

Making Board & Batten Shutters

Shutters come in at least as many types and styles as fences, but the most versatile (and the simplest to build) is the 'board-and-batten' shutter - several vertical boards reinforced by two or more horizontal strips or battens.

Designing Shutters - While most modern shutters are purely decorative and rarely functional, shut. Build your shutters to the approximate "working" dimensions: as tall as your windows and half as wide. Your house should also offer enough wall space to hang them. Shutters that are too small for the windows or too large for the house often detract more than they add.

If you are uncertain whether or not to invest the time and lumber in making a set of shutters, first make a cardboard model of your home and hang cardboard shutters on it to see how they look. This miniature can also help you choose a style and color for your shutters.

Attaching the Boards to the Battens - Cut your shutter boards to the proper length and width. If you plan to butt the boards up against each other, join the edges and glue them together with waterproof resorcinol glue. This will prevent moisture from collecting in the butt joint, causing the shutter to warp and/or the paint to peel.

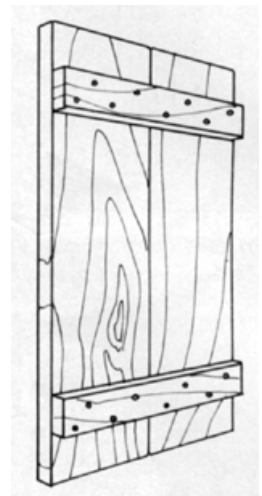
There are two ways to attach the battens: The easiest is to select common nails that are 1/4" longer than the combined thicknesses of the board and batten, drive them through from the outward-facing side, and clinch them over where the shutter faces the house. This makes a good, strong shutter; however, wood swells and shrinks across the grain in the out-of-doors. First the paint and then the boards may split where they are attached to the battens. Also, nails rust and may stain the paint job. To avoid both these problems, bevel the edges of the battens, and drive them into dovetail slots in the boards. This arrangement needs no nails and the shutter will be able to expand and shrink with the weather.

Decoration - Once you have completed the basic board-and-batten, there is no end to the ways you may decorate them. Here are a few suggestions:

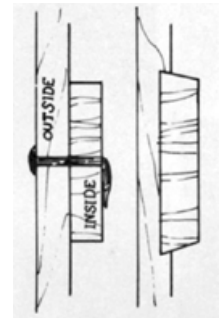
Peepholes - Once upon a time, our ancestors cut these in their shutters so they had something to shoot out of when they were under attack. Now they are purely decorative and can be cut in any shape you fancy. Make a piercing cut with your jigsaw and smooth with a rasp.

Initials and Designs - This also takes some jigsaw work. Cut the design out of solid wood and apply to the shutter with waterproof glue.

Molding - By tacking and/or gluing moldings to the surface of the shutter, you can achieve a paneled effect. Or you can use the molding to create a design.

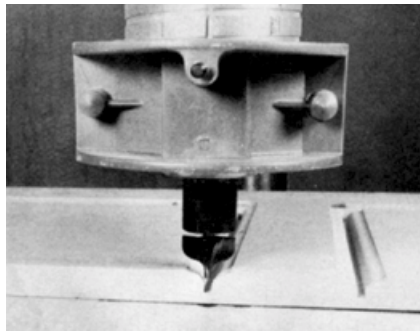


A typical board and batten shutter.



Two ways to attach battens to shutter boards -- drive nails through and clinch them over or slide a beveled batten into a dovetail slot.

Raised Panels - By using both the jigsaw and the router arm, you can make your shutter look as if it were made of raised panels instead of simple boards and battens. Cut a template on the jigsaw and attach it to a piece of plywood the same size as your shutter. Attach the shutter, battens down, to the other side. Trace the template over the table pin in the router arm, while cutting a groove in the shutter with a paneling or 'groove forming' bit. The result is indistinguishable from true panels and costs much less in time and effort.



An "ogee" groove forming bit. They are also available in different styles. (Router Arm Guard removed for photographic purposes.)



From left to right: A router arm template for a paneled shutter, the routed shutter board, and the finished shutter.

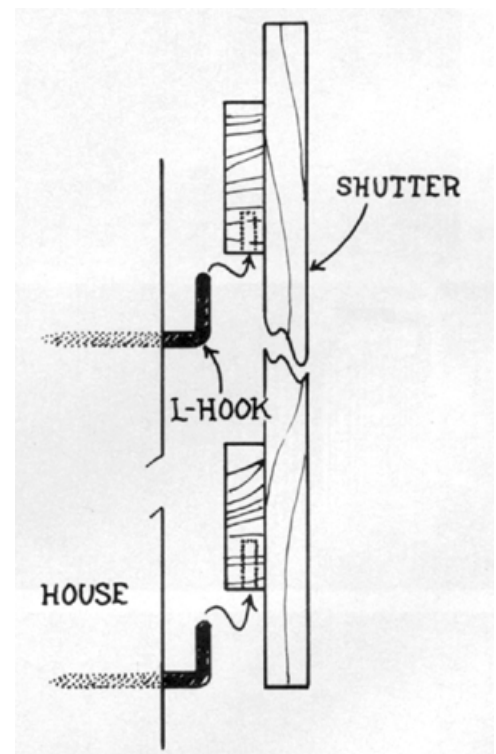
Hanging the Shutters - Should you want to make functional shutters, special shutter hardware is available through many hardware suppliers. This consists of hinges that lock in both the open and closed position, shutter 'dogs' that keep the wind from banging them around, and inside latches.

Most shutters, however, are simply screwed to the side of the house. This works just fine, but it's troublesome when it comes time to paint. The best way we've found to hang shutters was contributed by Arthur Pelkay of North Miami, Florida:

Drill two small holes in the upper and lower battens, as shown. Or, if the shutters are mounted with the battens out, put two screw eyes in the backside of the shutter. Screw L-hooks into the side of the house so that they line up with the holes or eyes, and hang your shutters on the hooks. When you need to paint or repair your home, the shutters will come down and hang back up with a minimum of trouble.

Maintenance Tips for Your Outdoor Projects:

- Replace rotted boards quickly. Rotted parts shift and wiggle, weakening the entire structure. Also, dryrot spreads.
- Spray hardware with WD-40 or a similar oil several times a year. Make sure all moving parts get some exercise now and then, even if they're just decorative.
- Vines may look nice climbing over a fence or up the side of a house, but they can ruin a paint job and eventually



The simplest way to hang a shutter - screw L-hooks into the side of your house and insert these into holes drilled in the underside of the battens.

the wood underneath. And you may have to damage the vine to repaint or repair. Consider making separate trellises for vines that will stand out a short distance away from the house or fence.

- Don't place your wood projects in heavily shaded areas. With too little sun, wood retains moisture and begins to rot. Or, when winter comes, the moisture will freeze and the wood will split. If you see moss growing on the wood, it's time to prune the surrounding trees and bushes.
- Unless you build from cedar or redwood, or have treated the wood above and below the ground, keep outdoor projects painted or varnished. Remember, the thicker the finish, the better the protection. One coat may last a few years; but if you take time to apply two, the finish will last three times as long.