MEMBERS VAULT

Property and Backyard Layout Worksheets

A thinking tool for placing a bunker, smokehouse, golf simulator, or rink on the lot you actually have — before you dig or pour.

Drawn from The Practical Backyard Bunker, Building Your Backyard Smokehouse, Building Your Backyard Golf Simulator, and The Backyard Ice Rink.

A book interior for *The Practical Family Compound* was not available, so these worksheets do not use that book. Garden and household water appear on the placement checklist as "considering / not for this lot" rows only — there is no Family Compound or garden-book placement text behind them.

WHAT THIS IS NOT

These worksheets are a thinking tool for your own observations. They are not a survey, site plan, engineering drawing, or permit set, and they are not a substitute for local codes or a qualified professional. Do not dig or build from this sheet alone.

BUILT, NOT JUST WRITTEN.

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How to use these worksheets

Look at the lot you have. Then open the book.

These pages help you look at your own lot. They are not a drawing you can build from, and they are not a substitute for the matching book, local rules, or a qualified professional.

HOW TO USE THE SHEETS

1. Walk the lot. Fill the observation prompts from what you can see and have already noticed — sun, slope, drainage, neighbors, hose reach, power, winter wind or shade — not from memory of a website.
2. On a grid page, write the scale you are using: "1 square = ____ feet." The books do not set a standard scale, so you choose one that fits your lot on the page. Mark north, the street or access edge, and a simple house footprint. This is a sketch, not a survey.
3. Use the placement checklist to mark each possible project as have / considering / not for this lot. Read the matching book before you dig or pour.
4. The book-note pages are prompt lists, not calculation sheets and not legal setbacks. Where a book gives a general distance it has observed, it is labeled as the book's own note. Your local rules still govern.
5. The rink sheet is on its own page, in the ice-rink palette, because that book has its own site questions (shade, slope, septic fields, insurance).

SETBACKS AND PERMITS

What do your local rules require? That is the question to answer — by calling your city or county building department, and by reading any HOA rules you have. The books are clear that setbacks and permits vary by place. No number on these sheets is a legal setback for your lot.

Read the matching book before you dig or pour. If you later use a Backyard Build Plan from the Vault, start with these observations, not with a shovel.

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What I can already see on this lot

A prompt list, not a calculation sheet

Answer from what you can see and have already noticed on this lot. Leave a line blank rather than guessing.

Sun. Where does the sun actually hit this yard in summer, and in winter? Which spots stay in shade? (The golf book treats summer sun as a cooling problem; the rink book treats winter afternoon sun as an ice problem.)

Slope and drainage you can see. After a heavy rain, where does water sheet, pool, or clear within an hour? Any spot that still has puddles the next day is one the bunker book takes off the list for a buried shelter. Do not put a smokehouse in a low spot that collects water.

Neighbors and privacy. Who is close, and on which side? Which way would noise, lights, or smoke travel? Have you talked with the neighbors who would be affected?

Water access and hose reach. Where is the nearest outdoor tap, and can a hose reach the spot you are considering? For a rink, where will winter water come from if outdoor taps are shut off?

Winter shade or wind you have noticed. What have you already noticed on this lot — a south-facing open patch, a shady fence line, a windy corner? Write what you have seen, not a guess.

Power access. Where is the main panel, and how far is the spot you are considering? The golf book treats a long electrical run as a real cost to quote before you finalize a location.

Setbacks and rules. What do your local rules require? Write the answer you get from the building department or HOA — not a number copied from a book. If you have an HOA, the smokehouse book asks for written approval, not a verbal one.

Underground and access. Have you called 811 (or filed a request) before anyone puts a shovel in the ground? The bunker book notes that 811 marks utility-owned lines only — private lines, sprinklers, a septic drain field, or a line you or a previous owner installed will not be marked. Can a machine actually get to the spot (gates, fences, retaining walls)?

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Lot sketch — coarser grid

Write the scale. Mark north. This is a sketch, not a site plan.

Scale: 1 square = [write in feet] _____

Coarser grid — use a scale that lets the whole lot, or the part you are thinking about, fit on the page.

▲ N

STREET / ACCESS EDGE — LABEL THIS SIDE, OR MARK IT ON THE GRID

Sketch the house footprint, known edges, and existing sheds or fences. Not a survey. Legend: house · access/gate · water tap · proposed project · trees or obstacles

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Lot sketch — denser grid

Write the scale. Mark north. This is a sketch, not a site plan.

Scale: 1 square = [write in feet — denser grid] _____

Denser grid — same idea, smaller squares, for a closer look at one part of the lot.

▲ N

STREET / ACCESS EDGE — LABEL THIS SIDE, OR MARK IT ON THE GRID

Sketch the house footprint, known edges, and existing sheds or fences. Not a survey. Legend: house · access/gate · water tap · proposed project · trees or obstacles

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Placement checklist

Have / considering / not for this lot

Mark one column for each possible project. Read the matching book before you dig or pour.

PROJECT				NOTES
Bunker / storm shelter The Practical Backyard Bunker	☐ Have	☐ Considering	☐ Not for this lot	
Household water (storage or access you already have) Notes only — no compound-book interior was available	☐ Have	☐ Considering	☐ Not for this lot	
Garden Notes only — no garden-book interior was used	☐ Have	☐ Considering	☐ Not for this lot	
Backyard ice rink The Backyard Ice Rink	☐ Have	☐ Considering	☐ Not for this lot	
Smokehouse Building Your Backyard Smokehouse	☐ Have	☐ Considering	☐ Not for this lot	
Golf simulator shed Building Your Backyard Golf Simulator	☐ Have	☐ Considering	☐ Not for this lot	
Other (name it) Write the matching book if you have one	☐ Have	☐ Considering	☐ Not for this lot	

READ THE MATCHING BOOK BEFORE YOU DIG OR POUR

A checkbox on this page is not a go-ahead. The bunker book, the smokehouse book, the golf book, and the rink book each have their own site, permit, and safety chapters. If a row is only a note (garden, household water), leave it as a reminder until you have a book or a professional to work from — do not invent a layout for it here.

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Book notes to take onto the lot

Prompts from the bunker, smokehouse, and golf books — not a permit set

These are planning prompts taken from the books, not legal setbacks and not a calculation sheet. Where a book mentions a general distance, it is labeled as the book's own observation. Your local rules still govern. What do your local rules require?

BUNKER — FROM CHAPTERS 3 AND 4

After a heavy rain, does this spot drain within an hour, or still hold puddles the next day?

Is it a little higher than the land around it, in the open, and clear of mature trees? (The book asks you to stay well clear of big trees and their roots.)

The book notes that most backyard shelters end up 20 to 50 feet from the house — too close, and debris can bury the hatch; too far, and you are running across an open yard. Time a walk at night from the farthest bedroom, carrying a child or a bag. If it takes more than about a minute, the book says think hard about whether that's the right spot. This is the book's planning test, not a legal setback.

Have you called 811 (or filed online) before anyone digs? Do you also know private lines and the septic drain field, which 811 will not mark?

Can an excavator, a skid steer, and a concrete truck or pump actually get there? Measure the gates.

Where will drainage go — is there somewhere lower than the bottom of the shelter, or would a pump be required?

What did the building department say when you asked: do I need a permit? Are there zoning limits? What are the setbacks? Are there drainage or stormwater rules? Is stamped engineering required? Write down who you spoke to.

SMOKEHOUSE — FROM CHAPTER 3

Which way is the prevailing wind on this property? Can the exhaust face away from your house and away from a neighbor's windows?

The book describes two pressures: far enough that smoke and a fire emergency don't threaten the house, and close enough that you will actually use it. It notes that most builders aim for at least fifteen feet of clearance (and more is better), and that the sweet spot for most properties is twenty to forty feet from the back of the house. Those are the book's general observations, not your local setback. Site it as close as fire safety and local codes allow.

Is this a low spot that collects water? Is the ground reasonably level and accessible for hauling wood and food?

Have you checked whether your municipality treats a smokehouse as an outbuilding and requires a permit? If you have an HOA, do you have written approval — not verbal?

Have you talked with the neighbors on the downwind side before you start?

GOLF SIMULATOR — FROM CHAPTER 3

Is the shed a short walk from the door you actually use, or is there enough friction that you won't go?

How much direct summer sun would it get? The book treats shade as real cooling value if you have two reasonable options.

How far is the run from the main electrical panel? Have you asked an electrician for a quick quote before you finalize the location?

Which way would the hitting end face, and how close are the neighbors? The book notes that a simulator shed isn't silent.

Is the ground level enough to build on, or would you be grading a slope?

Have you called the building department about accessory structures and setbacks? The book notes that unpermitted structures can create problems when you sell.

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Rink placement — from The Backyard Ice Rink

Its own page, because the rink book has its own site questions

This page is only about a backyard rink. Prompts come from the planning chapters and Chapter 11 of *The Backyard Ice Rink*. Do the slope measurement in the book (a string and a line level, in Chapter 2). Do not dig, stake, or fill from this sheet alone.

Sun and shade. In North America, the winter sun stays low in the southern sky. The book says the best rink spots get shade from the south — from the house, a garage, a fence, or evergreens — and that a spot open to the south that gets three or four hours of direct afternoon sun will struggle to hold ice. What happens on this lot in winter afternoon sun?

Slope. Almost no yard is truly flat. Have you measured the slope the way Chapter 2 shows (string and line level), in the fall, before the ground freezes? Write the result you measured — not a guess.

Drainage and what's underground. Where did water pool last spring? The book says those spots stay soggy, freeze late, and thaw early. A rink should never go over a septic drain field.

Water and hose reach. Where will the water come from? Can a hose reach the spot? If outdoor taps are shut off for winter, do you have a plan the book describes (for example, a hose adapter on a laundry or basement tap)? The book also walks through how to time a hose and how slope changes the volume you need — do that math in the book, not here.

A view from the house. Can you see the rink from a window?

Neighbors, HOA, and insurance. Before you build, find out whether your HOA or town has rules about temporary structures, lighting, water use, or front-yard projects. If you have close neighbors, the book suggests a heads-up before the boards go up, especially if you'll have lights on in the evening. Have you called your homeowner's insurance company — the book asks you to do that before the season, and Chapter 11 explains why?

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Photos and measurements I already have

Your tape measure and your camera — not a survey

This is a list of tape-measure distances and photos the owner already has. It is not a survey.

Date I walked the lot, and the weather that day

Tape-measure distances I already have (house to fence, house to the spot I'm considering, gate width, hose reach) — my measurements, not a survey

Photos I already have (label what each one shows: drainage after rain, winter sun or shade, the access route, the neighbor side)

Utility marks I have already requested or received (811 or equivalent) — and private lines I still need to find myself

Names and dates of any call to the building department, HOA, insurer, or electrician, and what they said

Anything I still need to measure or photograph before I open the matching book's build chapters

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