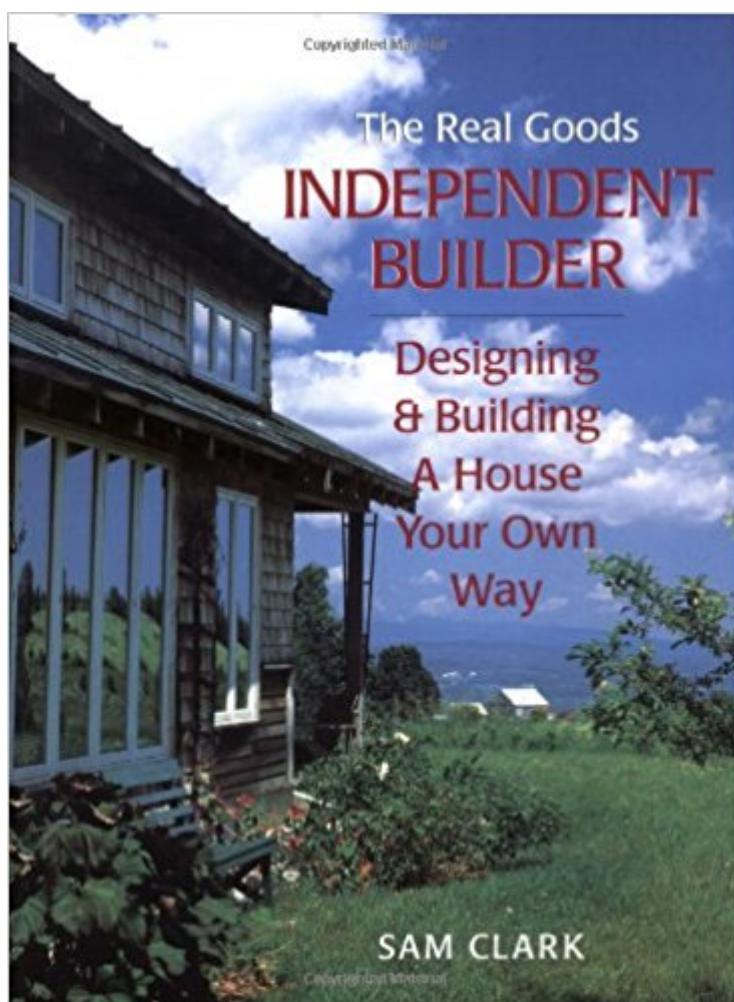


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# The Real Goods Independent Builder: Designing & Building A House Your Own Way (Real Goods Independent Living Books)



## Synopsis

This is a comprehensive manual of design and building methods for owner-builders as well as professional builders and their clients. In addition to presenting specific building techniques, the book explains the design principles and planning processes that underlie all good building, so that readers can develop their own exceptional designs, independently. Independent Builder develops subjects not covered thoroughly in other books, but critical to success: Designing small houses that seem big Understanding innovation Estimating and controlling costs Incorporating ergonomics and accessibility Doing drawings and scale models Making contracts that work

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Subtitled "Designing and Building a House Your Own Way," this is the book for anyone thinking about building their own home. It is comprehensive, detailed and covers subjects I have never before seen covered in home building books, like how to make a small house seem bigger, incorporating ergonomics and accessibility, doing your own drawings and scale models, making contracts that work, and working effectively with professional designers and builders. With detailed diagrams and photographs, this is the most thorough overall guide to building your own home I have ever seen (and I've seen a lot!).

Clark, a carpenter, designer, and builder with over 25 years' experience, has revised and expanded

his earlier *Designing and Building Your House Your Own Way* (Chelsea Green, 1978) to reflect recent developments. Clark takes a pragmatic approach to construction, combining the best new technologies with more traditional, time-tested methods (the main criteria being whether the construction is cost-effective and can stand the test of time). The first third of the book covers design, preparation, making contracts, and estimating costs, areas that aren't very glamorous but are of the utmost importance. The rest of the book covers materials, systems (heating, cooling, and water), and methods of construction. Clark doesn't engage in a lot of hand-holding—the information is short and to the point. This tome is chock-full of so much information that it could make even the most ardent do-it-yourselfer's head spin. Recommended for all construction collections. (Photos and appendixes not seen.)—Jonathan N. Hershey, Akron-Summit Cty. P.L., Ohio  
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Sam Clark uses up half the book before he gets into the nitty-gritty of construction methods. This really IS a book about house DESIGN as well as construction. As such, it's an EXCELLENT book for someone who's starting from scratch to create their own house. The approach is extremely methodical, treating mindsets and goals as elements of the design process equal in importance to elevation drawings. The illustrations bear particular attention. The (black and white) photographs are well composed, and have high contrast to clearly delineate the features that are supposed to be of interest. The line drawings are rather funky looking (in part because Clark appears not to own a ruler), but nevertheless do a very good job of illustrating what the text is talking about. This is the case for three reasons: (1) they were created by the author, who knew EXACTLY what part of the text needed visual aids; (2) their rulerless nature means that Clark can emphasize particular features rather than focus on strict scale drawings; and (3) each one is sized independently to take up as much space as is required to depict the subject matter, without worrying about "wasting" some page area. The end result is that the text and illustrations fit together well to make a unified whole. For more detail on the Building part of creating a house, I'd recommend "Do-It-Yourself HOUSEBUILDING" by George Nash. But because Nash's book doesn't come close to Clark's for clarity, I'd first read Clark's book cover-to-cover. Then I'd keep Sam Clark's book open to the same subject area so that you can step back and get a clear overview as you get confused in the details of the Nash book.

I would like to review this book again after I actually use it to build a home. But that is a couple years in the future, so I thought I'd go ahead and just review it as a reader. This book is my favorite of the

three I've read so far. It gives advice on designing and contracting your own home. Even if you don't plan on designing your own home, it's very useful to understand the basics of sound design. It could help you pick out blueprints, or even analyze the design of a house that's already built. The layout and design of your home is such a huge part of what makes it pleasant to live in. The book also gives useful advice on how to general contract your own home. A good read. For further information on a well-designed home, the author recommends the books *A Pattern Language* and *The Timeless Way of Building*, both by Christopher Alexander. *A Pattern Language* is definitely next on my reading list.

I built a cabin in the mountains over the last few years. I did everything from drawing plans, plumbing, and drove every nail. As I was preparing for the project I read a \*lot\* of books on design, framing, etc. This was the best book by far. There are plenty of books out there that provide more detailed information on specific topics, but this book provides glue that ties the elements of planning and building a home better than I have seen articulated anywhere else. The sections on how to think about flow through rooms, light, material options, and technical tables in the back were great. This was always the go-to book I looked at first when trying to figure something out, or wanting to understand some element better. If I needed more detail, I could go to the specialty book and resources armed with enough knowledge not to be lost in the weeds. I would recommend this book to anyone considering building on their own

This is the first book I've found that actually addresses living patterns in home design. The book describes the fact that people can be uncomfortable sitting in a huge living space and actually crave the need for smaller spaces like alcoves. Social behaviours and traffic patterns while entertaining are studied and factually explains what makes a room feel comfortable or homey. With traffic patterns and accessibility as the basis for the design half of the book, Clark provides a solid foundation for design fundamentals and the why behind it. The second half of the book covers home building. As a complete novice in this area, I can't vouch for the accuracy of the information, but it does seem quite comprehensive in its description, demystifying the building process, and empowering owners to monitor their contractors with an informed eye, while giving insight to the bigger picture and mindset of contractors. I think this understanding will help communication between owners and contractors and make homebuilding a smoother process. Of particular interest, I found the load calculations for foundations fascinating as it wasn't something I had ever considered in home building as it is something the architect waves his magic pencil to produce. The

book is written in a familiar tone the layperson will relate and understand, and while it doesn't shirk the industry jargon, explanations are forthcoming, making it easy to understand and simple to follow. I've read quite a few books on home building and have done extensive research on the internet. This book covers design principles and the why not found elsewhere. I highly recommend this book as the foundation to anyone planning and building their own home.

This is the best book I have yet to find that encompasses every step of the home building process from design to finishing out the house. This is the only book I could find that gave good info on building a foundation using concrete footings and columns using the cardboard "sonotubes". I have referenced this book many times during the construction of my house. Also "How to Design & Build Your Own House" by Lupe DiDonno is also a good read, but this book is laid out and written in a better style.

Excellent book with lots of useful information. A great reference for anyone planning on building or designing their own structure.

Couldn't recommend this book highly enough.

Ok

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