

## The Ultimate Tiny House Checklist (Plan of Attack)



### Determine how much space you need.

#### Considerations

- How many people will live in the space?
- Do you plan to cook?
- How often do you plan to go shopping?
- Are you going to build the house on a trailer?
- Do you want a bathtub?

#### Advice

- We recommend taping off a section of your current residence comparable to the area you plan to live in.
- Tiny house hotels are another burgeoning option in many areas of the country. Along the same lines, you might check sites like HomeAway and airbnb. It's becoming increasingly common for people to rent out tiny houses in their backyard on these sites.
- Be real with yourself. Don't try to convince yourself that you can live without items you regularly enjoy,
- Curb your shopping habits before you move into your tiny house. Shopping is more engrained in our American DNA than you might realize. The goal is to acclimate to your new lifestyle slowly over time to make the eventual transition comfortable.

### Are you going to build the house yourself or use a builder?

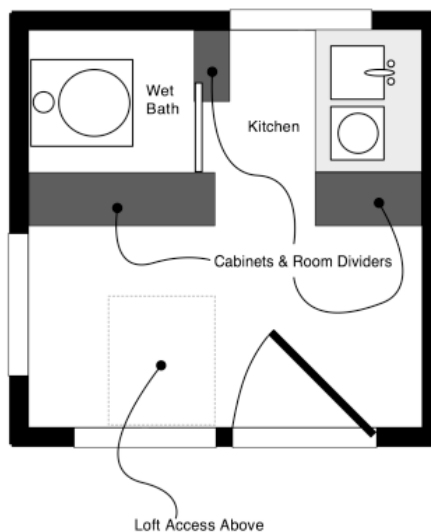
## Considerations

- How much time do you have?
- Do you own tools? (see tools)
- Do you have construction skills?
- Can friends help you complete the project faster and lend their talents

## Advice

- Allocate plenty of time if you are going to build yourself. Having a project drag on can fray nerves and drain bank accounts.
- Even if you plan to do the work yourself, research contractors in advance. It's better to be prepared than have shoddy craftsmanship.
- Attend a respected tiny house workshop to learn more about the construction process.
- Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity to gain experience building.
- Use a quality set of plans if you are going to build yourself.

## Builders & Plans



- TinyHouseMap.com is a great resource to find builders.
- Tumbleweed, Four Lights Tiny House Company, and Minim Micro Homes are the best known sellers of pre-made tiny house plans. Approach vendors selling tiny house plans with caution and do your due diligence.
- You will need software if you are going to design the tiny house yourself. Recommendations include Google SketchUp, Design Workshop, and Home Designer Suite.

## Tools (you will likely need)



- Air compressor
- Electric drill
- Wire cutters
- Voltage tester
- Utility knife
- Flashlight
- Pry bar
- Staple gun
- Framing nailer
- Jig saw
- Miter saw
- Table saw
- Circular saw

### **Tool Advice**

- Try to borrow tools. People often buy a tool for a specific project, but they don't consistently need it.
- Look for cheap used tools from pawn shops or Craigslist.
- Consider renting tools from your local big box stores. Yes, big box stores are the homogenizing force sucking the life blood from main street, but they can be your friend for this one small project.
- Harbor Freight is frequently the cheapest place to buy tools. The quality usually is not great, but that might not matter for light use.
- Our list isn't complete. Be ready to make many trips to the hardware store.

## Electrical Considerations



- Even if your house bypasses the inspection process, wire it according to code.
- If you don't feel comfortable with this process, use a contractor.
- Determine what gauge wire you need (NM-B 12-2 is common)
- Determine what kind of boxes you need and at heights they need to be placed in relation to other components (appliances, sinks, etc).
- Learn to properly ground wires.
- Will you use propane? Using propane makes it easier to rely upon solar for all other electrical needs.

## Electrical Source

- Traditional hookups
- Solar
- Solar + secondary
- RV hookups
- Battery power

## General Building Materials

- Roof
- Outside finishing
- Flooring
- Insulation
- Wood for frame
- Drywall
- Wall finishing (paint, wood, etc)
- Windows
- Doors
- Nails

## **Furniture**

- Sitting area
- Bed (overhead loft, rollout couch, murphy / wall bed, regular bed)
- Eating area
- Desk

## **Kitchen**

- [Appliances](#) (refrigeration, cooking, dishwashing, laundry, microwave, etc)
- Cabinets and other storage
- Countertops
- Sink
- Plumbing
- Burners (propane, alcohol, or electric)

## **Bathroom**

- Sink
- Toilet (composting, incinerating, traditional)
- Shower/bath
- Storage area
- Plumbing

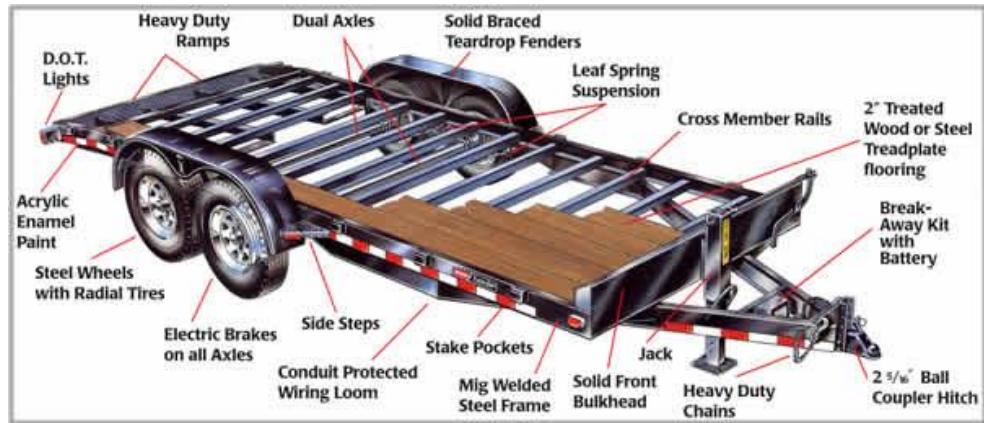
## **Air Conditioning Options**

- Portable air conditioner
- Window air conditioner
- Mini-split

## **Heating Options**

- Space heater
- Window unit
- Mini-split
- Electric fireplace
- Wall heater
- Woodstove
- Propane

## **Trailer Considerations**



- Vehicle and trailer may not exceed sixty feet. The trailer itself can have a maximum of length of 45 feet.
- The maximum trailer width is eight and a half feet. Remember your house will likely need to be smaller since the wheels count towards this maximum width.
- Maximum tow weight is determined by the hitch, ball mount, hitch ball and axel rating of the vehicle. Remember the lowest rated component is your maximum weight.
- Weight is the largest factor in the determining how many axels your trailer will need, although lengths over 24 feet often have three axels.
- Axels can be rated for different amounts of weight.

#### Typical Axle Diameters Based on Axle Capacity

- 1,000-lb - 2,000-lb Axles: 1-1/2 inch - 1-3/4 inch diameter
- 3,500-lb Axles: 2-3/8 inch diameter
- 6,000-lb - 7,200-lb Axles: 3 inch diameter
- 8,000-lb Axles: 3-1/2 inch diameter
- 9,000-lb Axles: 4 inch diameter
- 10,000-lb or more axles: 5 inch diameter

#### Water



- Well water
- Traditional plumbing
- Water hose from a house with traditional plumbing
- Cistern refillable by rainwater or truck

### Determine You Budget



### Considerations

- How much work will you do yourself
- How large will your house be
- Will you buy plans
- Do you need to pay for workshops
- Do you have access to low cost recycled building supplies

- Traditional loans are not an option for most tiny houses, although some alternatives exist (see financing)

### Advice

- Your time is worth money. Don't short change yourself by spending too much of your time on an area of tiny house construction you don't enjoy. Allocating too much work to yourself is the main cause of long delays and failed plans.
- Attend a tiny house workshop or Meetup to better understand all aspects of construction.
- People have built tiny houses for \$10,000. That isn't the norm though. \$25,000+ is a more realistic number for full time residence.
- If you plan to use a builder, remember that you can use one from almost anywhere in the country if your house is going to be on a trailer. The cost to transport the tiny house from afar might be significantly less than

### Financing Options



- If your tiny house builder is a certified RV manufacturer, you can obtain an RV loan. Your house will need a VIN number. Tumbleweed is a prominent builder with this option.
- Use another asset as collateral.
- See if you can obtain an unsecured loan. You will need exceptional credit and the rate will be higher than the first two options.
- Tiny house lending websites are springing up. I am not sure if these sites are actively giving loans or if they are more in the planning phase. Two examples are <http://tinyhouselending.com/> & <http://tinyhouseloans.com/>.

### Insurance Options



# Insurance

The meaning of insurance is **risk management** used to obtain compensation for potential loss or to safeguard against loss by any measure taken or

- If your tiny house was built by a certified RV manufacturer, you can obtain RV insurance.
- Alternatively, Darrel Grenz from Portland has found a way to offer real insurance to tiny house people. His information is:

Darrell Grenz  
Grenz Insurance Agency  
darrellgrenz@gmail.com  
503-206-6736

## Research Building Codes



### Considerations

- Determine minimum size requirements. (these are likely your largest obstacle)
- How many trailers does your area allow on a property?
- Can you designate your tiny house as an accessory building?

- Building on a trailer might circumvent building codes, but it might not since the tiny house is still a dwelling. The manufacturers who use this method are often certified as RV manufacturers. Obtaining this certification can cost several thousand dollars.

#### Advice

- Respectfully discuss your project with the authorities to see if they would be flexible. They might surprise you.
- Find your voice. If this is a project you care about, lobby your local officials to change archaic building laws.

#### Additional Resources

- [Meetups](#) – Portland might be the epicenter of the tiny house movement, but Meetups are springing up all over the country.
- [Books](#)
- Blogs – [Tumbleweed](#) and [Four Lights](#) are our favorite commercial sites. Other good blogs are The Tiny Life, Tiny House Talk, and Tiny House Blog.
- Stores –Treehouse
- Documentaries – Tiny - The Movie, The Tiny House Film, and We The Tiny House People
- TV – Tiny House Nation

#### Green Tips



- Avoid West facing construction to help keep the home cooler.
- Insulate the home well.
- Use energy star rated appliances and windows.

- Install solar panels.
- Collect rain water to use in the house.
- If you landscape, avoid plants that need to be watered.

#### Other Tips

- Be flexible – plans will inevitably change.
- Label needs vs. wants.
- Be self-aware.
- Underestimate calculations if you plan to tow your tiny house.
- If you live in a tornado prone area, consider adding a separate storm cellar.

If there are additional resources you would like us to add, please send us an email at [affiliates@livingdirect.com](mailto:affiliates@livingdirect.com)