

# How-To Guide

## Mud Kitchens

Mud kitchens are a popular way for children to feed their imaginations through dramatic play in the outdoor learning environment. Providing opportunities for individual and small group creative activities, mud kitchens reuse readily available kitchenware (such as pots, pans, bowls and baking sheets), utensils, and sinks. When placed adjacent to earth and sand digging areas, all the right “ingredients” will be available for creative recipes!

This guide outlines how to build a 2’ tall, 2’ wide, 8’ long mud kitchen using lumber and a reused kitchen sink.

### Duration



1/2 day

### # of People



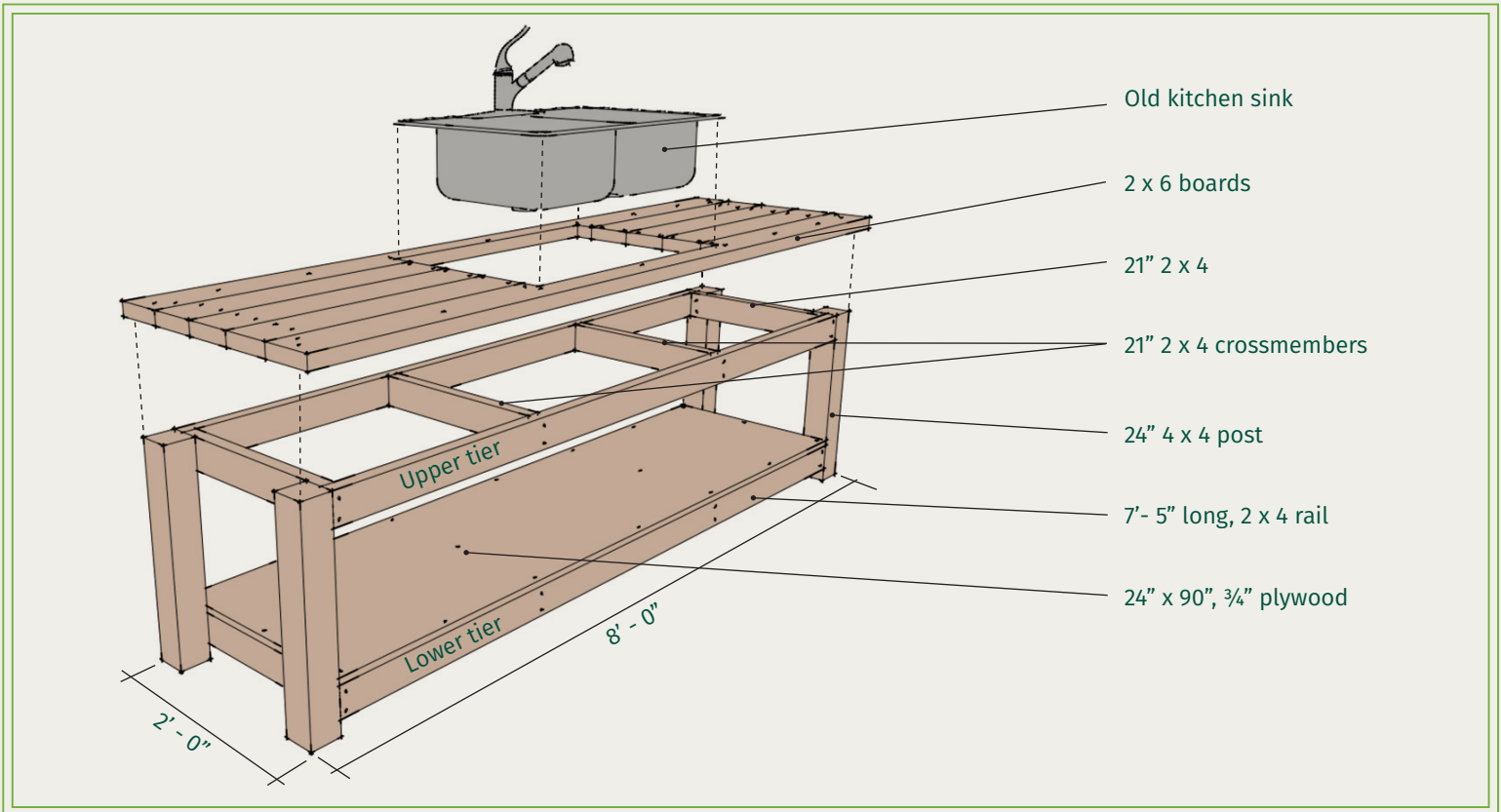
2 - 4

### Required Effort



Moderate effort and planning

## Diagram



## Materials

- Old kitchen sink
- (1) 8' long, lumber 4 x 4
- (6) 8' long, lumber 2 x 4s
- (5) 8' long, lumber 2 x 6s
- (1) 48" x 96" sheet of 3/4" plywood
- 3", #10 coarse thread exterior wood screws
- 1 1/2", #10 coarse thread exterior wood screws
- Sand paper (80 grit)
- Non-toxic, water-based wood sealant OR Durable, non-toxic outdoor paint
- Durable, latex, non-toxic outdoor caulk
- Access to power
- Used kitchenware and utensils (pots, pans, baking sheets, pie pans, spoons, etc.)
- Storage (bin, baskets, basins, etc.)
- (Optional) Lattice backing and hooks to hang kitchenware
- (Optional) Used kitchen cabinet
- (Optional) Used countertop

## Tools

- Miter or circular saw
- Orbital power sander(s)
- Extension cord(s)
- Screw gun/drill
- Proper screw bits
- Pencils
- Speed square
- Level
- Paint brushes
- Paint rollers
- Paint trays
- Tarps
- Eye and ear protection
- Gloves



## Implementation Steps

### 1 Gather materials

### 2 Prep the frame materials

- Cut the 4 x 4 into (4) 24" long posts.
- Using (2) of the 2 x 4's, cut (8) 21" lengths.
- Cut (4) of the 8' long 2 x 4's to 7'- 5".
- Cut the  $\frac{3}{4}$ " sheet of plywood at 24" x 90" (2' x 7  $\frac{1}{2}$ ').

### 3 Assemble the frame (See diagram for reference)

- Fasten (2) of the 21" 2x4s to (2) of the 24" 4x4 posts using the 3" screws, choosing a 'top' where the 2x4 should sit flush with the ends of the 4x4s.
- Fasten (2) more of the 21" 2x4s to the other (2) 24" 4x4 posts using the 3" screws, again choosing a 'top' where the 2x4 should sit flush with the ends of the 4x4s.
- Attach the (2) post ends with the (4) 7'- 5" long, 2x4 rails.
- Measure the width of the sink, to figure how much space will be needed between the crossmembers, underneath the countertop. For a top mounted sink, as shown in the diagram, the opening should be at least a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " shorter than the dimensions of the sink on the two sides.
- Fasten the rest of the 21" 2x4s between the 7'- 5" long 2x4 rails, allowing clearance for the sink in the desired location on the upper tier.

- Fasten the 24" x 90" piece of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood to the lower tier, using the 1  $\frac{1}{2}$ " screws.

- Attach the 2x6 boards with the 3" screws, to create the countertop. When the boards are centered, there should be a 1  $\frac{3}{4}$ " overhang front and back. Leave an opening for the sink that is at least  $\frac{1}{2}$ " shorter than its dimensions on all sides so that at least  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of the lip of the sink can rest on top of the countertop.

### 4 Install the sink

- Use the durable, latex, non-toxic outdoor caulk to secure the sink in place.

### 5 Sand any rough edges

- Be sure to get rid of any snags or obvious splinters, and round any pointy corners.

### 6 Weatherproof or paint

### 7 Place in desired location

- Ensure location is as level as possible before placing.



# Considerations

- A modified, repurposed counter can be used on the lumber frame instead of building the counter out of 2x6s. The key here is offering storage below and easy access by children to the associated kitchenware and utensils.
- “Measure twice, cut once.” A classic reminder to always measure twice before making a cut. This step will minimize the chance of error and help ensure efficient use of materials and lumber.
- Make sure all screw heads are countersunk and inaccessible.
- Consider adding a lattice backing to allow for hanging kitchenware and utensils.
- Consider placing the mud kitchen adjacent to earth and sand digging areas to provide just the right ingredients for creative recipes!



Cover photo  
credit: ECHO

## Disclaimer

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