

Cat Project Condo Taking Measurements

Before starting any woodshop project, it's important to have some idea of the dimensions you're going to be working with. Silly is a fairly petite cat, but how tall is a cat, really? Beats me. I got out the tape measure and went looking for the cat.



After returning from the emergency room, I superimposed the more pertinent measurements on these stock Sillycat photos to the right.

Requirements / Features

Must be taller than a dog

This serves two purposes. The most obvious is to allow the cat some seclusion from the barking, drooling masses. But secondly, a high platform makes tasty cat food inaccessible by the aforementioned drooling masses.

Multi-tiered, handi-capable accessibility

We thought to provide multiple avenues of ingress to the main (dinner) platform. Silly is getting up in years, though you'd never know it by the amount of noise she makes catting around the house at 4AM. Regardless, no platform is more than 12" higher than the platform beneath it. We also included a central ramp so she can walk from level to level. This should make things easier for our poor old grey-haired cat in her retirement years.

Carpeted, painted, suitable for a corner of the living room

Although Silly has her own room where she may sit high upon her throne, this may not always be the case. Our goal is to avoid building a Homer Simpson sculpture, so if we need to move her into a more trafficked area of the house, it won't look too out of place.

Making Plans

Once we knew the basic layout of our cat, and had a firm idea of what we actually wanted our structure to accomplish, we drew up a set of plans.



Cat Condo Plans 1



Cat Condo Plans 2

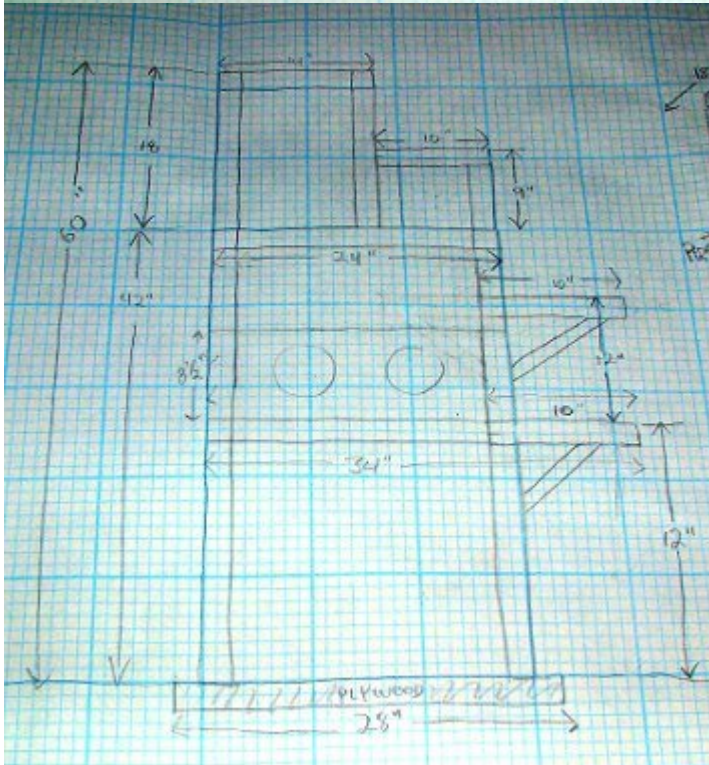
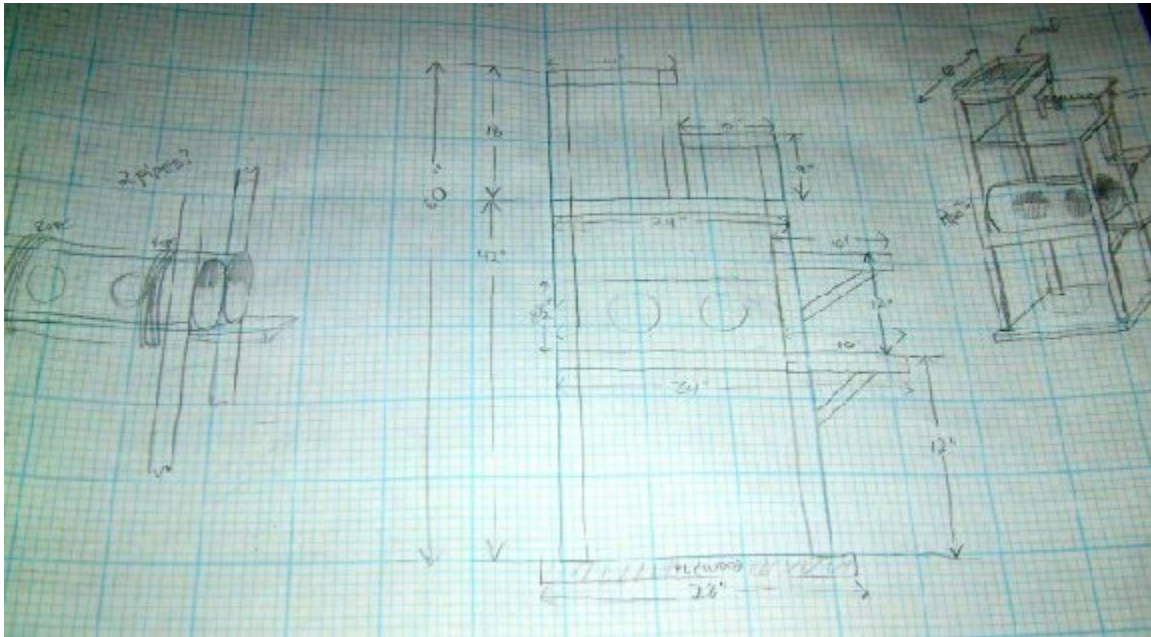
There are times when even the most meticulously drawn plans have to be treated more as suggestions than formal guidelines. The more impressive they look, the less likely anyone will question a missing wall here or there. Hang them up somewhere close by and when someone asks you what you're doing, just grunt and wave vaguely in that direction.

Construction

Cost overruns and bureaucratic snafus plagued the project from its outset. However, upon

completion, we managed to end up with a structure that basically resembled our plans instead of something wildly inappropriate like a windmill, or a catapult.

Despite the fact that it bears some resemblance to a Rube Goldberg device, the construction is simple. The entire structure is supported by four legs. After determining the desired height of the topmost tier, we cut two legs to (basically) that length. The other two legs only reached as high as the main level. This was unanimously agreed to later on as a design embellishment.



If you have a good eye for the potential in things, then you'll get more out of the rest of this project by looking at the pictures than by reading my comments about them. For the rest of you, it's time to begin nurturing the dreamer within.

The ramp from the 2nd level to level 3 was dropped in favor of a trap-door prairie dog hole.



Do it yourself cat scratching post



We made a nice scratching post out of some scratchy twine. Secure one end to your post with staples (making sure that the staples are far away from where kitty's claws will be scratching), and wrap it tightly around the post. Staple the other end, and you're done. An electric or air-powered staple gun works well, and you can tap in any stubborn staples with a hammer.

The "penthouse" level is supported by two 1x4s. The 1x4s are mounted to the two taller upright 2x2s using 6 wood screws drilled at an angle to avoid splitting the posts.



We added a coat of Elmer's between the posts and the 1x4's before tightening the screws. A combination of finishing nails and 1" wood screws keep the top platform in place. Saul was interested in what we were doing until he noticed that the electric staple gun was out of its case, after which he disappeared for a couple of days.



Here we see that the frame has miraculously turned blue. That was fortunate since it was the exact shade that we had planned to paint it.



Next, we began puzzling out the carpeting. If you have at your disposal a very goal-oriented girl friend who also has sewing skills, or a latent talent for origami, I recommend that she be appointed el jefe over this portion of the project.

I would have been happy with a hunk of carpet nailed to a piece of plywood, but the lovely and talented "The Chick" was having none of that. She says it's like wrapping a present. If that really is the case, then I probably would have accidentally suffocated myself or stapled my foot to the floor.

Construction continued ...



The promenade deck looked great with The Chick's professional carpeting job. However, in the interest of finishing this project before we began collecting social security, we took a shortcut on the other carpeted areas.

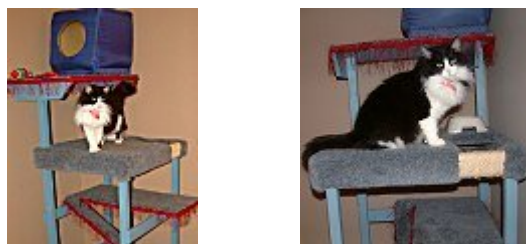
We cut our remaining carpet strips to the area of each platform we wanted to cover, and used latex adhesive to glue it down. I usually have a bucket or two of this stuff lying around for corpsing skeletons, but this was the first time I actually used it for its intended purpose.



Just spread the adhesive with a putty knife, then carefully lay down your carpet. This dried in about 8 hours, so there is plenty of time to slide things around if you need to.

Using a hot glue gun, we tacked fringe around all the edges where we had short-cutted the carpet. We almost bought 7 1/2 yards of those little fuzzy balls that you see hanging from the players' hats in a mariachi band. Somehow that just kept making me think AMC Pacer, so we went instead with a burgundy fringe that wouldn't look out of place hanging from a lamp in a house of ill-repute. A "cat house" fringe, if you will.

After we dragged our completed cat condo up out of the shop and into the cat's room, we went looking for her to "test it out". She was hiding in the closet, but we were sure she couldn't wait to see her new house.

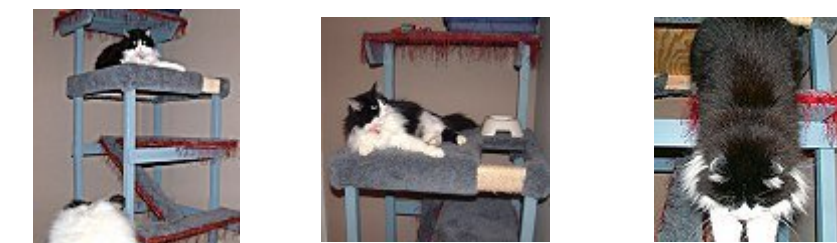


You could taste the excitement in the air. Or the sawdust.

Placing the cat on the condo was a pointless exercise, much like trying to teach it to fetch, or mix martinis. We eventually coaxed her up to the main level with her favorite treats.



If you recall, the original design called for a vertical space of no more than 12" between platforms to allow crotchety old Spotcat to get to the top of her house with a minimum of effort. Naturally, she thought nothing of our considerate design and jumped directly to where the treats were, a full 4' off the floor.



She'll be old

someday, and then
she'll appreciate us.

A few notes



We sort of glossed over some of the finer points of building your own cat condo. We overlooked how to fold carpet in such a way as to make it appear that it actually belongs on (and not as if it is trying to digest) the thing over which it is folded. We didn't give you any meaningful measurements, we didn't talk about weight distribution, and we never even mentioned power tool safety.

For those of you who are disappointed with us because of this ...
22-1/2" x 18-1/2", put the heavy end on the floor, and don't use a table saw to carve a turkey.