

WALK

On simple, safe, adjustable stilts

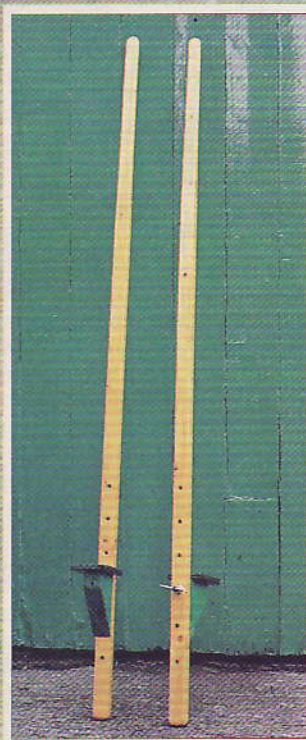
IT all started like this. "Stilts" said my daughter, "stilts are what we need; my children are growing up without having all the experience and fun of stilt-walking that I had when I was young".

Simple, I first thought; a block of wood nailed to a batten, but there were design requirements to be met. Firstly, three children of ascending ages are pretty sure to be of different sizes. The size must be suitable for the smallest, the largest, and the in-between. Secondly, they must be light enough for the slightest and strong enough for the greatest, probably mum or dad, and they may well be left around in the garden exposed to all weathers (few children are really paragons of virtue). Fourthly, but by no means least, came the safety aspects, they must have a sufficient footrest to hold all foot sizes without slipping, the fixing must not bend or fail, and of course the poles must not snap.

The local DIY store provided the poles, but only after much sorting through the display to find straight lengths without large weakening knots. The poles needed to be long enough in use to tuck behind the shoulder and a length of 5ft 6in. (1676mm) was decided on for this. To confirm the strength I propped a length on two bricks, one at each end and hopped on to it. No break, everything OK!

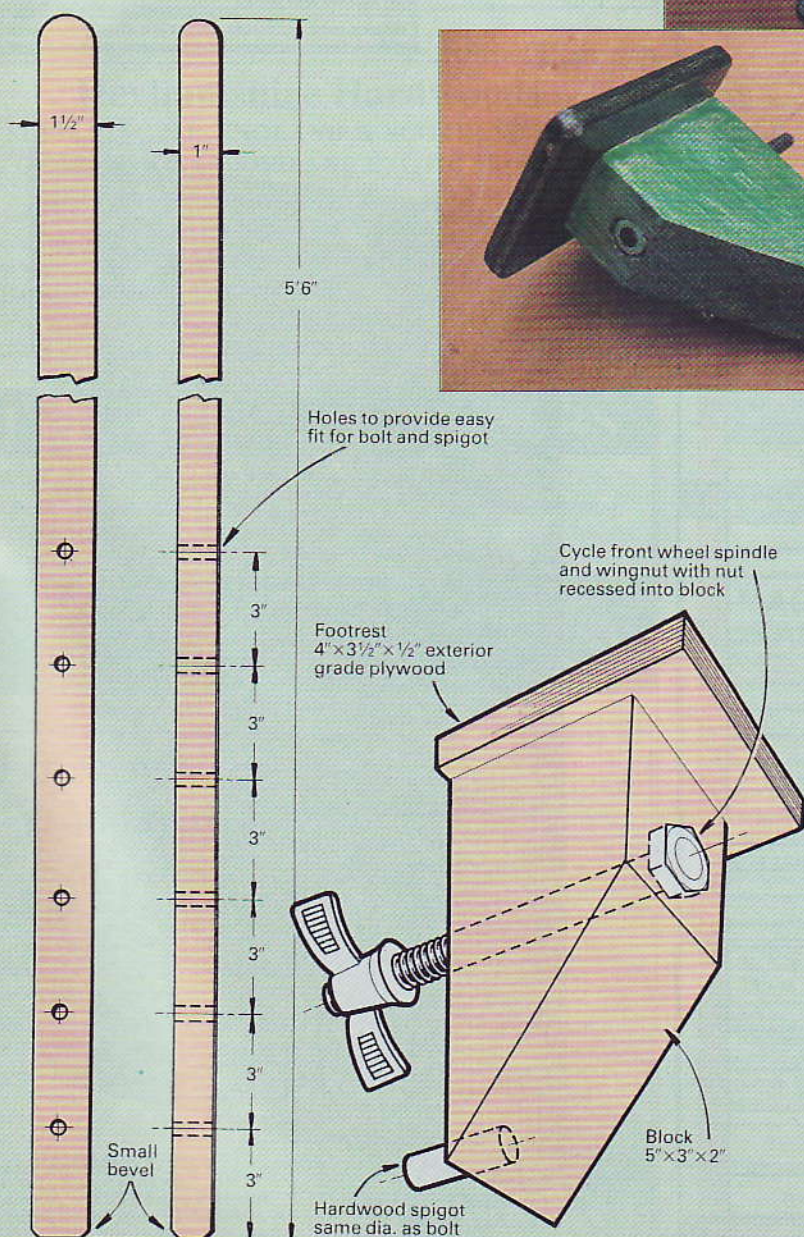
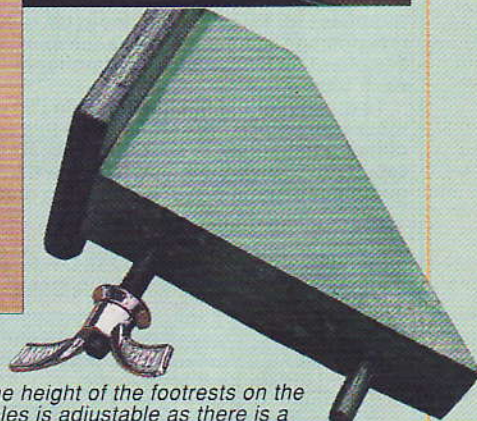
The footrests had to be adjustable in height from the ground and I decided the safe way was to bolt through the pole, using a wingnut for ease with a spigot to prevent twisting. The positioning of the holes for bolt and spigot was carefully measured and marked using a centre punch to maintain accuracy. This is important as the footrests must be interchangeable step-wise up the pole.

The bolts were a problem, they were unobtainable locally of a size to fit locally available wing nuts. I finally



KTALL

A plea from his daughter encouraged Derek Wallace to make some stilts so that her family could have some fun turning to walk tall



The height of the footrests on the poles is adjustable as there is a series of holes for locating these using bolts and wingnuts and spigots to prevent twisting.

ran to earth some bicycle front wheel spindles, sold together with nuts and separately available with large wingnuts with integral washers to fit. The spindles were measured and cut to length fixing a hexagonal nut at one end with Araldite.

The footrest blocks were made of pine from my scrap store and the actual footrests were of exterior grade ply from the same source. All was sanded down, the top 8in. (200mm) of the poles was chamfered and the ends rounded and smoothed for young tender hands. two coats of Rustin's transparent polyurethane lacquer were applied and I denibbed between coats.

When all was dry it was time to try them out. After some initial stumbling about and much laughter, the family can now all do at least 100 steps without falling off — an exercise in balance and deportment, not to mention fun.