we stretch that muscle a little more and open ourselves up to things we may surprise ourselves we can actually do. Remember, you never know what you're capable of doing until you try!*

I started sewing a lot after work and playing around making different items including small handbags. As you can imagine, the first few I made were a hot mess 🤢. They were so bad y'all but it was great for practice and after awhile I thought they were cute enough to share with some friends. When one of my friends asked if she could purchase one, a light bulb went off. I thought...wow, can I really sell these?! Honestly, I wasn't 100% sure if people other than my friends would buy them but I figured I'd find out! It was at that moment, my handbag line, Nneka Saran was formed. I started making and selling hobo style handbags for a whopping \$20 each. I was rolling in the dough yall! Haha

Overtime, I gained more customers and found myself making them all the time. I decided to focus exclusively on clutches and that's when things really took off. What was once a hobby turned into a full fledged business and I started to have aspirations of doing it full time one day. Around the same time, my job started doing layoffs during a company reorganization. I prayed about it, took a severance package, and stepped out on faith to pursue my entrepreneurial dreams!

Was it scary leaving my job with benefits and a steady income to pursue my passion? Absolutely! But I believed in myself and had the support of my husband, family and friends so I was ready to conquer the world!

Free to focus 100% of my time to my business, I started traveling around the country hosting trunk shows to sell my products. I got a small commercial studio space and was afforded so many cool opportunities while running that business. My handbags were featured in magazines, on television shows, and on the arms of celebs. I was happy, fulfilled and living in my purpose...at that time.

### The shift

Fast forward about 3 years and I noticed a change. I wasn't as passionate about what I was doing anymore. I kept questioning why I felt that way but couldn't put my finger on what was happening to me. Around the same time, my husband and I started planning to have a family. We had no clue when we got married that when we were ready to have children, it would be so challenging. That in itself took a toll on me and looking back, that probably played a role in my focus not being on my handbag business as much.

I started dabbling in other things like upholstering furniture, taking on interior design projects and planning events. I found myself also thinking about building projects I could tackle in my own home. I remember really wanting built in cabinets in our family room so I reached out to a contractor and got a quote. Immediately after I picked my jaw up from the floor, I told my husband we can do this. I didn't know how at the time, but I knew I'd figure it out.

In 2013, I co-founded a workshop called Handy Chics with a friend. We hosted workshops that taught women how to build & upholster furniture. And I realized how many women had never even picked up a drill before let alone operate one. It was so awesome teaching and empowering so many women to build. And the more we did, the more I started working on small projects on my own. Not long after, my husband discovered he enjoyed building too so we would work on some of the bigger projects together (including those built ins I wanted). By 2017, I had officially dissolved my handbag biz, gave birth to our 3rd child, and was no longer doing many workshops. I was at a crossroads creatively. I had no clue what I wanted to do and I felt lost.

## The birth of One Handy Momma

During that time, I spent a lot of time thinking. I thought about what really brought me joy...and it always had something to do with being creative. I just wasn't quite sure how I could package it. I explored a lot of different paths but it kept coming back to the same thing... DIY & Home Design. I knew I loved to make things & decorate my home and I loved to inspire others to do the same. So, I decided I would get back into blogging but I wanted to differentiate myself from my Nneka Saran brand a bit. I came up with One Handy Momma because it incorporated my love for being handy and also tied in my life as a mom. I launched my blog and started an Instagram page and have been sharing ever since!

The joy I get from seeing something I styled or built in my home with my own two hands is like no other. I also love that my children have a front row seat to mommy doing what she loves. They get to not only witness me pushing past gender biases but also being an example of accomplishing anything I put my mind to. My goal with this is to truly inspire & empower women specifically to go for it..whatever that may be!

## Getting it done

People often ask me how I find time to do projects as a working wife & mom of 4 young children. My answer to that is I do what I can when I can.

It can be a lot juggling work, taking care of kids, cooking, keeping the house clean (as much as possible), and fitting in home projects. But, it can be done. I take advantage of the times the kids are preoccupied or taking naps. If you have a support system, I suggest leaning on them to help with your kids while you work on projects. Most importantly, be okay with not finishing every project in a day. I know Instagram and those time lapse videos make it seem like everyone finishes things super quick, but that's not real life. In real life, you can start a project one day and not be able to get back to it until a few days or weeks later. And that's okay.

So as you can see, I'm no different than many of you reading this. I'm not a professional carpenter or interior designer. I'm just a regular girl who decided to go for it. I'm doing what I love, learning and hopefully inspiring women along the way. I've learned a lot over the years, but it's a never ending learning process. That said, I don't proclaim to know it all. There's a bunch of things I still want to learn about. But, I can teach you what I do know!

Hopefully, that gave you a peek into my background and journey!

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“She *believed*  
she could so  
she did.”

- Unknown

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# You CAN do This!

Alright, so let's just put it out there right now... power tools are intimidating. I get it. I felt the same way. But think about how many other things you've done that were once intimidating. Oh I don't know, remember how you felt before learning how to drive? Think about how scared you were your first time getting behind the wheel, let alone on the highway! Whew child, I still remember how nervous I was...but guess what ... I did it! And there's a good chance, you did too. And now you're a pro at it! This is no different.

But don't get me wrong, I totally get how intimidating some tools & projects can be, but that shouldn't stop you from getting started. My motto is if other women (and men!) can do it, so can I. And that's exactly how you should feel too!

I remember the first time I picked up a drill. I had no idea how to use it and had no clue how to change the bits either. But it didn't take me long to figure it out.

As with anything, once you get going things will start making sense! Who cares if you make mistakes, that's how you learn.

This is the time to stop making excuses about getting started. No more sitting around looking at projects other people have done telling yourself you could never do it. No more letting fear or your feelings of inadequacy prevent you from doing something you really want to do because you CAN do this! Repeat after me (and repeat it as often as you need to):

I **CAN** do this! I **AM** capable!

Now that we got that out the way, lets get into the meat of this book!

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“There are two  
things a girl  
should *always*  
have...a great  
pair of jeans &  
a drill.”

- Nneka

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# Must have Tools

In this section, we'll review some beginner must have tools. As you can imagine, there are hundreds of tools on the market. We'll review my top 15 beginner tools but starting out, you only need a few. As you get into building & DIYing more, you'll slowly add more to your toolbox.

The first 3 tools I suggest you definitely get are a drill, circular saw, and nail gun. In this chapter, you will learn about each item on this list which will help you figure out what items you want to invest in based on the types of projects you plan to do. For your convenience, I've also included links for each item in case you want to purchase any of them online. You can also shop around for deals at your local hardware stores and keep an eye out for good sales on tools during the holidays.

## BEGINNER TOOL LIST

1. Drill
2. Impact Driver
3. Bit Set
4. Nail Gun
5. Circular Saw
6. Kreg Jig
7. Orbital Sander
8. Clamps
9. Tape Measure
10. Hammer/Mallet
11. Level
12. 6 ft table /work table
13. Speed square
14. Safety Glasses & Masks
15. Wood Glue/Filler

\*I earn a small % for any item purchased from the affiliate links included in this eBook.

**Pro Tip:** It's perfectly okay to have tools from multiple brands, but one way to save money is to select a brand that uses the same battery packs for most of the tools in their ecosystem. Ryobi does a great job with this and is also a great line of tools for beginners.

# DRILL

A drill is #1 on this list because it's definitely the one tool a DIYer can't live without. This is because you can do so much with a drill from household fixes to building furniture.

It can be used to pre-drill holes and drive screws through different materials. There are two options: corded and cordless. My preference is a cordless drill because it's convenient and obviously, it doesn't have a cord attached to it so you can freely move around while working. I've also found cordless drills have enough power to do what I need. Speaking of power, you can find small drills with 8-12 volt batteries, but they can't handle all jobs. If you're only buying one to start out with, I suggest spending a little more and get one with a 18-20 volt battery so you'll have enough power to do most projects.

*What I use:* Rigid 18V cordless drill



*Get it here!*

# IMPACT DRIVER

Now, the impact driver is one of the tools that I've recently fallen in love with that I never knew I would! Years ago, I bought a drill and impact driver set, but never really took the time to learn what the impact driver was intended to be used for. As a result, I used my drill for EVERYTHING. The drill can definitely do the job for most situations, but the amount of sweat equity you have to add to it is where things change. I can recall trying to screw lag bolts into a 3x3 post for a table we were building with my drill and while I eventually got it in there, it took about 5-7 mins. And once I got the first one in, I thought maybe I should try my impact driver...voila! When I tell you it was like night and day, it really was!

So, that's what an impact driver is for - driving screws and bolts into hard/thick surfaces. While you can get it done with a drill, do yourself a favor and get an impact driver now because you never know where your DIY journey will take you and you want to be prepared! Trust me, you won't regret it.

**What I use:** Milwaukee 12V cordless (pictured here) for simple projects with thin/soft woods to speed things up (i.e. attaching things to a wooden stud) and a Hercules 20V cordless for heavy duty use (drilling/screwing into thick wooden posts/boards)

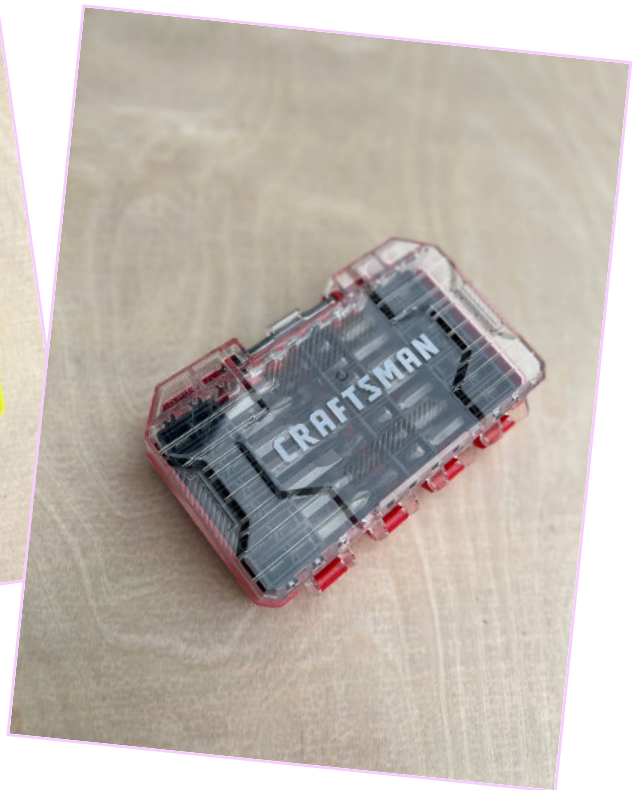


*Get it here!*

# BIT SET

If you have a drill, you definitely need a drill bit set. A drill bit set is a universal set of various size bits and they typically come in a case.

*What I use: Ryobi & Craftsman*



*Get it here!*

# NAIL GUN

I absolutely love my nail gun. It is one of my go-to tools that I use for just about every single project, which is why it's one of my top 3. As you might guess, a nail gun is used to nail things together. Often times, especially for small DIY projects, you can get a pretty secure connection with just the use of a nail gun and some wood glue. And what I love about nail guns is that they allow you to load different size nails depending on the need. For example, when I'm attaching wood trim to something to give it a nice, finished look (e.g. bookshelf or bench), I use  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch nails. However, when I'm attaching any type of moulding to a wall and want a nice and flush look, I will use 2" nails. So, you may be thinking in your head, "when should I use screws vs. nails?" If you are, great question! I like to think about it like this. If you're looking to attach two pieces of wood together that will not carry a lot of weight, a nail gun + wood glue can work just fine. However, if you are attaching two pieces of wood that will be used to hold a good amount of weight (i.e. for a table, bench, chair), you want to use screws because they will give you the most secure and stable connection. Nails are great for what they call 'finish' work as in, the wood you attach to things to give it a professional look. Nails are also good to use to hold two pieces together while you then screw them together for more stability. All in all, my nail gun is one of my favorites and I never start a project without it!

**What I use:** Ryobi 18V AirStrike cordless Brad Nailer



*Get it here!*

# CIRCULAR SAW

If you're like I was when I got started, the thought of using a saw was pretty scary! The first time I used one, I was sooo nervous. It may be a small tool, but it's powerful. Once you try it and become comfortable using it, that fear will go away.

A circular saw is used to cut wood - plain and simple. It can be used a ton of different ways. There are corded and cordless, options. If you get one with 18-20V, you'll be good to go. The only limitation that a battery-powered circular saw has is that you will go through a couple of batteries if you're doing big projects. As a result, I recommend always having a second battery charging for your circular saw while working on your project so you don't get stuck waiting 30 mins for a battery charge when you're in a flow.

Now, let me give you a couple of clear examples what I've used my circular saw for:

- Cutting 4'x8' sheets of plywood
- Cutting 2x4s and other wood trim. As you advance, most DIYers will use a miter saw for these cuts. That said, miter saws can cost you a good amount of money, so before you make that type of investment, a good circular saw can go a long way.

**NOTE:** When cutting with a circular saw, you'll need a flat surface and a few clamps to hold pieces in place while you cut.

**What I use:** Ryobi 18V 5 ½ Ryobi circular saw (pictured here) and an 18V 7 ¼ circular saw with a dust port.



*Get it here!*

Circular saws kick up A LOT of dust, so not only will you need to keep safety goggles and dust masks readily available, a good vacuum is helpful too to clean up the mess. The beauty of having a circular saw with a dust port is that you can attach the vacuum to it and it does all the work for you, leaving very little mess as you go. I recommend getting a small wet vac for this purpose.

# KREG JIG

Ok so this is one of my favorite tools and it's for good reason. Me & Kreg go wayyyy back! I can't even begin to tell you how many projects I've used my Kreg Jig for. If you aren't familiar with it, it's a tool that is used to join wood by creating pocket holes. The pocket holes allow screws to be inserted at an angle and hidden. I know it may look complicated to use, but it is one of the easiest tools you'll come across. They recently updated it and its even easier to use now.

If you plan to work on different types of projects, this is a must have.

*What I use:* Kreg Pocket Hole Jig 720PRO



*Get it here!*

# ORBITAL SANDER

There's nothing better than running my hand over a project I've just completed and feeling the smooth grain of wood. This feeling only comes after I've sanded it...lol. The orbital sander is going to be one of the most efficient ways to sand your projects. You can absolutely use a sheet of sand paper or sand block, but the reality is if you're sanding a reasonably sized build, an orbital sander will save you time and hand cramping!

With an orbital sander, you just choose the type of sandpaper you want (the higher the grit, the smoother the finish) and attach it. After a few uses (and as you see the grit being rubbed away), you just peel it off and add another. Easy peasy! Similar to the circular saw, the orbital sander can create quite a bit of dust as well. However, most orbital sanders comes with dust ports already, so you don't have to specifically look for one that has it. And, like the circular saw, you can use a vacuum to attach to the dust port to make things easier.

Once you've sanded your project, you're ready to paint and stain it. Now look, I'm not going to lie to you say that I always do the proper amount of sanding. Sometimes I'm in a rush and don't give things a thorough sanding. And...when I've done that, I usually regret it. So, take it from me...it may not be the most exhilarating part of the DIY project, but it's a necessary one and you'll be glad you took the time to do it when your beautiful build is on full display for all to enjoy!

**What I use:** Dewalt Orbital corded sander



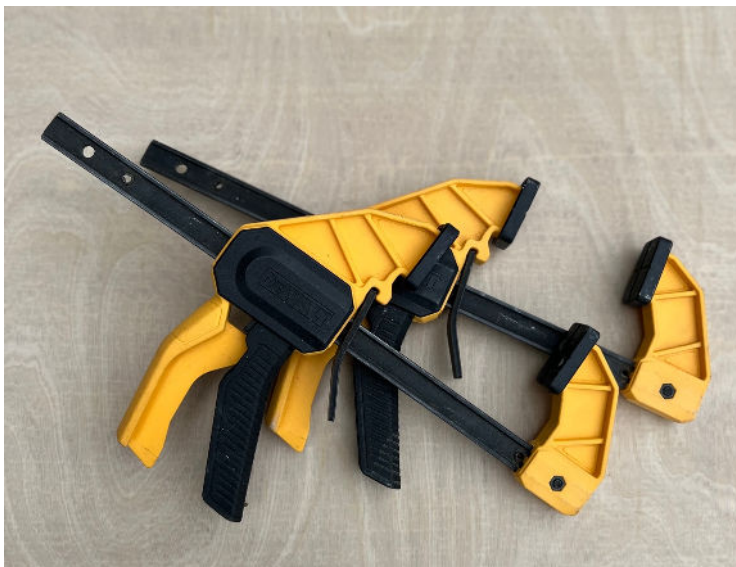
*Get it here!*

# CLAMPS

Clamps are pretty self-explanatory, however, they come in all shapes and sizes...literally. To start out, I suggest you get the following and you'll be good to go:

- Two 12-in Trigger Clamps (pictured below) - trigger clamps are what I use 90% of the time to
  - a) hold wood to my workbench or
  - b) hold wood together while I'm nailing or screwing.
- Two 24-in Bar Clamps - bar clamps are great for getting a strong hold, especially for really thick or wide pieces of wood.
- Two 1-in Spring Clamps - spring clamps are small, but mighty. They don't have the depth that the other two do, but are good for a number of uses just to hold things in place and they are incredibly strong. You can't go wrong with having a few of these near by.
- Two 4-in Hand Clamps - similar to spring clamps, these are small but mighty.

**What I use:** Everything above and also, 36-in and 48-in bar clamps for big projects like tables and headboards.



[Get it here!](#)

# TAPE MEASURE

I won't spend a ton of time on this, but every DIYer needs a great tape measure. What makes a great tape measure? One that locks in place as you pull out the tape and one that has the fractional scale all written out (e.g.  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{3}{8}$ ,  $\frac{5}{8}$ , etc.) and not just the full inches/ft (i.e. 3in, 6-ft. ).

Also, you'll want to get a 25-ft tape measure minimally for sure. Anything shorter could be limiting as you tackle larger projects.

**What I use:** I have too many tape measures to count. One of my favorites is my 25-ft Autolock Milwaukee.



*Get it here!*

## HAMMER

You probably have a hammer already, but if you don't go ahead and get one. A hammer is a great tool to have around the house even if you aren't DIY'ing very often. For a DIYer, a hammer has a multitude of uses. For me, I use my hammer to pull nails out, put nails in walls for hanging things, and to drive nails deeper that may be sticking out after nailing with my nail gun. It's a simple tool with a ton of uses, so be sure to add this to your toolbox if you don't already one.

[Get it here!](#)

## MALLET

Now, the mallet is probably my most used 'simple' tool. Why? Because unlike the hammer, the mallet allows you to bang on things without damaging them. That piece of wood that's not quite in place? Use a hammer to knock it in and you could chip the wood. Use a mallet and you're in business! While you can hammer in nails with a mallet, it's use for woodworking can't be understated.



[Get it here!](#)

## LEVEL

The level is a must have tool for all DIYers. Our eyes are certainly deceptive and every time I think something is level based on what I see, the level usually proves me wrong. There are levels in varying sizes, but starting out I recommend you get a 9-in and 24-in level. You'll be able to use the 9 inch level to see if something you've built is level (i.e. table, book case, etc.). But, at times you'll need something longer to ensure you're getting a full sense of how level your build is and not just one end of it. For these instances, a 24-in level is perfect. They also come in 36 and 48 inch too, but starting out, you'll be just fine with a 9-in and 24-in level for most projects.

**What I use:** I have about 4 different levels, various brands. My 9-in level is pictured below.



[Get it here!](#)

## WORK TABLE

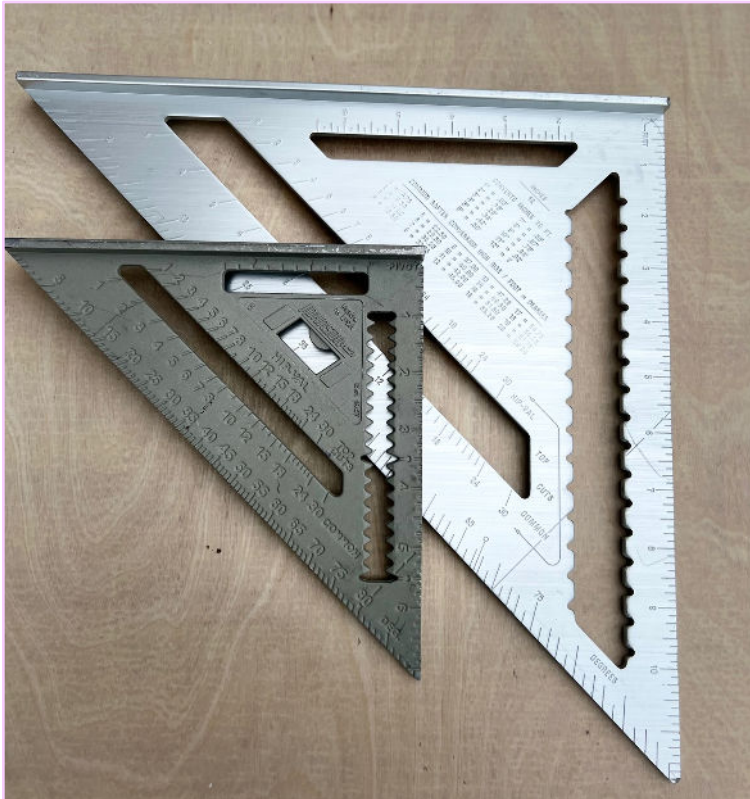
There are a lot of options for work tables/benches out there. You can buy one but they can get pretty pricey or build one. If you're like me, starting out I didn't have a lot of space and couldn't afford to have a big ole table taking up space all the time in my garage. So, I would use a foldable 6-ft table to work on and that allowed me to use it, then store it away easily when not needed. Eventually, we built our own workbench, but I still use my 6-ft tables all the time!

[Get it here!](#)

# SPEED SQUARE

Everyone needs a good straight edge and speed squares are awesome for this. Additionally, they can help you ensure you've got nice, flush 90 degree angles when building wood projects. Like most tools, speed squares come in different sizes: 7-in and 12-in. I'd recommend buying the 7-in first and as you progress, grabbing a 12-in later.

**What I use:** 7-in and 12-in Speed squares from Home Depot



Get it here!

# SAFETY GLASSES & MASKS

I'm not proud to admit this, but I haven't always been the best with wearing my safety glasses while working on projects. My husband would regularly get on me about putting them on, then finally I started making it a habit. So, I want you to make it a habit from the start so it becomes second nature for you.

Wearing safety glasses is so important because they really shield our eyes from so much. When cutting wood, small particles and dust can easily get into your eyes, so please make sure you cover them up. Even better, now there are so many cute options on the market so we can look good and be safe!

Masks are also important to wear especially when sanding. Sanding produces very fine dust so you don't want to inhale that.

What I use: Milwaukee Clear Safety Glasses & RZ Masks



[Get it here!](#)



# WOOD GLUE & FILLER

Wood glue is an adhesive that creates a strong wood to wood bond. Although I use wood glue for most of my builds, I don't use it all the time. If I'm making something that may need to be disassembled, I leave it off. But this is definitely an item you want to always keep on hand to use when building something you want to last.

**What I use:** Gorilla Wood Glue



Wood filler is a substance applied to wood to fill nicks, holes, and any other indentations in unfinished wood. It can be sanded down and stained or painted.

[Get it here!](#)

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“A *strong* woman  
looks a challenge  
in the eye  
& gives  
it a wink.”

- Gina Carey

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# Say what now?

The easiest way to jump into your first project is to use a building plan. It lays out the materials you need as well as the cut list. I remember when I first started using plans, there were some terms used quite a lot that I wasn't familiar with so I'll take you through a few of them here so you don't have that problem.

- **Material List:** This is a list of all the materials you will need to complete a project. You typically find this included in a building plan.
- **Cut List:** This is a list of cuts you'll need to make of the wood you are using for a building plan. You can use this list to make your own cuts or take it to your local lumber store and have them cut them for you (more on that later)
- **Stud :** A stud is a vertical board of wood commonly used to support the framework of a wall.
  - The most common size (also known as the nominal size) is a 2x4 (two by four). This means the wood is 2 inches thick and 4 inches wide. It comes in a number of other sizes as well (1x2, 2x2, 1x3, 2x3, 1x4, 2x4, 1x6, 2x6 etc.). These are commonly referred to as 1x (one bys) or 2x (two-bys).
  - **Fun Fact:** The nominal size of wood purchased in stores is not the actual size of the wood. In the past, a 2 x 4 was exactly that. However, that is no longer the case. So in this example, a 2 x 4 is actual a 1.5 x 3.5. So definitely keep that in mind when building. If you are using a building plan though, it usually accounts for that.
- **Ripping wood:** This refers to cutting the wood along its grain for a lengthwise cut. For example, if you had a big sheet of plywood that you cut in strips, you would be "ripping the wood".

- **Pilot hole:** Refers to drilling a smaller diameter hole before drilling a screw in wood or any other material. This is an important step as it can prevent your wood from splitting. I've had tons of wood split on me because I was being lazy and skipped this step. Don't be me lol!
- **Knots :** Refers to the area formed in wood where branches are broken off.
- **Butt joints:** When two pieces of wood butt up against each other.
- **Miter joints:** When two pieces of wood are cut on an angle to form a 90 degree angle when joined (Note: miter cuts can be used to cut mouldings to fit where walls meet)
- **Pocket hole:** A hole drilled at an angle that forms a pocket for the screw.
- **Glue up:** Refers to the process of gluing wood boards together .

# Let's talk about wood

If you're anything like I was when I first started out, you probably have no clue how many different types of wood there are. Now, I won't be giving a lesson on all of them but let's talk about some of the most commonly used types of wood for DIY projects and where to get it from.

## Commonly used types of wood

- Softwoods - Poplar, pine, cedar, Douglas fir, etc.
- Hardwoods - Cherry, walnut, oak, maple, mahogany, etc.

*Pine* - This is one of the most commonly used types of wood especially for beginner projects. It's pretty easy to drive screws/nails in it, and it's one of the least expensive types of wood. I've used pine for tons of projects.

*Poplar* - This is a soft wood that is also inexpensive and takes paint really well.

*Cedar* - This is another soft wood that is commonly used for furniture and outdoor projects like decks. My husband and I used cedar to build patio furniture and it really holds up well outside.

*Oak* - This is a hardwood, typically more durable and more expensive than pine.

*MDF (Medium Density Fiberboard)* - This is a man made manufactured material made from wood fibers being compressed into boards. It can be inexpensive making it ideal for DIY projects but it is heavy and I find it can split easily.

## Shopping for wood

A lot of DIYers go to the big box home improvement stores like The Home Depot & Lowes. They are convenient and typically carry a variety of products to tackle projects. However, there are other places to source wood from like your local saw mills and/or lumber yards. There are also online lumber companies if you happen to live in an area that doesn't have

many local options. Although, in that case, you don't get to inspect the wood yourself. But, if you do decide to get your wood from HD or Lowe's, you'll notice they have the wood broken up into different sections and you may be wondering what to buy.

Here's a breakdown of the ones you'll most likely use for beginner projects:

**Furring strips** - These are rough & inexpensive pieces of wood. The downside is it's usually hard to find quality pieces that aren't bowed. But they do come in handy for parts of a project that aren't seen. You can use them for finished looks but you will definitely need to sand them down good.

**Common boards** - I love using common boards for projects. They are typically made from pine and have a straight grain and uniform texture but they may still have some knots so you still have to inspect them. I've used common boards to make everything from bookshelves to entertainment stands to benches, etc. and they are great. They also take paint and stain well. I would recommend using these for beginner projects.

**Select pine boards** - These are the hot girls of the bunch...the cream of the crop. These are knot free, smooth and typically very straight. When I want a really finished look without having to do a bunch of sanding, these are my go to. They are more expensive than regular common boards though but depending on what you're making, they are worth the extra spend.

**Plywood** - Plywood is the base material for the majority of my builds and it comes in different sizes  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$ . It's sold in 4'x8' sheets, 4'x4', and 2'x4'. You can use a circular saw to cut it into different sizes or have them cut it at the store for you.

## **Cost of wood**

Before the pandemic, wood was much cheaper than it is now. But just like everything else, there was a spike in the price. During the first year of the pandemic, the price of wood literally quadrupled! Thankfully, prices have come down from that but they definitely aren't back to pre-pandemic levels.

# Extra & Resources

In this section, I'll be sharing a few extra tips and resources that may be helpful.

## Other tools to get:

- Miter saw
- Jig saw
- Staple Gun
- Stud finder
- End cutting pliers

## Having wood cut at store:

If you're not quite ready to invest in a circular saw but you need wood cut for a project, you can have them cut it at the store. Both Home Depot and Lowes will cut most wood for you but they do have some restrictions. For example, they typically do not guarantee precision cuts. This means you can tell them what size to cut it, but it may not be exact. It also really depends on the employee who is cutting your wood. I've come across really great guys who take their time and do as many cuts as I want and others who do the complete opposite. It's the luck of the draw.

If you do decide to cut your own wood, always remember 'Measure twice, cut once'.

## Miscellaneous tips

- To prevent wood from splitting, don't place screws too close to edge of wood
- When using the circular saw, you can use painters tape on the line your going to cut to ensure a nice, clean cut with no splintering
- Try not to drill in a knot.
- Always test out stain on scrap wood first.
- Also, if you are planning to use stain for a project, be sure to use the same type of wood. Stain shows up differently on different variations of wood.
- Try not to use too much wood glue if you plan to stain your project. Most wood glues are not stainable so if you end up with a lot of squeeze out, the glue spots will not take stain and just end up looking like light spots. I've had this happen numerous times and it's so annoying.

## Beginner Projects

So you've almost made it to the end of this guide and now it's time to start thinking about the first project you want to tackle. On the next page, you'll find a quick & easy building plan for an entryway table I made! This is also a great beginner project especially since you only need one tool!

Another good resource for building plans is [Ana-White.com](http://Ana-White.com). If you're not familiar with Ana, it's time to get familiar. She is a self-taught woodworker who has a website full of building plans for every level of experience. When I first started getting into woodworking, I came across her page and it was sooo helpful! She has tons of info and resources available for FREE so be sure to check it out!

Would you believe it if I told you I made this table below only using common boards, wood glue and my nail gun? Believe it!  
Here are the deets:



**Material List :**

- 1 - 1 x12 @ 4 feet long (table top)
- 1 - 1 x 12 @6 feet long (legs)
- 1 - 1 x 8 @ 6 feet long (legs)
- Wood Glue
- Nail Gun & 2 inch nails
- Wood filler

**Cut List:**

- 1 - 1x12 @ 44" (table top)
- 2 - 1x12 @29". (legs)
- 2- 1x8 @29". (legs)

**Step 1:** Attach 1 - 1x8 @ 29" to 1 - 1x12 @29" with wood glue and nails . Repeat step as shown in picture to create table legs (as shown below)



**Step 2:** Attach 1 - 1x12 @ 44" to top of legs using wood glue and nails. If you prefer a different size table, adjust size as desired.



Use wood filler to fill all the nail holes, lightly sand, then paint.

# Safety Tips

Now that we've come to the end, I want to remind you how important it is to be safe when working with tools. Although there's no need to be afraid of them, they are powerful and used incorrectly can cause serious harm. I have not always practiced good safety habits and I've escaped what could have been some pretty nasty injuries a number of times over the years. And I definitely don't want that for you! So, here are a few final tips on staying safe while DIYing.

- Always read the instruction manuals that come with your tools to learn how to properly use them. In addition to reading the manual, I also utilize YouTube to look for videos showing how to use tools to get a better understanding of how they work.
- Always wear your safety glasses to prevent injury to your eyes.
- Wear dust masks as needed especially when sanding.
- Try to avoid wearing baggy clothing to prevent anything from getting caught in blade including hair. If you have long hair, make sure it's out the way.
- Keep your hands clear from the saw blade and nail gun when operating.
- Remove battery or disconnect power when changing blades or bits on your drill.
- Ensure the wood you are cutting doesn't have any staples, screws, or nails in it already. The last thing you want to do is attempt to saw through it which can cause kick back. Kick back is when the saw blade stalls suddenly causing the wood to get unexpectedly thrown back at the operator.
- Make sure you are not distracted and children aren't close by when operating tools.

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“There is no limit  
to what we, as  
*women* can  
accomplish.”

- Michelle Obama

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# Thank you!

Your support means the world to me! I hope you enjoyed this eBook and learned a lot.

If you have any questions or feedback, please don't hesitate to reach out. I would love to hear from you and stay connected. I also want to see all the awesome projects you'll be doing soon, so make sure you tag me on social! ☺

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