
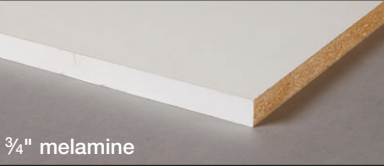








The smart builder's shelving selector

Note: All shelves measured 11" wide before the addition of edging.		Match the shelf length you want with the material you're considering. The result tells you how much in inches our sample sagged in the center while bearing a 64-lb load. (Edging is 3/4x1 1/4" hardwood.)					
material	you need to know	edging difference	shelf span				
			24"	32"	36"	42"	48"
		amount of sagging in inches over shelf span					
 3/4" wheat stalk	This option looks good for utility purposes, with its painted bullnose edge. We found it priced at about \$11 for a 1x8' piece. It needs a lot of support.	no edge	5/64	11/64	19/64	34/64	52/64
 3/4" melamine	Even with an edge, this common shelving material developed a noticeable sag at 36". A 4x8' sheet costs \$25 at our home center.	no edge oak edge	3/64 1/64	9/64 5/64	19/64 8/64	33/64 16/64	52/64 26/64
 3/4" particleboard	With a solid-wood edge added, this inexpensive material (\$11.50 per sheet) can handle medium loads in a garage or workshop.	no edge pine edge	7/64 0	15/64 5/64	27/64 6/64	44/64 12/64	1 18/64
 3/4" particleboard with plastic laminate	A simple layer of plastic laminate (about \$2 per square foot) on each face adds a surprising amount of strength to particleboard.	no edge oak edge	1/64 0	5/64 4/64	10/64 8/64	17/64 12/64	30/64 21/64
 3/4" oriented-strand board (OSB)	When you make rough shelving, note that medium-cost OSB (\$27 per sheet) offers more strength than particleboard.	no edge pine edge	5/64 1/64	8/64 4/64	9/64 6/64	18/64 10/64	27/64 15/64
 3/4" medium-density fiberboard (MDF)	MDF is comparable to the other manufactured sheet goods in strength, but has a smooth surface. Our sheet cost about \$20.	no edge pine edge	3/64 2/64	9/64 2/64	15/64 6/64	32/64 12/64	47/64 21/64
 3/4" oak-veneer plywood	With an edge, this choice gives you furniture-like appearance along with visually acceptable deflection up to 36". It's expensive, at \$40 per sheet.	no edge oak edge	1/64 0	4/64 3/64	7/64 5/64	7/64 7/64	7/64 7/64
 3/4" Baltic birch plywood	This is the winner of our strength test. However, its face has a bland appearance in comparison to solid wood, and we paid a hefty \$46 for a 5x5' sheet.	no edge poplar edge	0 0	4/64 0	6/64 0	10/64 0	15/64 6/64
 3/4" solid oak	There's no need for edging unless you build shelves in the 48" range. But it's expensive: \$5.50 per board foot at our home center.	no edge oak edge	1/64 1/64	1/64 1/64	3/64 2/64	9/64 4/64	20/64 13/64
 3/4" solid pine	With an edge, it performs as well as oak, and we paid only \$1.50 per board foot.	no edge pine edge	1/64 0	5/64 0	9/64 0	15/64 4/64	20/64 7/64