

# How to Build a Billy Cart Racer

Build your own automobile.

**Genre:** Entertainment, History, Popular Culture, Science and Technology



**Billy carts are just as fun now as they were 100s of years ago.**

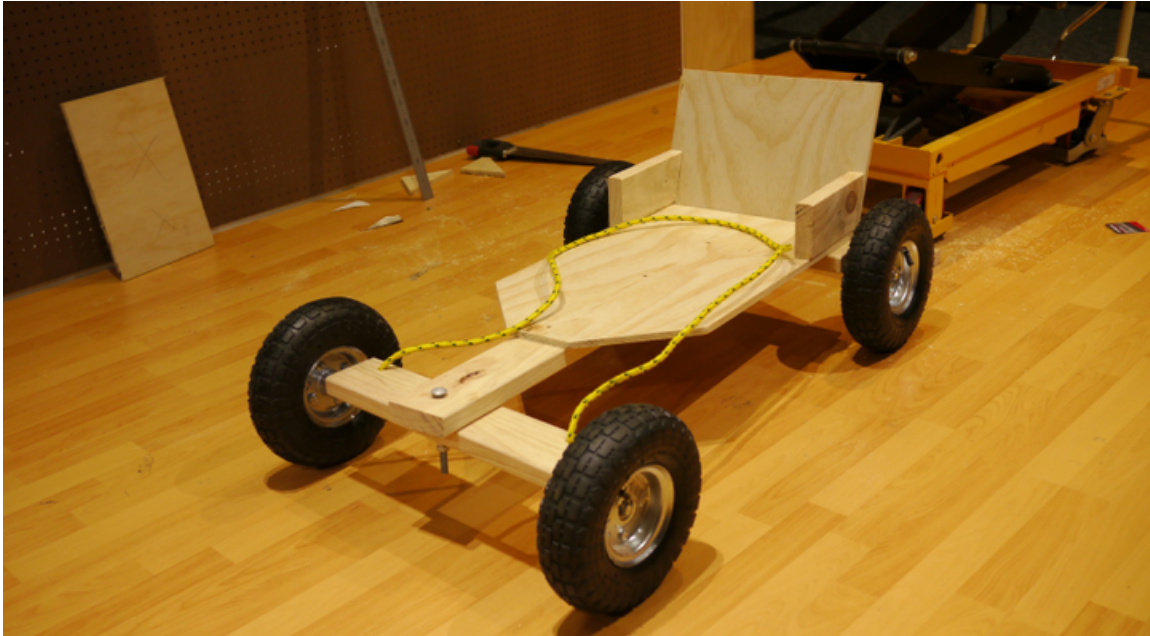
Harness your boots, strap on your seatbelt, and get ready to launch your Billy cart down a hill at 100 miles per hour ... well not exactly 100 miles, more like 30 miles per hour (at top speed) but that is really fast when strapped into a cart that may or may not have any brakes!



**Billy carts can be made in many different designs, depending on the materials you have available.**



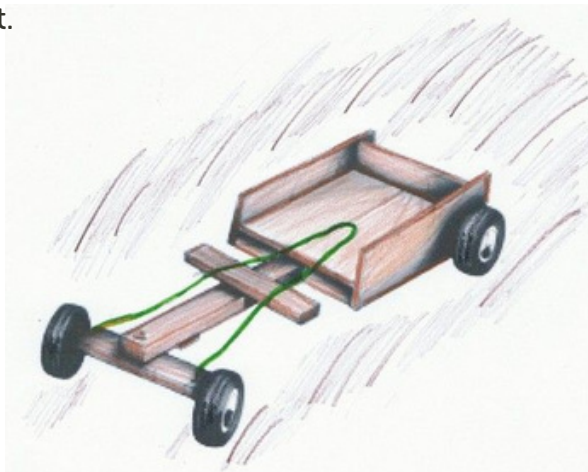
A Billy Cart Racer is a homemade buggy, trolley, or cart (it has many different names depending on the country you live in) that is built from the pieces of wooden crates, roller skate wheels, or even old shopping trolleys. They're designed to be self-powered, meaning you and your friend's leg power moves them while holding on tight to a moveable front steering column, usually joined with ropes that help you move left or right.



**You can make your Billy Cart Racer as simple or as complex as you want.**

## History of Billy Cart Racers

The extremely fun Billy Cart Racer can be traced all the way back to the 1880s when kids filled the streets with their makeshift, homemade carts racing each other to see who could get to the finish line first.



If you were cool enough to have yours pulled by an actual Billy goat (hence the name) you were really special.



**Billy carts in the 1880s and beyond were often made from wooden crates, the wheels of trolleys, and rope.**

But by the 1930s motorised cars and trucks started to rule the roads and small converted wooden delivery boxes driven by children were becoming less common but that didn't stop them from being built for fun and they are still being made today.



**Billy carts are still being built today and can range from being made out of wood, metal, and/or plastic.**



When built and created under the supervision of an adult, you can build a billy cart that can enter races or competitions, with many regions in North America and the United Kingdom holding yearly races, with adults even entering the competitions.

# Your Guide to Building a Billy Cart Racer

You first need to gather all the materials in your garage or at a local hardware store to make your own racer. You can even go to a local second-hand store that can have some of the materials you need at a lower cost. Wheels, wood, axles, brackets, split pins, a roll of vinyl tubing, nuts, bolts, washers, screws, and a roll of rope... That last one is possibly the most important item, as it's both your steering wheel and the thing you'll use to drag your billy cart racer up the nearest hill.

## Grab some tools:

- something to measure with
- something to mark with
- something to cut wood with
- something to put screws in with
- something to drill holes with
- something to tighten nuts and bolts with
- something to protect your head with .... i.e. a helmet!

Next, find a person who knows how to use each of these tools and you're almost there.



**Get the help of someone who is experienced and has the tools you need to help you build your own Billy Cart Racer.**

If the adults in your life don't have handyman skills, you can find YouTube videos that outline exactly what you'll need to do to make the best racer in town.

## To build your Billy cart, you will need to:

1. Cut your wood into specific shapes.
2. Screw those wooden pieces together for the racer's platform and seat.
3. Attach the axles and wheels.
4. Tie the rope onto the front section.
5. Find a not-too-steep hill.
6. Put on your helmet and off you go!

Once your Billy Cart Racer is finished you can race your friends, have fun giving your friends and other kids rides in your neighbourhood, or even give a job to an out-of-work billy goat. Whatever you do though, you're going to have a lot of fun with your new Billy Cart Racer!



**Once you've built your  
Billy Cart Racer, you are  
ready to race.**



 **Good to Think About**



1. What makes billy cart racing so much fun?

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2. What tools do you need to build a billy cart?

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3. If you built a billy cart racer, what type of billy cart would you build and why would you build it that way?

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4. Why do people like building billy carts?

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 **Key Vocabulary:**

- homemade
- design
- powered
- makeshift
- motorise
- convert
- competition
- hardware
- handyman
- neighbourhood



LiteracyPlanet's  
**My Words**

