

SUPER BASIC LAWS OF A SUKKAH & BUILDING THE SIMPLEST POSSIBLE SUKKAH:

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During *Sukkot*, we are commanded to dwell in a *sukkah*—a temporary structure that is reminiscent of the structures the Israelites dwelled in while escaping Egypt, and also of the huts that farmers would sleep in throughout the harvest season so that they could work long hours without returning to their homes in town.

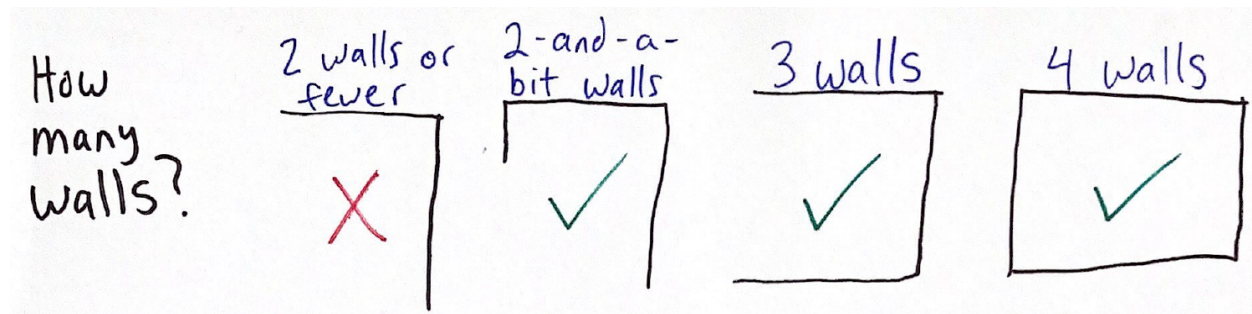
The idea of temporariness is a major theme of *Sukkot*. Nothing is permanent: “To everything there is a season” says [Kohelet](#), the book we read on the Shabbat that falls during *Sukkot*. Part of constructing, dwelling in, and then deconstructing a *sukkah* is about getting in touch with the temporary nature of our lives.

What follows are the very very basics of the laws of building a *Sukkah* and a suggestion for building the simplest possible *sukkah* on a (literal!) shoestring budget. As always when we’re dealing with matters of *halachah* (Jewish law), I recommend you speak to a rabbi (or call a JLS!) if you have questions.

For a more detailed and easy-to-follow video outlining what is below, and more, see [this video](#) by Rabbi Aviva Richman.

How many walls must a *sukkah* have?

The answer is three. But because #Judaism, 2 full walls plus a little bit of a third wall counts as three full walls. But I recommend building at least 3 walls.



How tall do the walls need to be?

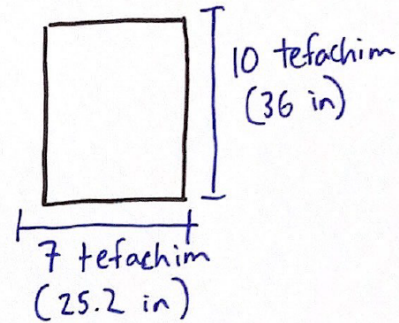
The walls of your *sukkah* need to be at least 10 *tefachim* tall. A *tefach* is the rabbinic measurement of a hand-breadth. *Tefach* has been standardized to about 3-3.6 inches. When measuring how *big* something needs to be, one should air on the side of caution and use the larger measurement. So if 3.6 inches = 1 *tefach*, then the walls of your *sukkah* must be at least 36 inches high.

How wide do the walls need to be?

Each full wall must be at least 7 *tefachim* long. Using our larger *tefach* measurement of 3.6 inches, that means each full wall must be at least 25.2 inches.

Remember! If you have two full walls (at least 36 inches tall and 25.2 inches wide), a little bit of a third wall counts as a full wall. This ‘little bit’ must have the same height as the other walls, but can be only 4 *tefachim* (14.4 inches) wide.

Dimensions of a wall (minimum):



What can the walls be made of?

Walls can be made of most things you'd think of. Wood, metal, plastic, canvas, tarp, etc. But the walls of a *sukkah* must be sturdy enough to not blow in a normal wind. For this reason, if your walls are canvas, sheets, tarps, or something similar, I recommend adding string or straps and taking advantage of the principle of *lavud* below.

What's the deal with *schach*?

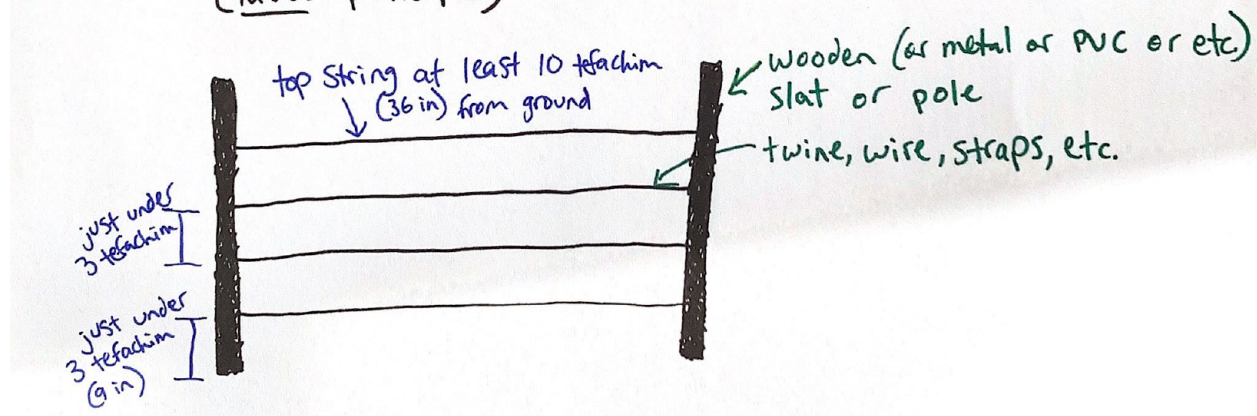
Schach, the covering of your *sukkah*, must be made of a natural plant material. There also must be more shade than sun inside your *sukkah*. I recommend long leafy branches or rolled bamboo mats. You must build your *sukkah* under open air—no roofs, trees, or overhangs may hang over the roof!

Lavud.

The principle of *lavud* (lit. abutting) is that any gap smaller than 3 *tefachim* is considered to be closed. Leave it to the rabbis to come up with something like this! For this principle, we're going to air on the side of caution again and use the smaller measurement for a *tefach*: 3 inches. That means that any gaps in the walls of your *sukkah* that are smaller than 9 inches are considered to be closed.

Using the principle of *lavud*, one could construct a halachically kosher *sukkah* wall using only string. Tie one string 9 inches from the ground. According to the principle of *lavud*, this string is touching the ground, because a gap of fewer than 3 *tefachim* is considered to be closed. Then tie another string 9 inches (3 small-*tefachim*) above that string. Continue upwards until the top string is at least 36 inches (10 big-*tefachim*) from the ground. Using 4 strings, tie one 36 inches (10 *tefachim*) from the ground.

Making a Kosher "Wall" from slats and string: (lavud principle)



How to Build the Simplest Possible Sukkah:

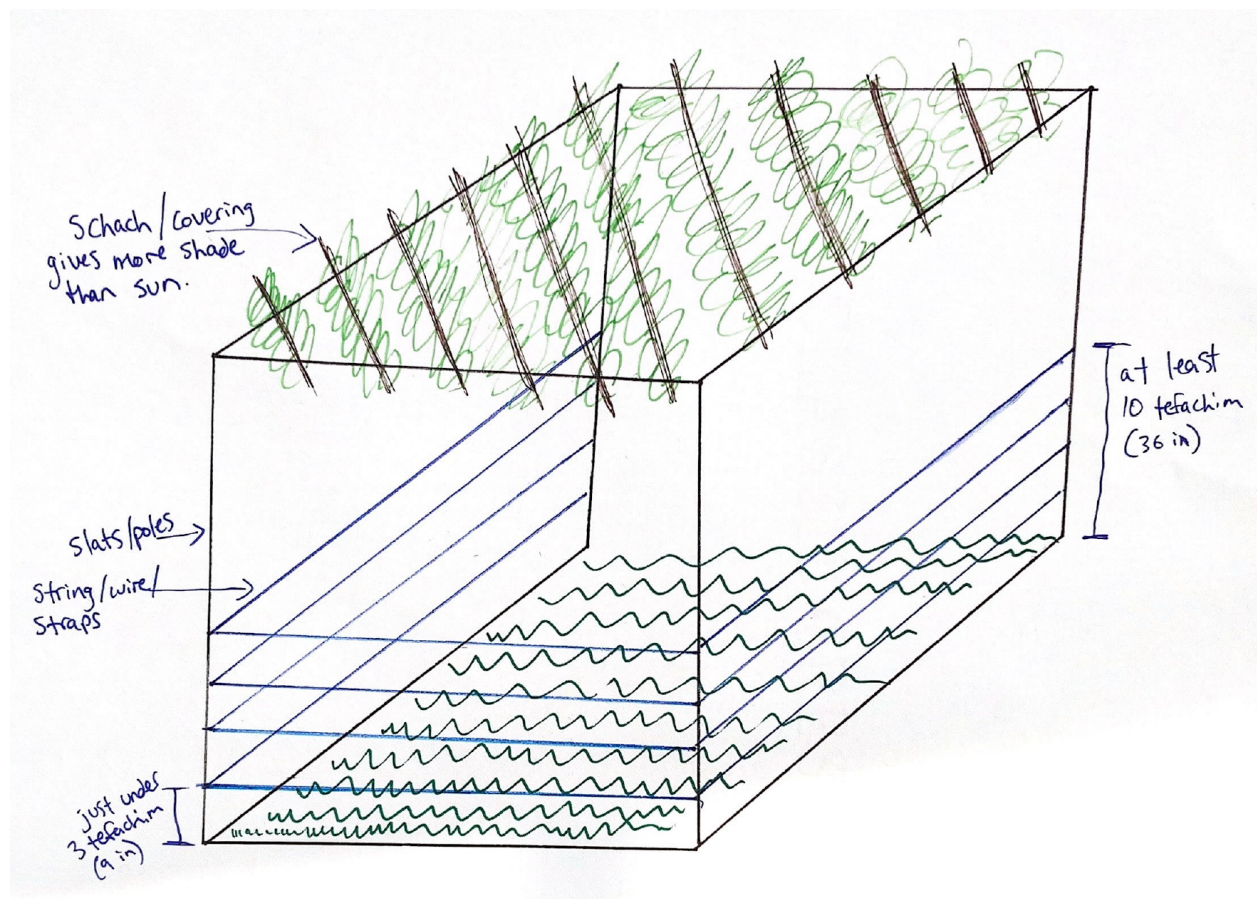
Please note: this will be a very small *sukkah*. When I made it, it could fit 3 people sitting on the ground comfortably, and 4 people when we squished. This *sukkah* is totally kosher, but it is not super comfy.

Materials:

- **11 wooden boards/slats at least 36 inches long (plus a couple more, optional, for the roof).** (When I built this last year I used broom handles. I do not recommend this because they are round and difficult to hammer straight)
- **Nails, screws, and/or wood-glue**
- **1 large ball of good-quality natural twine**
- **Enough *schach* (see above) to cover the roof of your *sukkah*** (I usually go rogue and take some clippers to a local overgrown tree. I've also done my community a service by ripping out a bunch of invasive vines and using that. Get creative!)

Procedure:

- Hammer, screw, or wood-glue the wooden boards into a cube (you'll be one slat short of a full cube. That's on purpose. See diagram.)
- Tie strings between each of the walls to create *halachically* kosher walls. One string 9 inches from the ground, a second string 9 inches above that, a third string 9 inches above that, and a fourth string 9 inches above that. Your top string must be at least 36 inches from the ground. If you're not there yet, add another string. The string must be tied tightly so they do not move in the wind.
- Lay your *schach* over the *sukkah*. If your *schach* is not long enough to reach all the way across the roof, you may need extra support. If you have a few extra slats you can lay those over the roof. When I did this last year I just looped a whole bunch of string tightly across the roof and layed my *schach* branches on top. Wacky, but kosher!
- Decorate as you see fit (I recommend a picnic blanket or rug, since you'll be sitting on the ground!)



See the following pictures of the one I made last year, so you know it's possible!!!!



