

# Scout Bridge

I really built this bridge as I went along, so I don't have any plans. Everything was driven by the wood. I used clear redwood. This wood is very light, which is a major factor, and it is highly weather and abuse resistant. The bridge is over ten years old and still going after well over 1,000 kids and parents crossing it. It has been decorated in a variety of ways and used by the Local Girl Scout Troops for their bridgings. It has also been used by Kindergarten groups to bridge to first grade and was used last year at an 8th grade dance for pictures. I only finished the handrails to keep down splinters, though redwood is fairly fine grained anyway. I started with standard 6 X 8 boards. The planks of the bridge have the Scout Law routed into each plank. I purchased a jig from Sears that makes this easy. I used four-inch letters that I printed from my printer. You could paint them, but the routed letters will last longer. My planks are removable. I used dowel pins to hold them on. There are a few design flaws that I have fixed over time and still a few that I can't do much about.

I have one continual problem with the bridge and that is that I allowed the first and last planks overhang the end. Without support all the way across the edge, a misstep on those planks and they come off. Most of the time kids step on the bridge so this is not a problem. No one has been hurt, but it is annoying. I am not sure why I designed it that way. In retrospect I would make the bridge longer so that the last plank matches up with the end of the bridge.

The bridge's handrails were originally built in three pieces (each side). These fit together by dowels. Eventually these loosened and the rails would come apart if grabbed and used for support. I glued them, but this never seemed to hold very long. I finally added some small brass plates across each joint, on both sides of the joint. This seems to be stable though not really strong.

In ten years I have replaced one of the posts, added some supports under the support pieces, and added the long cross braces underneath the bridge. It all remains very light. I can lift the main bridge into a car by myself. It does take a min-van or station wagon to carry the whole unit to and from bridging sites, but it easily fits through doors, etc.

I am sure a little forethought will produce an even better design. I look forward to your success. Feel free to contact me if you have any other questions.

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