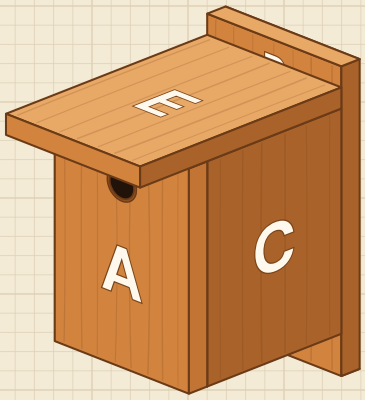
Build a Birdhouse



A nest box for **House Wrens** and **chickadees**. Every piece comes from **one board**.

✋ **A grown-up does the sawing and drilling**

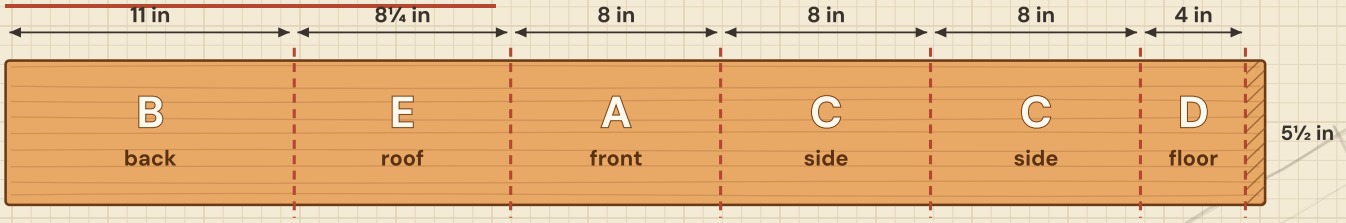
You need

- one 1×6 board, 4 ft long: **untreated cedar or pine**
- about 18 galvanized screws, 1½ in
- 2 galvanized nails (for the door)
- sandpaper

Tools

- tape measure and pencil
- saw
- drill with a 1 in or 1⅛ in bit (spade or Forstner) and a ⅝ in bit
- screwdriver, hammer

1. Mark and cut the board



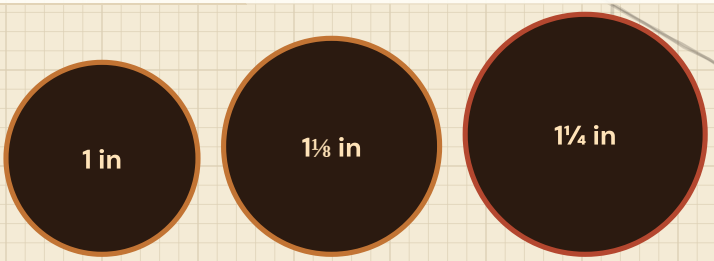
One 1×6 board, 4 feet long (really ¾ in thick and 5½ in wide). Saw cuts eat a little wood, so measure each piece again before you cut it.

2. The 5 pieces

	PIECE	SIZE	WHAT TO DO
	**A** Front	5½ × 8 in	Drill the entrance hole near the top: its top edge about 1 in below the top of the board.
	**B** Back	5½ × 11 in	Longer than the box, so you can screw it to a pole or post.
	**C** Sides (cut 2)	5½ × 8 in	Drill two ⅝ in vent holes near the top of each side.
	**D** Floor	4 × 5½ in	Cut off the 4 corners (about ⅜ in) so rain can drain out.
	**E** Roof	5½ × 8¼ in	Sticks out 2 in past the front to keep rain off the hole.

Hole size

Pick one. Printed at real size if you print at 100%.



House Wren | chickadees | NO: sparrows fit

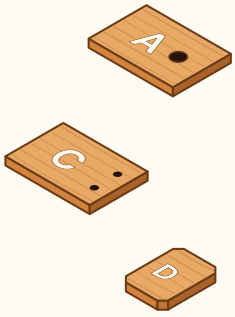
Sizes from the nest box plan shared by Cornell Lab NestWatch (design: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources). For ¾ in boards; if your cedar is ⅞ in thick, make the floor 3¾ in wide.

Put It Together

Steps 1 and 2 are on page 1. Pre-drill every screw hole so the wood doesn't split.

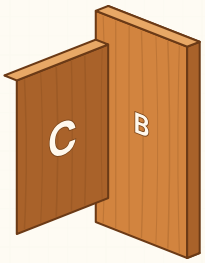
3 Drill the holes

Drill the entrance hole in the front **A**. Drill two ⅝ in vent holes near the top of each side **C**. Cut the corners off the floor **D**. Sand the edges.



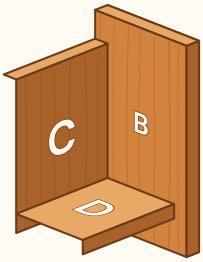
4 Back + one side

Screw one side **C** to the back **B**. Leave about 1½ in of the back sticking out below the side, and the rest above, for hanging it.



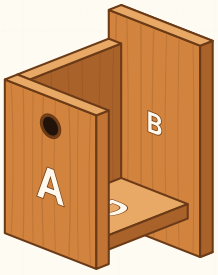
5 Fit the floor

Set the floor **D** about ¼ in up from the bottom edge of the side, so it stays dry. Screw it in through the back and the side.



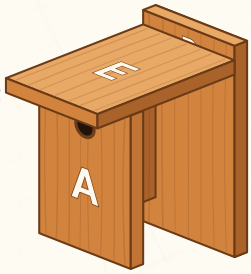
6 Add the front

Scratch a few grooves inside the front **A** below the hole, so babies can climb out. Then screw it on, hole at the top.



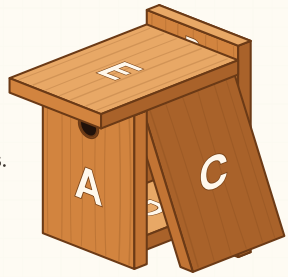
7 Put on the roof

Screw the roof **E** on so it touches the back and sticks out past the front.



8 The door side

Fit the last side **C**. Hammer one nail through the front and one through the back, at the same height near the top, so it swings. One nail at the bottom keeps it shut.



Builder's tips

Where
On a **metal pole with a guard** so cats, raccoons and snakes can't climb up. Not on a tree or fence post. House Wrens: 5–10 ft up. Chickadees: 5–15 ft up.

When
Put it up before nesting starts: by February in the South, by mid to late March in the North.

No perch, no paint inside
A perch only helps predators. Leave the wood plain inside. Never use treated wood.

Keep House Sparrows out
Keep the hole at 1 in or 1⅛ in. A 1¼ in hole lets House Sparrows in.

Clean it every fall
After the babies have left, open the door, take out the old nest (wear gloves), and wash it with mild soapy water.

Be a scientist
Watch quietly from a distance. Grown-ups can report the nest to Cornell Lab NestWatch.

Facts from Cornell Lab NestWatch: features of a good birdhouse, nest box placement, House Wren and Black-capped Chickadee nest box pages. From the book Glowpeak's Backyard Birds.