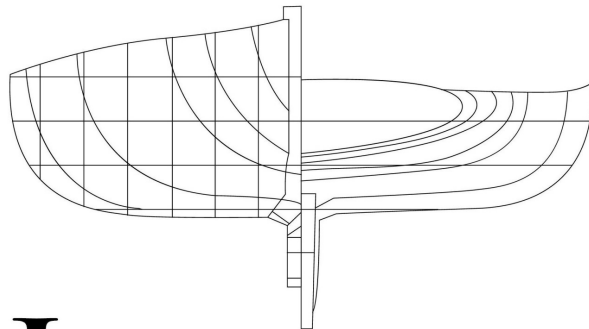


Building a Wooden Boat

A Resource Guide

By Jed Lavoie



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Preface:

Hello and thank you for downloading the Heritage Boatworks Resource Guide “Building a Wooden Boat.” I wanted to start the Resource Guide by introducing you to my website. It is in its infancy at just 5 months old and will likely go through some changes, but below is a walk-through of the site. The website contains everything from new and used tool reviews to boat builder interviews. Here is a brief map of links.

ABOUT US: I think that is pretty self-explanatory. There is information about me personally and my goals with Heritage Boatworks.

PODCAST: This page contains an index of all Podcast episodes with links to each show page. On the show pages you will find an embedded audio player, a show summary, and pictures from each episode. The podcasts contain interviews with boat builders all over New England. I publish a new episode at the end of every month.

THE HBW BLOG: Throw your email in the box to get a notification each time I post a blog. I talk about everything. It is usually boating related, but the mind does wander on occasion.

Please visit and provide me with some feedback on what you like, don't like, or wish to read about. I am trying to foster some more activity on the site itself so please feel free to leave comments on blogs as you see fit. Now, on to the Resource Guide in all its glory.

Thanks again!!

Jed Lavoie

NOTE: Please do not distribute copies of this guide. If you would like to share the guide with a friend, please send them this link so that they can get it through my site.

<http://heritageboatworks.com/resourceguide1/>

So you want to build a boat. Let me guess. You want something that won't cost too much, won't take too much time, and isn't too difficult. That is what I wanted out of my first boat build, but let my experience help you out a little. Loosen the reins on those guidelines just a little. Don't opt for the cheapest, easiest, shortest build. I am not advising you to go out and build a 30' cabin cruiser, but you should choose a project that will force you to be patient and force you to study and learn something new. This Resource Guide will offer links to all of the websites I have visited and used over the years in researching, purchasing, and building boats.

For the record, I do have affiliate accounts with Amazon and Jamestown Distributors. When I link to items on Amazon, I get a small kickback if you make a purchase (and it is much appreciated). For all of the other links, I am not using their affiliate links. I have no incentive to recommend a vendor except for their prices and quality of service and selection. I decided to do it this way so that you could know that I am recommending these folks because I believe in them and not because I am making any money from them.

1. Choosing your boat

When I decide that I want to build a boat, I tend to follow the same patterns when browsing for ideas. First, pick what type of boat you want. Sail, row, or power. Here are the sites I frequent:

Instant Boats (<http://instantboats.com/>): Builder Harold "Dynamite" Payson and Designer Phil Bolger teamed up to create a number of easy-to-build yet beautiful boats. Phil would design the boats and Harold would build them to test them out and to simplify the building process. I highly recommend picking up one of [Harold's books on boatbuilding](#). They are designed for the novice. These boats are mostly plywood construction. My recommendation for a first boat would be the Pointy Skiff. I built one and have been using it for 5 years. She is still sturdy and pretty.

Storer Boats (<http://www.storerboatplans.com/>): Most of Michael Storer's plans are in metric measurements, so keep that in mind. Many of the folks that are used to standard measurements have found working with metric easier, but you will need to purchase some additional tools to make the conversion. I would recommend the Goat Island Skiff. Looks like a fun, fast, and easy to build boat. The Goat Island skiff also has a large cult following which could provide a wealth of help and advice along the way. I purchased these plans with the idea of building it for my daughter, but opted for something more beamy and stable (read: slower) in the Bolger Bobcat.

Chesapeake Light Craft (<http://www.clcboats.com/>): CLC has a wide range of boats from Stand up paddle boards to the 22' Faerings sailboat. CLC sells kits, just plans, or partial kits. I personally do not believe in a kit. I don't judge folks that build boats from kits, but I feel as though the boat doesn't take on the true personality of your own creation unless you are cutting out the components yourself. If you are a first-timer and have no construction experience and/or you are building a boat with a young child, a kit is probably a better option, but otherwise I would recommend opting for just the plans. The beauty of CLC Boats is that you can simply add pieces of the material list to your shopping cart. That saves the frustration of scurrying all over town to get everything you need. The Kaholo Stand-up Paddle Board is a hot seller right now at CLC and is a very fun build. You can see my [Kaholo build here](#).

Bateau Boats (<http://www.bateau.com>): I have not built a Bateau boat, but the designs tend to always make it into my top 3 list. The beauty of the website is that they have a very active forum where you can post questions and get some quality answers.

Duckworks Magazine (<http://www.duckworksmagazine.com/>): Don't let the simplicity of this site fool you. These guys have been around for years and are a pleasure to work with. They also have a Yahoo Group that is full of small boat builders and always willing to give their opinions. I could spend hours in their Boat Plans section looking through the various designers' plans. They also have some free plans if you are looking to save some money there. Remember, you typically get what you pay for.

2. Finalizing Your Decision

Once you've picked a couple of designs you are interested in, start with the folks that offer the plans. Many plans vendors also have online forums and members are happy to share their opinions on various builds. From there you can branch out to more general resources.

Google (<http://google.com>): I know. It seems like an obvious suggestion, but you would be shocked how few people actually know how amazing of a resource Google is. Enter in the name of the boat you'd like to build and you will typically get links to forums where the boat is discussed at length. Add some more detail to the search if the results are too broad. So instead of "skiff," try using the phrase "pointy skiff" or "Bolger pointy skiff" to narrow down your results.

Wooden Boat (<http://forum.woodenboat.com/>): The Wooden Boat forums are very active, friendly, and informative. The people on the boards range from the novice to the professional boat builder. Create an account and post your question and you will get a number of replies.

Duckworks Magazine (<http://www.duckworksmagazine.com/>): There is a Yahoo Group called "dwforum" that is filled with builders of all experience levels. They are very opinionated, active, and helpful. Sign up and strike up a conversation with some specific questions about your boats.

3. Stocking Up

Rolling through a project only to find that you need to stop short because you forgot to order one of the key components you need to keep moving on is very frustrating. I recommend opening an Excel document and listing out every component you will need. Take it to the next step and put the price in the next column. I would bet that money or improper budgeting is almost always the reason a boat goes unfinished. First let's talk lumber.

Lumber

Do not underestimate the lumber buying process. It is often the most confusing part of the whole project. If you are on a super tight budget, go down to your local lumber yard and pick up some exterior grade plywood for your project. As I stated above, I would avoid this if financially possible, but I do have a boat that I build with Home Depot plywood that has stood up to the elements quite well over 5 years of use. Otherwise, buy marine-grade materials if you can. You don't need to do your whole project in teak, but some okoume plywood, western red cedar, white oak, or douglas fir will go a long way in keeping your boat alive and beautiful over the years.

Here is a list of marine lumber yards by state: <http://www.glen-l.com/resources/lumber-suppliers.html>

Here in MA we have Boulter Plywood (<http://www.boulterplywood.com/>) which I use for all of my projects.

Also, if you just need small portions of wood for small projects, check ebay (<http://www.ebay.com>). I recently purchased a small piece of cherry that I am making 6" cleats from. I paid \$10 for it. I have also purchased short lengths of teak for a couple of small projects.

Other Items

Let's start with epoxy because it is the expensive material that will keep the water outside of the boat. From my experience, there are three epoxies. I know there are more out there, but I have only used 3. None of these opinions are based on scientific fact. It is just my experience.

West Systems epoxy is the Mercedes of the epoxies. It is the most expensive, has the best technical support from the vendor and offers a wide range of additives and accessories. It can be found at just about any boat supply house. The downside is the amine blush. When the epoxy cures, it leaves behind a blush that must be scrubbed off with a Scotch-brite pad before recoating, painting or varnishing.

MAS Epoxy is the middle of the road epoxy. In my opinion, it is the best value. From the boats I have built, the strength has been as good as West Systems. The price is considerably less and they offer a non-blush hardener which will save you a lot of time. In addition, MAS Epoxy is a higher viscosity which makes wetting out fiberglass a little easier. MAS is my epoxy of choice

RAKA epoxy is the more budget-minded epoxy. It is the least expensive of the three. Again, for the small boat builder, the strength is plentiful. They also offer non-blush hardener like MAS. The downside is that the pumps they sell with the epoxy are the same pump for both the hardener and resin. That means 2 pumps of resin and 1 pump of hardener. That seems easy enough, but it leaves you with a pretty large portion of epoxy. If you just have a small job to do, you will either be wasting epoxy or you will be manually measuring the epoxy in measuring cups.

The prices of epoxy are pretty consistent across the various resellers. I typically use [Jamestown Distributors](#) or [Defender Marine](#). Even [Amazon](#) gets into the Epoxy game and the prices are pretty decent as well. Note that Raka can only be purchased on the Raka website (<http://www.raka.com/>).

Depending on your boat choice, you will need a number of other supplies as well. Various nails, screws, lines, blocks, cleats, fiberglass cloth and tape, sand paper, etc will be on the list. I typically fall back on [Amazon](#), [Jamestown Distributors](#), or [Defender Marine](#) for most everything. If it is something you must go look at and touch, you can usually find a West Marine in your area. They are typically more expensive than the rest, but sometimes they are the ones that have what you need.

If you are building a CLC boat, click on the link for the "Materials List for Plans Builders." This will give you a list of everything you need to build the boat. Here is an [example](#). Their prices are decent if you just want to buy everything from them. Otherwise, this list will tell you exactly what you need and allow you to go price shopping elsewhere.

Tools:

This is a tough one because so many woodworkers out there have brand and tool preferences. If I am buying new tools, I do not have too much of a brand loyalty. I seem to have a lot of Craftsman tools and I do like their service offerings, but I also have Hachi, Makita, DeWalt, and other tool brands that I greatly enjoy. That being said, I have about 4 tools in my basement that were actually new when I bought them. I pick up used tools wherever I can.

Yard Sales are a fantastic place to find tools, but I have come to realize that tool buyers get up really early in the morning. If you want to scour the yard sales for tools, get up early and be liberal with those signs that say "No Early Birds." I think that 830am for a 9am yard sale isn't "early." It's punctual. And if you have cash in hand and don't waste their time with any erroneous questions, they typically don't mind. Have the seller plug in the tool and test it before buying it. They are usually happy to oblige if you plan on buying it if the test is a success. Otherwise, I have purchased used tools at the following sites.

Craigslist (<http://www.craigslist.com>) is a fantastic place for used tools. Yes, there are a lot of scams on Craigslist, but they are typically aimed at the sellers and not the buyers. One piece of advice is to only buy something that you can go see and try out. Don't go for any offers that involve sending your money anywhere. Don't contact a seller unless you are planning on buying their product if they answer your questions to your satisfaction and if you make an appointment, keep it. I have sold a couple of things on Craigslist and there seems to be a rash of folks that just want to chat about your stuff and cannot seem to keep an appointment. It can be frustrating as a seller.

eBay (<http://www.ebay.com>) is also a great place to find tools. The only problem with eBay is that it is overrun with cheap Chinese knockoffs. I recently saw a brand new cordless drill on eBay for \$12. The name brand was "Master Drill." I mean, who buys these things? It would probably last about a week. Use the filters on the left to narrow down your search. Stick with the major name brands like DeWalt, Hitachi, Craftsman, Milwaukee, etc. Again, keep an eye out for scammers, but you are fairly safe on eBay because of their buyer protection program.

Amazon Amazon.com is enormous. Do yourself a favor a sign up for an Amazon Prime Membership. It will save you buckets of money on shipping if you shop there as often as I do. I start most of my searches for anything boat related at Amazon. If you do not purchase the tool from Amazon, at the very least, the customer reviews are exceedingly helpful in gathering information.

Conclusion:

Now you have your boat plans picked out, all of your lumber listed, and your shop full of tools, you are ready to get started. Don't get overwhelmed, and just try to do a little every week. No boat made of wood is perfect. It is the nature of the craft and don't let the dreaded perfectionism slow you down. Make mistakes, fix them, and move on. If you are like me, you will lie in bed at night and plan out the entire next process in your head as you fall asleep. It is therapeutic. vTake your time and above all, have fun!

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