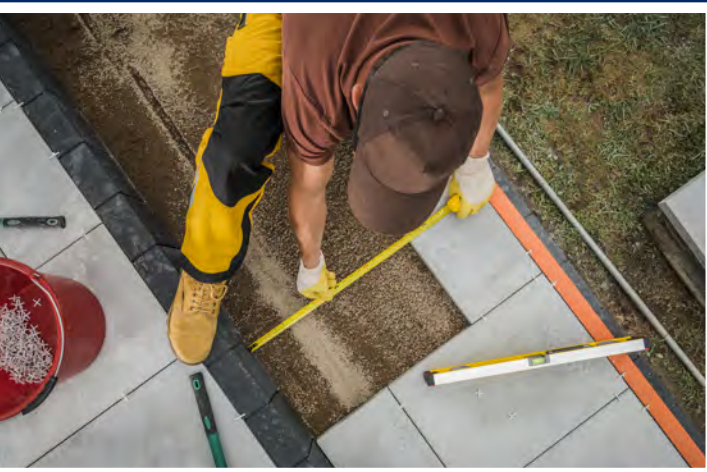




The Ultimate Guide to **Creating Indoor Spaces Outdoors**

Want more space at home without going to the trouble and expense of moving or stumping up for a costly extension? A garden room could be the answer. With the right materials and know-how, you could build anything from an outdoor bar to a cinema room or office.

To get you started, we've put together our top tips to help you create five different indoor spaces outdoors. We kick things off with some construction pointers for this type of building project.



Construction need-to-knows

Planning permission

The good news is, most garden rooms fall under something called ‘permitted development rights’, meaning you don’t need planning permission to build them. However, to be categorised in this way, the constructions must be single storey and under three metres high - or four metres if the roof is dual-pitched. If the building is within a couple of metres of your property boundary, the max height for permitted development is 2.5 metres.

Bear in mind, there are restrictions in terms of how much of your garden the rooms can take up and what they are used for. For example, in order to fall within permitted development

rules, outbuildings must be ‘incidental’ to the main dwelling. This means their use must be a minor addition to your house. In the case of a home office, for instance, if you’re just using it to work from your computer, this is likely to be considered incidental, whereas if you’re using it for regular meetings with clients, you may need to get planning permission. Also, if you’re situated in a conservation area, you will need to get permission.

If you’re unsure whether your project will fall under permitted development rights, always check with your local authority.

Cost

These projects can range in cost from a few hundred pounds to tens of thousands, depending on their scale and scope. You can use our handy [building materials calculator](#) to help you work out the cost, including everything from concrete to timber, plasterboard and paint.

The cost of your project will also depend on what elements you’re able to do yourself. The more DIY you do, the more money you’ll save. However, if you’re planning complex constructions, it’s likely you will need some professional involvement, for example to install electrics.

Location

Ideally, your garden room should be situated on ground that’s as flat as possible, and there should be at least two feet of space around it on all sides to allow the timber to breathe and to allow access for future treatments and repairs. Depending on what you plan to use the space for, you might also want to position it close to mains power and water.

Size

When choosing the size, consider what furniture or other items you need to fit into the room and work backwards from there, obviously taking into account the space available in your garden and any planning restrictions that may apply.

Base

The best type of foundations for your project will depend on factors including the size and type of construction you’re building and how level the surface is. For flat areas, concrete slab bases are a popular choice. This involves excavating the ground before adding a layer of compacted hardcore, followed by soft sand and a [damp proof membrane](#). Concrete is then poured into a timber frame on top of this membrane, before being levelled.

For uneven ground, ground screws or concrete piles can be good alternatives. Ground screws are large screws that are driven deep into the ground. Brackets are then fitted to provide a base for your garden room. Concrete piles involve driving hollow steel structures below the ground and filling them with concrete to provide a solid base.

Safety

Always make sure you use appropriate safety equipment when working on your building project. For example, this could include heavy duty gloves and protective goggles when sawing or drilling. When dealing with heavy materials, such as cladded panels, it’s best to have someone helping you with lifting and assembly. And don’t attempt any electrical work or other potentially dangerous tasks yourself unless you have the required knowledge and skills.

Garden office

If you're one of the growing number of people working from home, you need the perfect spot to do it - and what better place than your very own garden office? The following tips will help you to build a practical, comfortable work area that you can use year-round.

Insulation

Mineral wool and [PIR insulation boards](#) are both good insulation options for garden offices. Be aware that the thicker your insulation, the better for retaining heat and blocking sound, but the more it'll encroach on the usable space inside your room - so you'll need to strike the right balance.



Underfloor heating

Although it's often more expensive, underfloor heating can be ideal for these rooms as it saves space by removing the need for radiators. Bear in mind these systems work best with hard flooring such as [stone or ceramic tiles](#), or engineered wood.



Reliable wi-fi

Don't try to make do with weak wi-fi signals from your house. It's well worth the effort of running exterior-grade ethernet cabling underground from your house to a wireless access point in your new office.



WC

Including a WC in your office design will save you having to go back and forth to your house while you're working. If your garden room is close enough to your home, you should be able to connect it to the mains water and sewerage supplies. If this isn't possible, consider a waterless eco loo solution.



Top tip!

Arrange to have your ethernet cable laid at the same time as your power cable. This will save money and hassle.



Bar

Want a garden room for entertaining friends and family, or simply for enjoying some well-deserved R&R? Here are our pointers for creating the perfect bar area.



Sociable seating

Think carefully about the seating in your bar. Stools at the bar are a must, and if the space allows, incorporate sociable seating arrangements - such as a corner sofa, or two sofas facing each other.



Indoor-outdoor

Create the ultimate indoor-outdoor vibe by installing bifold doors that open out onto a decked area. This will give you a flexible space that's perfect for entertaining.



The view

Try to locate your bar so it takes advantage of the best views on offer in your garden, and use plenty of glass in your room design to showcase the vista



Storage

You'll need plenty of storage for all those glasses, bottles and other bar essentials, so make sure you incorporate this into your design.

Top tip!

Floating shelves will give your bar a contemporary look and feel. Just make sure these shelves are strong enough to support the weight of whatever you plan to put on them.

Gym

Building a workout space will cost you money upfront, but it means you can kiss goodbye to costly gym fees - and it can be a great motivation to stay in shape. Our handy pointers will help you to nail the design of your garden gym.

Size

You'll need to size your garden gym according to the equipment you intend to use, and make sure you think about room height as well as floor space. Equipment like cross trainers and stair climbers will elevate your height, and so will exercises like jumping and stretching. However, take care not to lose sight of planning permission restrictions when sizing this room.

Strong flooring

Consider using reinforced floor joists to accommodate heavy exercise equipment and high-impact workouts.

Cooling system

Especially in mid-summer, there's a risk that your garden room will be uncomfortably hot during intense workouts. Installing air conditioning will help you to keep the temperature comfortable year-round. When choosing the capacity of your AC system, consider factors including the room size, insulation and exposure to sun.

Security

You don't want your expensive gym gear to be on full display to potential intruders, so think about window size and placement when designing the space - and invest in appropriate window coverings too. Make sure you choose a robust door and lock too, and you might want to consider installing security cameras or alarm systems.



Top tip!

Invest in specialist rubber gym tiles for added shock absorption.

Cinema room

Love films and want to create the perfect setting to settle down, popcorn in hand, to enjoy the latest flicks? Or perhaps you're looking for the ideal spot for watching the big game. While not many of us have space for a designated home cinema room in our houses, there is an alternative; you can create your own cinema room in your garden instead.



Integrated seating

Incorporating integrated bench seating in this room is an efficient use of space. For the full cinema effect, why not build stepped seating?



Sound proofing

Sound proofing is key when designing a home cinema. Make sure you incorporate effective sound dampening materials into the fabric of this room, such as [acoustic insulation roll](#). Think about your windows too. Double glazing is better than single, while triple glazing is the ultimate for sound deadening.



Wi-fi

Chances are, you'll be streaming most of the movies or programmes you watch - so as with a home office, reliable wi-fi is a must. Running an ethernet cable to this garden room will help ensure uninterrupted viewing. If your garden room is close enough to your home, you might want to save hassle and expense by using a standard wi-fi extender instead, but be aware that the connection may not be as good.



Electrical outlets

Think carefully about the placement of electrical sockets in your home cinema. You'll need mains power for everything from your projector or TV to your speakers and lights.

Top tip!

Consider sound insulation when choosing the base for your garden cinema room. A solid concrete base is effective at minimising sound leakage.

Man Cave/She Shed

Whether you're looking for a space to get stuck into your favourite hobby, bury yourself in a book, relax with friends or crack on with your latest DIY effort, creating a man cave or she shed could be the perfect project for you. Here are our top design tips for these versatile spaces.

Space saving features

These rooms are often multi-purpose, which can mean space is in short supply. Save square footage by choosing savvy design features. This could be anything from hollow bench seating that doubles up as storage, to a fold down desk or bar.



Lighting

Choose a range of lighting options to suit different activities. As well as a main ceiling light, consider additions such as reading lamps and string lights that allow you to create different ambiances. And of course, big windows and/or skylights will let in plenty of daylight.



French doors or bifolds

By having French doors or bifolds as your entryway, you give yourself the option of opening this room up when you want some fresh air and a feeling of greater space.



Materials

This is your space, so choose building materials you love and that reflect your personality. Maybe you want to maximise the impact of natural wood in the room, or perhaps you can't get enough of the industrial look of materials like bare concrete or steel. Whatever your preferences, don't be afraid to be bold.



Top tip!

Fit blinds or other window dressings that will allow you to eliminate computer or TV screen glare if necessary.



Thank you for reading our guide to creating indoor spaces outdoors. We hope it's given you some useful pointers for your garden room project. Have your own building tips or experiences you'd like to share? Join the conversation on [#UltimateOutdoorLivingSpace](#).

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