



## TOMBSTONES

[http://www.halloweentombstones.com/halloween-tombstones\\_hm2.html](http://www.halloweentombstones.com/halloween-tombstones_hm2.html)

### HALLOWEEN TOMBSTONES - HOME MADE WOODEN GRAVE MARKERS



Wooden crosses as grave markers are very simple to make and should be included in every graveyard. There are two ways to make wooden crosses, the easy way and the better way. First decide what size cross or crosses you want to make. The basic rule of thumb is that it should be twice as tall as it is wide, plus an additional foot in length for planting it in the ground. Example: Lets say you want a three foot tall cross. You would need one board that was 48 inches tall (36 inches + 12 inches) for the vertical beam. And a second board that was 18 inches long for the horizontal beam.

#### The Easy Way

After cutting the two boards to the desired lengths, use a hand or power saw to make two diagonal cuts on the last four inches of the long board to make the end of it into a stake to make it easier to push it into the ground. Next, set the short board on top of the long board one third of the way down from the top, not including the extra foot you added to stake it into the ground (see diagram). In this case the top edge of the short board should be one foot from the top of the long board. Now hammer two finishing nails through the top (shorter) board and into the lower (long) board.

Supplies	Tools
1 - 2" x 2" x 5' board	Hammer
1 - 2" x 2" x 2' board	Hand or power saw
2 - 1-1/2" finishing nails	

## The Better Way

If you have woodworking skills, making a cross using crossed half-lap joints is quick and easy using an electric router with a straight or rebate bit. To cut a half-lap joint, half the thickness of each board is removed where they will be connected so the two overlap and their faces are flush, in this case 1" deep by 4 inches long. To ensure accurate results, all your boards need to be exactly the same thickness. If they are not, you won't be able to cut the half-lap joints so the two pieces are flush on both faces.

Supplies	Tools
1 - 2" x 2" x 5' board	Router and router table
1 - 2" x 2" x 2' board	Hand or power saw
Wood glue	Wood Clamp

## Painting and Distressing

We like to use a dark stain when painting our crosses. Using cheese cloth to apply it will give it a weathered look. Using gloves, take a small ball of cheese cloth and drip it into the stain, allowing the excess to drip off. Rub the wood with the stain lightly. Give it a second to soak in and remove with a cloth or cloth-like paper towel. This will give it an old, weathered look. Use a medium brown or gray stain. If you are going to carve an epitaph in the cross, do so before staining. If you are going to paint one on or use a wood burner, it can be done after word. Use the wood burner in a well ventilated area after stain has been applied to avoid any harmful fumes.

## Epitaphs

You may or may not want to add epitaphs to your crosses.

One way to add an epitaph is to use a wood burner. Care should be taken as wood burners get very hot and can burn the user or start a fire.

Another is simply painting it on using artist brushes. You can use acrylic craft paint. You should use paint that is darker than the finish on the cross, not lighter.

You can use stencils and either spray or use a brush to paint the open areas of the stencil.

## Staking the Cross into the Ground

If your ground is soft, you can simply use a mallet to pound the cross into the ground. If your ground is hard like ours, you will want to dig a small hole into the ground, place the sharp end into the hole, fill in the hole and tamp the dirt down for a secure fit. A post hole digger works well for this.

## Tree Branch Cross

Another way to make a cross is to use two tree branches fastened together with heavy-weight twine. If you have forests near by, finding the right sized branches won't be a problem. If you have trees in your yard that need trimming, now's the time! Cut the sizes you'll need and tie together with rough twine. If the branches are thick enough, you can use a couple of nails first to keep the branches in place and then add the twine for an old, authentic look. One Halloween, during the "Blair Witch" craze, we made about a hundred small twig crosses and stick figures and hung them all over the trees above the graveyard using clear fishing line. It really added an extra spookiness to the graveyard that year! This can be done any Halloween to add that extra "something" to your Halloween haunt!

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