

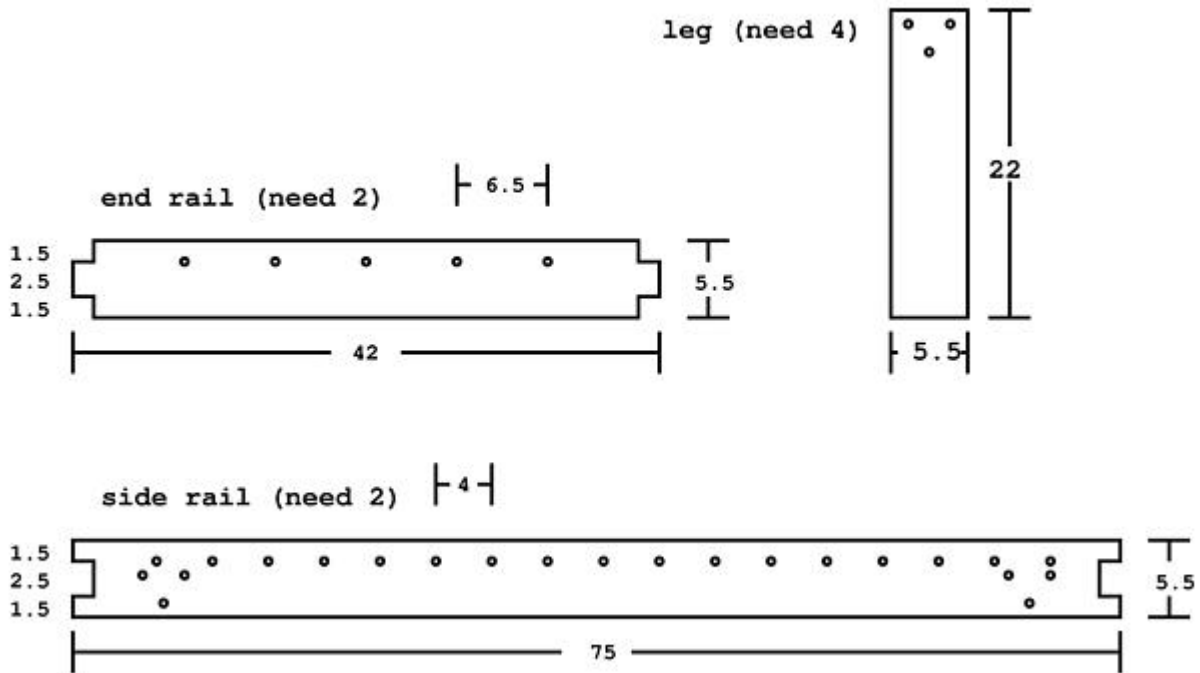


# Making a Rope Bed

Rope beds are easy to make and relatively comfortable on which to sleep. The basic idea behind a rope bed is a wooden frame within which is stretched a lattice of ropes. you place a mattress on the ropes and sleep on that.

parts

There are 8 pieces of wood that you need: 4 legs, 2 sides and 2 ends. This picture assumes a twin bed (39 X 72) sized mattress will be used and that the bed will have about 17 inches of storage space below. all the parts are cut from 2 by 6 lumber (which actually measures 1.5 by 5.5).



along each of the sides and ends you will drill 1/2 inch holes to facilitate the stringing of the rope. note that the two side pieces have two groups of three holes to allow you to bolt on the legs.

assembly

cut the 8 lengths of wood - two 75 inch lengths, two 42 inch lengths and four 22 inch lengths. cut out the ends of the side and end rails so that they dovetail into each other.

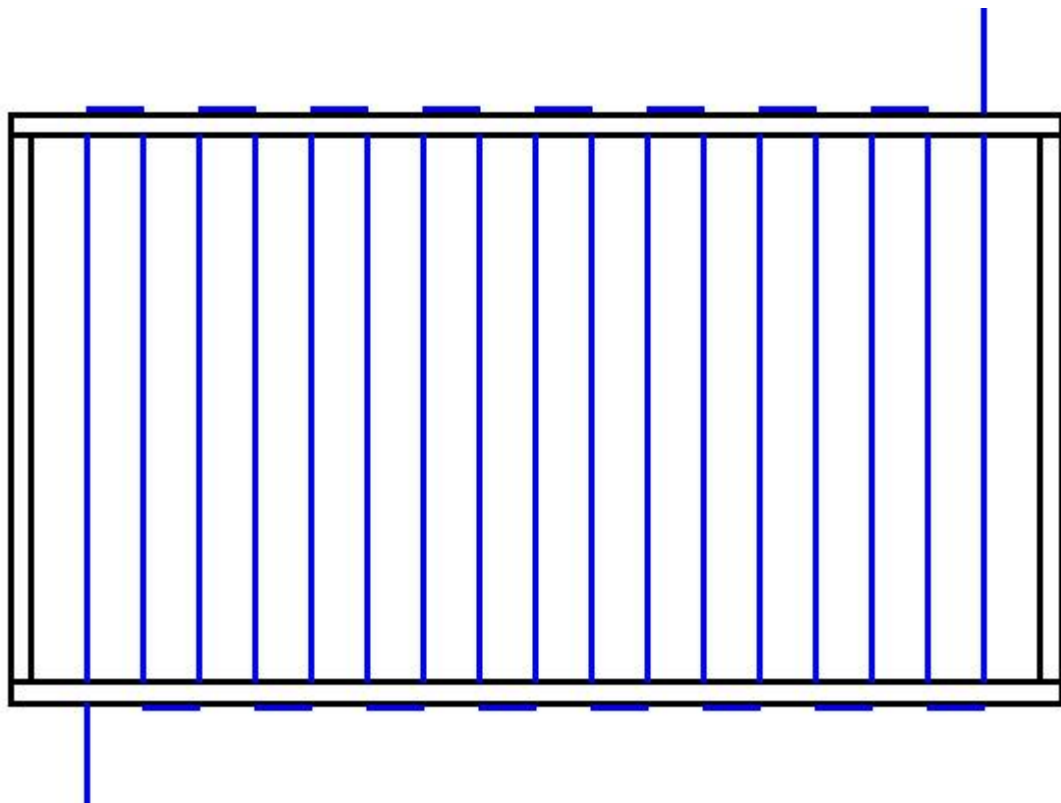
along each of the side rails, drill 13 holes. along each of the end rails, drill 5 holes. The ropes going from side to side are actually the ones that support you and thus are close together. The ropes running from end to end are to keep the support ropes in place and are can thus be space wider.

bolt the legs onto the side rails and remember to use washers so that the bolts do not pull into the wood and loosen over time.

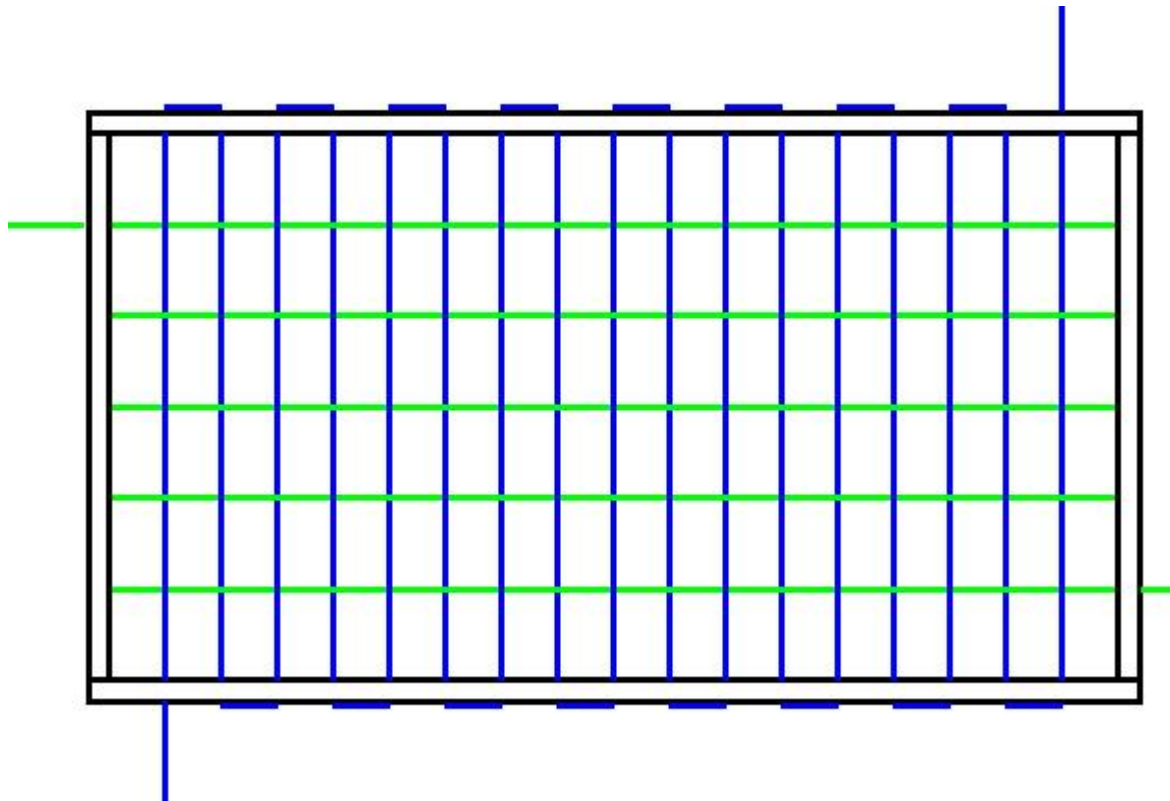
you are now ready to assemble your bed. i suggest that you assemble the whole thing upside down, with the legs sticking up in the air. this is much easier than trying to keep the whole thing together while you string it together.

to run the rope 13 times between the two sides, you will need 71 feet of rope. and to run rope 5 times between the two ends, you will need 38 feet of rope giving you a total of about 100 feet of rope required. since you will take a lot more rope when the bed is loose, i suggest you get 100 feet for the one piece and 50 for the other.

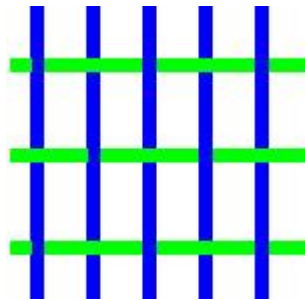
the first step is to string the 17 holes between the side rails. This gives you something like this:



next, you lace the rope between the end pieces. remember to alternate up and down so that you have woven the second rope through the first.



examine at this close up so you understand what is meant by weaving the second rope through the first. notice that the top green rope goes under the first blue that it encounters, then over the next blue, then under, over, under and so on. the second green rope goes over the first blue rope it encounters, then under the next blue, then over, under, over and so on. this way of weaving the ropes ensures that both the long and short ropes follow the under over under over pattern.



once the ropes are strung, tighten them up, flip the whole thing right-side up and enjoy.

the disadvantages

there is no such thing as a free lunch. here are two problems with rope beds.

sag

rope beds sag into the middle, they all do. If you are one person sleeping on the bed, then it is not a big deal (although a really saggy bed can cause back pain) but two people sleeping on a rope bed will find themselves rolling into each other a lot. it is up to concerned parties to determine if this is good or bad.

stretch

the new rope in a bed stretches a lot, and you'll find yourself retightening the ropes a lot. Even in older beds with rope that should darn well have stretched itself to limit, you will

find yourself rolling into the center of the bed during longer events. See the [hints on using wedges](#) as a way to quickly tighten up a bed.

unstring or don't unstring?

when you transport your rope bed, you will want to collapse it. you will not want to completely unstring it - trust me. if you unstring the rope running from top to bottom (remember it only loops back and forth 5 times) then you can roll every thing up in a bundle.

however, if you merely loosen up the entire bed, then it is possible to twist the head and foot pieces 90 degrees and still roll everything up in a lump. this means when you arrive at an event you merely need to unroll, tighten and your bed is ready.

size

it is to your advantage to make the bed a size such that a standard *twin* or a *double* size mattress will fit on your bed. both sizes are 72 inches long, a twin bed is 39 inches wide and a double is about 54 inches wide.

once, at an event near my house, i pulled my back lifting a trailer and could not sleep on a rope bed. since my bed was the same size as a twin bed, i went home and brought back my firm store bought matteress.

when you make your rope bed the same size as a "standard" bed, you can then use a futon for your mattress. futons are easy to roll up and transport and are fairly comfortable. they also offer more support than an air mattress or a piece of foam. if you go to a futon store (as opposed to a furniture store that merely sells futons on the side) then you can have a custom thinner futon mattress made for less money than a regular thickness futon mattress. the thinner mattress will be easier to roll, take up less space in the car and is lighter to move around.

a good way of getting a futon mattress cheap is to check the the local campus bulletin boards near the end of semester. many international students buy a futon, use it for a few months and sell it cheap when they return home. end of semester is usually close to the beginning of tourney season.

short legs or long?

some people claim that if your bed is too high, then you can get the wind blowing under it and create a very cold sleeping area. i have never had this happen and infact enjoy the extra space under the bed. our current bed is 18 inches off the ground allowing me to store the large gold key containers under it. some other people let their dog sleep under the bed creating a personal furnace for those cold nights.

remember, if you make long legs, you can always cut them shorter.

battens

You will notice that if you tighten the rope bed with... vengeance... then you can bow the long sides of the bed in toward each other. if this bothers you, then you can insert a couple of battens between the two sides on the bottom edge. This will allow you to tighten the bed without bending in the sides.

slats

slat beds use a series of slats, each 3 to 4 inches wide, to support the mattress. this gives you a firmer bed that will not sag into the middle. currently our bed has slats, but the four sides are still held together as a conventional rope bed. down deep i don't trust slats and am afraid of them breaking so the ropes let me sleep soundly, happy in the knowledge that the ropes will catch us when the slats break.

hints

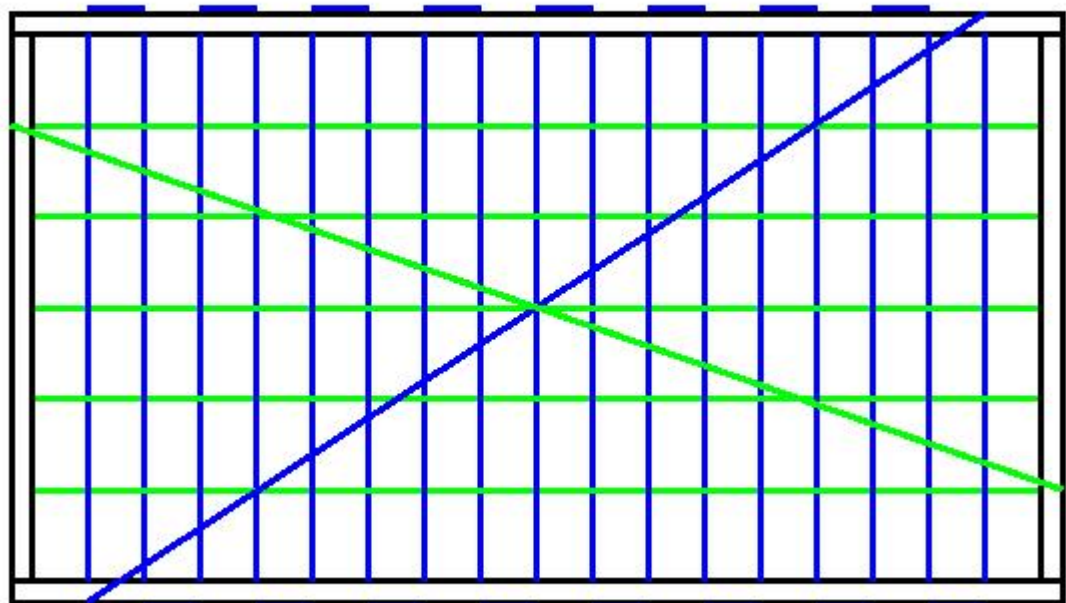
#### wedges

an easy way to tighten up a bed is to make a set of wedges. these wedges will be about the same size as a doorstop - 4 inches long, 2 inches high. you can make them out of 2x4 scrap lumber. To use them, insert them in the loops of rope along the side of the bed and push them in so that the rope is pulled away from the side of the bed. This really tightens up the bed without you having to dismantle the bed clothes. on the left side of the picture below, we have a saggy bed rope. on the right side of the picture below, we have the same bed with a wedge inserted in a loop lying along the side of the bed and tightened up the rope.



#### crossing ropes

you will notice that because an odd number of holes were drilled in the side rails (17) that the rope going from side to side has an end on either side. this was done on purpose, and allows join the two ends under the bed and tie them together. if you put a loop in one end and then pass the other end through it, you can really tighten up the bed.



Harold Devin

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