

An Outdoor Project Desk on the Cheap

by [natantus](#) on August 31, 2009

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intro: An Outdoor Project Desk on the Cheap

Fires raged in California this weekend and I got an unexpected call telling me not to head into work on Monday. With the free time I decided to build a project desk for the back patio of my apartment. Recently I bought a Dremel for another project and after cleaning little plastic bits out of the carpet I figured I should probably start working outside. I think my girlfriend will appreciate it too.

What follows is my quick and dirty outdoor desk project. This is probably perfect for those DIYers stuck in apartments without garages or for gardeners who'd rather spend money on the garden than on an expensive workspace. Total cost of my project? \$34.40. Total time to construct? Less than 1 hour. So read along if this is the project for you!



step 1: Buy Your Materials

Fortunately for me I live near a Home Depot. It's convenient because the prices are pretty low and they'll cut wood for me. Here's what you'll need from the store:

- 1) 3 - 2in x 4in x 8ft Douglas Fir (\$1.82ea)
- 2) 1 - 5/8in x 4ft x 8ft Particle Board (\$18.77ea)
- 3) 1lb 2.5in Gold Screws (\$5.94)

Once you have everything take the wood to the back and have them cut it for you. Be aware that some places won't cut particle board because of health hazards, so wear a mask if you're nearby when they cut it. Also, it's usually 2 cuts free and \$1 for each additional cut. This project required 10 cuts in total.

First have them cut the big particle board into two 3ft x 4ft pieces. This should leave you with an extra 2ft x 4ft piece of scrap. If you plan ahead of time you could even have the small piece cut down to make a shelf to fit under your desk, something I did not do.

Cut the three 2in x 4in douglas fir pieces in the following way:

- 1) 3 pieces at 30in each
- 2) 1 piece at 20 in, 2 pieces at 28in each
- 3) 2 pieces at 40 in each



Image Notes

1. More screws than I know what to do with

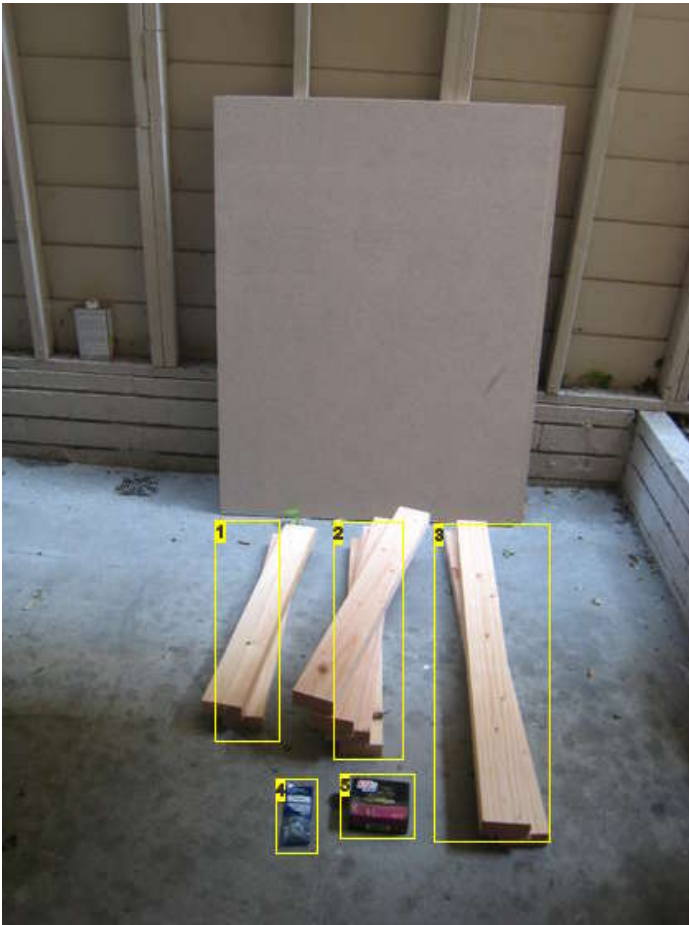


Image Notes

1. 28in pieces for frame
2. 30in pieces for table feet
3. 40in pieces for frame
4. parts I didn't use
5. 1lb of 2.5in gold screws

step 2: Gather your tools

For this project you won't need a lot of tools. If you don't have these then borrow them. It will be a lot more work to do this project otherwise.

You will need:

- 1) A power drill (I prefer my cordless)
- 2) A measuring tape
- 3) A pen
- 4) Safety Goggles

Easy, see? The measuring tape and the pen come in handy for placing the top in the correct place. For everything else I basically eyed the placement of screws for construction.

As a note, please, please, PLEASE wear safety goggles. Even if you think there is no danger because you're just putting in screws, there is always a chance fate will decide to hate you and you'll lose an eye. So just play it safe.



Image Notes

1. I use this all the time. I can't imagine doing this project by hand.
2. Tape measure
3. Trusty pocket pen

step 3: Start building!

The basic construction is pretty easy. The first thing you'll do is construct a frame out of the 2in x 4in pieces. This will be done with the two 40in pieces and the two 28in pieces. I framed them up, as you can see in the picture, and then put two screws in each corner to hold it together.

Be careful how you do this. I wish I'd had an extra hand or two to help hold things steady while I built mine and it takes only a second to ask a buddy for help, so see what you can do. Once the frame is done you can put the legs on.

For the legs I used 3 screws each. I tried to place the screws for the leg so they wouldn't intersect the screws holding the table frame. You can hopefully see how this panned out in the pictures below.

As a note, you may be wondering why the frame for the table top is smaller than the actual piece of particle board you had cut out. This was done so that I'd have a lip on the table to put a clamp of some sort at a later date. The work tables I've seen for sale simply didn't have this and it was a feature I wanted.

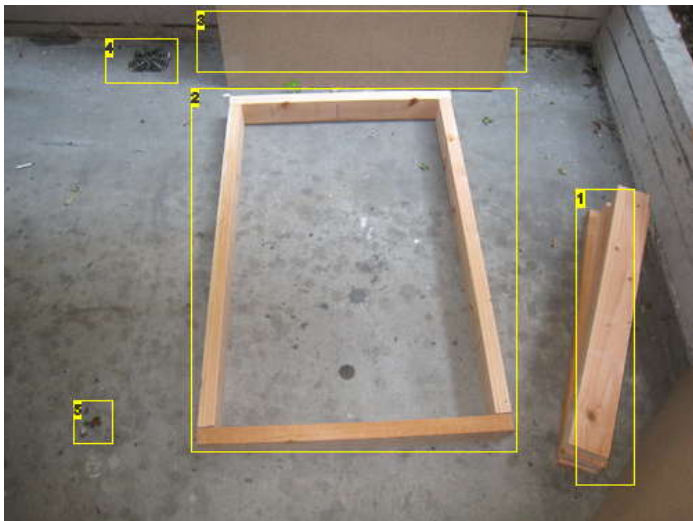


Image Notes

1. Table legs
2. Table frame layed out
3. Particle board
4. Drain, explaining why my patio is uneven
5. No idea what this is, I just moved in



Image Notes

1. Gum ... I think



Image Notes

1. First leg on the table!

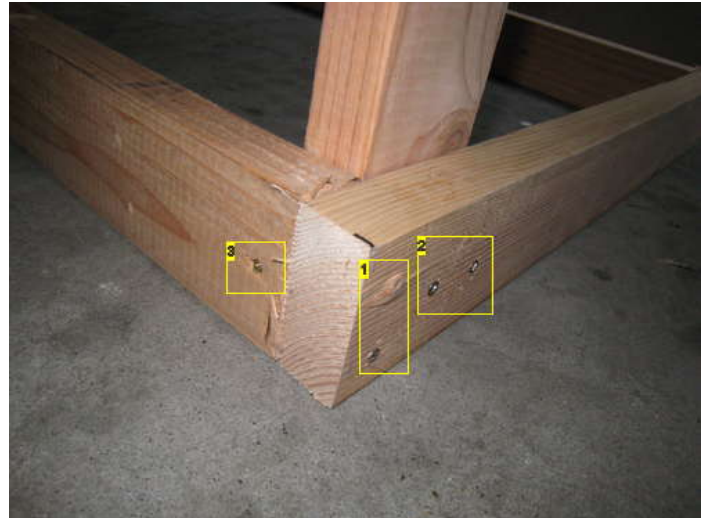


Image Notes

1. Screws for the frame insert on the 28in piece
2. Two of the three screws holding in the leg
3. The third screw holding in the leg



step 4: Complete the Table

Now that you have all four legs on it's time to put the table top on. First you'll want to flip the table over. Once you have it upright place one of your two particle board tops (the 3ft by 4ft pieces) on the top of the table.

This is where your measuring tape and pen come in. I made marks on the under side of the table top where the corners should meet on the table. This usually was at 4in and 2.5in for each corner. Make sure you measure each corner twice too, else you may have an unbalanced table.

With the table lined up correctly I made marks on the top of the table telling me where the table frame was. Then, using 6 more screws, I secured the table top to the table frame. I had to do this twice, though, since the first screw pushed the table a little bit out of center. Be careful about this (again, this would be a good place to have a buddy help).



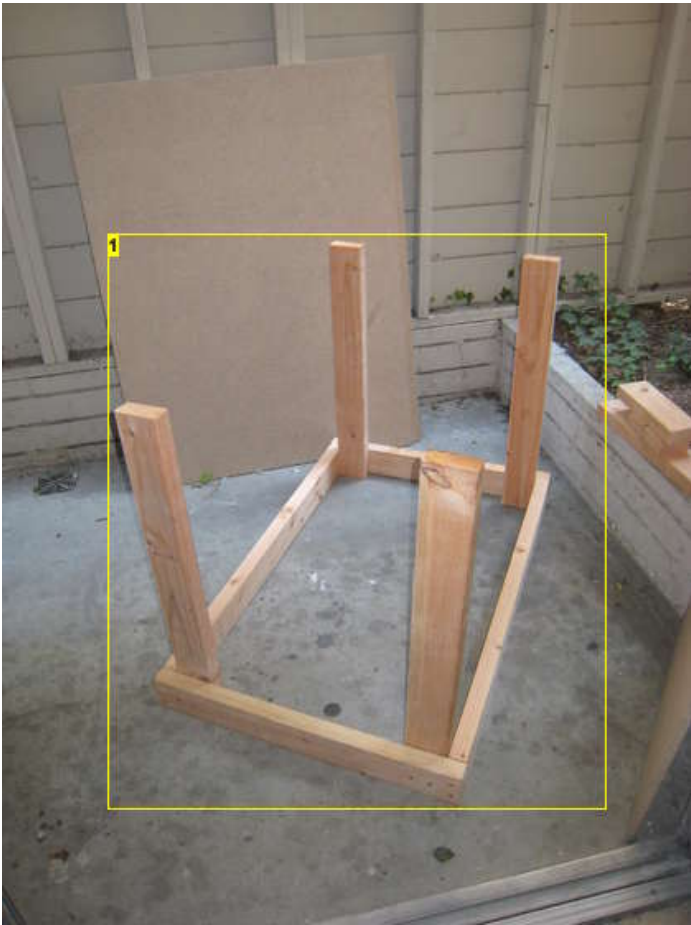


Image Notes

1. Reminds me of a turtle trying to turn over



step 5: Other notes and modifications

A couple notes now that you're done. The table legs could probably be secured better if you build a frame around the bottom of the table. I would suggest three of the four sides, leaving the front open.

The second thing to note is that you have an extra table top. This is great if you want to build another desk for a friend on the cheap. More likely you'll do what I'm planning on doing which is destroying the first table top with awesome projects. Then it will be great to unscrew the old table top and screw a new one back on. This way you're not throwing anything out.

Lastly, you can use the extra 2ft x 4ft particle board and build a shelf if you want to under the table. You may need to get it cut to the right size, but that's easy with a little planning. Go crazy and see what you can do with it.

If you do make one of these tables please let me know. I'd love a picture and to see how you made it even better than this one. Hope it was just what you needed or gave you some good ideas.



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lemonie says:
Good work, and well presented too.

L

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