



Course Building Construction
Section: Masonry



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Build a Wythe

What You Will Do

Learn what a wythe is in masonry and how masons build walls in straight, level rows.

Materials You Will Need

- Books, dominoes, Jenga blocks, soap bars, toy blocks, or small boxes (to use as blocks)
- Paper strips or cardboard (to represent mortar)
- Ruler
- String

What Is a Wythe?

A wythe is one vertical layer of masonry units (brick, block, or stone) that is one unit thick.

Examples:

- A single row of bricks = one wythe
- Two side-by-side layers tied together = two wythes

Masons use wythes to build strong walls.

Step 1: Make a Foundation Line

- Lay a string straight on floor/table.
- This is the wall line.
- Masons use lines to keep walls straight.

Step 2: Lay the First Course

- Place blocks in one row along the line.
- Leave small equal spaces or use paper strips between them for mortar joints.
- This row is called a course.

Step 3: Check Alignment

- Use a ruler to make sure the row is straight.
- Adjust blocks until even.

Step 4: Build the Second Course

Place the second row on top, but stagger the joints (offset the seams.).

Example:

- Bottom row: [brick][brick][brick]
- Second row: [brick][brick][brick]

This is called running bond.

Step 5: Build One Wythe High Wall

Continue stacking 3–5 courses high.

- Keep it:
- Straight
- Level-looking
- Joints staggered

Step 6: Two-Wythe Challenge

Build a second layer beside the first.

Now compare:

- One wythe wall
- Two wythe wall

Which feels stronger?

Reflection Questions

- Why are staggered joints stronger than stacked seams?
- Why do masons use string lines?
- Why is a two-wythe wall stronger?
- Why do small alignment mistakes matter as walls get taller?