

A Practical Guide to Building Your Sukkah

By Rabbi Shalom Zagelbaum

When to build:

- 1) It is proper to begin building at least part of the sukkah on the night following Yom Kippur after breaking the fast^א.
- 2) Ideally, one should fully complete the sukkah the next morning^ב.

Where

- 1) A sukkah may not be built in a place where an unpleasant odor will reach it^א.
- 2) One may build a sukkah only in their own private property, or in someone else's if given permission to do so by the owner^ב.
- 3) There may be nothing else besides kosher roofing (called s'chach) or decorations in between a person sitting in the sukkah and the heavens. Therefore a sukkah may not be built under a tree, overhang, or the like^ג.



Out of What:

- 1) The roofing is only kosher if it grew from the ground, is detached, and will remain pure even upon coming in contact with something impure^א. The walls do not carry these restrictions^ב.
- 2) Both the s'chach^ג and the walls^ד may not be made from something that emits an unpleasant odor or will wither away.

What Size:

A sukkah must be between 40" and 31' 5" in height and have an area of at least 28" x 28".^א

Roofing (S'chach):

- 1) There must be enough s'chach to cover the majority of the roof area^א such that when the sun is directly overhead, the majority of the floor must be shaded^ב.
- 2) There is no maximum to how much s'chach one can put. However if the s'chach is placed in such a way that even in a heavy rainstorm, water will not enter the sukkah, it is invalid^ג.
- 3) The s'chach should not rest on metal poles, rather they should be laid on wooden beams, which can be supported by metal if needed^ד.

^א רמ"א או"ח סימן תרכ"ד ס"ה.
^ב רמ"א סימן תרכ"ה ומ"ב ס"ק ב'.
^ג מ"ב סימן תר"ל ס"ק ד'.
^ד רמ"א סימן תרל"ז ס"ג, וע"ש במ"ב.
^ה רמ"א תימן תרכ"ו ס"א, ומ"ב ס"א.
^ו סימן תרכ"ט ס"א.
^ז סימן תר"ל ס"א, וע"ש בב"ה"ל.
^ח סימן תרכ"ט ס"ד ורמ"א לס"יב.

^ט רמ"א סימן תר"ל ס"א.
^א סימן תרל"ג ס"א וס"ח, וסימן תרל"ד ס"א. ולענין השיעורים ע' למטה.
^ב סימן תרל"א ס"א.
^ג ב"ה"ל שם ד"ה שוין.
^ד מ"ב שם ס"ק ו'
^ה סימן תרכ"ט ס"ז ומ"ב ס"ק כב'

- Each piece of s'chach may be no wider than one square foot¹⁰.

Walls:

- The walls must be sturdy enough that a normal wind (approximately 20mph¹¹) will not move them back and forth¹². Extra care must be taken when using cloth for walls that they meet this requirement.
- A sukkah should ideally have three complete and solid walls that connect to each other, the ground, and the s'chach at all points¹³. If this is not feasible, contact your Rav for specific guidance.

Decorations:

While it is praiseworthy to beautify the sukkah, care must be taken to ensure that ceiling decorations remain within one foot of the s'chach¹⁴.



Mezuza:

- A mezuza is not placed on the doorway of a sukkah¹⁵.

An Indoor Sukkah:

- One may remove the roof of his home and lay down s'chach to create a kosher sukkah as long as all the specifications for a kosher sukkah are met (i.e. area, walls, etc.)¹⁶.
- One must make sure the roof is removed before placing the s'chach on top¹⁷.

Laws of a Shlock:

- A shlok is a retractable roof some build over their sukkah to protect the sukkah from rain.
- The shlok must be open at the time the s'chach is put on the sukkah¹⁸.
- After that it may be closed and opened again even on Shabbos and Yom Yov¹⁹.
- When the shlok is closed and it is not raining the sukkah is invalid and one must be careful not to sit in it until opened²⁰.
- One must also be careful that the shlok is fully opened, and if not, then the part of the sukkah it covers may not be used²¹.

Note: This column is not comprehensive. It is recommended that you ask your Rav to visually inspect your sukkah or at least discuss it with him.

¹⁰ סימן תרכ"ט ס"יח.

¹¹ <http://www.usa.com/85254-az-weather.htm>

¹² סימן תר"ל ס"י.

¹³ רמ"א תר"ל ס"ה ומ"ב ס"ק כח'.

¹⁴ רמ"א תרכ"ז ס"ד.

¹⁵ מ"ב תרכ"ו ס"ק כא'.

¹⁶ תרכ"ו ס"ג.

¹⁷ מ"ב שם ס"ק יח'.

¹⁸ שם.

¹⁹ רמ"א שם.

²⁰ שם.

²¹ מ"ב שם ס"ק כא'.