

Making Your Tire Sandals

Making Your Tire Sandals:

First, place either foot in the center of a large piece of paper, at least an 8 1/2 x 14.

Trace around your foot, being careful at all times to keep the pencil straight up and down.

Next make a mark on each side, directly down from the point on your ankles (A) (see pattern at the end of this web page).

Also make a mark at the point along the inside of your foot, directly back from your big toe (B).

Remove your foot from the pattern.

Now sketch a bigger outline around the tracing of your foot.

Add about 3/8 inch for the toes and sides, but not to the back.

Then use a ruler and bisect the pattern lengthwise, extending the line three inches past the heel.

This serves as a guide to help you sketch the rear tab accurately.

Now connect the marks you made by your ankles (A), extending a line three inches beyond each side of the pattern.

These tabs will be sketched in front of this line.

Also draw a line for the front tabs, extending from the single mark (B) across the pattern, perpendicular to the line that bisects the foot lengthwise.

The positioning of all these tabs is quite variable, and you can choose to move them forward or back, or at angles to one another, and all usually work, although the arrangement I have suggested may work more consistently.

Problems usually arise with the front set of tabs.



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When at angles across the pattern they can twist a little and dig into your foot.

If the tabs are moved forward or back then the edges can dig into that point (B) on the inside of your foot.

That point is more pronounced on some people's feet than on others.

Now sketch in the five tabs, as shown on the pattern.

These tabs are sized width-wise for 3/4 inch wide strapping, and should be made according to the approximate dimensions I've written in on the pattern, regardless of how big or small the foot.

If anything you might make some adjustments length-wise, adjusting for particularly large or small feet.

Finally, sketch in the holes that you will cut out to thread the strapping through.

This just helps you remember to cut them the right direction when you get to that stage.

Cut the pattern out, and it can be used for both sandals, assuming your feet are fairly similar to one another.

As for tires, I would recommend truck tires, rather than car tires.

The "corner" of any tire, where the sidewalls and tread come together, is always much thicker than the rest.

You can work with that thickness in the tabs of the sandals, but not in the sole itself.

Pickup tires are typically wide enough to work with, and you can make about three pair of sandals from one tire.

Most importantly, always use tires that do not have steel cables running through them.

All tires have some kind of fibrous reinforcement in them, typically nylon or rayon threads.



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Most of the newer tires also have a layer of steel cables, which is not workable at all. Still, there are a few billion of the older tires around without steel cables, so you should not have to look too far to find some.

Just look on the sidewalls of the tire and it will be printed there how many plies of nylon, rayon, or steel are imbedded in the rubber.

We used simple utility knives to cut out our first sandals.

Doing it this way you can trace around the pattern on the outside of the tire and start cutting.

However, I must say this is very laborious and not much fun.

It is hard work, and you could easily slip and cut yourself with the utility knife.

Along the way I have discovered that it is much easier and more enjoyable to cut tires using sharp wood chisels or a bandsaw.

To do the chisel or bandsaw method you must first remove a section of tire.

This allows you to run the piece through the bandsaw, or to put it on a wooden block, where you can chisel from the inside out.

A circular saw works fairly well for cutting tires, except that it creates a lot of blue-black smoke, and binds frequently.

Cut out a piece that is at least a half inch longer than your pattern, and save as much of the sidewalls as you reasonably can.

These are useful later for making the buckles.

Do not try cutting through the inner edge of the tire, which has an imbedded steel band to fit the tire snug against the rim.

Now, trace the pattern on the inside of the tire, being certain that the pattern is centered and straight on the tire.

Even a slight 1/2 inch angle along the length of a sandal can cause problems when you wear it.

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I've done separate tests, cutting out the sandals with chisels and with a bandsaw, and the bandsaw method is only a little faster.

A good set of wood chisels works just fine if you do not have the bandsaw.

I would suggest making only one sandal at a time, and completing it.

Finish the one and try it on; you might think of some modifications to improve the next one.

Few of my pairs of sandals are exactly identical, as I usually find some new idea to try on that second sandal.

The next step, after cutting out the sandal, is to thin the four side tabs.

The tabs are generally cut from that "corner" on the tire, where there is a thick lump of tread.

These are easiest to thin on a bandsaw.

You can, however, do a crude but adequate job by cutting the lump down with some careful chiseling or with a sharp knife.

Thin down as close as you can to the nylon/rayon plies, without actually cutting any of them.

This step is not easy by any method I have found, and I typically leave 1/8 to 1/4 inch of rubber covering the plies, for a total thickness of up to half an inch.

That is still quite thick, but thin enough to work.

Now, to make the tabs flex upward, take a razor blade and slice straight into the tread of the tire at the joint where the tab attaches.

Slice in all the way until the plies inside are exposed.

Be careful not to cut into those fibers.

Chisel out each of the eyelets, where the strapping will be threaded through.

For this I use a 1 inch chisel and a 1/4 inch chisel.

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Be careful to not cut too close to the edge.

If you break out the side of a tab, then you generally have to start all over.

Also cut a set of buckles from the sidewalls of the tire.

These are easy to do.

For strapping, I use a sort of a nylon harness strapping, available at farm and ranch supply stores.

3/4 inch wide strapping works well with the one inch slots.

Cut pieces that are extra long, you can trim them off after you thread them through.

Use a match, and melt the end of the nylon strap to secure the threads.

To do the back strap, thread through the hole marked point (C) on the pattern and stitch an inch or so of the strap back on itself.

Thread around through the other eyelets, through the buckle, through the other hole on the first tab, and once again through the buckle.

The front strap should be threaded through the buckle, through both eyelets, and back through the buckle again.

This system is a little hard to adjust, but once set, I find I can slip my foot in and out, without having to tighten or loosen them.

The finished sandals should be comfortable to wear, although you may need to do some fine-tuning to get them right.

For any serious hiking you should wear a couple heavy pairs of socks, or moccasins, or bring along some moleskin.

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Note:

Hi, Just read your interesting article on making sandals out of rubber tires. We did that in Germany after WW2 because there were no shoes one could buy for years. As a 14 year old I made a pair that I wore all year (hiking all over the Alps and over glaciers in them during summer vacation), from 1946 to 1949, when one was able to buy a pair of real shoes once again.

The straps were cut from my old worn out "Lederhosen". They were inserted into slits sliced into the sides of the sole (below the fabric belt), and fastened with twine that we threaded through holes melted into the rubber with a needle that was heated in a flame. That was not necessary if one had a big enough needle, or pliers to force the needle through.

To secure the straps even better, we made some rubber cement by soaking some gum rubber in gasoline until the rubber was dissolved - took about three days, if I remember correctly. We didn't have utility knives so I used an old hacksaw blade that I honed to a razor edge.

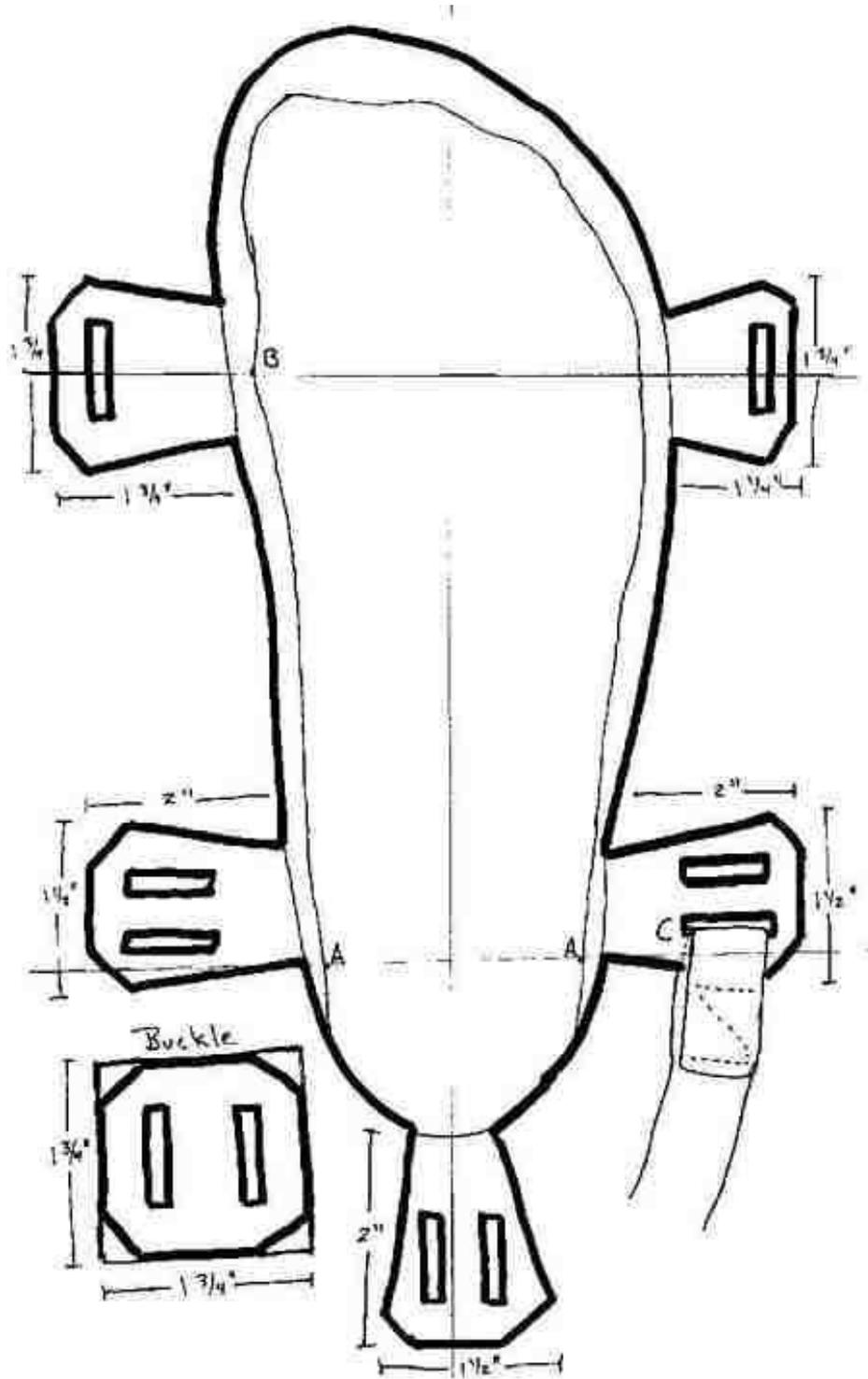
All that probably won't interest you, but the way we cut the rubber was so easy: We used plain water to lubricate the cut. Once there is water in the cut the knife cuts like butter! Be careful, I slipped and sliced through the tops of three fingers. (Want to see my scars?)

When I looked at the pictures of your sandals I saw that you left tabs from the sidewalls to attach the straps. That is much better than our method and left me wondering if one could make some 'boots' out of a properly sized tire? That would have been much nicer for wear in the snow! We never considered that, because the man, who sold the tire pieces on the black market, had already cut the sides off.



He punched discs out of tires to make bicycle tires (for those who were lucky enough to still have a bike.) You bought enough of the discs, drilled or burned holes in the center, and ran a sturdy fence wire through the holes. To mount these 'tires' one twisted the fence wire until it was tight enough take up any slack. It was a very hard ride, especially on the old cobblestone roads, but it was better than walking for some people.

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