



## Working with Lumber 101



If you're thinking of starting a lumber project or are already in the middle, you should spend some time at the lumber yard familiarizing yourself with materials, learning about new techniques and asking lots of questions.

In Working with Lumber 101, we give you:

- The basics on lumber terminology (so you know what you are talking about)
- Tips on when to ask professionals your burning lumber related questions (so you get off on the right footing with your project)
- Three projects you can knock out this weekend (so you can put your new knowledge and skills to use)



# Common Lumber Terms & Applications

All the technical terms and industry jargon floating around can be intimidating if you are starting your first D.I.Y. project and are looking for the right Lumber.

Here's a rundown of common lumber terms that will make your trip to the lumber yard a little easier. Familiarize yourself with some of these terms today and soon you'll be talking like a pro.

## TEXTURE

When we refer to the texture of lumber, we're talking about both the look and the feel of the material. The same type of wood can be milled to different textures, so textural changes reflect varying degrees of processing.

***Rough*** – Just like it sounds, “rough” lumber has a coarse feel that provides a more rustic look. Often used for patio covers, fences, garden boxes and other outdoor applications, planks will have thicker dimensions that are closer to the nominal size of the lumber. Additionally, rough lumber is the least processed type of lumber.

***Surfaced*** – The same exact original plank listed above can be further planed at the mill to create a smoother finish, which is called “surfaced lumber.” This is normally the type of lumber you'll find in big box stores. Surfaced lumber is used for finish projects, decks, patio furniture, railings and framing. Whereas rough lumber can have some variation in size, the final dimensions of surfaced lumber are industry standards that will be the same from almost any supplier.

***Resawn*** – Resawn wood is run through a mill just prior to purchase to freshen up its surface. Giving it a fresh cut brightens up the wood, leaving it sharp and uniform.

***Remanned*** – Short for “remanufactured,” remanned lumber is wood that has been further processed. Sometimes people mistakenly call this “rough” lumber, but it's really wood that has been engineered by human hands, not natural processes. One common production method is to break up lumber into small chips or fibers and press them into rough-surfaced board. This remanned wood is most commonly used in industrial applications.

## PRESSURE TREATED (“PT”)

This wood that has been treated to last longer, particularly outdoors. Pressure treatment applications help protect the lumber against fire, pests and moisture. Pressure treating lumber involves etching small divots into the surface of the wood then placing the lumber into a giant vacuum with a special treatment solution. When the air is extracted, the wood is imbued with the solution. The rating on PT lumber is based on how far the treatment has penetrated into the grain of the wood. Ground contact PT has a higher penetration rating than lumber used for indoor framing and a lower rating than lumber used for direct contact with water.

## BLEED

All woods contain natural oils, called tannins. Over time, tannins work their way out of the wood—this is called “bleed”. If you’ve ever seen grayed out wood on old fences, you’re actually looking at the tannins rising to the surface. In some woods, the tannins are light and barely noticeable. In many hardwoods, the tannins are dark and thick. Many decking woods can bleed out, and you’ll notice this discoloration below the surface of the deck.





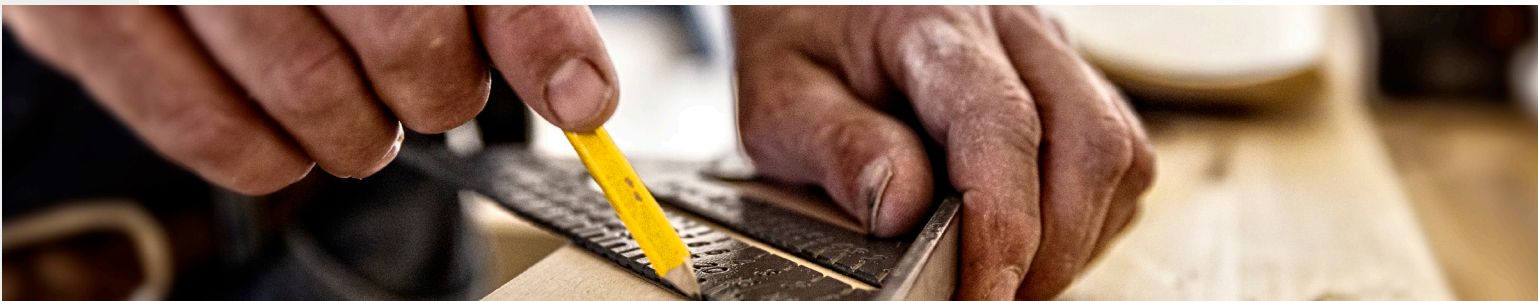
## MEASUREMENT

Measuring lumber is one of the most important things you can do to ensure a successful project, but we'll be honest: standard industry lumber measurements can get a little tricky. Here are the terms you'll hear down at your nearby lumber supply company—and what they really mean.

***On-center (“OC”)*** — This refers to the distance between two sections of whatever you're building and indicates that you should measure center-to-center of each board. So, if you're building a fence, “OC” means measuring from the center of one post to the center of the next post—studs in a house frame are the same. This is important because mistakenly measuring from inner/outer edge to inner/outer edge of ceiling rafters, house framing, or any other structural support assembly will result in a weaker final product that will fail to meet code.

***Lineal Feet*** — This common term is used two different ways:

- **For projects** — Referring to distance around a perimeter of something (ex. fence or hand railing).
- **For lumber pricing** — When referring to the lineal feet of lumber itself, this usually means the “length” of the wood, which is used to derive pricing. For example, a plank that is 2”x4”x10' long = 10 lineal feet. 8”x8”x10' also equals 10 lineal feet. Because this is how lumber is priced, knowing the lineal feet in the planks you're buying will help you accurately estimate the cost of your project materials.



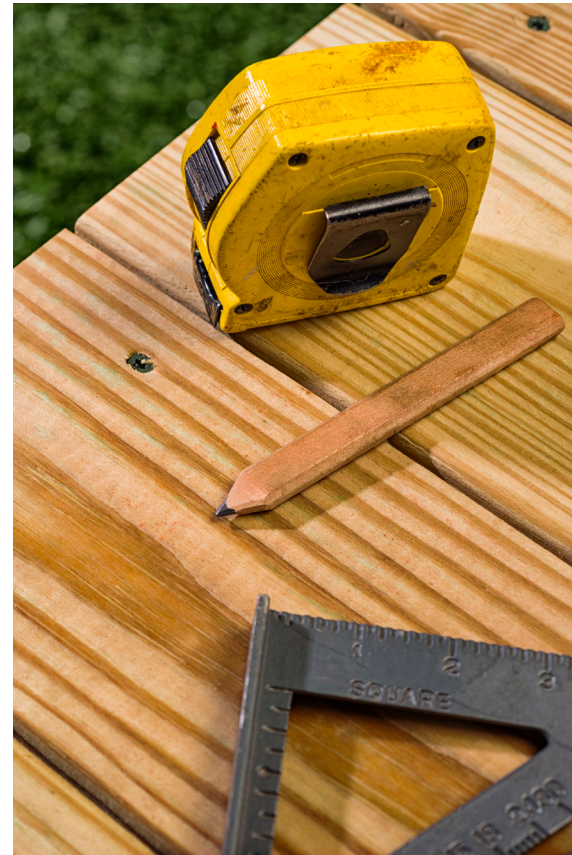
**Measuring lumber is one of the most important things you can do.**

**Square feet** – This is the term used to describe the surface area of a finished project. Square footage is derived by multiplying length x width.

**Nominal size** – “Nominal” is related to the word “name,” so this is what the dimensions of the wood are called, whether or not the plank actually matches that exact size. Rough lumber is closer in true dimension to its nominal size, while the additional planing of surface lumber usually drops its size down up to ½ inch. Therefore, a surface lumber 2×4 is 1.5”x3.5”. Lumber labels in California now list both nominal and true size, so you’ll know exactly what you’re getting.

**1-by, 2-by, 4-by, 6-by, 8-by...** —Each of these common measurements refers to the thickness of the board. Therefore, everything in the “1-by” family will be 1-inch thick. Everything in the “2-by family” will be two inches thick, etc.

Knowing your way around common lumber terms goes a long way toward increasing your confidence in your next home improvement project.





# When Should You Talk to a Lumber Specialist?

Being a DIY enthusiast doesn't mean that you have to be an expert in building techniques or materials. In fact, part of the fun is learning new skills and practices. This is where the specialists at your local lumber yard can come in handy. Here are a few instances when you should be taking advantage of their expertise.

## SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE

If you don't know something or you're unsure how to solve a particular problem, head straight to the specialists for advice. The service staff at big box stores are generalists—i.e. they know a little about a lot of different things. However, when it comes to lumber and building supplies specifically, the sales staff at your local lumberyard possess in-depth knowledge about how to best quote and tackle your outdoor building project. When you have lumber-specific questions, ask a pro.

## SOLVING PROBLEMS

There is always more than one way to solve a construction problem. Specialists have deep knowledge about the performance of outdoor building supplies and how to manage challenging lumber projects. Tell the team down at your local lumber supply company what you're trying to accomplish and ask them to help you find the ideal solution that fits your timeframe, skill level, and budget.

## SAVE MONEY

Many kinds of wood that are considered special-order for big box stores are standard inventory at the lumber yard, so they're likely to be in stock. Also, since lumber suppliers buy by the truckload (not per plank), larger quantity wholesale orders and bulk shipping on their end keep prices down for the final buyer: you.

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## SPECIALTY WOOD OPTIONS

Big box stores must keep millions of products in stock at any time. Therefore, to maximize floor space, they make trade-offs on product selection—and lumber is usually among the first to get the ax (pardon the pun). Lumber yards specialize in wood, so they carry a much greater variety of wood species and sizes. Your lumber supplier has literally aisles and aisles of high-quality wood for same-day purchase. The lumber experts are also a great resource when comparing different types of wood options and the best applications.

## CUSTOM CUTS

Lumber suppliers have milling services available to perform custom cutting on-site for you. Prices for this service are usually clearly marked at the lumber yard— no more begging the big box guys to throw in a couple of cuts on the sly. Help with ripping, planning and mitering can save you thousands over investing in a saw set to use at home. Also, because the pros are doing it, you won't run the risk of wrong cuts that waste valuable planks. Don't be afraid to chat up the lumber yard professionals when you need advice or help with cutting your lumber.



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## PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE & AVAILABILITY

Just like with the wood itself, lumber specialists know about the ins and outs of the variety of products—both old standards and new releases—designed to protect wood and enhance its usability. Consult the specialists with specific problems like how to address wood damage, how to replace interior and exterior woods, and the right type of lumber hardware to use for your construction application. Not only will they have the expertise to guide you in the right direction, but the products you need will also be right there on the shelf.

Other stores may carry wood, but lumber yards specialize in it. Use this expertise to your advantage. The next time you're toying with the idea of a home improvement project, head down to the lumber yard and start asking questions. The level of knowledge and guidance you'll receive will keep you on the right track throughout the course of your project.

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## 3 DIY Lumber Projects You Can Complete This Weekend

Got some extra time this weekend? Not all lumber projects require weeks of planning, CAD drawings, and a lengthy materials acquisition process.

Here are three small-scale lumber projects that you can tackle this weekend.

### PICNIC TABLE

This family-friendly redwood picnic table project is a great one to undertake on a Saturday morning. After assembly, staining and drying time, you'll be ready for a Sunday evening barbeque. Pre-planned kits come with all the lumber and building supplies you'll need to put together your 3×6 or 3×4 picnic table in a few short hours. Your kit will include pre-cut wood, the correct amount of screws, and easy-to-follow instructions. The only tool required is an electric screwdriver.

Using a kit set-up not only gives you the benefit of professional planning and design but buying all your materials as a set is more cost effective than if you were to gather all your wood and hardware separately. High-quality lumber like redwood is normally a fairly expensive material, but lumber yards receive full-size planks at non-standard lengths and are forced to cut them down to more desirable sizes. This leaves behind plenty of high-end wood at odd sizes, which can be trimmed further for use in projects like this. As a consumer, you get excellent lumber at a fraction of the price.

Once your picnic table assembly is complete, it's time to stain. An oil-based stain is best for redwoods. Choose from a range of classic natural stains that range from clear to deep brown, or experiment with other colors like red, gold, green or even gray.





## PLANTER BOX

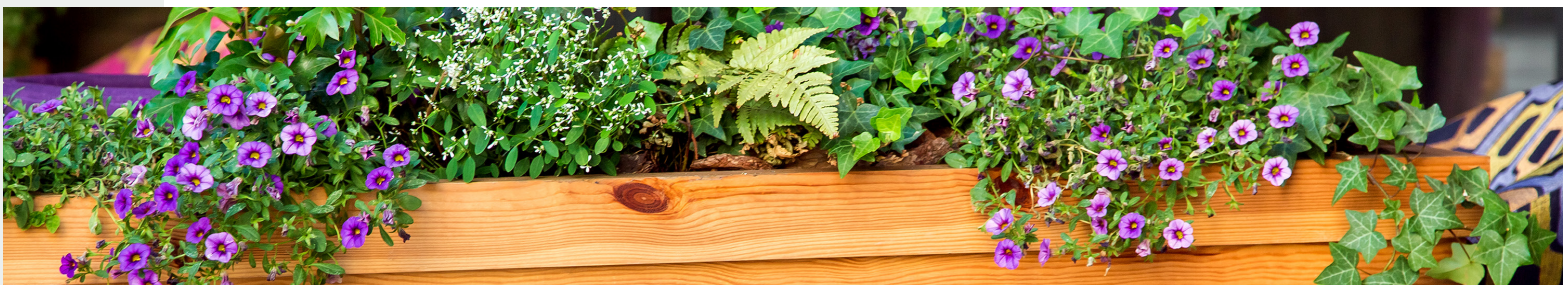
Whether you want to add a pop of color from a raised flower bed or would like to start cultivating your own herbs or veggies, garden box kits are another weekend-long DIY project that can make a serious impact on your outdoor space. Though planters aren't the most complicated to build, they can feature lots of variations that will best support the plant life you want to grow.

At J&W Lumber, we have two options for building garden boxes: create your box from a pre-assembled kit or speak to our specialists to plan your custom-sized planter.

The main difference between a kit and a custom-build is that the kit will feature high quality surfaced redwood and more finishing features (ex. fascia), while custom boxes can be sized to meet your exact specifications.

Another variation that applies is whether or not you use a leg kit. Leg kits raise the planter box off the ground 12 inches, which can be a lifesaver in an outdoor space where rabbits or other critters are a problem. Leg kits also give the box a more “furniture”-like aesthetic, which is perfect for indoor or outdoor use in smaller spaces, like apartment patios. Similar to picnic table kits, planter box kits are pre-cut and pre-drilled and include instructions and all the lumber and building supplies you'll need to finish the project.

If you feel a little more confident designing and building, talk to our team and we'll help you plan for a customized box that fits your specs exactly.



## ARBORS

Arbors are the most complicated of these three DIY projects, but they're still manageable to build over the course of a weekend. Arbors can be as simple or detailed as your imagination—and if done thoughtfully, can transform the look of an outdoor space and even add value to the house.

Softwoods like redwood, cedar, and Douglas fir are ideal for an arbor. Bring a reference picture down to the lumber yard and we can help evaluate what you'll need, along with cutting your components down to size. The true versatility of an arbor build is in the details. Get creative by adding a trellis, scalloped edges or corbel cuts that mimic the style of your house. These embellishments can make the arbor itself a true centerpiece of your yard.

Don't think you need to figure it all out on your own. That's what your local lumber yard is for. Determine your desired width, depth and height before you begin. Then bring your measurements and reference photos down to the lumber yard and start talking to the staff. Through your conversation, lumber experts can convert your idea into the specific materials you'll need. It's like getting a tattoo—come in with a basic idea and let the professionals run with it.

Assembly is a bit more complicated than a picnic table or garden box. For the arbor itself, you'll just need a drill. However, setting the posts is a little more in-depth, which is where a post-hole digger will help for pouring concrete. From there, the amount of time it takes will be unique to your design. More details mean time-consuming work, so in the end, the choice is yours.





Have questions about lumber terms or a project you are working on and you're not sure who to ask? Our friendly lumber experts are available to help.

## Call or visit a store today.

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