



Photo courtesy of Midwest Lumber

This house isn't really a log cabin, but you'd never know it from the outside. The log cabin siding provides the charm and realism of an actual log home.

Installing Log Cabin Siding

Log cabin siding is an inexpensive way to achieve the rustic look of log homes. Since the siding is not composed of full logs, it uses less wood, making it less expensive than traditional log cabins. But from the outside, it's almost impossible to tell that the house is not an actual log cabin. The log-tail corners complete the authentic appearance. Where the log tails would restrict a pathway or entrance, or create a design problem, vertical log corners can be used.

Log cabin siding is generally available in cedar or pine. For our project, we're using 2 x 8 pine siding, which is considerably less expensive than cedar. The siding is face nailed, but the nails are hardly visible. To speed up installation, rent an air compressor and nail gun. If you choose to hand nail, be sure to use a hammer with a smooth face. A corrugated face could mar the siding.

You can cut the siding with a circular saw, but a compound saw or miter saw works better. It's critical for the cuts to be square since the siding pieces butt against each other. The siding must be nailed to studs, so be sure the stud marks on the housewrap are properly aligned with the studs in the walls.

Everything You Need

Tools: hammer, level, chalk line, chisel, tape measure, drill, 4-ft. level, caulk gun, jig saw, miter saw or sliding compound saw, T-bevel, paintbrush.

Materials: log cabin siding, cedar or pine 2 x 2s, 2 x 4s, 2 x 6s, housewrap, cap nails, left- and right- side corners, 12d or 16d hot-dipped galvanized siding nails, polyurethane caulk, sealer.

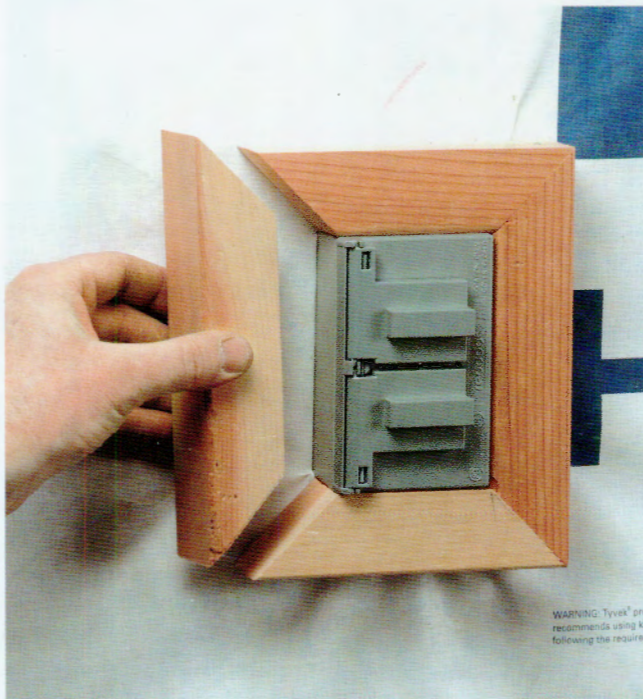
How to Install Log Cabin Siding



1 Cover the walls with housewrap (pages 114 to 115) and snap a level line around the base of the walls for the first row of siding, following step 1 on page 129. Place a 2 × 2 in each inside corner, flush with the chalk line at the bottom, and nail in place. If more than one 2 × 2 is needed to span the wall, cut a 45° bevel at the joining ends.



2 Use 2 × 2s or 2 × 4s to trim doors and windows. Measure the top, bottom, and sides of doors and windows, add 1/4" to each piece, and cut to size. Install the trim, keeping a 1/8" gap between the window and door frames and the trim.



3 Apply 2 × 2 trim around electrical outlets, the electric meter, and vents.

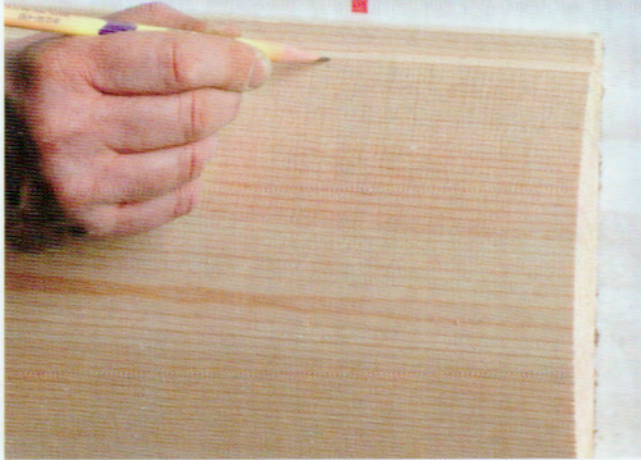


Option: If using vertical corners, place the corner on the wall, flush with the chalk line at the bottom, and nail in place. Install vertical corners before applying any siding. Keep siding 1/8" from these corners.

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How to Install Log Cabin Siding (continued)

TIP: Apply sealer to the cut ends of siding, trim, and corners before installing.



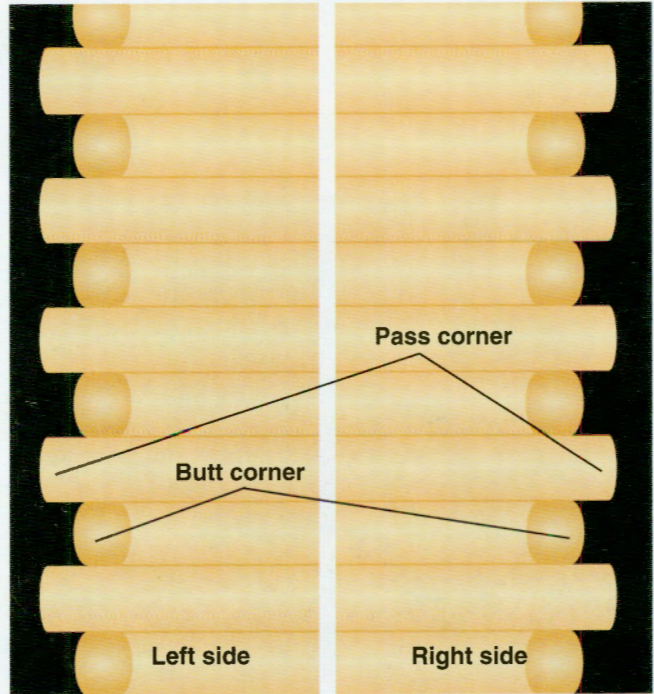
4 Hold a piece of siding in place with the bottom (groove) edge aligned with the chalk line and the end flush with an outside corner. Mark the opposite end at the midpoint of the last stud it crosses. Cut the siding at the mark. Apply sealer to the cut end.



5 Set the siding back in place along the chalk line, flush with the corner. Fasten it to the wall with two siding nails at each stud location. Drive the first nail $1\frac{1}{2}$ " from the bottom edge, and the second nail 3" to 4" above that. Cut the next piece to reach the opposite corner, butt it against the first piece, and install.



6 On the adjacent wall, start with a corner piece. Hold it in place so the log tail overlaps the adjacent siding. Mark the opposite end at the last stud. Cut it to length, set along the chalk line so the corner overlaps the adjacent wall, and nail in place. Install the remaining first course the same way.



7 Alternate between the butt and the pass at the corners for each row of siding. The corners at both ends of a wall must be the same, either both butts or both passes, for each course. You cannot have a butt at one end of the wall and a pass at the opposite corner.

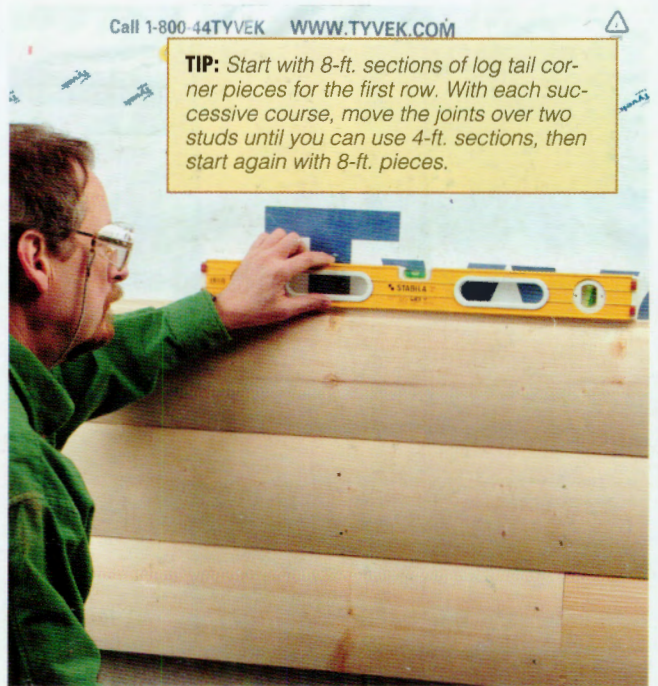


TIP: There are left-side and right-side corner pieces. Be sure to use the correct piece for each corner. Start the siding on a wall that has a "butt" corner, then overlap it with a "pass" on the adjacent side. For a butt corner, the end of the siding is flush with the corner. A pass corner extends past the corner to overlap siding on the adjacent wall.

8 Place the second row of siding over the first, setting the groove over the lip of the siding below. Offset joints between rows by at least two studs. Keep a 1/8" gap between the siding and inside corners. Install remaining courses the same way.



9 For hose spigots and other small wall protrusions that you don't frame around, drill a hole in the siding at the proper location, then place the siding over the object. To keep the hole as small as possible, you may need to remove the protrusion, then reinsert it after the siding is in place.



TIP: Start with 8-ft. sections of log tail corner pieces for the first row. With each successive course, move the joints over two studs until you can use 4-ft. sections, then start again with 8-ft. pieces.

10 Check every few rows of siding with a level. If necessary, leave a small gap between the grooves and lips in the siding until the rows are level. Make the changes subtly over several courses.

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How to Install Log Cabin Siding (continued)



11 Install siding up to the bottom of windows. Hold a piece of siding in place below the window framing. Make a mark on the siding, $\frac{1}{8}$ " past the outside edge of the side window trim. Place a scrap of siding next to the window, over the last installed row. Mark the siding piece, $\frac{1}{8}$ " below the edge of the window.



12 Transfer the measurements from the last step to a piece of siding. Cut out the opening, using a jig saw.



13 Install the siding, keeping a $\frac{1}{8}$ " gap around the window frame. As you continue installing rows of siding, maintain a $\frac{1}{8}$ " gap between the siding and trim.



TIP: For optimum appearance, keep joints in the siding from falling directly above or below windows and doors.

14 Follow steps 11 to 12 to mark and cut siding to fit over the top of doors and windows. Center the siding opening over the door and window, and nail in place.



15 At light fixture locations, drill a hole in the siding for electrical wires. To make a flat surface to hold the fixture, start at the wire hole and work out $2\frac{3}{4}$ " on each side, making a series of 1"-deep cuts in the siding. Chisel out the wood until the surface is flat, and apply sealer. Install the siding, feeding the wires through the hole. Cut a 2 x 6 the height of the siding, drill a hole for the wiring, and install in the notch. Mount the fixture on the 2 x 6.



16 For the top row, measure the distance from the bottom of the lip of the last installed row of siding to the eaves. Subtract $\frac{1}{8}$ " and rip siding to this measurement. Nail the siding in place under the eaves.



17 On the gable ends of the house, use a T-bevel to determine the roof angle. Cut the ends of the siding at this angle, then install along the gable.



18 Caulk between the siding and inside corners, siding and window and door framing, and around wall protrusions. Do not apply caulk to the joints between siding. Stain the siding, following the instructions on pages 218 to 219.