The board and batten siding on the second level offers vertical, parallel lines that are juxtaposed against the horizontal siding on the lower level. The effect is a contrasting exterior that uses multiple colors.

Installing Board & Batten Siding

Board and batten is a vertically installed siding that offers a rustic look and makes houses appear taller. The application consists of installing wide boards vertically on the walls, then placing narrow boards, called battens, over the seams.

Although there are no set board and batten widths, a popular combination is 1 × 10" boards with 1 × 3" battens, which is what we're using for this project. Our lumber is knotty cedar, which is often used for board and batten applications.

Regardless of the type and size of lumber you choose, the battens need to overlap the boards by at least ½". To maintain a uniform look, measure the length of the wall, the width of the boards, and determine the appropriate spacing between boards so you can install a full board at the end of the wall. Ripping the last board to fit will ruin the symmetry you've established.

Before installing the siding, you'll need to install horizontal blocking lines or furring strips on the walls. This gives you a firm nailing base for the siding. Nails must be driven 1½" into solid wood.

Nailing directly to your sheathing, even if it's plywood, will not provide sufficient hold. Because the nailing strips add thickness to your walls, you'll need to extend the jambs and sills around your doors and windows.

Another way to achieve the board-on-board look is to use board and batten panels (page 145). These panels feature a reverse batten style, in which the batten is placed behind the simulated boards. The panels are typically available in 4 × 8 or 4 × 9-foot sheets to span the length of the wall. Be sure to purchase panels that are rated for exterior use.
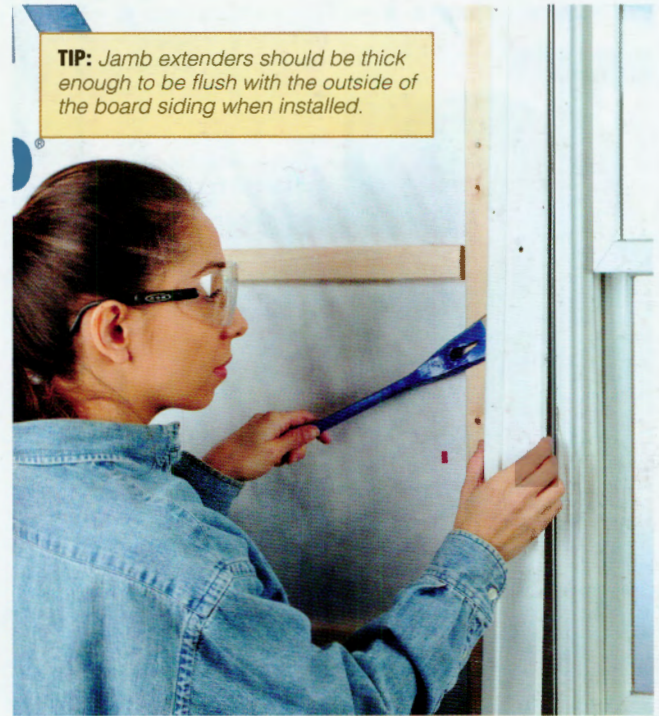
Everything You Need

Tools: tape measure, circular saw, hammer, chalk line, line level, pry bar, tin snips, level, jig saw, T-bevel, caulk gun, 4-ft. level, paint brush.

Materials: 1 × 10 and 1 × 3 cedar lumber, 1 × 3 nailing strips, 2 × 4, 8d and 10d corrosion-resistant box nails, drip caps, 6d galvanized box nails, sealer, caulk.

How to Install Board & Batten Siding

1 Cover the walls with housewrap (pages 114 to 115). Starting at the bottom of the wall, fasten horizontal nailing strips every 16" to 24". Nail the strips to studs, using 8d nails. Install nailing strips around all doors and windows. Do this for each wall.

TIP: *Jamb extenders should be thick enough to be flush with the outside of the board siding when installed.*

2 Carefully remove the exterior trim around windows and doors, using a pry bar. Rip jamb extenders to the same width as the jambs.

3 Cut an extender to fit over a window. Nail it in place, using nails that penetrate the jamb by at least 1". Cut and install jambs along the sides of the window, then do the same for the sill. Apply sealer to all cut edges.

4 Cut a piece of drip cap to size to fit over the window, using tin snips. Set the drip cap in place so the bottom lip is over the jamb extension. Nail the drip cap in the upper corners, using 6d galvanized nails. Repeat Steps 2 to 4 for each window and door.

TIP: *Don't cut all boards to size at the start of a wall. The distance from the ledger to the soffits can change, which can impact the length of the boards.*

5 Starting at a corner, snap a level chalk line at the bottom of the wall where you want to start the siding. Make sure it's below the nailing strips. Install a straight 2 × 4 flush with the chalk line to use as a temporary ledger.

6 Measure from the ledger to the soffits, then subtract ⅛". Cut a siding board to this length. Set the bottom of the board on the ledger, and align the side with the edge of the wall. For boards 6" and narrower, drive one 8d nail in the center at each nailing strip. For boards wider than 6", drive two nails 3" apart.

TIP: *To maintain even spacing between boards, cut wood spacers the size of your gaps and use them when installing each board.*

7 Cut the next board to size and set in place on the ledger. Keep your predetermined gap between boards, but make sure the batten will overlap each board by at least ½". Nail in place at each nailing strip. Install remaining boards the same way. Check every few boards with a level to make sure they're plumb. If they're not, adjust slightly until plumb.

8 At window locations, set a board next to the window, keeping the bottom on the ledger. Mark the board ⅛" above and below the outside of the top and bottom jambs.

9 Position a scrap board under the window, keeping the proper gap from the last installed board. Mark the scrap board ⅛" past the outside edge of the side jamb. Use this measurement to mark the cutout on the board you marked in step 8. Cut out the window opening, using a jig saw.

10 Set the board in place, keeping a ⅛" gap around the window jamb. When installing, drive only one nail per nailing strip in the area next to the window. Repeat steps 8 to 10 for each window and door.

11 If more than one board is needed to span the height of a wall, cut a 45° bevel in the ends of the adjoining boards and butt them together. Make sure the seam falls over a nailing strip. Offset seams by at least one nailing strip. Note: Whenever possible, use full-length boards rather than butting two boards together.

12 When starting a new wall, place the first board over the edge of the last installed board on the adjacent wall. Nail the board in place.

13 At the gable end of the house, use a T-bevel to determine the pitch of the roof. Transfer the angle to the boards, cut to size, and install. The length of each board needs to be measured individually since the distance changes along the gable end.

14 Fill gaps between the boards and soffits, and between the boards and jambs with flexible, paintable caulk.

15 Measure and cut battens to size. Center a batten over each gap between boards. Drive one 10d nail in the battens at each nailing strip. Once the battens are installed, remove the ledger board. Paint the siding (see Exterior Painting, starting on page 198).

Variation: To create a deep channel look, install the battens first, then place the boards over the battens.
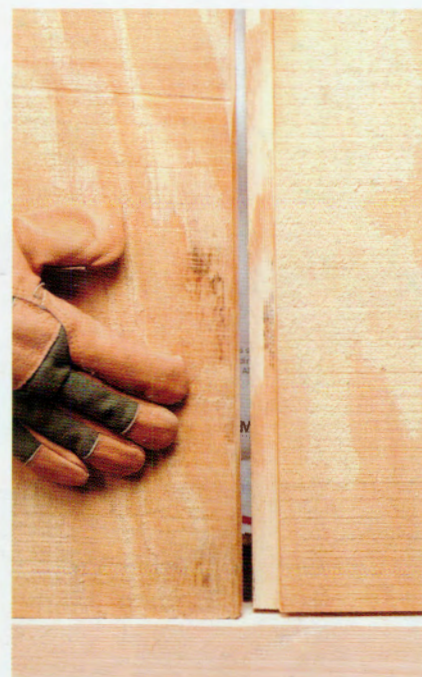
How to Install Board & Batten Paneling

1 Cover the walls with house-wrap (pages 114 to 116). Snap a level line at the base of the wall where the siding will start. Install a straight ledger board flush with the line, following step 5 on page 142.

2 Starting at a corner, measure from the ledger to the soffits, subtract ⅛", and cut the panel to size. Place the panel on the ledger, flush with the corner, and install, using corrosion-resistant nails that penetrate studs by 1½".

TIP: *When nailing, drive nails through studs every 6" along the edges and every 10" in the field.*

3 If the panels have built-in ship-laps, overlap the panels as specified by the manufacturer. If the panels don't have laps, leave ⅛" gaps between panels.

4 Place a panel next to a window and make a mark ⅛" above and below the outside of the jambs. Set a scrap piece in place under the window and make a mark ⅛" past the side jambs. Transfer the measurements to the panel, then cut out the window opening, using a jig saw. Do the same for each door, window, and protrusion.

5 Follow steps 13 and 14 on page 144 to cut panels to fit the gable end of the house, and to caulk between panels and soffits. To create a more finished look, install 1 × 3 or 1 × 4 trim around doors, windows, and corners, and under soffits. Paint the siding (see Exterior Painting, starting on page 198).