

# Ladder bookshelf

Assemble a custom tiered storage unit or opt for a ready-made one

By CODY CALAMAIO + Photograph by IAN SPANIER

A ladder bookshelf provides the perfect storage solution for an old home. Leaning against a wall, it conveniently sidesteps baseboard moldings and receptacles, and with just two feet to level, it's not so easily upset by those charming warped floors. Maybe best of all, unlike closed bookcases, the open, airy design helps the room feel more spacious—all for not much more than the cost of a few feet of floor space.

Delicate as it may appear, the notched hardwood frame at right is plenty sturdy, and with its balanced design, it won't topple. To mimic the look without having to cut notches, we sandwiched two layers of 1x3s together for the uprights.

There are plenty of some-assembly-required options out there if you'd prefer to buy a ladder bookshelf. Or you could follow our plans and knock one out in an afternoon, probably in less time than it would take to choose from the thousands of variations available online. Either way, you're sure to appreciate the unobtrusive new shelf space.

Shown: Linea Leaning Bookcase in Java by The Container Store, \$139; [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com)



## more storage ideas

For dozens of projects that help you make the most of your space, go to [thisoldhouse.com/oct2012](http://thisoldhouse.com/oct2012)

## build it

Modify the height and width to vary your shelf space

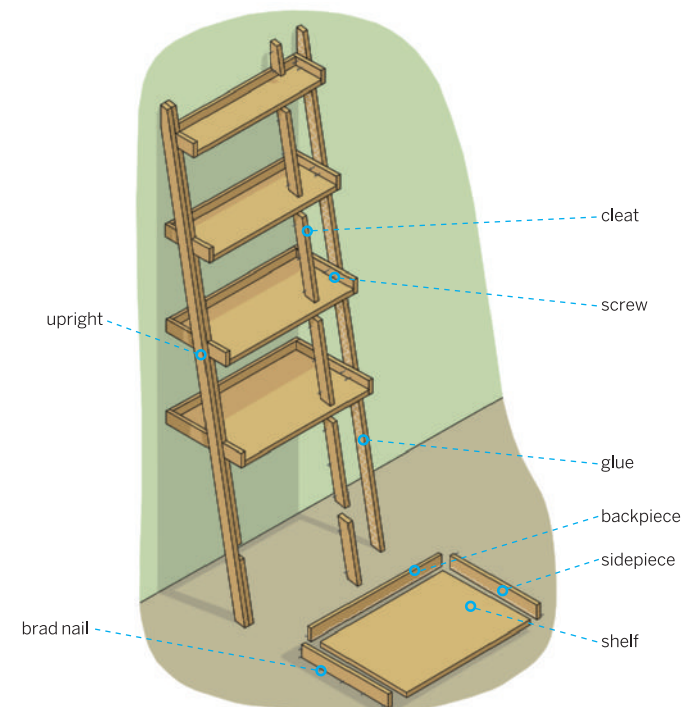
**1. Cut the pieces.** Follow the cut list at [thisoldhouse.com/oct2012](http://thisoldhouse.com/oct2012) to make the assembly pieces. First, make all the straight cuts for the shelves. Then set the miter-saw blade to 10 degrees and cut the uprights and cleats at parallel angles.

**2. Build the shelves.** Run a bead of wood glue along the back edge of a shelf, butt the shelf into its backpiece, and tack it in place with 2-inch brad nails. Glue and tack the sidepieces onto the shelf in the same manner, making sure they're flush at the back and bottom. Wipe away any excess glue.

**3. Attach the cleats.** Starting at the bottom of the uprights, glue the cleats in place, using scrap 1x3s to block out space for the shelves. Secure the cleats with 1 1/4-inch brad nails. To make the tops of the uprights sit flat against the wall, trim 1/4 inch off their back edges, perpendicular to the 10-degree end cuts.

**4. Join the shelves.** Stand up the tiered shelves on their backs, arranged shortest to tallest, on a level work surface. Dry-fit the shelves into the notches on the uprights. Make sure that the trimmed wall-side edges of the uprights rest flat against the work surface. Now glue the shelves to the uprights and drive two 1 1/4-inch screws through each shelf's sidepieces and into the uprights. Fill the fastener holes, then sand and paint. To finish, add nonskid foam pads to the feet and the wall-side edge of each upright.

**Cost:** \$82 for poplar  
**Time:** 6 hours  
**Difficulty:** Easy. The structure is simple, though the many angled cuts need to be made with care.



STYLING: (OPPOSITE PAGE) INGRID LEISS; ILLUSTRATION: GREGORY NEMEC

## buy it

What's the difference? Setup time and materials

\$89 →

### the basic model

The uprights on this unit from Convenience Concepts require assembly, but the extra effort is a trade-off for an affordable price; [walmart.com](http://walmart.com).



\$172 →

### the mid-range model

This sleek, wood-veneered bookshelf by Coaster Company of America has one-piece uprights made of medium-density fiberboard (MDF); [homeclick.com](http://homeclick.com).



\$349 →

### the luxury model

Constructed of veneered poplar and MDF, this unit's deep, wide shelves welcome your bulkiest books and bric-a-brac; [potterybarn.com](http://potterybarn.com).

