

# The Near-Perfect Tent: Design and Build a Recycled Tent

by [bentm](#) on February 24, 2007

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## intro: The Near-Perfect Tent: Design and Build a Recycled Tent

Like so many before me, I dreamed of owning the **Perfect Tent**. Years of disappointing store bought tents, the lameness of available designs and workmanship, and the burning shame every latter-day utilitarian feels at owning things that are bright and new told me I would have to design and make my own.

What follows is what I came up with. It's not **Perfect**, but it's pretty good, and you'll enjoy having one if you decide to make it.

Best of all though, if you plow through these instructions, I try to pass on the confidence and basic know-how to design and make your own.

### Pros:

CHEAP (almost free), durable, lightweight, roomy, very dry, good star visibility, versatile, sets up easily, DIY pride and skills-building. It's one-of-a-kind I guess, uses very few new materials, and like all great human endeavors, materially registers my existence on earth.

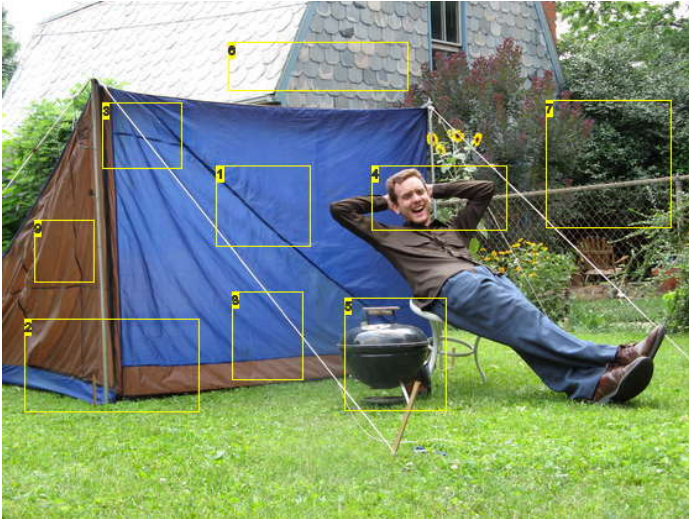
DURABLE: It's overbuilt and performing like a champ so far in downpours, snow, high coastal and mountaintop winds, crappy terrain, etc.

LIGHTWEIGHT: the post office weighed it for me in the bag and it came out to something like 4 lbs--not bad for a 2-4 person tent!

### Cons:

I'd like a tent that blends in with the natural surroundings better, but I had no choice in this because the source tents were yellow and blue.

A con for some people might also be that my design uses guy lines and pegs, which you and your significant other will get into arguments over trying to set up, and then your drunk or stoned friends will trip over in the dark. For me though, these elements enrich the overall camping experience and were 'must haves'.



### Image Notes

1. Tent is made from other, crappier tents, making it environmentally friendly, and also zany!
2. Made in the USA by semi-uncoerced labor in satisfactory working conditions, without the use of cattle prods, mandatory overtime, lockdowns, or degrading "team-building" exercises.
3. Torture-free construction from non-coerced materials. Safe for cute animals, precious children.
4. Tent is a First Mover in the big lead-up to Fun! (Model in photo compensated fairly for posing labor.)
5. Cooking things on a grill will finally be within your reach, once you have a homemade tent. (Grill should be light years away from tent when in use.)
6. Tent shown in laboratory conditions, on a mowed surface. Actual camping situations may vary.
7. Erecting tent in backyard will open dialogue with neighbors, and entertain their garden-party guests.
8. Nonsectarian design makes tent terrific for any race, religion, creed, or even credo!
9. Tent has doors on three sides, making peeing, fleeing bears and other pests a cinch!

### Image Notes

1. Versatile fly peels back.
2. Tent is not fireproof. Grill is not lit in this simulation of Camping Fun; keep all fires well away from tent.



**Image Notes**

- 1. Lots of screen means lower weight. Screens all open wide, enabling gear to be shoveled in and out with ease!
- 2. Patented Low Lip makes sweeping a breeze!



**Image Notes**

- 1. Open side of fly



**Image Notes**

- 1. Weather side of fly--this baby's generous, and can accomodate another couple of people or piles of stuff.



**Image Notes**

- 1. Tent with door open



**Image Notes**

- 1. Screen roof gives wide view of stars w/out having your face turned into

hamburger by of thousands of insects. wowee.  
2. Screened, closeable foot vent means plenty of air circulation. zowee.

## step 1: Planning, Materials

### I. Tent Design

First, decide what you want in a tent, and what you'll use it for. Make a list of the features you'd like to have, and all the things that were frustrating or inadequate about tents you've owned and used in the past. Rank these in order of importance.

**I wanted:** a lightweight, 2-3 person backpacking tent, roomy enough for canoe-camping, with decent visibility through all sides, a mosquito-free view of the stars at night, a fly that came out at least 1-2 feet from the tent walls, and something that would be comfortable to hang around in on rest days, in the rain, without getting wet.

**I hated:** getting wet in every single tent I've ever used regardless of what it cost, not in the least because of crummy flies that allow the water to run onto or under the tent; poor visibility, crouching around in a too-low tent, clambering over people to pee at night, not having enough ventilation, and having the tie-down points and corners rip out in rougher conditions.

Look at tents on the market and see if any approximate what you'd like. "Borrow" from extant designs, and draw up some of your own. Buy a tent you like, copy down all its dimensions then return it, or just **make some pictures** using whatever doodling skills you possess. Don't get out the graph paper and start going to town--these don't have to be exact at all.

### 'III. Seek the Treasure: MATERIALS!

Garage sales and craigslist.org are old tent gold mines.

Families who camped together in their salad years scatter, divorce, get fat, blow out their knees, and buy RVs, leaving enormous tents to rot in someone's garage...and that's where you come in, like a crayfish to a discarded toaster.

I recommend holding out for a giant cabin tent, which will have more solid panels than a dome tent and be easier to make new parts from. When the monied clean house these come cheap, so wait for a deal. (I recently bought an enormous multifamily cabin tent with separate rooms porch jacuzzi tiki bar etc. for a mere 45 bucks. It has more than enough material for the tiny solo tent I want to make, plus next year's christmas gifts for at least a couple of lucky people.....and you can use the scraps to make compression sacks for sleeping bags and clothes, your tent bags, kites, whatever you think of.)

What you come up with will determine what you'll be able to make, so the design phase should really be folded into the materials-gathering phase. If you have an old dome tent or just its poles, you'll be able to make something different than what I made.

As with any DIY project, the genius of your design will emerge from the tensions between available materials, your design ambitions, and your skills set--all of which will be improved in the process: Innovation through Impoverishment + Improvisation.

My **Pretty Great Tent** is made from a crappy old cabin tent (blue and yellow) someone left the basement of my apartment house that got wet, mildewed, and had its colors bleed--hence the muddy-to-tie-dyed appearance of the top piece in the photos. I also used pieces from a worthy old 2-person (brown) tent a friend gave me after its corner tore out.

### III.' Materials Preparation'

**Washing:** Whether you should wash the source tent(s) first obviously depends on their condition, and/or how much time and \$ you want to spend. There are tent-washing detergents out there that might be worth the money. There are probably vegan baking soda and what-all concoctions safe for toddlers and fish that folks have made too; you'd have to check (and let me know b/c a homemade recipe would be great.)

I used a lot of regular detergent and a laundromat washer on the cabin tent for this project. It came out nice, but the waterproofing washed out. **Re-waterproofing** the cloth when I was done with the tent sucked!, so you should probably only do this if your source tent was as moldy and cat-box-smelling as mine was. (I used a 10:1 solution of mineral spirits and 100%silicone whipped up with the home egg beater to re-waterproof it, but we'll get to that later.)

**Dyeing:** I wanted to re-dye the material a more natural color: it didn't work on my test pieces, so I guess nylon resists bleaching and dyeing. I suggest seeking materials that are the color you'd like, or being happy with what the Lord provides.

**Breaking it Down:** Once you're satisfied with the source-tent's smell, begin to rip seams and see what you've got to work with. At this point, just rip enough seams to make the whole thing lie flat, leaving your pieces as large as possible. Don't be afraid to bypass the seam-ripper altogether and just cut through the seams--it saves time and you'll be able to patch together sheets for your Frankentent regardless. Use sharp scissors or better yet a fancy hot-knife which cauterizes your cuts. In the future I plan to modify my soldering iron tip to make it into a cutter for this.

\*\*\*Be careful with, and SAVE those Zippers\*\*\*--they're expensive to buy new. Also save all of the loops and webbing and whatnot.



### Image Notes

1. This car-camper's overgrown crap-shack can be re-crafted into something beautiful in your hands. As they say, one man's shattered dreams of Coleman-sponsored campground glory are another man-or-woman's treasured pickins.
2. Using the old fly for your new fly is a good way to go.

## step 2: Mock-up, Measurements

'1.)' Gather up your best dream-tent doodle, some sleeping bags, backpacks, other camping crap if you think it'll help, get a **tape measure, a framing square, your future tent poles and pegs or some sticks of some kind, and get a couple hundred feet of strong string or parachute cord** and head for the park or yard. (You may also need **newspapers, tape, and scissors**, SEE BELOW, 3b1).

2.) Choose your favorite design, and build a full-scale, 3-D string model of it using all of the stuff above. This is way better than simply calculating b/c it'll really give you a sense of what you're going to get.

a.) Lay out your sleeping bags and backpack and whatnot on the ground. Imagine that you're lying inside of your fantasy tent, changing, sitting in your camp chair, playing chess, throwing gear around, or whatever it is you aspire to do inside of it, then poke four pegs into the ground to mark out the rough shape of the tent floor's four corners. Tie some string between the four corner pegs and then re-assess your dimensions...adjusting as necessary.

b.) when you're satisfied that you have enough room to do what you'll want to do in your tent, measure the distances between the pegs along one side, and along the back, and round them up to the nearest whole number.

c.) Now, using the framing square and tape measure, re-lay the floor according to these rounded figures, making the parallel sides exactly the same length so as to form a perfect box or rectangle. Measure from corner to corner to get this box or rectangle perfectly squared (the distance between corners should be the same if it's squared.)

d.) Now put up the tent poles where you'll want them, using cords and stakes to hold them in place. Adjust the cords until the shape, height, etc. of your tent starts to seem right.

I don't have photos of my mock-up, but it looked exactly like the **3-D drawing below** (with the angry cloud).

If you're designing your own tent, just spend some time playing house--sitting up, crawling in and out of, moving your hiking gear around inside of your imaginary tent, while adjusting the dimensions to your liking. Neighbors, passers-by will love watching this step. A random cat came over and "helped" with this step when I did mine...

3.) Now you have two options:

a.) When your tent is up, your strings are all adjusted, and you love what you've got, take all the measurements for the tent off of your mock-up and transfer them to your drawing...redo the drawing first if you need to. **See my diagrams below.**

b.) OR, if you don't own a tape measure, forget the measuring altogether and just make some patterns. Here's how:

1.) tape together sheets of newspaper into larger sheets (or use some saranwrap or cheapazoid plastic drop cloths,) then tape/attach them to the strings to form panels where the cloth will be.

2.) Cut these out along the strings, and label them if you need to. A dome tent would be easier to make this way, unless you're a math gal with computer skills and some sort of drawing program.

Since I didn't do patterns for the **Great Tent**, I don't have pictures of how to do it, but I've done this for other projects and it's simple. Just be confident and it'll work out.

Measurements are probably the best way to go for a boxy tent, but if I ever make a dome tent, or something wacky I'll probably use patterns.

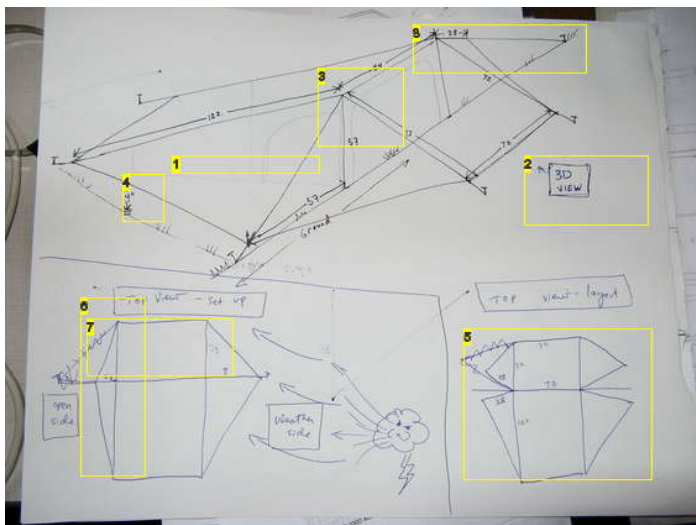
### 4.) The Fly:

a.) FOR THE MATH INHIBITED: don't bother measuring for the fly--we'll make it our way later. Just set aside a lot of cloth for it. DO NOT use my fly measurements below if you're copying this design; they're wrong.

b.) People with math skills: you'll be able to figure out what-all you need to do at this point in terms of the fly.

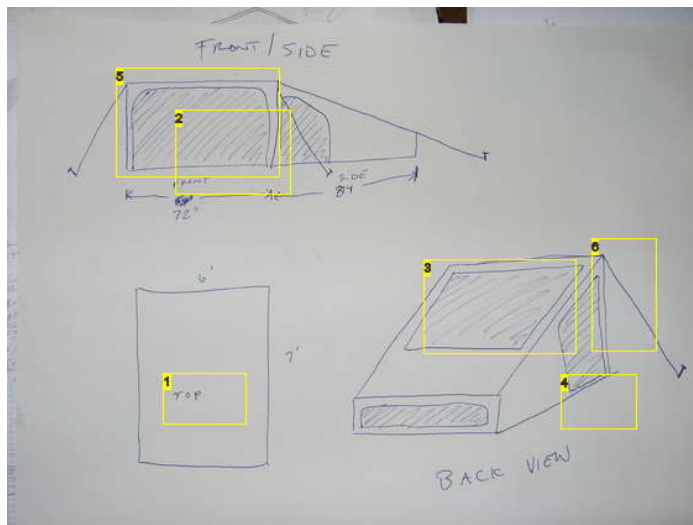
### 5.) doors and windows:

I just guesstimated these. See drawings for details. If You're making the Pretty Great Tent, measure what looks like a good door width for you, decide what shape you'd like it to be, and pencil them into your drawing with your measurements. Just be sure to leave 4 inches of cloth around the side and tops of the doors and windows for durability (see below for details).



#### Image Notes

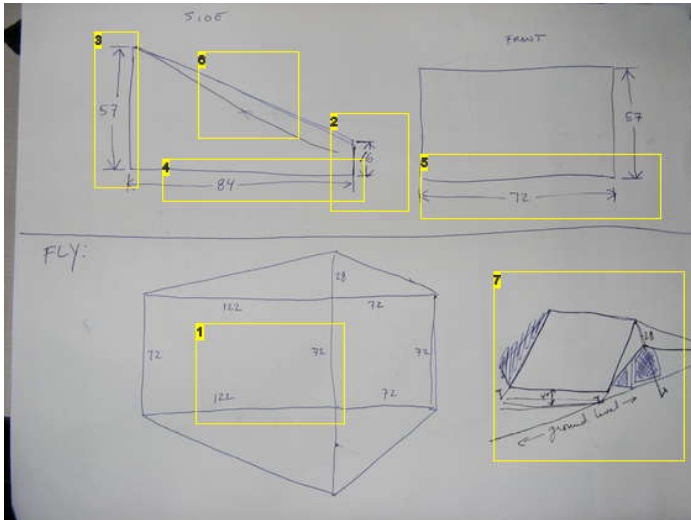
1. The ghost tent is visible here, with the door shapes penciled in, but see the other drawings too.
2. Again, when you're doing the mock-up make the bottom square, then mess with the poles and strings until it feels right.
3. This really is exactly what my string model looked like.
4. I ran some strings around the perimeter of the tent to mark what would be the bottom edge of the fly. Pictured here is the "weather side", or the side that angry clouds will blow against.
5. Ignore this--except for laughs. It was my failed attempt to draw a pattern for the fly--see the next photo for details.
6. The sheltered side of the fly comes down 28" from the peak, but still hangs out 16" + from the tent wall--preventing rain from getting anywhere near the tent wall.
7. The front of the fly goes down to the ground, but can be rolled up to whatever height is convenient.



#### Image Notes

1. This is actually the top view of the floor--not the dimensions for the roof piece.
2. This is my tent design on paper. Though the drawing isn't to scale, building the mock-up allows you to arrive at the measurements you'll want for your tent...or if you're building the pretty great tent you can just use mine
3. Wow, so many stars. and that foot vent really keeps the air moving.
4. The width of the side door was a figure the cat and I arrived at by crawling in and out of the ghost tent--and will vary according to your preferences and girth.
5. This garage door-style front is pretty awesome. You can really hurl your stuff in and out of the tent with ease, and in rainy weather you throw the fly on, roll up the front door, and, WITH GREAT CARE and plenty of ventilation, cook under the fly when you're not in bear country. With the door open and the fly on, your space is almost doubled, and in a pinch, you could sleep another 2-3 people under it...
6. I left 4" of cloth around the top and one side of the doors, to make the tent tougher.

8. The downwind, or more open side of the fly was laid out with strings, just as this drawing shows. I arrived at 28" by sitting under the ghost fly and adjusting the lines until they seemed like they'd be good. Then I ducked in and out to make sure it would be easy.



### Image Notes

1. Though these measurements are accurate, this is not a pattern for the fly. I flunked out of geometry in high school, so I couldn't figure out how to lay out the fly so that when I sewed it together it would come out in 3D and not 2. So kids, don't do as I have done: there are "real world" applications to that stuff.
2. This figure was arrived at by laying in the mock-up in a sleeping bag and figuring out what roof height would be nice to avoid having morning condensation soak the foot of my bag. I just measured from the grass to the string and rounded up to a convenient number.
3. This is the height of my old brown tent's poles (57"). It's a very good tent height. Several people have commented on how nice it is to have so much headspace in a lightweight backpacking tent.
4. I wanted to be able to host tall friends plus stow stuff in the tent, so the length of the tent was arrived at by lying in the sleeping bag, piling my backpack and some things at my feet, and making sure there was still enough head space. SO far, 84" has been adequate.
5. This is actually a little wider than is necessary for a 2-person tent. I arrived at it by lying in my bag and flopping over a couple of times, then putting a couple of backpacks beside the second flop-spot.
6. Once you've arrived at the other dimensions, just measure from the pole-top to the foot to get this figure.
7. On the other hand, as I'll be showing you in a later step, you don't really need to plot this mathematically since you can work it out practically (there are still a few Cajun boatbuilders who build beautiful boats by eyeballing it and using string, so don't ever let Math stand in your way...)

### step 3: Make a Parts List

...or for the Frankentent, you might call it a Patch list...

This is simply a list of the tent parts you'll be making and their dimensions.

If you're like me, and you probably are since you're reading this and not a book on how to sew, you like visual aids. I diagrammed each constitutive tent part before I started cutting things out. The photos of these are below.

To write up your parts list, just take the dimensions you recorded from the mock-up and add a 1/2"-1" seam allowance (the amount of material that will be used up in the seam when you sew pieces together) to any edge that will be sewn to another edge--pretty much all of them in this case.

#### 'For Example:

the front door's finished dimensions taken off the mock-up are

'57" high x 72" wide.'

So, adding the seam allowance, the rough dimensions for the door is 57" + 1/2" lower seam + 1/2" upper seam x 72" + 1/2" left seam + 1/2" right seam; or 58" x 73" total.

For those of you who have figured out at this point that the Pretty Great Tent actually *is* the Perfect Tent and are ready to partake in the Dream, here's the **Parts List** for my **Pretty Great Tent** :

#### Ripstop:

1 Floor: 82" x 94"

1 Roof: Made of several pieces; a window frame, screen window, and solid lower panel.

-window frame:

2 6" x 56"

1 6" x 74"

-top panel: 45.5" x 74"

1 Front Door: 55" x 74"

- 1 Back Wall: 14" x 74"
- 2 Side Walls: 55" high x 85" long x 14" lower height
- 1 Fly: 1 pc. 194" x 72", another few pieces to be determined later.

**Screen:**

- 1 Front Door: 58" x 73"
- 2 Side Doors: 30"w x 50"h
- 1 Foot Wall Vent/Window: 65" x 10"

**Zippers:**

- 4 Side Doors: roughly 100" each
- 2 Front Doors: 186" each
- 1 Foot Vent: 82"

(You'll need 2 zipper pulls per zipper, or 14 pulls in all.) Again, zippers are pricey. I had to buy some of the zippers I needed new and they were the single biggest expense for the tent.

**Webbing:**

How much you'll need will depend on how you want to make your tie-down and guy line attachments. I just used some 1 1/2" and 2" wide webbing I had from an old backpack I cut up for other projects.

Each piece was about 3-4" long for the tent tie-downs, and about 2-3" for the fly. You'll Need:

- 4 corner peg loops
- 4 pole loops
- 2 rear corner tie downs
- 7 Other tie downs on the fly

**Cordage:**

use what you have, or get some line of your choice for the guy lines. You'll need about 30' of it for both the fly and the tent.

**New Materials Sources:**

I couldn't scavenge everything I needed for the tent, so I had to buy some. One dumb thing I did was cut up the zippers on the cat-box cabin tent when I was ripping it apart, assuming that zipper-by-the-foot was cheap. It's not.

And since the moldy cat-box tent's windows were shot, I bought some "noseeum" mesh new from an online dealer.

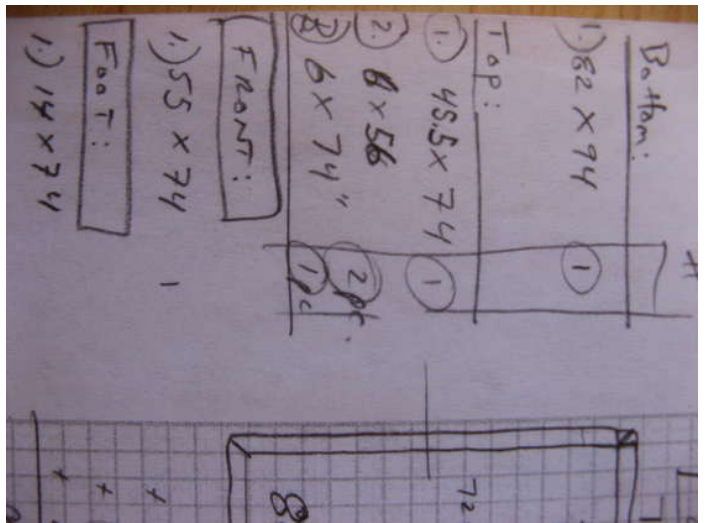
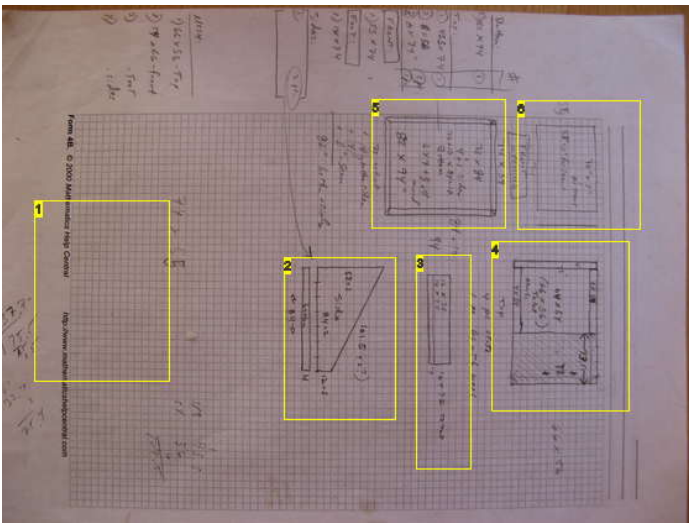
Outdoor Wilderness Fabrics online rocks, and the people there are good sources of info.

I bought the poyster 'noseeum' mesh from the brilliantly-named NettingWorld online.

Seattle Fabrics is a complete, though more expensive source. If you're in town, one thing they have that's awesome is a discount bin full of little sacks of scrap material, scrap webbing, zippers, velcro, and other junk. They also have some good patterns, examples of stuff you can make, and if you go to the right person, enough snottiness in the service to help you feel like you're an integral part of the hep-cat revolution or whatever.

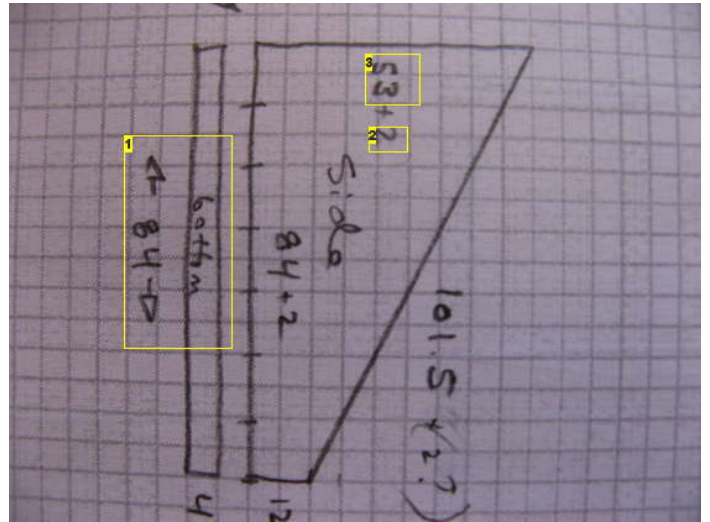
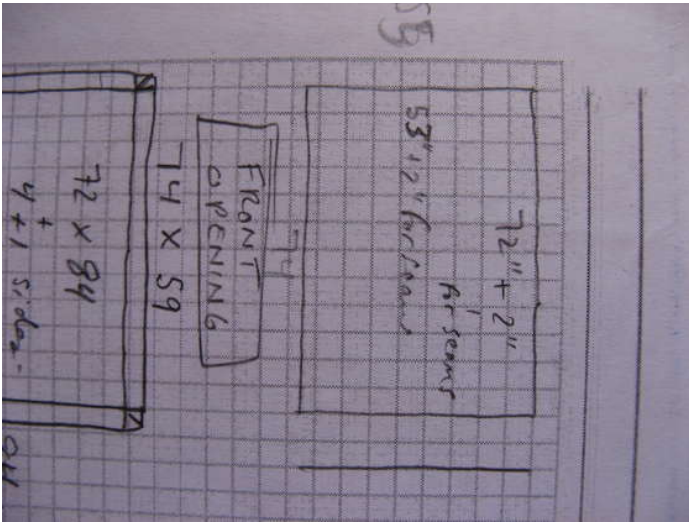
As always, the thrift store has old school bags and what have you that you can cut up to get the webbing pieces you need, or you can just apply your imagination to whatever you've got in your culch pile.

A final note about zippers: I did use a few old zippers and they're fine. Instead of having a continuous zipper all around the front door, separate zippers work one side of the door, and another zipper runs along the other side and the bottom. You could work something similar out with the other doors and window.



**Image Notes**

1. This is the general overview of my cut list. It's pretty simple, and not to scale, though I did break out some graph paper for it...
2. 2 side pieces, with the 4" floor/side piece shown.
3. one foot-end piece.
4. The Top--shaded area is solid, clear is screen.
5. Bottom piece.
6. Front opening--one piece is solid for this, and one is screen.



**Image Notes**

1. This portion of the side is actually part of the bottom piece of material--I wanted the seams between the bottom and sides to be up off of the ground--as in store-bought tents--so I subtracted 4" from the side, and added it to the bottom.
2. here I added 1" to either side for seam allowances, making the rough dimension 55".
3. 53" is the finished height (57") less the 4" of side wall that I added to the bottom piece.



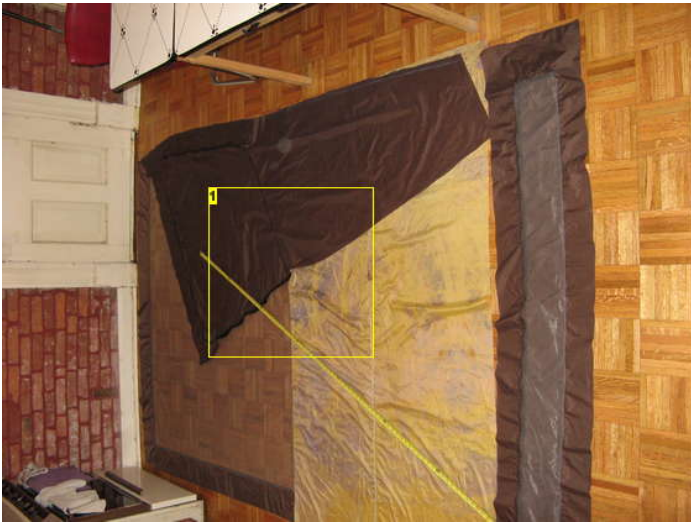
**Image Notes**

1. This is the roof after assembly. You can see the three frame pieces, the solid panel, and the screen.



**Image Notes**

1. Roof with the completed foot vent.



**Image Notes**

1. One completed side laid out.



**Image Notes**

1. Front doors laid out--screen on top.



**Image Notes**

1. Front door with solid door on top.



**Image Notes**

1. Bottom cut and laid out over all the other pieces.

#### step 4: Raising New Tent Pieces From the Ashes of the Old

There are a lot of ways to lay out and cut or make these six basic parts, but I'll go through the one that worked great for me. Know that when you're making a Frankentent, laying out, and "cutting out" your pieces can be a pain in the foot because the cloth won't lie flat and it's odd-sized. But there's an easy way to make very precise, attractive new pieces from older-n-effed-up scraps and such:

##### --Orchestra in, and Crescendo--

Make a simple **frame** set to the dimensions of each piece. Then lightly stretch and clamp some cloth pieces across the frame, mark the edges, and cut out the piece. The frame should be adjustable/re-assembleable so that you can re-set its dimensions for different pieces.

Once your frame is set up, you can stretch the old tents' cloth across it, pinning or clamping it taught, but not overly so. If a single scrap won't cover the full dimensions, sew as many as you need to together until you can fully cover the frame.

Think of this as making a large, funky stretcher for a painting and lightly pulling a canvas--one that might need pieces added to it--over it. (You may want to cut your doors into these panels once they're done and still in the frame. See steps 5-6 for details. )

##### --decrescendo--

**The frame** can be made out of any material that's long and thin and won't flex much. My basement (a trove in its own right I guess) had some **3/8" X 1" X 8' aluminum flatstock** in it and it worked really well...so well, that when I make my next tent I plan to try to get ahold of something like it again (I moved). Stiffish rebar would work, as would 1 X 3s in a pinch.

You'll need as many **clamps** as you can lay ahold of. I had a bunch of spring clamps from other projects, so I used those. If you don't have clamps you could use bolts w/wingnuts to hold a wooden frame together, and thumb-tack the cloth to it...or something else; use your imagination here...

...though as an aside, friends, sometimes you just want the right tools for the job dammit, so try to lay ahold of something slender and strong like the flatstock, and **Furthermore**, I encourage you to splurge on a sack of spring clamps if you don't have any--6 big ones and six small ones--b/c life w/out an adequate supply of clamps is a slack and cold thing indeed. Use your projects to justify spending money on tools. You'll get into a rewardingly vicious cycle where you buy tools to make things and then need to justify the expense of those tools by making more things that you'll need other tools to make and on and on until like me, you become your little family-neighborhood-and peer group's tool library--something which often garners gifts of alcohol and baked goods in addition to the more rewarding ones of friendship and diy comraderie...

Anyhoo, my frame, pictured below, is made from a couple of pieces of flatstock combined with the kitchen table, which I lengthened using an 8' board.

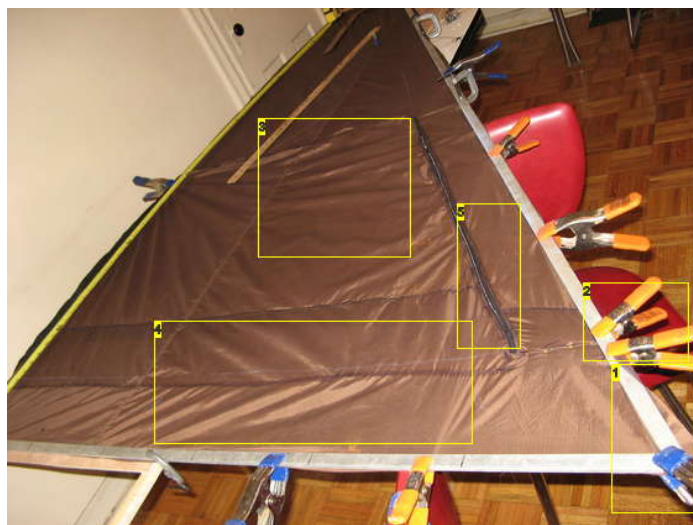
##### SO:

Just set the frame to the dimensions of the piece you need, stretch the material over it, patching in more cloth as needed, then use a sharpie or a fabric pen to trace the piece's cut lines along the edge of the frame.

##### A Final Thought Here:

Aside from environmental and economic ones, there's no reason why you couldn't make the tent out of entirely new materials using these same directions, so go for it if that's the itch you want to scratch. I strongly encourage you to reuse existing crap though--the closer to free you can get the greater the fun! and yeah, it's a bit more ethical. That said, I'd personally like to have a one-person stealth-camping tent for solo paddling/private property camping and if I can't find a camo junker to refab I'll have to buy the material new...

See the pictures for more directions and details.



##### Image Notes

1. This larger clamp holds the corner of the frame together and holds the cloth to the frame. Flat stock is nice here b/c there's not a big gap where the frame pieces come together.
2. These super-handy small clamps hold the cloth on the frame--wow, having enough clamps really makes life rich.
3. You can sort of see a seam between two original scraps that had to be sewn together here. To do this you just stretch the two pieces over the frame, pin their edges together, then sew in a butt seam (more on sewing in the next step)
4. The frame lends great precision to the whole operation. But don't sweat it too much if your pieces aren't perfect. Just do the best you can and plow ahead--you'll be amazed at how well it'll work out.
5. While the cloth is in the frame you might want to use a yard stick to lay out your side doors--just draw them on and cut them out, leaving the "hinge" side uncut. On this tent I tried putting one hinge at the pole-end, and one towards the



foot end. Putting the hinge at the pole end, as in this picture, is better.

#### Image Notes

1. This time around my frame was just two pieces of flatstock and this board I used to extend my kitchen table.
2. This picture shows the cloth after I've done some work on it, but you can see the basic concept for the frame. You clamp the frame together according to the dimensions of each tent piece, then clamp the material onto the frame...just like stretching a canvas, only looser.
3. Once the cloth is stretched in, just draw your cut lines along the inside of the frame.
4. "Keep me handy at all times!" --Your Tape Measure

### step 5: A Note About Sewing

#### So, here's the thing about sewing:

Don't worry if you've never sewn a stitch in your life. Once you've got your six sides cut out, you're over some of the harder steps. Or more precisely, if you gotten this far, everything else will be easy.

#### You'll need:

- a sewing machine
- good scissors
- lots of nylon thread, preferably UV resistant
- needles--hand, machine
- a seam ripper
- lots of pins
- a good magnet (easier to deal with pins)
- a tape measure/sewing measure
- something to mark on fabric with

#### 1. SEWING KNOW-HOW:

I never sewed before I made this tent. If you're in the same boat, read up on the subject a little online or in a book, but most importantly, start by sitting down with a **well-tuned, definitely working machine** and learn to make some straight stitches on scrap material.

For my sewing training I looked at the owner's manual for my mom's machine to figure out how to thread and adjust it, then I looked at the old tent and how its seams were made, and then tried to duplicate them. I also went to a fabric shop with some scraps from the tent and talked to some employees there about what I wanted to do and they showed me how to make a couple of basic seams too.

Getting a zipper foot and learning how to use it seems like it would be helpful--I didn't have one and my zipper seams are functional but kind of ugly.

You can figure functional sewing out in under an hour, so just jump right in. Once you're making the tent if you mess up, you just rip the stitches out and start again...but you probably won't need to do this if you practice a little.

**2. Access to a decent machine is critical.** I recently picked up a used Brother and started making some bike panniers and a few dry bags with it and it SUCKS! Doing any project with a Chinese-manufactured piece of crap will make you hate life and the whole project which is tantamount to hating the Will-to-Make-Stuff that comprises every decent human being's most basic drive (that's right; Freud got it wrong.)

I borrowed my mom's 1970 Singer Athena 2000 to make the Pretty Great Tent and it's a beaut! I plowed through a few thicknesses of ripstop and webbing with it with no problems...I also made a water and impact-resistant hardcase for my camera and a backpack with it, and if it wasn't 2600 miles away now I'd be making the panniers with it. So if you're trolling for a used machine I highly recommend it.

But, my friends, Beware of the Singers from the Russian Years...that's all I'm saying on that topic.

On the other hand, if you want to make a lot of outdoor gear for yourself, family, and friends, a commercial machine is better--though it's a bigger investment. I'm currently waiting for the right deal on a commercial machine to come down the pike myself...

If you own or get a free junker though, don't worry--you can still make tents with it. A piece of crap machine like my "Brother" could probably handle most of the sewing on the tent, but doing the corners, and sewing webbing in require power.

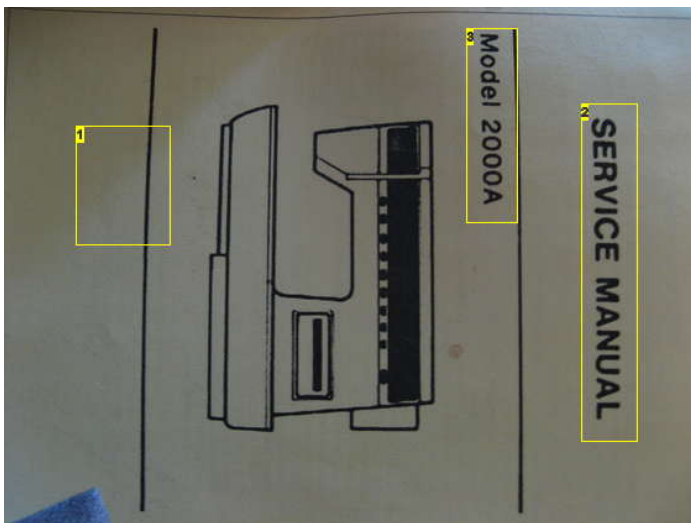
I talked to someone who runs a Bernina sewing store who said that their Swiss-made machines can sew a seagull to a cinder block, but even the old used Berninas cost way too much (\$1200++). **\*\*\*But**, the store owner told me that instead of *buying* one you could sign up to use the store's machines by the hour. She recommended doing the lighter sewing on your piece of junk at home, then bringing the tent in and sewing the corners and webbing and such with the brick-stitchers at the store to **save cash** **\*\*\***

3. I used a denim needle on most of the seams and zippers.

4. I bought a big spool of UV-resistant nylon thread online from Outdoor Wilderness Fabrics--a great, cheap source--and used it for all of the sewing.

5. Glues and such gum up the needle and aren't necessary--I just pinned all of my seams together and then sewed them. It can be slow, but it seemed worth it.

6. You could try using some sort of waterproof seam sealer tape as you sew. I didn't bother because I'm cheap, I planned to have a fly that would keep the tent dry at the bottom of a lake, and because I painted on **seam sealer** once I was finished (**just mix up 100% silicone in a 4-5:1 ratio with mineral spirits and paint it on when you've got the tent set up.**)



#### Image Notes

1. Make a Sweet Homemade Thimble: Put a coin on some rough concrete and pound on it with a small ball peen hammer. Once it's roughed up, use the rounded end of the hammer and beat it until it curls up. Put it over a divot in the concrete if it's reluctant to curl and beat it some more. Then tape it to your finger or thumb with a bunch of masking tape. It'll slip on and off after a little bit of use.

2. Again, just dive right into the sewing. I didn't know anything about it when I started but by the end I was sewing fine and even had to learn how to repair and fine-tune the stupid machine...

3. The Athena 2000--named, in 1970, after the Greek war goddess and patron of Weaving one hand, and the limit concept of technological advancement in 20th century US advertising on the other...

## step 6: Making Windows, Doors

### 1.) Cutting out the Doors and Windows

The next step is to put doors and windows in the tent's wall pieces. All you have to do is decide what size you want them to be, draw them onto the cloth using a yadstick, and cut them out. If you're making the Pretty Great Tent, you'll cut out three sides of the foot vent and side doors, leaving the third side uncut as a hinge. Doing this while the cloth is in the frame would be best, but laying out the material without the frame works fine too. I drew the doors and vent in with angular corners, using a yardstick. Then I used a big coffee can to round out the corners. Just be careful to cut along the *rounded* line.

### 2.) 'Sewing in Zippers'

Once you make the cuts, you'll sew the zipper on. Sew the zipper onto the door (or window) first--as opposed to sewing it onto the door or window "frame" edge first.

a.) First, fold 1/4" of the cloth under itself, and pin it to itself from the neat or unfolded side. Make sure you pin exclusively from the side you'll be sewing from (the 'top' side as you fold the material under, or the outside of the tent.)

b.) Then pin the zipper to this folded edge, pinning from the same side you did before. Pin it close to the teeth but not too close. Let a couple of inches of extra zipper overlap each end of the door cut.

c.) Sew the zipper onto the door or window edge, removing pins as you go. Keep your magnet in close by as you sew so the pins get sucked over to it while you're running the cloth through--it's a drag messing with a pin cushion; just pull the pins out as the cloth goes into the foot, and sweep them towards the needle.

3.) Once you've sewn the zipper to the door or window, repeat these steps to sew the zipper onto the edge of the door or window frame. Keep the zipper closed during these steps.

4.) When you've got the zipper completely sewn in, feed the sliders in and then run a bunch of stitches across its terminal ends so that the sliders won't come off. Then get some scrap material and sew a nice little patch over the outside side of the zipper ends to cover up the cuts/mess underneath (pictures in following steps).

When you're finished, you can unzip the zipper and admire your new door or window.

### 5.) Screens:

[http://www.instructables.com/id/The\\_Near\\_Perfect\\_Tent\\_Design\\_and\\_Build\\_a\\_Recycled/](http://www.instructables.com/id/The_Near_Perfect_Tent_Design_and_Build_a_Recycled/)

When you're done sewing the zippers for the doors and windows in, zip them shut, then lay the screen out over the door or window hole and cut your window screen to size, leaving 1/2" overlap. Fold the edge of the screen over 1/4" all around, and pin it to itself, leaving the heads of all the pins on one side of the screen.

**For Screen Windows and/or the Foot Vent:**

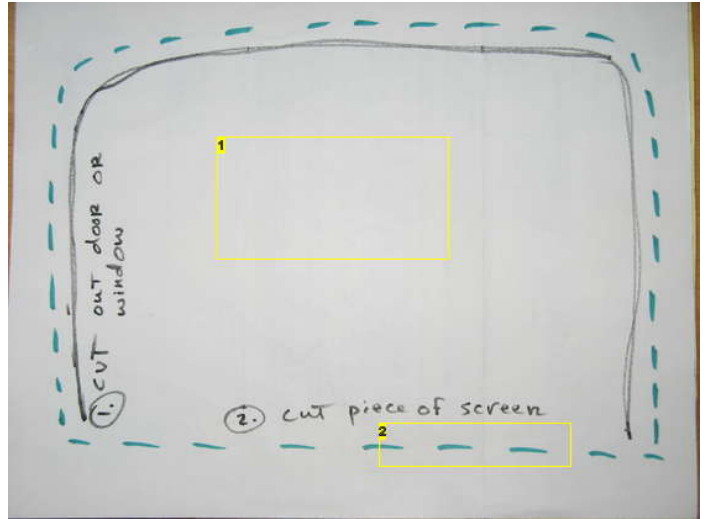
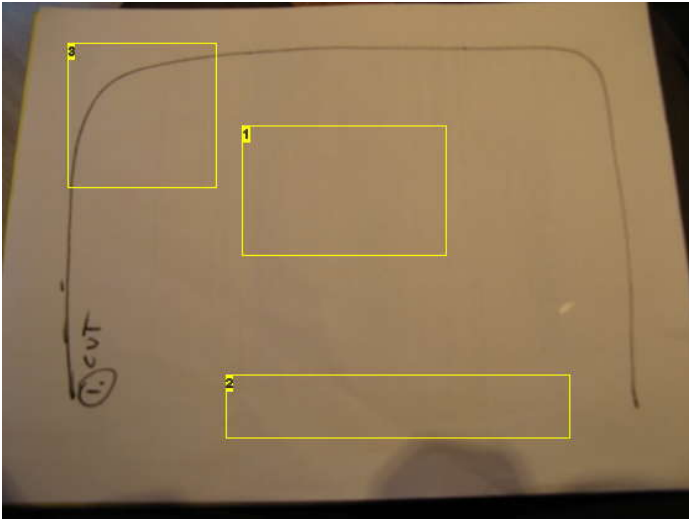
Think about which side of the tent wall you're dealing with (screens should be on the outside of the foot vent or window so you can unzip the solid panels from inside,) and after folding the edges of the window screen over 1/4", pin them to the wall material. Make sure the door is clear of where you'll be sewing and will still work right when you're done, and sew the screen on, being sure not to sew the door shut.

**'For Screen Doors:'**

a.) Fold the 3 edges of the screen door that will have a zipper running around them over 1/4", then pin and sew the zipper onto this edge like you did the solid doors.  
 b.) Then, with the ripstop door unzipped (open), sew the other side of the screen doors' zippers to the tent wall even with the solid panel's zipper.

c.) Once these three sides are sewn in, fold over the "hinge" side of the screen door, pin it to the ripstop wall/door hinge, and sew it. I might use a zig zag stitch the next time I do it, but for the great tent, a straight one worked fine.

You should now have both solid and screen doors that will open and close sewn into the wall.

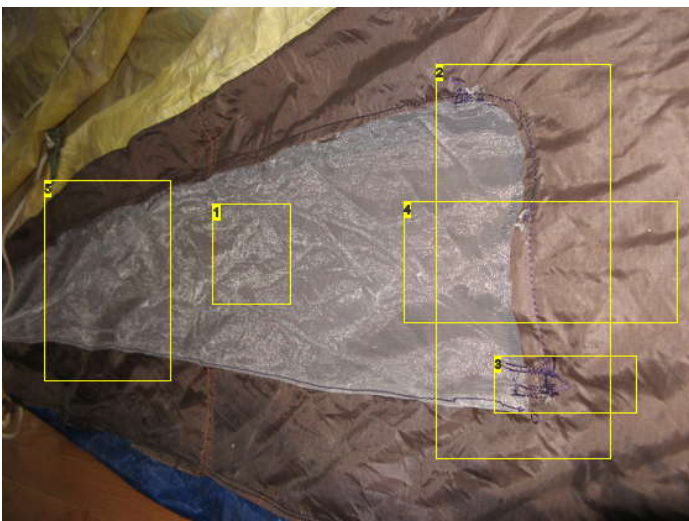


**Image Notes**

1. I don't have a photo of the foot vent before I sewed it, but the basic layout is as these drawings show. Draw the window you want on the back wall piece, and cut it out along three sides, leaving a hinge side.
2. Hinge--don't cut.
3. Use something round to mark the corner lines--like a bucket of fried chicken, or a frisbee.

**Image Notes**

1. This is a drawing of the foot vent. The black line is the cut line in the fabric, which leaves the "hinge" at the bottom. The green dotted line is the basic outline of the screen. Take the measurements off of the door, add 1/2" to all sides, and you've got your screen piece. Or just sew the zipper in and with it shut, lay a piece of screen over it and trace some cut lines onto it with a marker, leaving 1/2" extra for the seam.
2. 3. sew in the zipper 4. sew in the screen.



**Image Notes**

1. These are my first stitches and seams. They look like crap, but are perfectly functional. And by the time I finished, I was sewing like a pro...so don't be afraid to just start sewing.
2. There are prettier ways to do this, but the idea is to cut the window out, sew the zipper in, then sew the screen over the hole. Make sure the zipper winds up inside so you can work it from inside the tent.
3. This is the terminal end of the zipper, with stitches run across it.
4. Here I didn't do a good job keeping the cloth folded over as I sewed it--so do as I say, not as I did in this case...
5. This is the foot vent viewed from the outside. It's a good side to start with

**Image Notes**

1. Again, run a bunch of stitches across the zipper end, making sure the pull will never come off the end of it. I gobbled a little too much seam sealer on this end and didn't clean it off...you can be neater if you want.
2. This was the first zipper I sewed--and it doesn't have the 1/4" fold and looks kind of crappy as a result. It works great though--so again, though I encourage you to follow my directions above for better results, do what you can and from 2 feet away no one will know the difference.
3. This stitch is from sewing the screen on the other side...
4. This is the view of the foot vent from the inside..and for some reason it's upside down...

when making this tent b/c you can get your skills up to speed before doing the (only)slightly harder side pieces and their double doors.

### step 7: Making Side Doors II

1. Making the screen side doors and sewing them on is easy. But I want to be perfectly clear on this step. Either

a.) measure your doors and transfer those measurements to the screen material and cut them out, or  
b.) after you cut the doors out, lay the material flat, then lay the screen over top of it and trace the door shape onto the screen. Cut out the screen, leaving a little extra (1/2") all around.

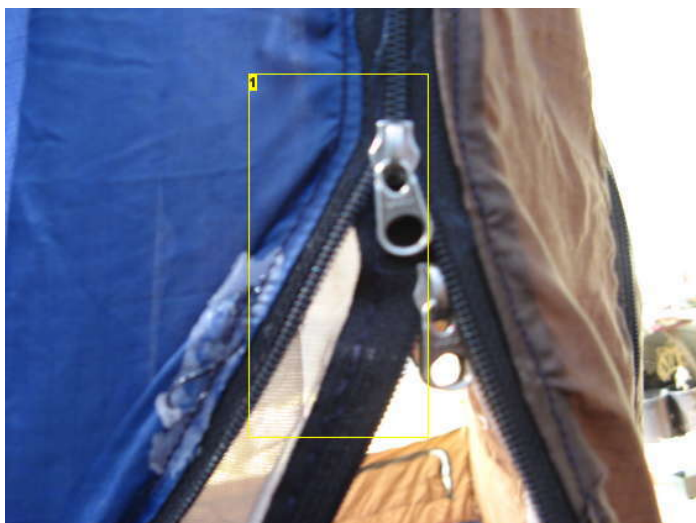
2. Sew one edge of the zipped-shut zippers to the door(s), then sew the other edge to the tent. Both the cloth and screen doors' zippers will end up being sewn to the door frame-edge together. You could pin the solid and screen doors' zippers together and sew them to the frame edge at the same time, but I found it easier to do them individually, and I suspect you will too.

Once both the screen and the solid doors have their zippers sewn on, zip them shut and sew the hinge end of the screen door to the hinge end of the opaque door.

This might sound complicated, but it's not--as you'll see once you're doing it, and by looking at the photos.

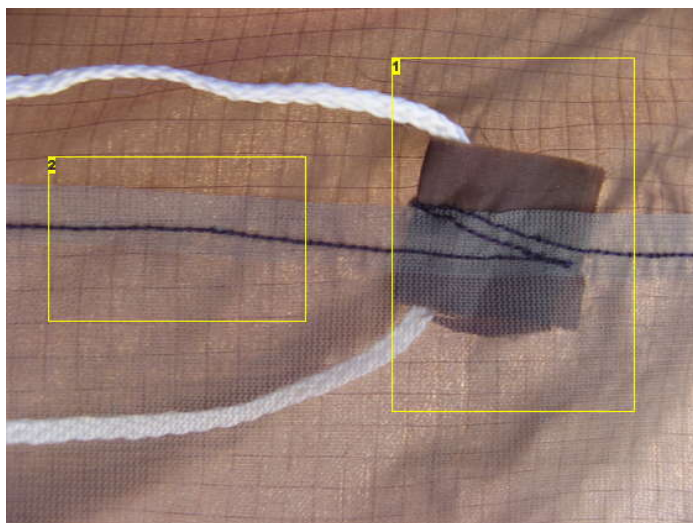
3.) I added a couple of tie-back strings at this point. just cut some line of some sort and sew it on to your liking. I reinforced mine with some scrap material. My photo shows one way to do this.

4.) Since the floor comes up about 3" from the ground, the bottoms of the doors will eventually be sewn to it when you assemble the tent. For now, just get the wall panels sewn up as discussed above, leaving the zippers of the screen and solid doors pinned together along their bottom edge. You'll sew them to the upturned side-pieces of the tent floor last.



#### Image Notes

1. here you can see the way the door material is folded over and sewn. This is the view from the outside.



#### Image Notes

1. Screen door tie-back. I reinforced it with a scrap of ripstop.  
2. Detail of the hinge-end of the screen door: 1/4" folded over, simple stitch.



#### Image Notes

1. A better type of hinge--the pole end supports the weight of the rolled up doors better.  
2. For this step, you're just putting the wall panel together, leaving the seam between the wall and the floor unsewn. For the great Tent, the floor comes up 3-



#### Image Notes

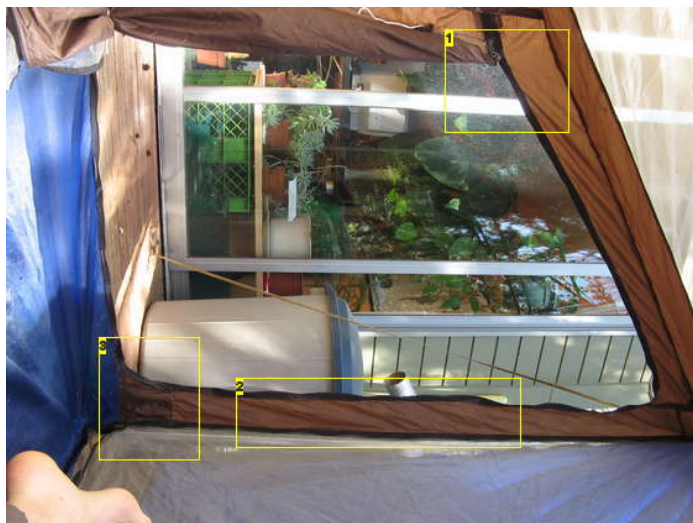
1. Here is a close-up of the door's zipper as it's sewn to the door, and to the floor piece--the 1/4" fold is visible on both sides.  
2. Sew a patch over the zipper end to keep the slider on, to conceal the sloppy joinery underneath, and to more or less weather proof it.

4"--the blue material in the photo.



**Image Notes**

- 1. Door tie-back in action.



**Image Notes**

- 1. Tent doors unzipped. Again, i prefer the hinge to be at the pole-side instead of this way. (See other photos.)
- 2. 4" section of wall takes stress off of zippers. Sew some glasses and junk holding loops or little bags to this piece--I didn't, and now I want to.
- 3. I reinforced this area with extra cloth.



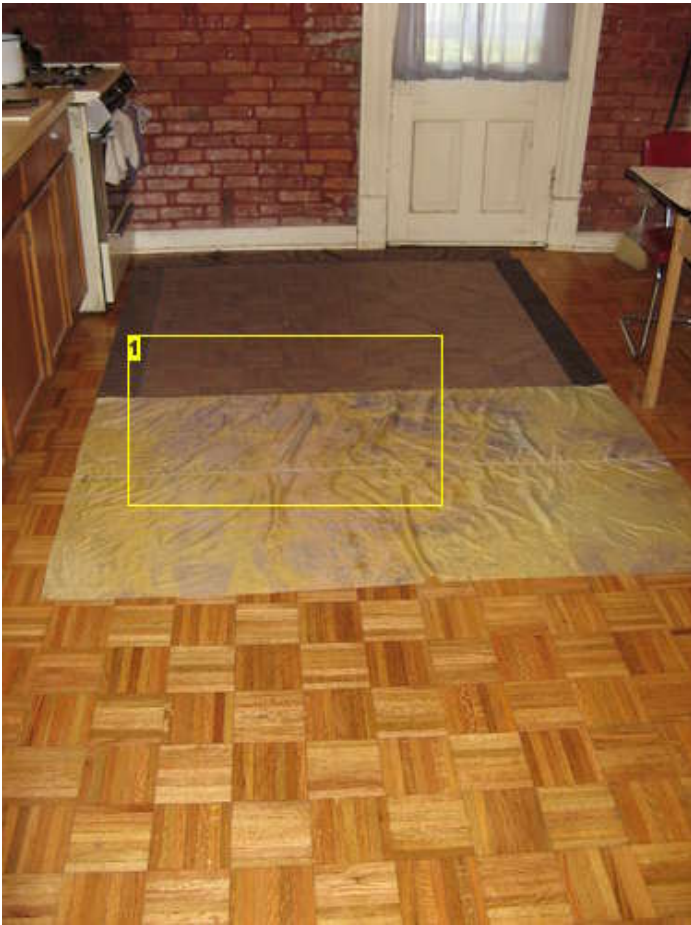
**Image Notes**

- 1. here you can see the way that both zippers--for the screen door and the solid door--get sewn together on the "door frame" edge.
- 2. The front doors' zippers are sewn in just like the side doors' are.
- 3. Because this strip of cloth takes a lot of stress, I doubled up the ripstop here. I don't know if this is necessary--I like to overbuild a little. Eventually I'm going to sew some pockets into this vertical strip to hold eye-glasses and whatnot.

**step 8: Roof**

The roof for this particular tent was pieced together out of a large rectangular piece of screen, a large piece of ripstop, and three narrow border strips. I sewed the border strips to the screen first, then sewed this panel assembly to the ripstop panel. I just matched the edges of thw two pieces needing to be sewn together, rolled them over twice, pinning as I went, then sewed two lines of stitches along the roll.

(Note: in the photo of the completed tent, there is a drip edge on the lower end of the roof. This was the result of getting my roof measurements wrong somhow. The roof was too long, so I folded over the edge and sewed in the flap. This ended up being a good thing because I reinforced the parts where guy lines attach and the flap takes all of the stress of the lines.)



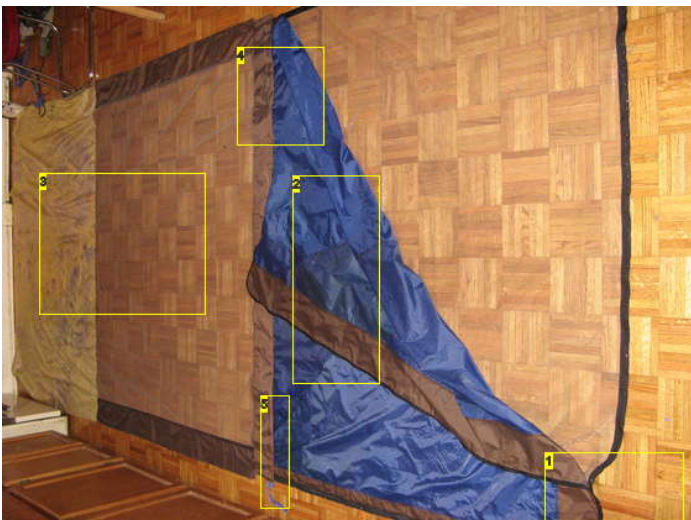
#### Image Notes

1. This is the roof after assembly. You can see the three frame pieces, the solid panel, and the screen.

### step 9: Front Bay-Style Door

I didn't photograph every part of this process, but this step is simple, and I've added pictures of the details:

- 1.) Piece together or cut-out the solid panel for the door. I had to sew three different pieces of cloth together for this, which is why there's a diagonal stitch across the front door, and a brown strip of cloth down one side.
- 2.) Piece together or cut out the screen door panel.
- 3.) If you're using continuous zippers, use a soup can or a bucket of fried chicken to round out the two bottom corners of these--like you did on the side doors. If you're using a couple of zippers, you should have them meet at right angles to each other in the lower corners.
- 4.) sew the zippers onto these in the same way you sewed them onto the side doors.
- 5.) match the two pieces with each other and sew their top edges together. This seam doesn't have to be fancy--they'll get a better one when you sew the doors to the roof.
- 7.) Once you've made this stitch, and sewn the zippers onto both the screen and ripstop doors, match the zippered edges of the two up, pin the unsewn edges of the zippers together, and run a stitch around them.
- 5.) set aside until final assembly.



### Image Notes

1. The two outside zipper edges are sewn together here.
2. again, doors are made up individually, then sewn together at their top edge, and at the outside edge of their zippers.
3. tent top is pictured here, aligned with the front door for the picture.
4. here the doors are sewn to the top piece.
5. sew a piece of reinforcing ribbon along this seam--see other pictures.

## step 10: Tent Assembly

This is simpler than it may seem. Just pin and sew the four walls to the roof, one at a time, then sew the walls to each other along the corner seams.

I started with the front doors, then did the back wall, then sewed in the side doors. Once all four walls were sewn to the roof, I sewed the vertical, or corner seams together one at a time.

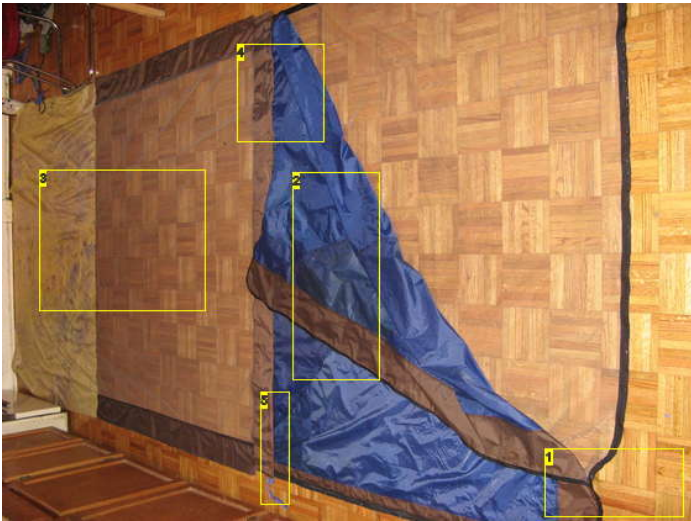
Leave the top four corners unsewn in the last inch or two so as to attach the webbing for the poles and guy lines.

Then sew in the floor in the same way. On three of your walls, you'll be sewing the door zippers to the floor. This is only slightly harder than sewing the tops of the walls to the roof. You just need to make sure that when you sew the two zippers in together that you don't crowd the teeth too much or run over them with your stitch. There were several points where I sewed through the zipper teeth doing this and had to rip the seam back open. It sucked, but it all works out in the end, so just be careful and be thorough when you pin the seams together.

Remember that you'll be turning the tent inside out to make these seams (just like a pair of pants or a T-shirt) so that they'll look neat from the outside...

\*\*Again, I suggest leaving the floor and ceiling corners unsewn at this point. Just sew the seams shut to within an inch or so of the corners. It's easier to add all of the webbing for stakes and lines all at once after the tent is fully assembled.

I did this step all in one semi-intense go, and didn't take pictures of the process. From the standpoint of assembly it's as easy as putting together a little model house. From the perspective of process it's a little harder, but not unlike anything you have to do up to this point. I've included some photos to to give a sense of how this is done below.



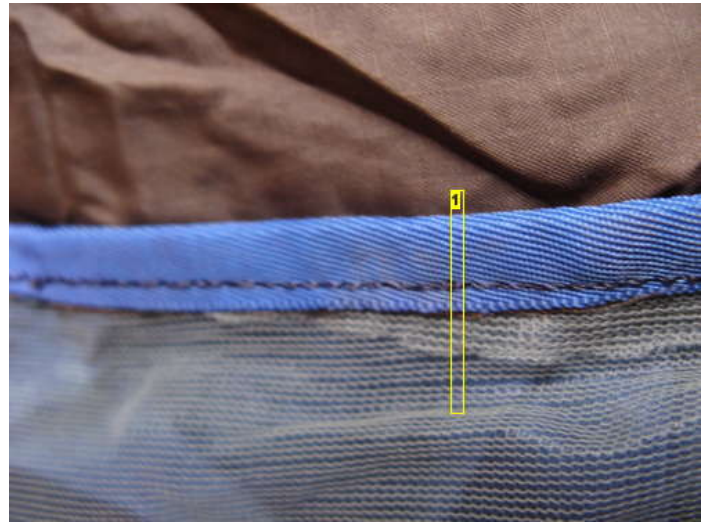
### Image Notes

1. The two outside zipper edges are sewn together here.
2. again, doors are made up individually, then sewn together at their top edge, and at the outside edge of their zippers.
3. tent top is pictured here, aligned with the front door for the picture.
4. here the doors are sewn to the top piece.
5. sew a piece of reinforcing ribbon along this seam--see other pictures.

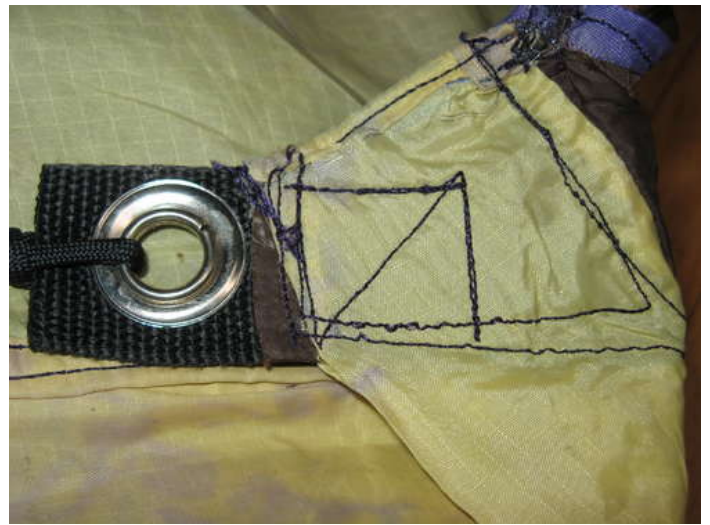
## step 11: Overbuilding

Although keeping the weight down was one of my top considerations in making this tent, durability won out in some instances.

1. I added some heavy nylon ribbon to the seams that run from the top of the poles down to the lower back corners, and from there down to the staking corners. I pulled the ribbon off of the junk tent. I just sewed the walls to the roof, then turned the tent right side out and pinned and sewed the ribbon onto the outside.
2. I used strips of 2" to 2 1/2" webbing for the corner stakes and for the guy line attachment points. I already had a little grommet-making kit so I put some grommets in these.
3. I also reinforced the corners with extra wedges of ripstop, building up a couple of plys and in some cases 4 plys of material. The webbing pieces are sort of long so that I could sew the crap out of them. (see photos).



**Image Notes**  
1. reinforce seams that take a lot of tension--especially where there's screen.



**Image Notes**  
1. Detail of awesome sewing job on a corner staking tab. The webbing extends about 2.5 inches into the corner and the whole thing is glued and sewed together.

### step 12: Optional Canoe Paddle Poles

I canoe camp a lot, so the idea of using paddles for poles was appealing, though obviously not necessary. So I attached some webbing that was long enough to tie a paddle handle into. The pictures explain how.



### step 13: The Fly

Making the fly is simple. When you've completed the tent, set it up. Then take your fly material--scraps, etc.--a bunch of pins and clamps, and piece the fly together over the erected tent. The tent serves as a 3-D frame that you stretch and pin the material over. If your material pieces are small it can be a pain in the ass, but be patient, keep patching it together, and you'll get there.

You can pin and sew as you go (recommended), or if you're a good sewer, pin it all up then sew it all at once.

I originally intended to put a zipper in the weather side of this fly, but got antsy to take the tent camping and didn't bother.

In any case, when you've got the fly together, put it over the tent again and mark where you'll need guy lines to hold it down.

Then make some small, grommeted webbing attachments, reinforcing the cloth around where you attach them with extra ripstop, and sewed them all together.



#### Image Notes

1. Spring clamps are great for holding the fly parts together



### step 14: Waterproofing

For the **seams**, I mixed up mineral spirits with silicone 50/50, on the advice of someone somewhere on the internet. It seems to work okay, though it's peeling off in places. I mixed up a 4:1 solution of the same with better results, so I recommend that, or even a **5:1** mixture.

For the **cloth**, I first mixed 100% silicone and mineral spirits together in more of a 3:1 ratio, put it in a spray bottle, and sprayed it on while the tent was set up. Then I spread it around with a paint brush. It seems to work so far, but it was a pain in the ass to mess with.

Later, I found a commercially available product that's 10% silicone. SO I mixed up the **100% silicone with the mineral spirits in a 10:1 ratio**, put it in a windex bottle and sprayed it on with good results.

#### Word to the wise: test that fly out before taking it camping!

One of my neighbor kids-turned-projects assistant gladly soaked the tent under a shower from the hose while I sat inside watching for leaks. He also put the hose on jet and tried to penetrate beneath and through the fly w/blasts of water--exposing a couple of leaky seams and unsealed patches of cloth, and warranting a retributive soaking of his own.

Anywhere I missed with the waterproofing leaked like a sieve, requiring a couple more applications.

**USE A RESPIRATOR 'AND CORROSION-PROOF GLOVES when you're painting or spraying the stuff on so you can be patient and thorough. \*\*\*I'm not talking about a dust mask and latex gloves, please use the right gear and dispose of things properly.\*\*\***

After an initial trial trip, I decided to fully waterproof the floor of the tent. I used a 5:1 ratio just for overkill.

For a different tent I bought a WAY overpriced product--by "nickwax" or something like that--that sprays on, to see if it was worth it. It works okay so far, but so does the silicone, which was free (aside from the mineral spirits) since there were bunches of it in a friend's garage when he moved in.



#### Image Notes

1. Test your waterproofing BEFORE you head out and risk dying of hypothermia...or just being kind of miserable and wet.

## step 15: Final Thoughts

Some will fear at this point that I haven't told them everything they need to know about making a tent. All I can say is that it's very simple and logical. If you can make a little paper model tent, you can make a real tent. Sewing for utility is easy. Sewing well comes with practice. You're not making dress shirts or anything, so just be willing to accept anomalies, odd colors, inexplicable and ugly seams and you'll be fine.

Look at what a new tent costs--way too much, like all outdoor gear. Once I finished the tent I branched out into dry bags, backpacks, stuff sacks, a sweet, high impact-resistant camera bag, all sorts of stuff.



## Related Instructables



**Condiment container** by TripWir3



**easy longlasting firestarter** by poi12340



**Improvised Flip Flops out of a camping mat** by SimonRuben



**Mini survival kit** by zorro3355



**the best ever backyard camping** by knex enthusiast



**Bubbling fire.** (video) by Rob K



**The amazing camp stove** by chickenliver123




**Rain Tarp Design** by jaaaaayyyy





## Comments


29 comments [Add Comment](#)


 **lkotoo** says: Oct 12, 2008. 8:20 PM [REPLY](#)  
That is one of the best tents I have ever seen. It makes mine look terrible.


 **INSTRUCTUBAL** says: Oct 12, 2008. 7:12 PM [REPLY](#)  
what if its really cold?

 **jerry49** says: Oct 12, 2008. 5:35 PM [REPLY](#)  
I have read that sewing the screen or windows into a tent or cover before cutting the opening will make a smoother appearing look. Once it is sewn, just carefully cut the fabric and not the screen.

 **WingDings** says: Oct 12, 2008. 3:30 AM [REPLY](#)  
This is very well described and written up. It's nice to see someone with a grasp of grammar and some vocabulary write an Instructable of this quality. Good work!

 **naruto 777** says: Oct 11, 2008. 11:26 AM [REPLY](#)  
i saw the last pic, and i realized that fly could fit another tent the same size under it and it would kinda be like an apartment tent.....


 **naruto 777** says: Oct 11, 2008. 11:25 AM [REPLY](#)  
wow..... im at a lack of words, its a reat tent, im gonna make one some day

 **phreon** says: Oct 8, 2008. 5:33 PM [REPLY](#)  
I applaud your ingenuity but have to wonder if this tent is truly an original design. Bill Mason, in his 1988 book titled, "Song of the Paddle, An Illustrated Guide to Wilderness Camping" goes into great detail about his version of the 18th century "herders tent". Pages 20-31 of this book go into great detail the virtues, use and construction of what he called the "Campfire Tent". In fact, pages 28-31 contain detailed instructions including blueprint style plans of a tent strikingly similar to what you've built.

If your tent is truly a self inspired design, I humbly apologize, but given the striking similarity \*and\* your inclusion of canoe paddles as supports (Bill Mason was a world renowned canoe paddler and designed his "Campfire Tent" for canoe camping), I can't help but think you might owe Bill some credit.

Either way, you have a neat tent on your hands.

Phreon

 **totally\_screwed** says: Oct 10, 2008. 8:06 AM [REPLY](#)  
phreon,  
Well spotted!  
I too spotted the similarity with Bill Mason's tent!  
I really like the tent! Should be an all round tent for Summer and Winter. Except Bill Mason's tent could take a stove inside with external flue for heating in the Winter.

 **littlewit** says: Oct 4, 2008. 9:35 PM [REPLY](#)  
really nice tent  
  
its only really a 2 maybe 3 season tent  
NEVER USE IT IN THE WINTER  
  
but otherwise its really cool  
i like the canoe paddles



**bentm** says:

Oct 5, 2008. 5:19 PM [REPLY](#)

Thanks. Say more about your reservations about wintertime use and what region/altitude you had in mind. I've actually done quite a bit of winter camping in this tent and worse ones, though obviously not on Everest or in avalanche country...am I unwittingly courting disaster?



**Calorie** says:

Oct 8, 2008. 9:45 AM [REPLY](#)

I have to admit that this looks like a really cold tent to be in. I live in Florida and the super wide amounts of netting looks great. On the other hand, rain could be a problem. Then again, Florida rain is well beyond mere mortal rain.

I guess I'm saying that it's a nice tent and a great idea. It also looks like a lot of fun to use. Just pick your battles. If possible, make a fly that is completely closed in front of the tent. You'll appreciate it when it snows.

As far as the Chinese sewing machine goes, most of the parts in an American machine are Chinese anyways. People use to laugh at the quality of the Japanese industry, then the Taiwanese. They have both since gained a reputation for very high quality. In the long run the reputation of Chinese goods will match.

It's like a computer. Virtually all of the computers you buy have only a few manufacturers of parts. Any computer is just about the same. It comes down to marketing and customer service at this point in the game. That's why Dell does so well, and Apple seems impeachable at this point.



**bentm** says:

Oct 8, 2008. 6:20 PM [REPLY](#)

Thanks for your thoughts, Calorie, and let me say that I apologize if my "pro-American-manufacturism" sounded too much like its racist cousins, nationalism or ethnocentrism.

It was being broke and buying some new but junky flea-market tools from Taiwan and China as kid that's made me a little biased in favor of older US stuff--but I definitely assume that the "junkiness" is a problem of cheap-assed designers, manufacturers, and importers cutting corners, and NOT as any kind of deficiency in other countries' workers' skill, intelligence, hard work, and all-around-awesomeness...



**Eromanga** says:

Oct 9, 2008. 5:25 PM [REPLY](#)

Aren't the Chinese just making things to the specifications of western companies? We ask them to make cheap sh\*t and they comply. No problem with pro-American manufacturism though. Living in Australia I can confirm that American camping equipment is made to a higher standard than Australian made stuff. It's not pleasant when you are in the middle of no-where and your equipment fails.



**Calorie** says:

Oct 9, 2008. 9:07 PM [REPLY](#)

Well, you are right that someone who buys a good is responding to several things. Cost is one, while quality, perception of quality and brand status are some others.

For example, I tend to buy a lot of tools from Harbor Freight. They have brands that are made in China and really don't hide this fact. I've had friends criticize me in that I am buying cheap junk that won't last that long.

In a sense they might be correct. However, I am an amateur mechanic. I will never meet the lifetime limit of an impact wrench whether it be by Snap-On or Harbor Freight. This fact makes no useful difference to me.

What does matter is that I can afford it. The low cost allows me to speed up my work, and make it more enjoyable. There is nothing better than an impact wrench when working on a car's suspension.

\*\*\*

As far as American vs any other nations' quality of goods, it's an interesting match. Any company makes its product to the market it wants to match. And the cheaper the price of sale, the lower the cost of inputs into the product.

Lowering inputs can be fewer workers, automation of production, lower costs of fabrics/material, lower marketing budgets, the list goes on. As a company you have to figure out what is most important.

\*\*\*

So, in the case of tents it may be that a tent is given an extra stitch line on each seam. The tent may have a heavier weight of fabric. It also may be better designed for ventilation. Those are things you pay extra for.

These are decisions that the company chooses. However, if you look at the origin of the fabric, thread, the machines that make the stitches, they are often not of American origin. The quality, and price, come from the choices a company makes relative to who they want to sell the product to and what those people in that market specifically want.

I hope that makes some sense.



**Calorie** says:

Oct 8, 2008. 10:21 PM [REPLY](#)

There's no need to apologize about wanting to avoid Chinese goods. It's not racist to have a preference based on previous quality of goods. It's all a bit too much PC for me. I'm a fan of Swedish cars, and this doesn't make me some sort of Swedish nationalist. It's just preference.

Most people aren't aware of the birth of the goods in their products. The idea of made in America is great, but the truth is that most goods are subtracted out to many smaller companies, and then assembled in the US. This is done to avoid import taxes (tariffs.) It's also one of the major reasons why there are Toyota and Honda plants in the US. It's cheaper to make them here.

You'll find plenty of "hecho en Mexico" stamped parts under the hood of your car. It's surprising to see how the world is so interconnected.



**PKM** says:

Oct 5, 2008. 12:14 PM [REPLY](#)

What if the builder's winter isn't as harsh as your winter? I think "Don't use this in heavy snowstorms, high winds or significantly-below-freezing temperatures" would be more useful advice. If you had a decent sleeping bag and rollmat or bed this should be fine in a UK winter.

This is one of the most detailed Instructables I think I've ever seen- seriously, with some elaboration on the bits of tent-making you didn't cover this could almost be a **book**. I've spent enough time in crappy, undersized tents to appreciate the joy of having enough space. Fantastic first Instructable!



**mje** says:

Oct 9, 2008. 11:55 AM [REPLY](#)

Very nicely presented- superb detail and writing. And the Baker tent design takes me back to my Boy Scout days, although the tents then were canvas.



**shilohjim** says:

Oct 8, 2008. 12:30 AM [REPLY](#)

What kind of silicone did you use? When I think of silicone I think either caulking or the spray on stuff.



**WhoTookMudshark** says:

Oct 7, 2008. 12:54 AM [REPLY](#)

I am really interested in the camera bag! Have you made an instructable for that one yet?

Your tent is brilliant, to say the least! :)



**Wasagi** says:

Oct 5, 2008. 5:45 PM [REPLY](#)

Nice! I just got back from a camping trip, but since I don't have my own tent, this is really cool! Evidently, the Girl Scouts Donate their old tents to the Boy Scouts, ..... Kind of Weird <sup>5/5!!</sup>



**Doctor What** says:

Oct 3, 2008. 7:36 PM [REPLY](#)

"Some will fear at this point that I haven't told them everything they need to know about making a tent."

You gave plenty of information, plus more.

I don't camp, but this is awesome.



**stone3408** says:

Oct 5, 2008. 7:47 AM [REPLY](#)

Great instructable. Very well written and very informative. It is clear the amount of work that you put into it and for that we all thank you.



**Pornostache** says:

Oct 5, 2008. 4:09 AM [REPLY](#)

pretty cool. i have 2 tents. for similar reasons, i don't really care for either one. yours makes really good use of materials. i'm gonna try something similar i think.



**fireplume** says:

Oct 4, 2008. 5:11 PM [REPLY](#)

Marry me, please! I didn't realize it before, but I've been holding out for a guy who would care enough about his camping gear to build it from scratch. I'm never going to make one of these, but reading about yours made me very, very happy.



**brainwise** says:

Oct 4, 2008. 2:07 PM [REPLY](#)

Excellent job. I've been thinking of purchasing a new tent, but I might go this route instead.



**AnarchistAsian** says:

Oct 4, 2008. 8:50 AM [REPLY](#)

WOW



**Kevvixx** says:

Oct 4, 2008. 6:55 AM [REPLY](#)

Simply Amazing!



**whackpak** says:

Oct 4, 2008. 3:51 AM [REPLY](#)

this is an awesome Instructable



**LinuxH4x0r** says:

Oct 3, 2008. 8:30 PM [REPLY](#)

Awesome! I miss camping so much. I haven't gone since my sister was born 8 years ago (haven't gone for 9)