

# 5-Star ★★★★★ H★E★N★H★O★T★E★L



by Karin Smith  
Ellenwood,  
Georgia

## YOU'LL NEED:

- 35 8' 2x4s
- 4 cement deck supports
- ½ sheet ¾" exterior grade plywood
- 5 sheets siding
- 10 lb. box of 8D coated sinkers (for siding, trim, and interior)
- 10 lb. box of 12D coated sinkers (for framing)
- 3 sheets corrugated tin roofing
- 1 box corrugated roofing screws
- 12" aluminum flashing
- 3" drywall or wood screws
- Small nails
- Salvaged door (30" wide or less)
- Salvaged window (24" wide or less)
- 2 4x8 sheets pre-primed beaded board paneling
- 2 8' 1x12s, for nesting box
- 7 1x3 or 1x4 boards for exterior trim
- 3 1x3 or 1x4 boards for roof strapping (if using corrugated tin roofing)
- 2 4x8 sheets of hardboard for wallpaper base
- 1 10' roll hardware cloth
- 1 3x10 roll poultry wire
- 1 box poultry staples
- 4 galvanized hinges and screws (for window and pop-hole door)
- 2 5" galvanized hinges (for door)
- 4 spring-style hooks and eyes
- Exterior paint
- Interior paint
- Wallpaper
- 16 12x12 vinyl peel-and-stick floor tiles
- 1 tube paintable caulk
- Caulk gun
- Hammer
- Speed square
- Circular saw
- Level
- Pencil for marking
- Tape measure
- Cordless screw gun with Phillips head bit, or Phillips head screwdriver
- Hex attachment for screw gun to accommodate the corrugated roofing screws, or manual driver

Instructions for project from *MaryJanesFarm* magazine, "Raising Jane" issue, p. 104

Begin by choosing the most level spot in the area you want to designate as your chicken yard. Place the four cement deck supports so that the inside corners are 45 inches apart, forming a square. Level, if necessary.

To make the platform for the floor, cut one 8-foot 2x4 in half, creating two 48-inch long pieces. These will be the top and the bottom. For the joists, cut five 45-inch long pieces. Mark along the top and bottom boards every 12 inches along the edge of the boards. Lay them on a flat surface, 45 inches apart and lay the joists on their sides set at 12 inches on center. (Meaning that the center of the 2x4 is aligned with the 12-inch mark on the top and bottom boards.) Nail the two outside joists in place, square the frame and nail the remaining three joists.

Place the framework on the deck supports and adjust as necessary so that the frame is accepted into the supports. Be sure to keep the framework square as you do so! You don't want a wanky chicken house.

Now that the framework is in place and square, place the 4x4 sheet of plywood on top and nail into place. You can use the nails on the sides of the frame to guide your nail placement along the joists.

## **You are now ready to build the walls!**

For ease of instruction, the walls will be identified accordingly:

Wall #1- the door wall (front)

Wall #2- the back wall

Wall #3- the window wall (left side)

Wall #4- the pop-hole wall (right side)

(Walls #3&4 are interchangeable)

### **Wall #1: The Front Door Wall**

Begin by cutting two 48-inch lengths of 2x4. Lay these on a flat surface, on edge, 8 feet apart. Lay one 8-foot 2x4, on edge, on each side, flush with the ends of the top and bottom, and nail into place. Square frame. Lay your door along the bottom of the frame, equal distance from each side. Nail together two 8-foot 2x4's and lay along the hinge side of the door. This will give you extra support for the door. Place galvanized hinges between the door and studs for spacing. Square and nail into place at the top and bottom of frame.

Place a single stud alongside the latch side of the door, square and nail into place. Measure between the studs above the door and cut a corresponding 2x4 to fit. Lay between studs, square and nail in place. Measure up from this board to the bottom of the upper frame and cut a corresponding 2x4. Place a mark in the center, top and bottom, square and nail in place. Lift wall, leaving the door behind, and move to the side. Prepare to build Wall #2.

Before you begin Wall #2, you will want to take measurements for the roof trusses. Lay a piece of newspaper along the top edge of the wall. Measure up 12 inches and make a mark and draw a line with a dark marker. Lay a 48-inch 2x4 on its side at an angle (with the upper corner of the 2x4 on the marked line) to the outer left edge of the wall. Draw a line using the Speed Square from the upper corner to the lower edge of the 2x4, following the line marked on the newspaper. This will give you the proper angle to cut without having to remember your high school geometry. Repeat for the opposite side. Set the marked boards aside until later. Back to the walls.

### **Wall #2: The Back Wall**

Begin by cutting two 48-inch long lengths of 2x4. Lay on edge, 8-feet apart, and mark every 16-inches. Place one 8-foot 2x4 on each side and nail in place. Square, if necessary. Place one 8-foot stud at each mark on edge, on center, square and nail in place. Set aside and prepare to build Wall #3.

### **Wall #3: The Window Wall**

Cut two 41-inch long 2x4's. Lay on edge, 8-feet apart. Lay one 8-foot 2x4 on edge, on each side, and nail in place. Square, if necessary. Lay your window at desired height (not less than 36-inches) in the center of the frame. Lay one 2x4 stud on edge along each side of the window. Place closed hinges along one side to set proper gap. Square and nail studs in place. Measure across the top and bottom of the window, between the studs, and cut two 2x4's the appropriate length. Square in the frame and nail in place. Measure from these boards to the top and bottom boards of the frame. Cut lengths accordingly, place in the center of each space and nail in place. (Remove window before you do so.) You will want to leave a small (1/8-inch) gap on all sides for expansion. Lift wall, leaving window, and set aside. Prepare to build Wall #4.

### **Wall #4: The Pop-hole Wall**

Once again, cut two 41-inch long 2x4's. Lay them on edge, 8-feet apart. Find the center point, top and bottom and mark 6 inches away on each side of the mark. Lay the studs inside the frame with the inside edge of the stud at the 6-inch mark. Square and nail in place. Cut a 12-inch piece of 2x4. Measure up 15 inches from the top edge of the bottom of the frame. Place the 12-inch piece between the studs, with the bottom of the piece at the 15-inch mark. Square and nail in place. Prepare to erect the walls.

Beginning with Wall #1, place wall on platform, with the outside edge of the wall flush with the outer edge of the platform. Nail in place. Continue adding the walls, placing Wall #3 against Wall #1 and nail to the platform and along the adjoining studs to secure the walls together. Repeat this process until all walls are attached and joined together. Step back and take a look at what you have accomplished!

Okay, back to work!

## The Roof

Take the two 2x4's that you marked earlier and make the cuts along the marked lines. Trace these angles onto four more precut 48-inch 2x4's. Attach the two together using wood screws. Cut one 48-inch long 2x4 and lay it on its side. Take the top portion of the truss and lay it on top of the board, making sure that the inside of the top lines up with the outer corner of the bottom. (In other words, you are not taking any length off the bottom edge of the 2x4). Draw a line along the top portion onto the bottom 2x4 on both sides. Cut along each line. Trace this pattern onto two more precut 48-inch 2x4's. Insert this piece into the top portion, creating a triangle. Attach with screws. Repeat two more times, making three roof trusses.

Before installing the trusses, staple poultry wire across the entire opening of the chicken house. Unless you want your chickens roosting in the rafters, of course.

Attach the trusses with screws, put in at an angle, to the top of the chicken house, one on each end and one in the center. Make sure that the front and back trusses are flush with the outer edge of the walls. You should have about a 1-foot overhang to prevent water from running into the chicken house.

If you are using corrugated tin roofing, cut six 48-inch long 1x3's (or 1x4's) and attach to the trusses using screws, placing one along the edge of the peak, in the center and the last in line with the side wall. Repeat on the opposite side, overlapping the top strap over the peak, keeping the angle sharp. Wearing gloves for protection and using tin snips or strong scissors, cut the corrugated roofing to size, and attach with corrugated roofing screws, overlapping each piece by two ridges. Keep the leftover pieces for a future use. Attach the flashing along the joint on the peak to prevent leaking.

To prevent birds or other predators from entering the chicken house through the space under the roof, measure and cut a piece of hardware cloth to size to fit between each truss. Attach with wood screws and #10 washers.

To finish the gable ends of the chicken house, measure the distance from the top of the wall (not the bottom of the truss) to the peak. Then you will measure the distance from the top of the wall at the outer corner, to the top of the truss directly above it. Mark these measurements on a piece of siding that has been cut to fit width-wise, measuring from the bottom up, and connect the dots, center point to outer edge, using a level or a straight board. Cut out the gable ends and attach to the chicken house and the roof trusses.

## Make the Outside Pretty

Trim the outside of the window and door frames with 1x3 (or 1x4) to give your chicken house a neat, finished appearance. Attach the door and window using galvanized hinges, and screws. Attach one spring-style hook and eye to the window frame and trim and two (top and bottom) to the door and trim to prevent unwanted guests from dropping in unexpectedly.

Cut an 18x20-inch door from 1/2-inch plywood. Attach to the outside of the pop-hole with hinges, creating a door. Lock using one spring-style hook and eye closure.

Dig away the dirt from under the pop-hole, just deep enough to accommodate the corrugated tin roofing scraps. Attach the pieces to the lower edge of the platform with nails, overlapping by two ridges at the joins. Back fill the hole, making sure that the dirt is firmly against the tin roofing. This will prevent predators from digging under the hotel and attacking your chickens.

Install a ramp for the chickens to walk on.

## The Inside Coop

To make your flock feel welcomed, you will want the inside to be as pretty and practical as the outside. Providing a place to feed, lay eggs and roost is crucial for contented hens. Here is one way that you can treat the interior space of your hotel.

Begin by covering the window opening with poultry wire and attach it with poultry staples to the frame. To prevent injury, cover the wire edges with 1x3 (or 1x4) trim.

Measure the width of the back wall, and cut a 4x8 sheet of beaded board paneling to size. You will use the entire length. Attach to the studs with nails.

Measure over the door, width and height and cut a corresponding piece of beaded board to fit. Attach to the studs.

Measure the width between the front and back walls, reaching to the front exterior wall, and cut a piece of paneling that width by 36-inches in height. Make a notch 1 1/2-inch high by 3 1/2 inches wide to accommodate the bottom of the wall in the lower left corner. Attach under the window. Repeat for the opposite side, but be sure to cut out the opening for the pop-hole. The notch will be on the right side of this panel.

If you choose not to wallpaper, you will want to place 2x4 spacers in between the studs, 36 inches high, on the window and pop-hole walls. This will give you something solid to nail into and prevent your hens from injury by becoming stuck between the interior and exterior walls. That would just not do!

If you do choose to wallpaper, cover the upper walls with hardboard, rough side out, so that the paper and glue will have something to grab onto.

Paint the walls and allow them to dry. If you choose to wallpaper, do so at this time.

Install the vinyl peel-and-stick tiles to the floor. Caulk along the perimeter where the floor meets the wall to prevent moisture from seeping up. Allow caulk to dry thoroughly.

### **Make the Nesting Box**

Measure the distance between the window and pop-hole walls, along the back wall, and cut two 1x12 boards the corresponding length. Cut two 24-inch 1x12's for the sides. Create a box, laying the long boards on the top and bottom edges of the shorter boards. Nail together and square the box. Make a mark half way down on either side.

Cut a 22½-inch long 1x12 and place inside the box, centering the board at the mark. Square and nail together. Measure the back and cut a piece of beaded board paneling to fit. Square the box and attach the back with small nails.

Make four dividers by cutting the 1x12 11¼-inches by 16½-inches.

Measure in 5 inches from the right side and 3 inches up from the right bottom corner. Connect these two marks.

Measure 5 inches in from the top right and connect this mark to the outer previous mark. Cut along these lines. Repeat three more times. (You can just trace the angles onto the other boards.)

Install in the nest box, offsetting the dividers for ease of attachment. Nail through the nest box, into the dividers from the top and bottom. Measure out two 1x6 boards the same measurement as the long boards of the nest box. Attach along the bottom angle of the dividers with nails. Paint with the interior color and allow the nest box to dry thoroughly.

Attach to the back wall of the chicken house with nails, making sure to nail into the studs.

### **The Chicken Yard**

Build your chicken yard to your own specifications, attaching it to the chicken house where you desire. The pop-hole should lead directly to the yard.

The rest is up to you! Your chickens will want places to roost. Wooden ladders cut into small sections and attached at an angle or shelves can provide the perfect spot. They will also need a place for their food and water. A shelf, hung low on the wall, can hold a feeding trough. A small box in the corner can hold the waterer. A soft, thick bed of aspen shavings on the floor and in the nest boxes will give them comfort as well as keeping them cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Adding homey touches to your own Hen Hotel is more for you than the hens, but that is okay. Have fun. Shopping at thrift stores or yard sales may yield things that will be decorative as well as functional. In no time, your Hen Hotel will be open for business. Breakfast served daily.