

HOW TO MAKE A PUSH BOARD FOR FLYBALL

INTRO

The “push board” is a piece of equipment that emulates the flyball box without needing to pop the tennis ball. It also allows you to change the steepness/angle if the dog needs to work up to the angle of the real box. Oh, and it’s a lot cheaper!

These instructions are for making THREE push boards, since I am using a standard size lumber that accommodates three boards. It’s probably cheaper to make three and sell two to your flyball friends than buy all these supplies and only make one.

SUPPLIES & TOOLS

SUPPLY LIST AND THE APPROXIMATE PRICES I PAID AT LOWE’S

1 sheet of ¾” x 4’ x 8’ standard particle board	19.98, cut at the store for free
2 sets of 2 – 3” hinges (6 total) including screws (> ¾”)	4 per 2-pack
3 – 18” x 27” door mats (acceptable 18”-24” x 27”-30”)	3.98 each
8 oz. Gorilla Glue	10.97
#14 ¾” tacks	1.30
3M 1- 7/8” – 105’ “Tough” black duct tape	9.47
3M colored duct tape(s)	6.98 each

TOOLS I USED

Electric drill
Phillips-head screwdriver
Hammer
Pencil or Sharpie

A BIT ON WHY I CHOSE THESE SUPPLIES

I chose particle board for the lumber because it is cheaper than MDF or hardwood but still very sturdy (my dogs are male German Shepherds, no teacup Yorkies hitting my push boards!) and thicker than the other plywood options. Also because I add the rubber surface there’s no need for a white or finished surface.

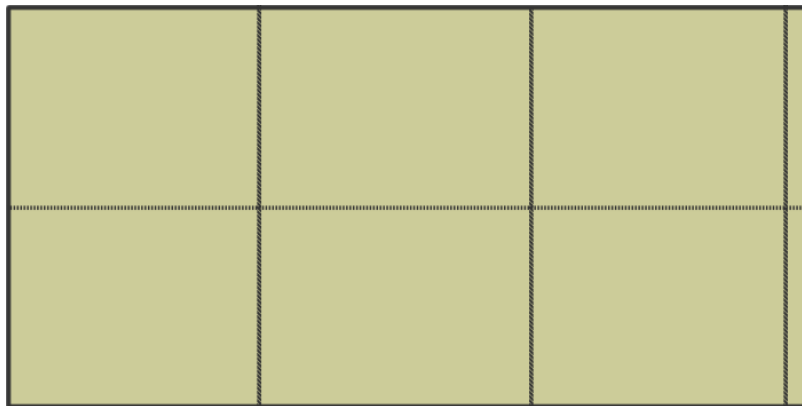
I experimented with the surface of my first board. Originally I had purchased a roll of cheap corrugated vinyl runner. I found the vinyl surface too slippery for my big dogs. Also, it came pretty tightly rolled and was difficult to glue and tack down smoothly. I made several trips to Lowe’s looking for just the right surface. I almost purchased a roll of anti-fatigue matting but it seemed a bit too soft, like my dogs’ nails might tear at the surface. I ended up picking up a few seasonal doormats, all kinds of ugly on one side, but a nice, soft, sturdy rubberized surface on the other side. Also since these mats were already flat, it made them extremely easy to glue and tack onto the board without any bubbles.

For the adhesive I ended up using Gorilla Glue. I tried a cheaper all-purpose adhesive on my first board and it dried like crumbly cement. When I removed the original corrugated vinyl to replace with the door mat I couldn't believe how easily it peeled off. It adhered to the wood surface fine but wasn't at all "sticky" and didn't seem to adhere to what I was applying to the wood. In addition to the adhesive I also purchased tacks. I looked for tack with the largest "head" but not so long that they would stick through the board and ended up with the #14 (whatever that means) ¾" long. One pack yielded enough tacks for three boards.

I also had to change my design after a major duct tape flaw. The original tape was the \$3.47 Scotch colorful stuff (I picked out teal and lime green) and it was horrible. Maybe I just got a bad batch but when I pulled the tape off the roll, the adhesive stuck to the top side, making the adhesive side not very sticky and the non-adhesive side a magnet for dog hair. Instead I got a large roll of the black heavy duty "tough" tape and used that around all the edges and to cover the tacks along the edges of the door mat and then got regular red and blue duct tape to make some fun colored edges. I would not cheap out when it comes to the tape since the dogs' feet will inevitably touch these surfaces at times and you don't want it constantly peeling off. Note: some people like to use white along the bottom to give the dog the same visual as the white panel jumps in the flyball lane and encourage jumping higher onto the board/box. You could also use athletic tape for this if white duct tape is not available.

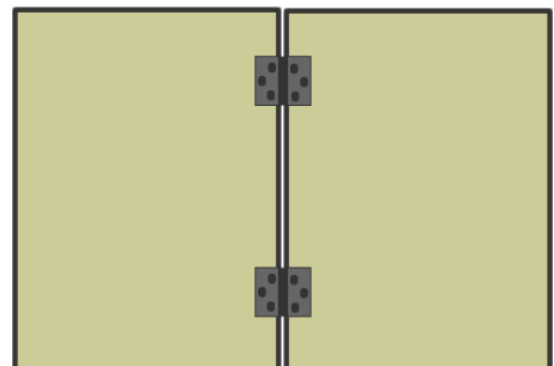
CUTTING THE LUMBER

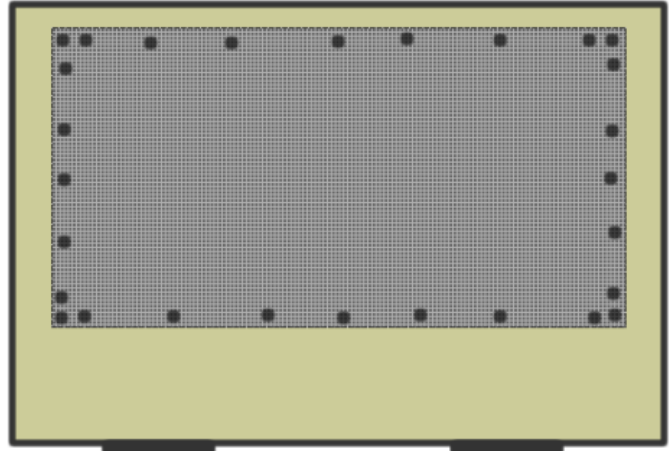
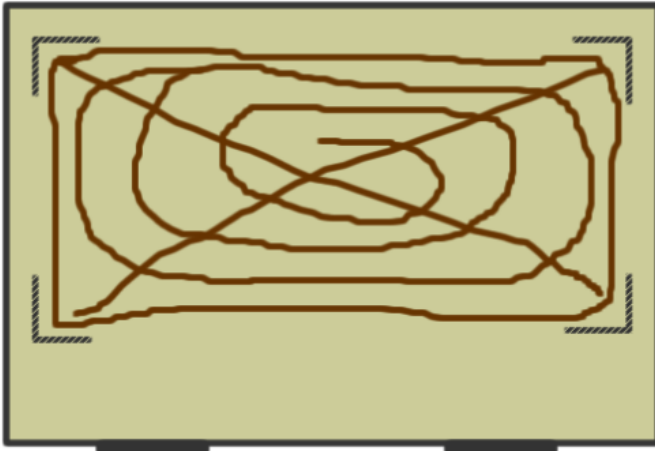
I called the lumber department at Lowe's and was told they can cut any standard lumber you purchase. I'm assuming this is true of most large home improvement stores. I had a table saw available but wasn't sure how to transport a 4'x8' piece of wood. I wasn't sure what dimensions to use and asked someone who has been doing flyball much longer. The dimensions of their boards are 24" x 30". This works out perfect for a 4'x8' sheet. I had them cut it in half the "hotdog" way. Then they can either cut at 30" (and have 6" left as scrap), or you could just have it cut into thirds for an ever-so-slightly wider board, or cut 2-30" and 1-36".



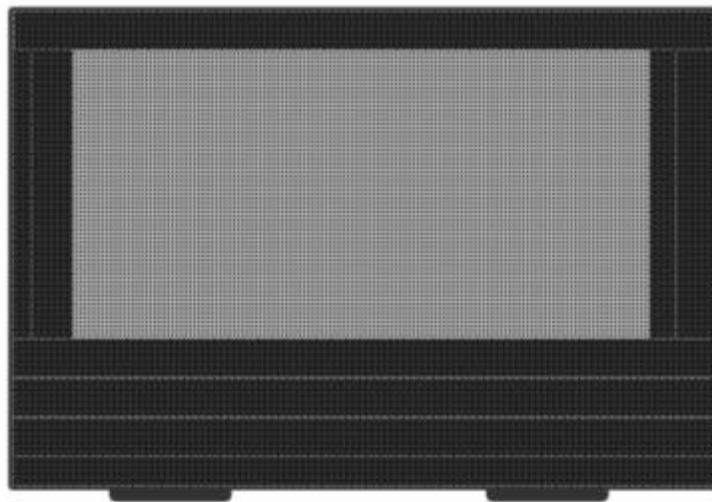
CONSTRUCTION

First connect the boards with two hinges. I spaced mine 3" from the edge. Make sure you put them on the right way so the boards can close flat. I marked the holes with a Sharpie, pre-drilled holes with an electric drill, inserted the screws with the electric drill, and then made sure they were in tight with the Phillips-head screwdriver.





Next, close the board and work on the surface. When I made mine, the door mat I got was 18" x 27" and my board was 24" x 30", so the diagram below is based on those measurements but yours might be slightly different. Lay the mat down and mark off the corners. Then apply the Gorilla Glue to the board. I've never made anything like this before or used Gorilla Glue, so I just went around the edges, made a thick X, and then just kept drawing circles with the glue. Stick the mat on rubber side up (duh!). Tack around the edges.



Lastly, use the duct tape to cover the tacks and create soft edges. I started with the "tough" black tape and covered all visible wood, wrapped around the edges of the board, and covered all the tacks. On the back side of the board I also added a layer of the "tough" tape around the back edge with some dabs of Gorilla Glue. Many people will apply white tape to the area below the rubber surface. This is to give the dog the same visual as the white panel jump in the flyball lane and help encourage the dog to jump higher and push off. You can also use various colored tapes to create fun edges.

You can experiment with ways to train the angle/incline of the board. I use firm cushions and dog bedding to create the angle and allow the board some "give" so that it's not as hard on the dogs' joints when training repetitive drills. Below are some photos of an actual board used with medium sized armchair cushions (though my final product had a steeper angle more correctly emulating the flyball box). We use a piece of Velcro in the corners when we are ready to add the tennis ball.



After using this board to shape the swimmer's turn, Pan has one of the fastest turns in the competition and set a new breed record in his first tournament after only five months of training. He beat his own record eight more times in his second tournament a month later. When people watch him race they all comment on his fast and correct turns!

USING THE PUSH BOARD

NIKON & PAN

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhllly1dZqJY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cx6KrZXucY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlvxvG3YKPY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BU37oTw8Eeg>

DOTTIE

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onkj_gsz7c

EDEN

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pJlf05t7hw>

OTHER USES:

Finn demonstrating rear-end awareness and a "pawstand": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfyCB7bzkTU>

Pan using the push board to learn a formal dumbbell retrieve: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voqljpd4J-l>

The push board can also be used for place board training, perch work, and two-on-two-off agility contacts!