

Free Furniture

Contents

- Improved Furniture** **4**
- Plastic Milk Crates 4
- Free Boxes 4
- Table 4
- Foam and Bean Bags 4
- Recycled Junk 5
- Auto-man Furniture 5
- Lawn Furniture 5
- Kids Stuff 5

- Free Furniture** **6**
- Reuse 6
- Diving for Furniture 6
- Futon 6
- Mattress 6

- Build Your Own Furniture** **8**
- DIY Japanese Screen 8
- Frame Bed 8
- Victorian Curtain and Canopy Bed 9

- Simplicity** **10**

- Moving the Stuff** **11**
- Hand Truck 11
- Strapping 11
- Cycle Moving 11
- Find a Friend With a Truck 12

After a hard day supporting the revolution, you may need something to sit on. If you're broke, moving, or just plain creative there are plenty of ways to get furniture that don't involve a small loan from a specialty store or flimsy fiberboard and plastic box store crap. Furniture is everywhere, literally being given away... if you know how and where to look.

Improvised Furniture

Plastic Milk Crates

Plastic milk crates are reusable containers that milk factories use to ship milk jugs to grocery stores. You can usually find many of these on the back docks of grocery stores awaiting return to the factory. These can also sometimes be found in trash or even left by other people. Regardless of the stern legal warnings promising stiff fines for private use imprinted on the handle (mostly to keep them from being used by other dairies), these crates have been used for decades. Quick and easy storage boxes, stools, and even temporary bookshelves when combined with boards are just many uses. If you find a large piece of plywood and place this on top of four of these, you have an instant make-do coffee table. Use your imagination.

Free Boxes

If you need cardboard boxes to store stuff in, check with local businesses. Most of the time you can go up and ask the manager to save some boxes for you because you are moving. It is possible to have the US Postal service and other shipping companies send you free boxes. There was a website since closed due to a FedEx lawsuit showing how several dozen flat packed boxes could be cut and folded into useful chairs and sofas. However, thanks to the Internet Archive, you can see photos of the various projects:

- http://web.archive.org/web/*/://www.fedexfurniture.com

Table

Two saw horses or police/construction barricades + one door = one large dinner table or desk. (Remember to remove the door knob.) Construction signs made of sturdy, painted plywood and improvised legs screwed together make a very distinct coffee table.

Foam and Bean Bags

If you have a knack for sewing you can make simple bean bag type furniture and fill it with whatever stuffing you can get your hands on. Styrofoam shipping pellets are surprisingly comfortable in a bean bag seat. Liberate some closed cell foam as used in most furniture and kids mattresses and use this as a more solid filler for your furniture. A piece of NiChrome wire and the proper power supply (measure the ohms of the cutting wire with a multimeter and add resistors if needed) you can make a large hot wire foam cutter.

Recycled Junk

If you know where your local newspaper is located, their dumpster will surely have some of the thick cardboard tubes from the huge rolls of newsprint. These are about six feet long, and can be cut into pieces for use as legs on desks, tables, etc., but not chairs, as they are too thick (6"-8"). Either way, four three-foot sections of that tubing, and a 3x5 piece of plywood liberated from your local construction site will make a bitchin' table. Another free table is the big wooden cable spools used by the power and phone companies.

Auto-man Furniture

Take the seats from an old or totaled beater car. Backseats, especially the bench-style found in older sedans and mini-vans, make great couches when put up on blocks. The bucket seats that usually make up passenger seats and middle rows in vans can be converted into nifty easy chairs. If the car is old enough to not have electric seat adjustments, it will probably be a recliner, too. This means that bench seat can often be converted into a short double bed. Score!

Lawn Furniture

Lawn furniture is light and folds easily to fit into your car or bicycle trailer. Many people dump the one year old lawn furniture at the street in spring or fall. While a chaise lounge is all right to sleep on solo, making love is a good way to make it fall apart.

Kids Stuff

A crib can be made from a laundry basket and an easily washed pillow or a folded blanket in a pillowcase. A plastic bucket is great for bathing baby. Your stroller, or a baby bike seat strapped to a chair make a cheap high- chair. The cheap vinyl shower curtains at dollar stores are very effective 'rubber sheets' spread out under the fitted sheet. A hand towel with a head hole cut and hemmed is a good washable bib.

When traveling or taking a temporary home with children along, your camping ground mat or exercise mat is a great bed; there is no worry about falling out if they roll off, and children usually prefer firmer beds. Car seats are very important, as the leading cause of death for children 14 and younger are car crashes. Call your local hospital or fire department and ask if they have vouchers for a free car seat. Also check <http://www.seatcheck.org/> to find a location to have a free check performed on your child's car seat to insure that it's safe.

Free Furniture

Reuse

You can often find free furniture on <http://www.craigslist.com> , <http://www.freecycle.org/> , <http://www.regioshare.org> and other community sites, if you look in the free section for whatever area you are in. All you would need to do is contact the owner of the furniture and pick it up from the location listed there. Also, sometimes folks who need to move quickly will simply give you nice furniture just so they will not have to haul it with them. You can also score used furniture by keeping up with apartment staff that evicts folks about a week or two after rent time or keeping an ear living in dorms near the end of terms.

Diving for Furniture

Making furniture out of scraps of garbage that you find around when doing urban forging can be wonderful, and any DIY shop will have salesmen willing to explain how, or you can check online for a DIY site. Additionally, furniture can be found whole when foraging, especially in the back of furniture stores, and drop offs, like the back of thrift stores. (Warning: Taking items dropped off at thrift stores or donation boxes constitutes theft of varying degrees depending on what jurisdiction you're in.) Most thrift stores don't have cameras despite the frequent claims to the contrary on the signs they often hang up, so try hunting out by the side of their dumpsters at night for furniture the employees were too lazy to lift into the dumpster – often times it's still in decent condition and just didn't sell within a certain time frame. You can also pick up some pretty good furniture from the curb of an uppermiddle class neighborhood on trash day.

Futon

It is often possible to acquire a second hand futon pad without a frame, these are great for a convertible sleep and work area since they roll up or fold into a couch. As soon as possible a base must be made from something which will allow air to circulate under the pad otherwise you will likely ruin the pad with mold growth, this will also make the futon pad a health problem for future users. Check all new and used futon pads for mold. Several wood cargo pallets will provide sufficient ventilation to prevent mold growth. We try to find futons after college ends in the spring, futons outside in winter are usually already wet and sometimes moldy, so check, and there is no easy way to dry them

Mattress

Sometimes, mattress stores that deliver the mattresses to people's homes will haul off the customer's old mattresses for free as a service. Near the end of the stores hours, go to their loading docks and ask if

they have any used mattresses that are going to be thrown away. Usually, they will give them to you or just point to the dumpster. If they are not willing to give away, waiting until the place is closed (an hour or so and the parking lot is empty) and checking the dumpster is also good. One revolutionary reports a place in his area that always has 2-3 in a clean dumpster every day. Be sure the dumpster is not shared with a restaurant or other place that may foul up your new score. If you do not like what is available, you can always check back the next day. Don't fear a stained mattress, modern spring mattresses are mostly synthetics which dry quickly especially in summer. Some dish or laundry detergent can be rubbed wet into the stained areas and rinsed out using a garden hose or shower head, allow to dry by propping upright outside on a warm day, turn over several times so the water doesn't just collect at the bottom.

Hotels and Motels typically change mattresses on occasion. Many of the nicer motels change out all mattresses on a seasonal or yearly basis while others replace mattresses as they get stained or torn.

Foam is by far the cheapest mattress. Go to any furniture repair, sewing, or upholstery shop to have a piece cut for you. Don't buy it unless they let you lie down on it to test the firmness. It is smart to cover the foam to keep it clean and prevent mold and mildew. If you are handy at sewing, you can make yourself a fitted cover. Failing that, stack up those free homeless shelter blankets or dive some couch cushions from the dumpster of a furniture or thrift shop.

In cool and damp conditions it is necessary to take extra precautions to prevent mold from growing on your mattress. Flip the mattress every other day, and every fourth day also turn it to face the opposite direction. This way different parts get a chance to dry out. Propping up your mattress at an angle during the day with a stick or broom is also a good way to let it dry out. We also hear that occasionally dusting it with baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) or borax might make mold growth less likely and help get rid of any used furniture stank.

Build Your Own Furniture

DIY Japanese Screen

With a roll of paper, some small brass hinges, and lightweight wood framing you can make Japanese type screens. Use these to make light movable dividers that will not take the light out of a room. Excellent for separating a sleeping area which is cleaned up in the morning to make a larger living/work space. You will also have the option to paint and decorate your screens to your liking.

If you are careful in placing hinges at the exact same locations on every panel (use a measuring tape and mark location with a pencil, then add the hinge) after your screen is built you can tap out the pins from the small brass hinges and insert a nail or cotter pin into where you removed the standard pin. Now you can connect as many panels together as you like for a wall and still easily take them down or separate when moving or redecorating.

Frame Bed

Get ahold of some two by four lumber, this is easier than it sounds, if you are squatting and can't afford buy lumber(which is the best choice by far) there are going to be all sort of sources. Try looking around construction sites, or the shipping dept of some local company. If possible get some one by six lumber about 80 inches long too. You will want to make a bed frame that the inside area is 39 inches wide and 75 inches long, the size of a twin bed, that way you can use standard size sheets and blankets and maybe even scam a real mattress at some point. **Read these directions twice with a handy friend before cutting or screwing anything together** What you need

- 2x 80 inch long 2x4 lumber
- 2x 40 inch long 2x4 lumber
- 2x 80 inch long 1x6 lumber (2x4 will work in a pinch)
- 12x 39 inch long 1x4 lumber (skimp too much and the bed will be weak)
- 1x box two inch wood screws
- 1x box one inch wood screws
- 4x 12 inch long 4x4 lumber

An electrical drill to drive the screws helps, a professional grade cordless drill with extra batteries is best for disconnected squats

- Leave the long (80 inch) boards a few inches long (you can trim the extra later)
- Lay the boards on edge on the floor and mark the location of the 39 inch boards with a pencil so that you have a 39x75 inch inner area

- Long 2x4 boards to the outside
- Screw wood screws through the two long 2x4 boards (on their edges) and into the 40 inch 2x4 boards (also on their sides)
- Measure the inside of the frame to be sure that a 39x75 inch mattress will fit (with a little extra space if possible) before continuing. You now have a rectangular frame.
- Screw the 1x6 boards down securely onto both sides with long screws flat against the bottom of the frame, attaching to the long boards as well as the 39in inner boards so the bed frame won't twist.
- Saw off the excess long board so it is flush with your 39 inch inner frame rails
- Place the 4x4 legs onto all four corners and use at least 8 screws to tighten them down through the 1x6 lumber (you should get helpers to hold the bed frame level for this so the legs mount flush)
- Screw your 1x4 slats down leaving even spaces, these gaps allow the mattress to breathe.

If you have some plywood or left over lumber building a headboard and securely attaching it to the bed frame with 2x4 lumber makes it much easier to read in bed and keeps your pillow from falling off.

Push two of these frames together to make a queen bed for a couple, this is easier to move and stronger than one big frame.

Victorian Curtain and Canopy Bed

When we think of Victorian four poster beds we forget that those long spindles were not for style, but a place to hang the curtains and canopy, turning a bed into a little tent of warmth. No more cold morning wake-ups even in the coldest, dampest squat; you can even hang your clothes up inside your canopy and be warmly dressed before inhaling the cold, damp squat air. A word to the wise: even in a regular home curtaining your bed and dressing warm will reduce your home heating fuel waste. Think green!

The height of your canopy poles is up to you. Higher poles will make it easier to dress in the morning, while lower poles will make it easier to keep warm. You don't need to use anything bigger than broom handles screwed tightly to your bed frame with a few pieces of metal strapdown tape (fold in the edges so there are no sharp points). Use thin cotton bedsheets as curtains and canopy; they breathe the easiest and won't get too damp from condensation. Cut and hem them to size (twin sheets should be pretty close in size). Reinforce the canopy corners and punch a large grommet; this will slip over a screw or peg at the top of your canopy poles. The same is done for the top two corners on each of your side curtains. It is a good idea to sew tie strings every foot or so so that the curtains can be pulled tightly closed. A split overlapping curtain on the side you like to wake up on will make getting in and out easier but keep the draft out.

rfJmage:Bedpost.png

If roof leaks are a problem in your squat think about using a tarp for a second upper canopy, but make some sort of hoop frame to keep your breath from condensing on the tarp and dripping onto you.

Simplicity

Try not to overload a small room or flat with too much furniture. We try to be simple and frugal. The acquisition of too much junk ties us down and makes boosting out and onto the road more difficult. Don't screw over friends and supporters by leaving a room filled with junk when you disappear. If you can, live as much as possible out of your pack, even during long term crashes. This is especially important if you are in a situation that requires a high degree of mobility. For example: couch surfing, homelessness, jobs that require traveling, or volatile situations where you may need to move quick. See [Pack Your Bag](#)

Moving the Stuff

Moving tons of furniture is a pain in the ass. Professional moving companies usually charge high, by-the-hour rates then only give you two guys who proceed to slowly bubble-wrap everything and take their own sweet time. The bills can easily get to 800 USD or more to move a small flat full of stuff across town. This may be okay if you have loads of cash or irreplaceable family heirloom antiques, but a bit much for the rest of us. Of course, there is always U-haul. But, this too has drawbacks. Uhaul may be pretty reasonable for in-town moves, but if you are moving a great distance, can go into the high hundreds or more. Uhaul is also going to want to see insurance, a valid driver's license from someone, and a credit card. If you have a car, you could try using multiple bungees, loading it down, and praying the cops do not look for someone to harass. But using a small car takes many trips, is only economical for cross town moves, and you cannot exactly strap refrigerators to the top.

If you are moving across country, you need to consider if all of your goods make economic sense to take with you. As you have seen above, furniture is pretty cheap. Shipping, Renting trucks, or paying movers to cart the stuff across the state or country is not cheap. It may, in some situations, be better to sell or donate your furniture to someone who needs it and reestablish later.

Some of the more creative ideas are below:

Hand Truck

Simple: Get, beg, liberate, or borrow a hand truck. Your life will be easier. A hand truck or dolly will help a team of movers move the largest furniture. Even a refrigerator can be moved across town by a minimum of two strong people on foot, be careful on hills and plan for emergency stopping. The best hand trucks for appliances are extra wide and have a big strap which will wrap around the appliance but rope and the right knots will help in a pinch.

Strapping

If you are likely to encounter stairs the only safe way (at least for the furniture or appliance) is to use heavy strapping to help you hand carry. We are talking about the heavy strap like is used for seat belts or making rappelling harnesses, we need something that will resist abrasion.

One type of strap carrier uses between twenty and twenty five feet of strap and a heavy steel slide buckle (tied or sewn properly works too) to make a loop with adjustable size, be sure to slide a cutoff wool sock or tape over the buckle to prevent scratching your furniture. Your big loop crosses under your load and the loop ends rest on the shoulders of the two carriers. Stand up properly with straight backs and the load lifts as well.

Cycle Moving

With creative use of rope and either caster wheels screwed into the frame or a strapped on caster platform or skateboards even couches and beds can be moved good distances as long as there are no

major hills involved. If possible move during the day when traffic is light and attach plenty of orange or white flagging. If you are looking to avoid cop trouble look into the laws for non-motorized vehicles like horse carriges, this said even if you are legal in some places the cops will jack you and tow your furniture, seriously with a flat bed tow truck to the impound lot!

Find a Friend With a Truck

Not to be underestimated is to ask a friend who has a valid Driver License and a working vehicle to help you move your stuff from your old pad to your new pad. Being able to offer cash, beer, or other valuable substances can more easily persuade this person to help you. Needless to say, be sure wait to let them imbibe in such beer or substances until after the move is done to avoid DUIs or other unpleasantness.



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