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Fuselage Frame Boats: A guide to building skin kayaks and canoes

S. Jeff Horton

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Tired of struggling with that heavy plastic kayak? Are you looking for a lightweight boat but not willing to take out a second mortgage to buy it? What if I told you that you could build a boat weighting less than 35 lbs for $300 to $500? You can and in my new book I will show you how.

This style was very popular in the 1950's and 1960's and many boat plans appeared in magazines such as Popular Mechanics and Popular Science. Even though it is no longer fashionable in the magazines, the fuselage style of construction is still probably the most cost effective way to build a small boat. Recently I have seen a renewed interest in this type of boat construction. People are rediscovering the advantages of Fuselage style Skin Boats. Fuselage frames boats cost very little to build. A sheet of marine plywood, a lightweight wood such as cedar for the stringers, a few yards of a synthetic fabric for the skin and something to waterproof the skin. Materials for a basic 17' kayak cost around $300. Adding a seat, deck rigging and adjustable footrest would add another $100 to $150 dollars depending on your preferences. For somewhere around $400 you can build a high performance, 30-35 lbs boat. A composite construction canoe or kayak of similar weight would cost thousands of dollars.

This book will walk you through the process of building your own Skin on Frame canoe or kayak. I start by addressing the space needed to build a boat as well as tools needed. There is a detailed section on laying out the frames from a table of offsets. Progressing to how to assemble the frame, skinning the boat and through all the steps to preparing your boat for launching. Included are offsets for three of my boat designs. The StoneFly canoe, Curlew, a 15' Sea Kayak and new sea kayak design Pouco Barta.

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