

HOW TO BUILD AN ESCAPE RAFT

If you are stuck on an island with the mainland too far away to even consider swimming to safety, it's up to you to find a safe and secure way to get not only yourself, but also anyone else who may be with you, to safety.



PICK YOUR POSITION

Building a sturdy log raft will take strength and determination. There will be lots of heavy lifting involved, and also the use of an axe or chopping implement.

To make a successful raft you will need plenty of buoyancy, but the raft also needs to be light enough to actually move into the water from your construction area.

Pick a work area in which to build your raft that is near your launch position. If the water is shallow enough, and you feel confident, you could even build your raft in the water to reduce the amount you will have to move it in order to set sail.



SELECT AND COLLECT

You will need to plan the size of your raft to accommodate the number of people that need transporting. As a guide, a three-and-a-half metre by two-and-a-half metre raft will comfortably carry two people.

Take a dozen three-and-a-half-metre long by around 10–15cm in diameter logs. These will form your main deck.

Collect two, slightly smaller in diameter, logs that are just over two metres in length. These will become your cross supports.

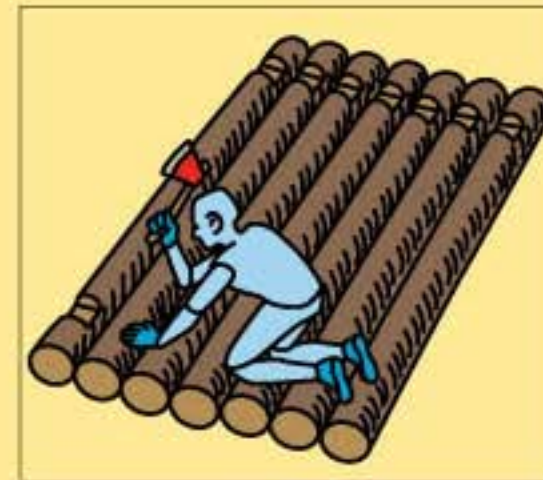
Find yourself plenty of lengths of something to bind the logs with. This can be fibrous bark or even strong seaweed strands.

BUILD YOUR RAFT

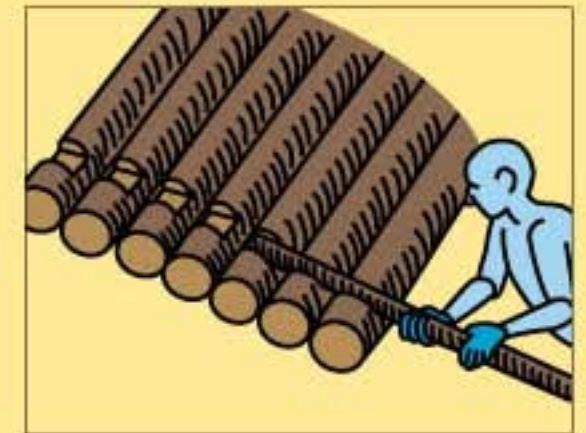
Take your longer deck logs and place them side by side so the ends line up and they form the basic shape of your raft.



Half a metre from one end of each log, use an axe or saw to cut a four-centimetre-deep dovetail. Repeat this at the other end of the logs.



Line up the logs so that the dovetails are all in line. Take one of the two-metre logs and slide this through the dovetails. Bind the logs together using



whatever binding material you have found. Repeat the process on the other end of the raft.

Turn the raft over and collect some dry ferns, brush or whatever you can find to cover the deck and provide a dry footing on your raft.



SAILS AND STUFF

Of course a basic log raft has no real steering abilities so navigation can be a bit hit and miss. To rectify this, a simple sail can be made using branches and tarpaulin, while using oars can not only provide a means of navigation, but also power for those times when there isn't enough wind to sail alone.