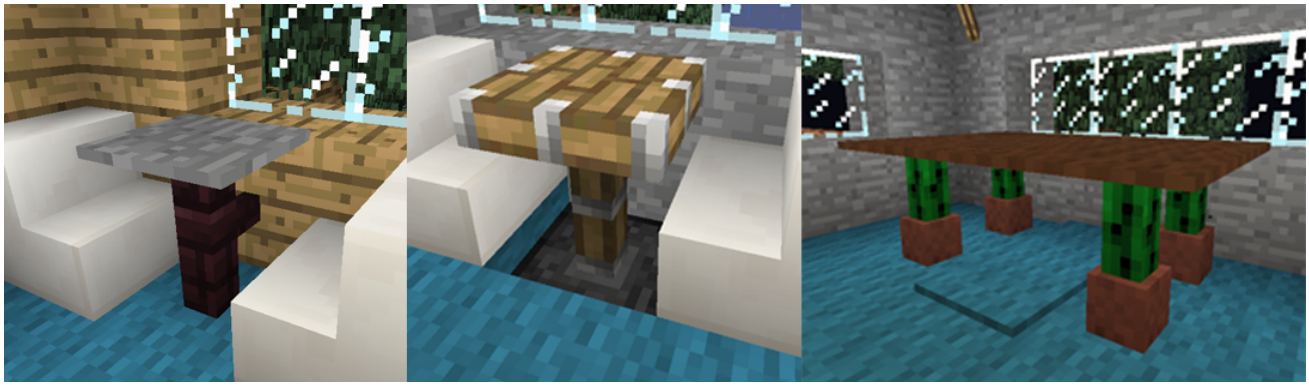
Advanced Building

Furniture and Decor

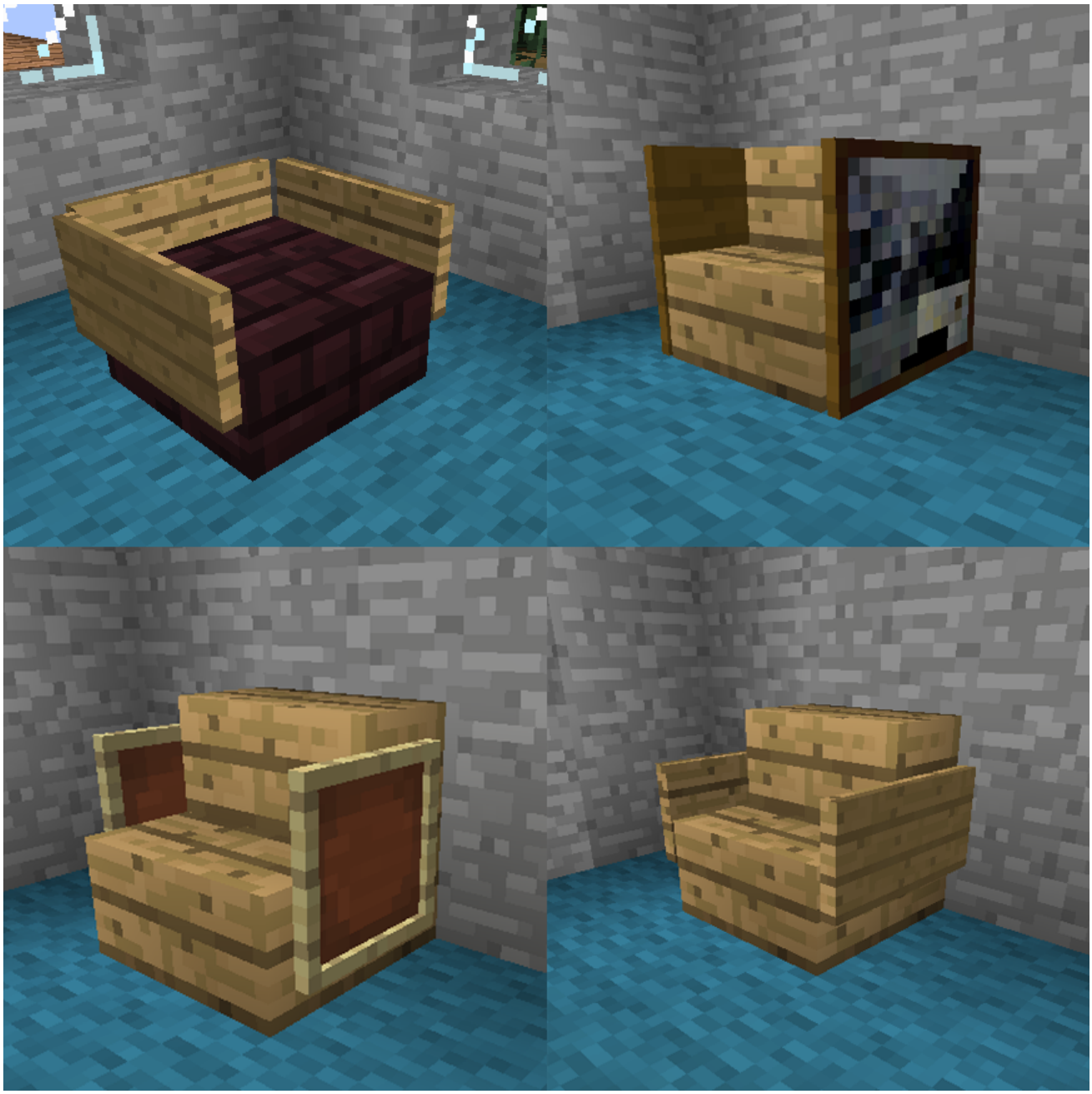
Tables and Chairs

Tables can be made in many different ways, like a pressure plate on a fence post or glass pame, carpet on a cactus in a pot, or a piston powered by redstone.



Tables using various materials

Chairs are usually made with stairs and can be given arm rests with items such as signs, paintings, trap doors, and item frames.



Chairs using various materials

Wall art

Paintings are a great way to decorate your home. They come in lots of different sizes and can even be used to hide doors! Item frames are not only a nice decoration, but double as storage to display your tools and fovorite items!

Hiding doors with paintings

Item Frames

Cabinets

Bookshelves can be spruced up with the same types of materials you use for chairs. Stairs are a great way to add depth and texture to a home, as well.

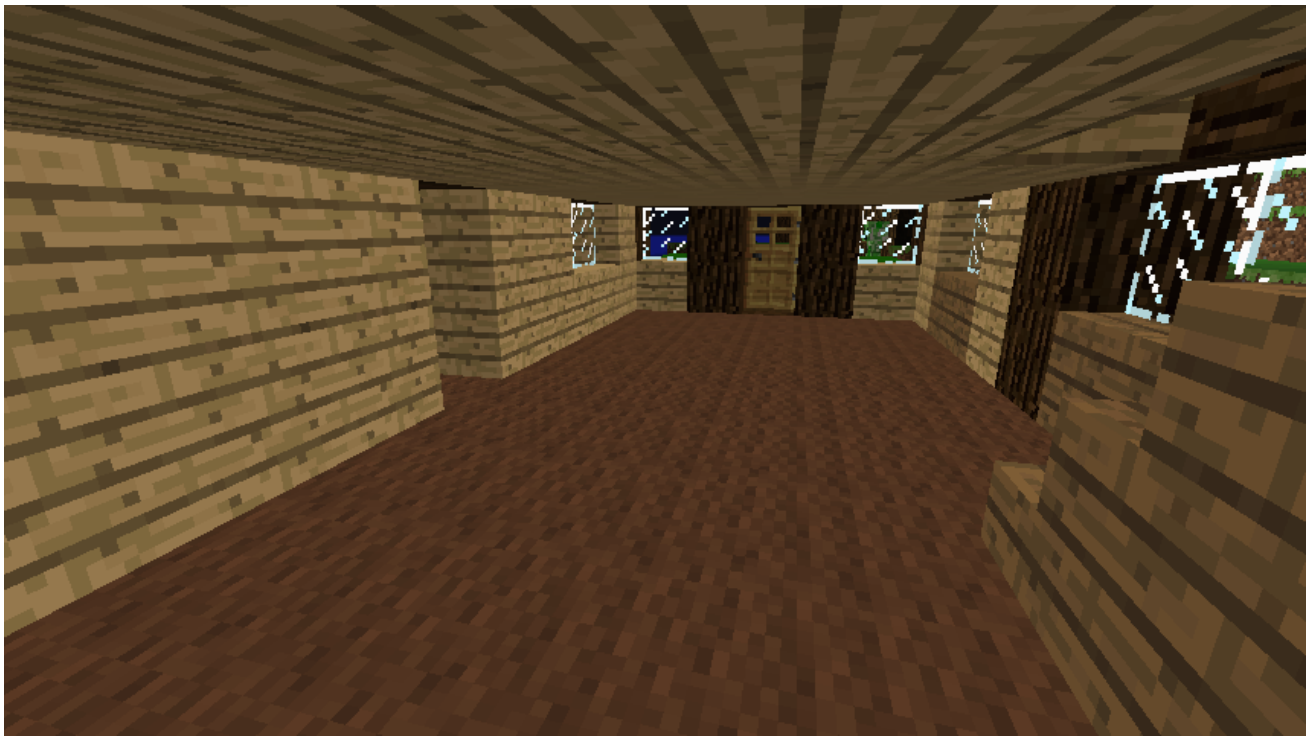
Shelves and stairs

Lighting strategies

Hiding light sources

Carpet

You can hide a light source under carpet. The only disadvantage is you can't place another block on top of the carpet.



Using carpet to hide lighting sources

Using carpet to hide lighting sources

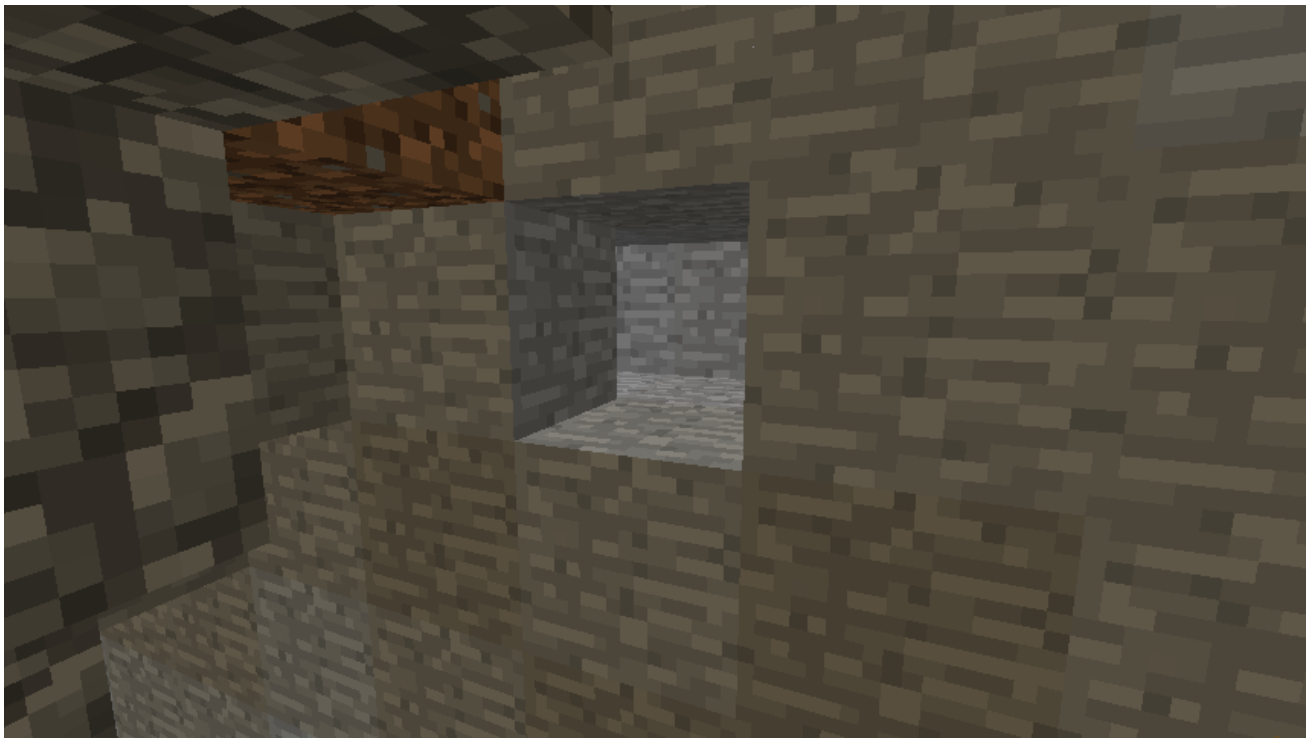
Jack-o-lanterns with hidden faces

You can place jack-o-lanterns in walls and floors so that their face isn't facing outwards. Unless you like the jack-o-lantern faces, in which case leave them face-out (only an option in walls).

Lack-o-lantern obscured in wall

The around-the-corner trick

It lets less light through, and might not work in buildings as well as it does in caves or mountain-dwellings, but lights can be hidden "up and away" inside small openings in walls.



Torch obscured in wall

Behind bushes

Like carpet, bushes let light through but obscure the light source. This works great outside when bushes are placed strategically.

Redstone lamps

Redstone lamps are commonly considered the most tasteful of light sources, but they are also the most expensive. The recipe for a redstone lamp is as follows: a glowstone block surrounded by four redstone dust. The advantage to redstone lamps is they can be controlled by switches and daylight sensors, allowing them to turn off and on by either user action or the lack of natural light.

Creating an automatic lighting source using redstone lamps and a daylight sensor

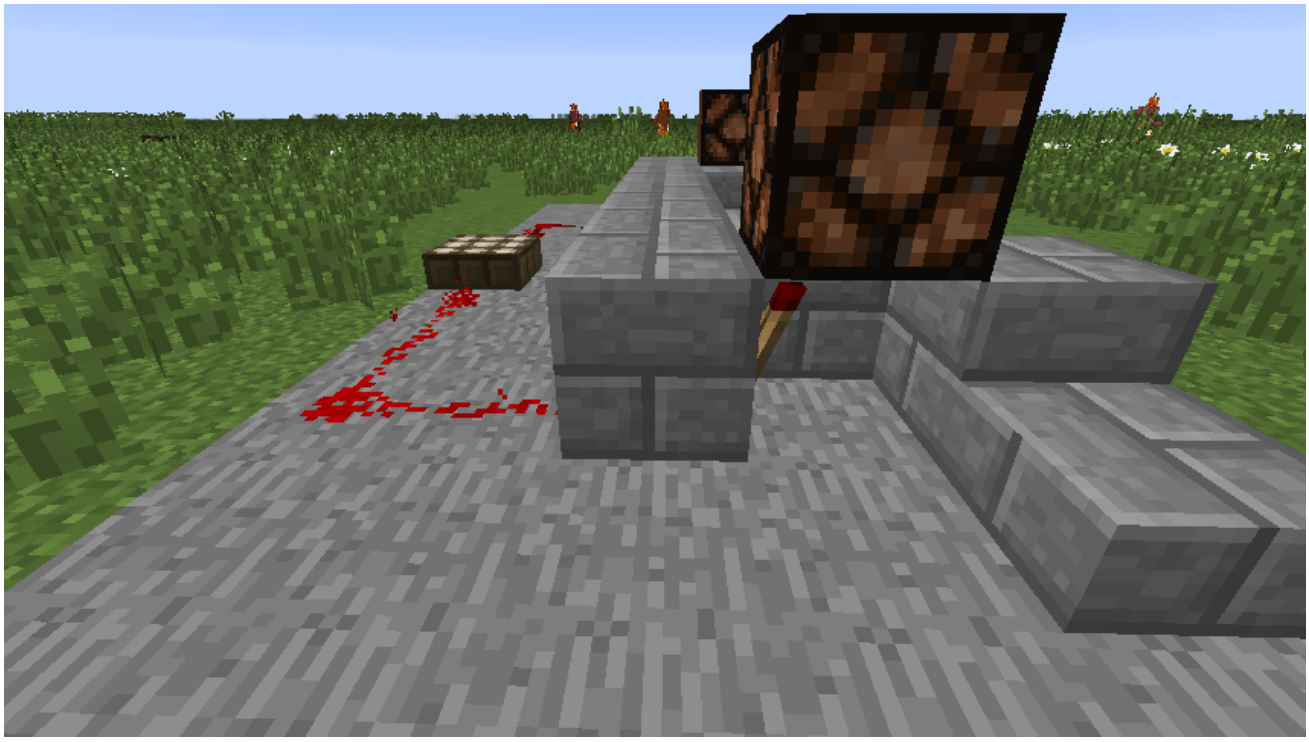
For this exercise create a creative superflat world. Once in your world, you will need the following:

- Redstone lamps
- Redstone dust
- Redstone torches
- Daylight sensors
- Some building material, like stone bricks.

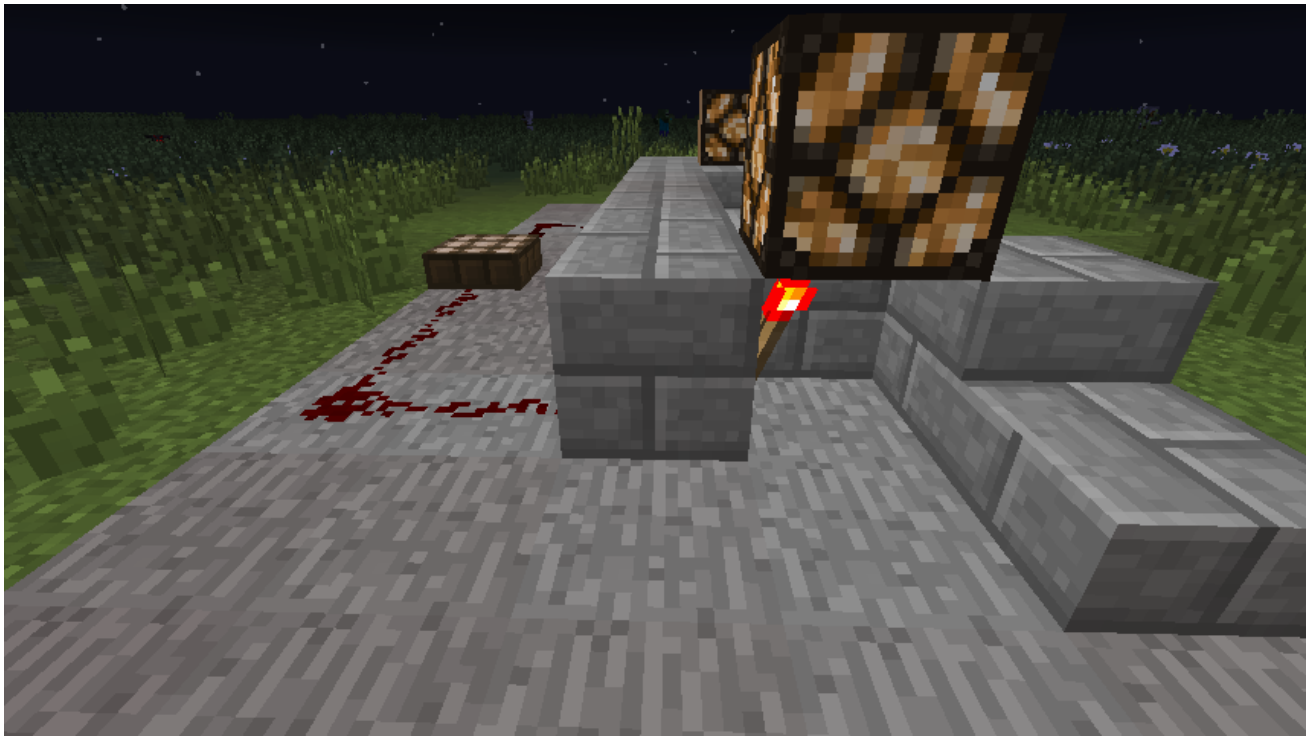
We will be creating an inverter or “not gate”. Because the daylight sensor emits a redstone signal during the day, but we want our redstone lamp to be powered at night, we need to reverse the signal with just such a configuration. Fortunately they are simple to configure. A block acts as an inverter, reversing any redstone signal to its opposite state.

The layout is: daylight sensor -> redstone dust -> block -> redstone torch -> redstone lamp. Use the screenshots below to guide you.

> If you already know how to create an automatic redstone lamp, improve on the examples to better hide the sensors and improve the aesthetics.

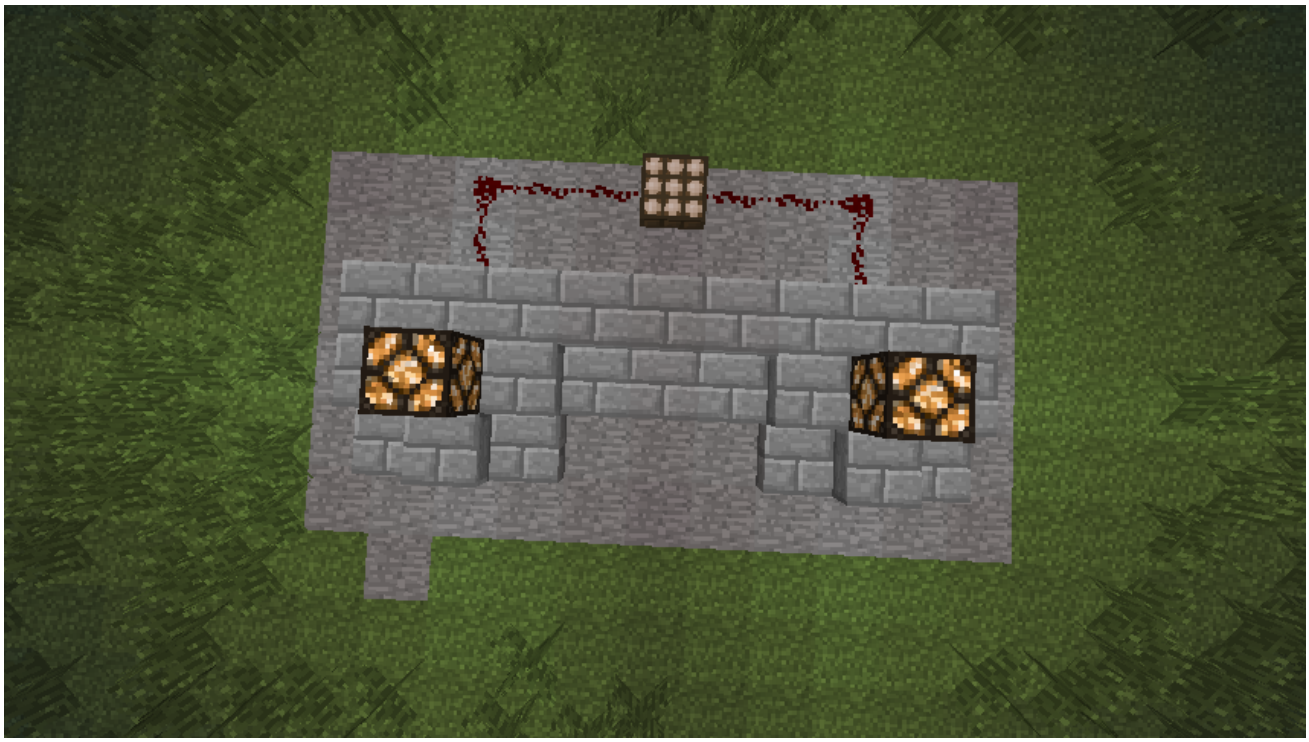


Automatic redstone lamp configuration daytime



Automatic redstone lamp configuration nighttime

Here one daylight sensor powers two redstone lamps:



Automatic redstone lamp configuration two lamps

The final product from the “front”: Automatic lights along a decorative wall.

Automatic redstone lamp configuration two lamps

Adding texture and interest

One of the keys to a really great looking build is the ability to add texture and variety to your structures.

Roads and paths

Try and mix up the materials used in building roads and paths as much as possible. Here we see a stone path made up of stone bricks, mossy stone bricks, cracked stone bricks, cobblestone and gravel. Stick with one main material, adding as randomly as possible the other materials you have at your disposal.

Stone Path

(There is also a very typical Minecraft street light added for good measure. It just takes some fence posts, a glowstone block and some trap doors.)

Adding borders to roads and paths also helps them look better. Here we have single block border made up of the same materials, although half slabs work great for this purpose as well. Using stairs to break things up a little bit is a great technique as well; here they're used to go around the street lights, keeping the border from just being a straight line for as far as the eye can see.

Stone Path With Border

Dirt paths can also be rather nice. Here we have one made of dirt, podzol, gravel and wool, with a stone border flush vertically with the path. The glowstone blocks at the end of the path will soon be covered by bushes, giving us a secret lighting source.

Dirt Path

Structures

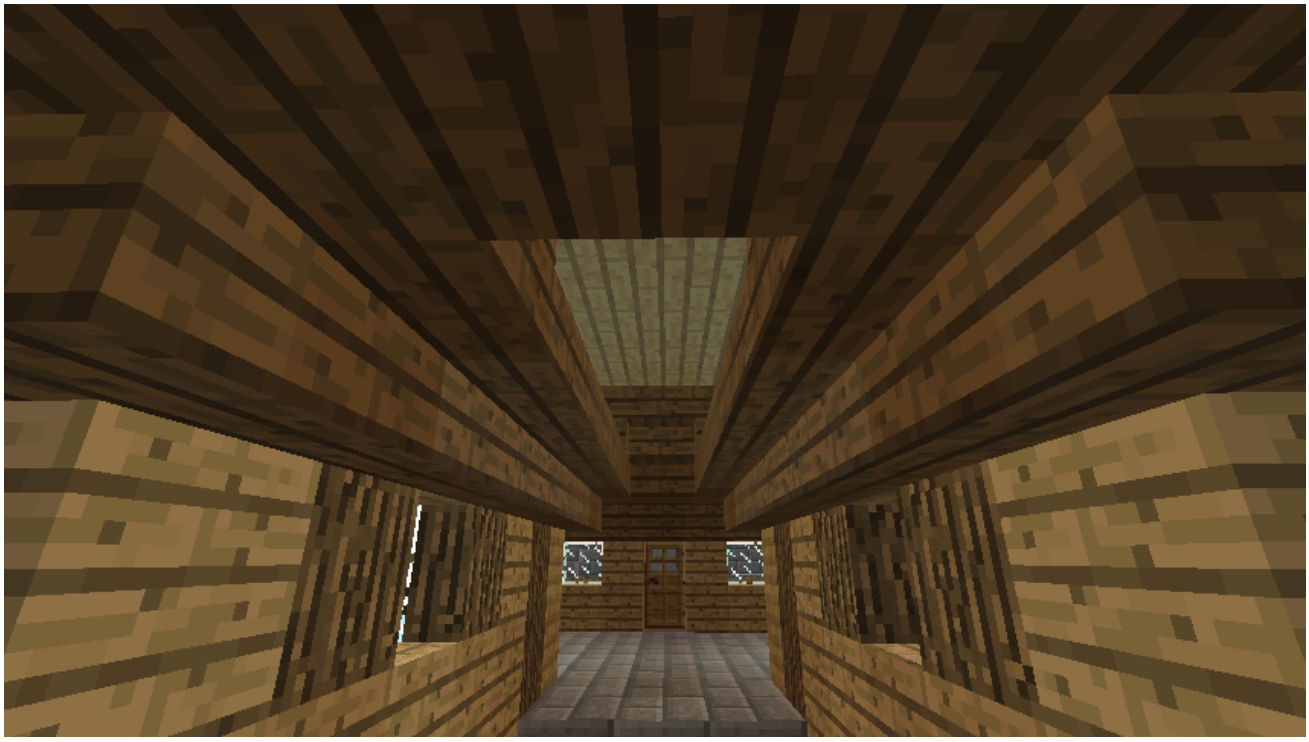
Now, onto structures. One of the often neglected areas of a building is the entrance. Here we make the entrance more interesting with some pillars anchoring a covered path to the front doors of this house. The stairs on either side create separation and define the space while taking up less visual space than a fully square block. With enough imagination they could also be benches lining the path.

Home Entrance

Here are some examples of how to create more interesting interiors. In this first example, we see the use of stairs as a way to create more interesting corners and the use of item frames behind torches to make them look a little bit more intentional than just a stick in a wall.

Stairs and Item Frames

This next example uses the space between the ceiling and the roof to create recessed lighting (again, hiding light sources is a very big deal in the Minecraft builder world).



Recessed Lighting

Roofs and Material Choice

Roof lines are very important in Minecraft. Here we see two different styles of flat roof and the beginnings of multi-lined staired roof.

Roof Lines

You'll also notice the variety of materials used in this build: oak wood and planks, spruce, birch, stone bricks and stone slabs. Here is another example of using different block types; this building (one of the schematics we used before) uses wool, spruce and stone bricks:

Different Building Materials

Don't forget to add interesting bits and pieces to the outside of your structure as well. This example uses leaves and vines, stairs and crafting tables, podzol and red mushrooms and redstone torches with item frames to break up what would normally just be a relatively plain outside area:

Outside Interest

Your Turn

We want to finish this section off with a relatively big build. We will provide some examples, but use your own creativity and practice building your dream Minecraft house, or at least something better than your last Minecraft house. (Remember we're going for detail and visual interest here, not simply building size.)

Here are a couple of screen shots of the final product all the previous examples were leading up to. Again, don't try to copy this build exactly, just use the techniques it demonstrates.

Finished Buliding Front

Finished Buliding Back

Colors and Depth

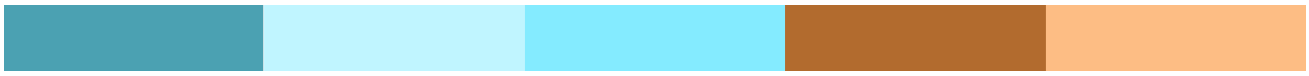
When starting out in a new world, it's wise to keep your first home simple. You don't have enough resources yet to make it complex and beautiful. But after you have established a base of operations, and freed yourself from the shackles of iron tools, it's time to upgrade your dwelling into something more fit for the ruler you've become.

Color Palettes using Blocks

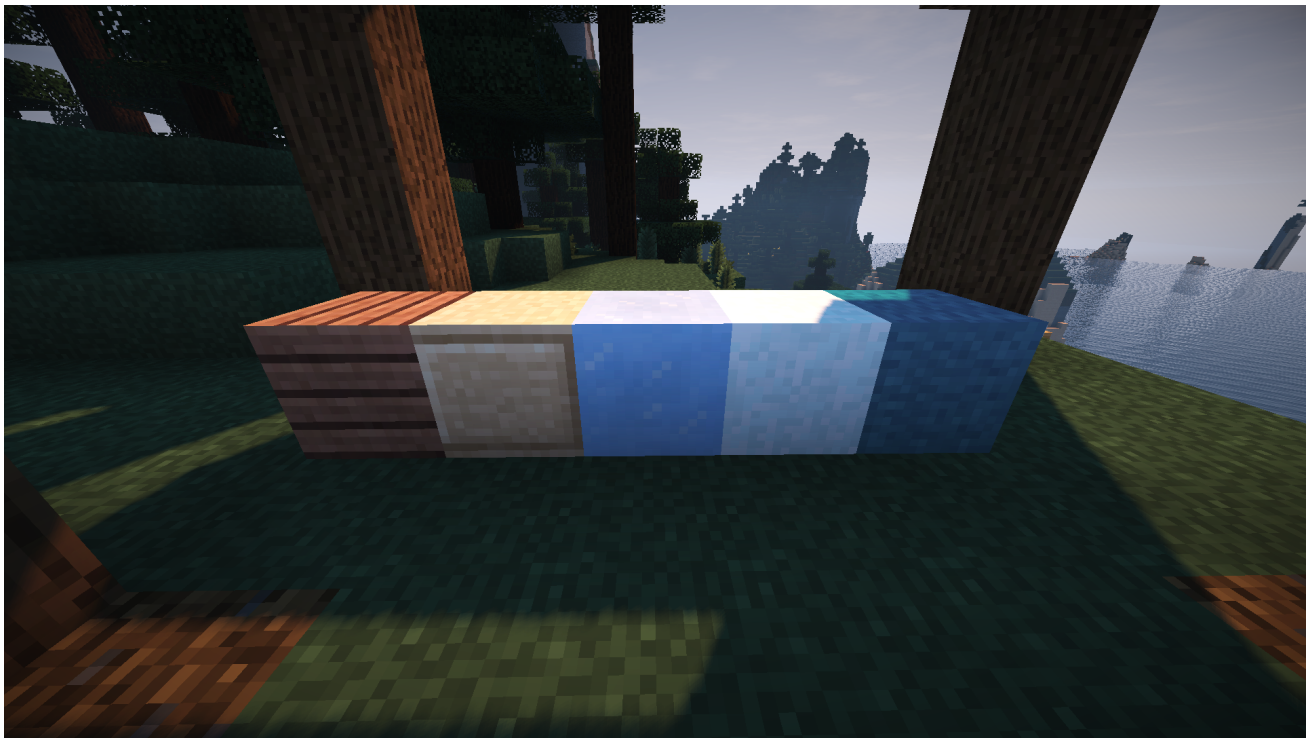
One of the basics of making a good looking structure is picking blocks that work well together.

For most of this, we'll be using Adobe Color CC, a free tool from the people that make Photoshop. It lets you choose the kind of color scheme you want to use, and it generates a decent looking palette by itself.

For instance, this:

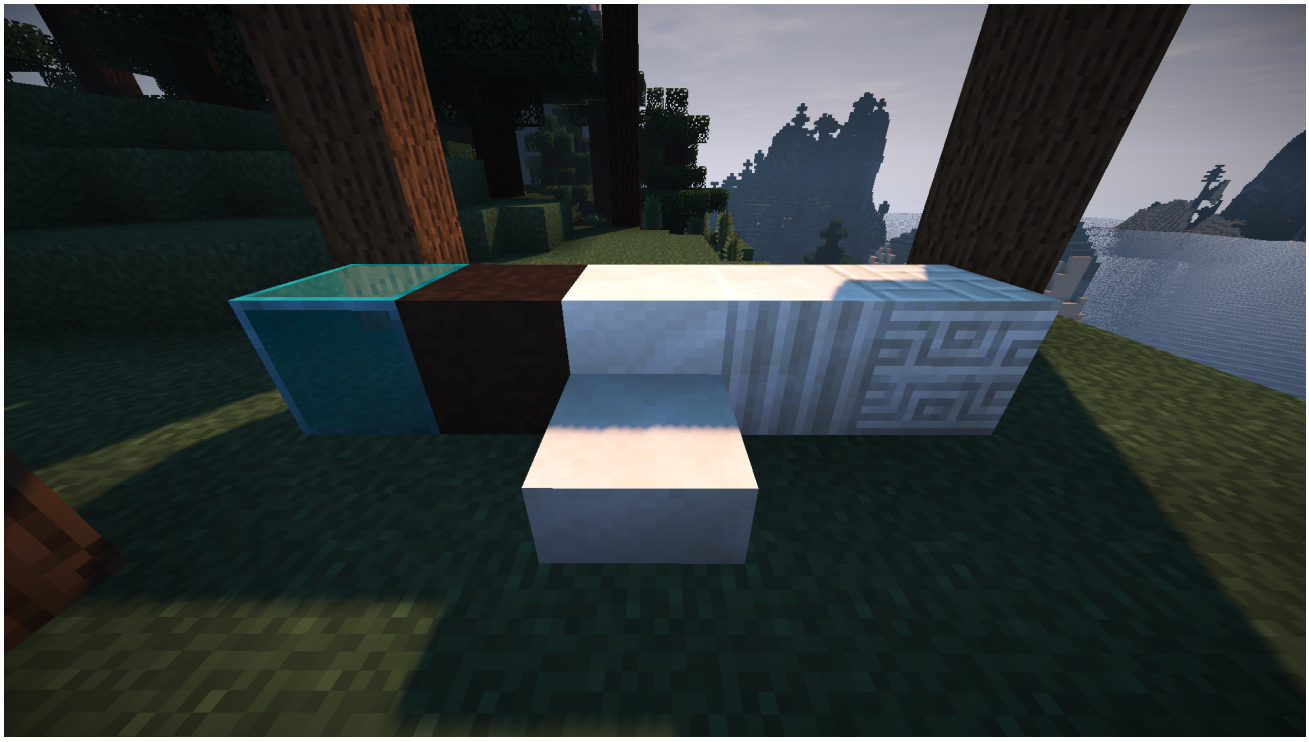


Is a simple color palette generated by Color CC. It could probably be made in Minecraft with jungle wood planks, sandstone, ice, snow, and maybe some colored wool. Let's try it out:



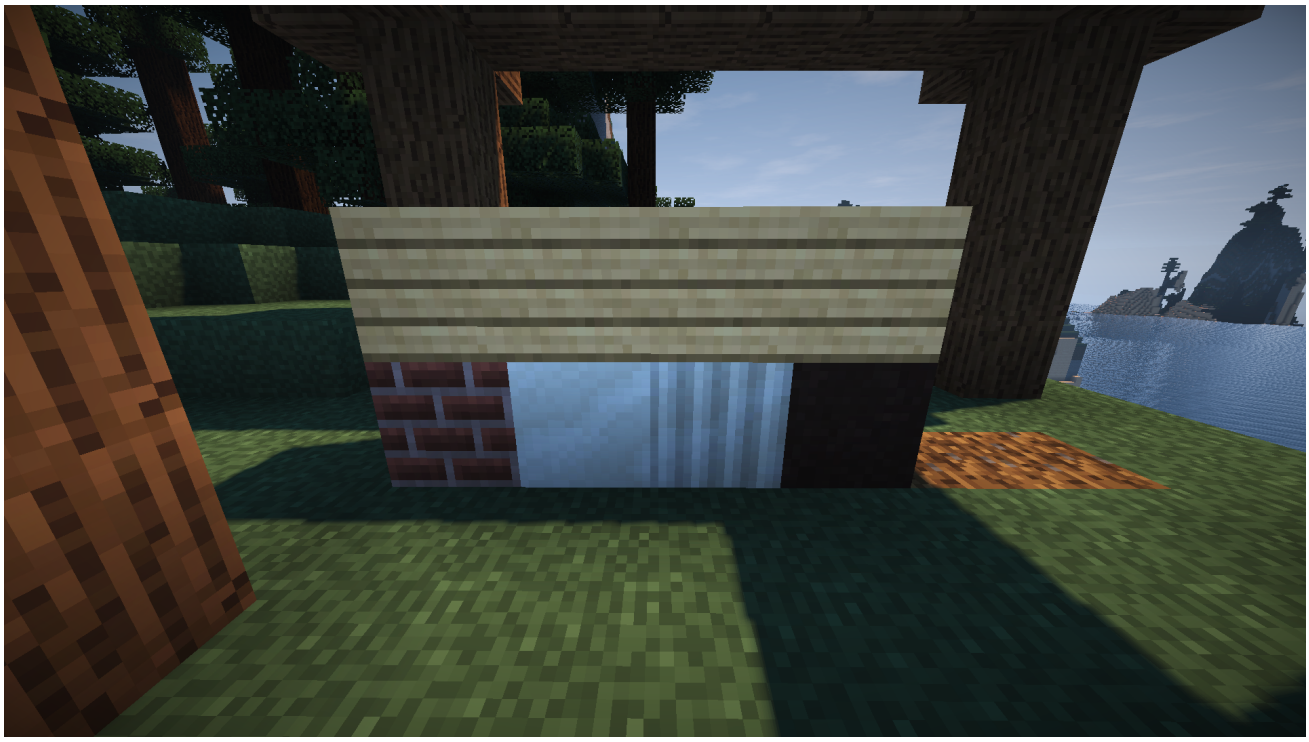
Looks pretty good! You can play around with Color CC to get your own color schemes to follow. One of the easiest ways to start a good looking building is to get a good color palette and then find blocks that fit those colors in Minecraft. Here are some more of my favorite color palettes, built inside Minecraft.

Ultra Modern:



Medieval:

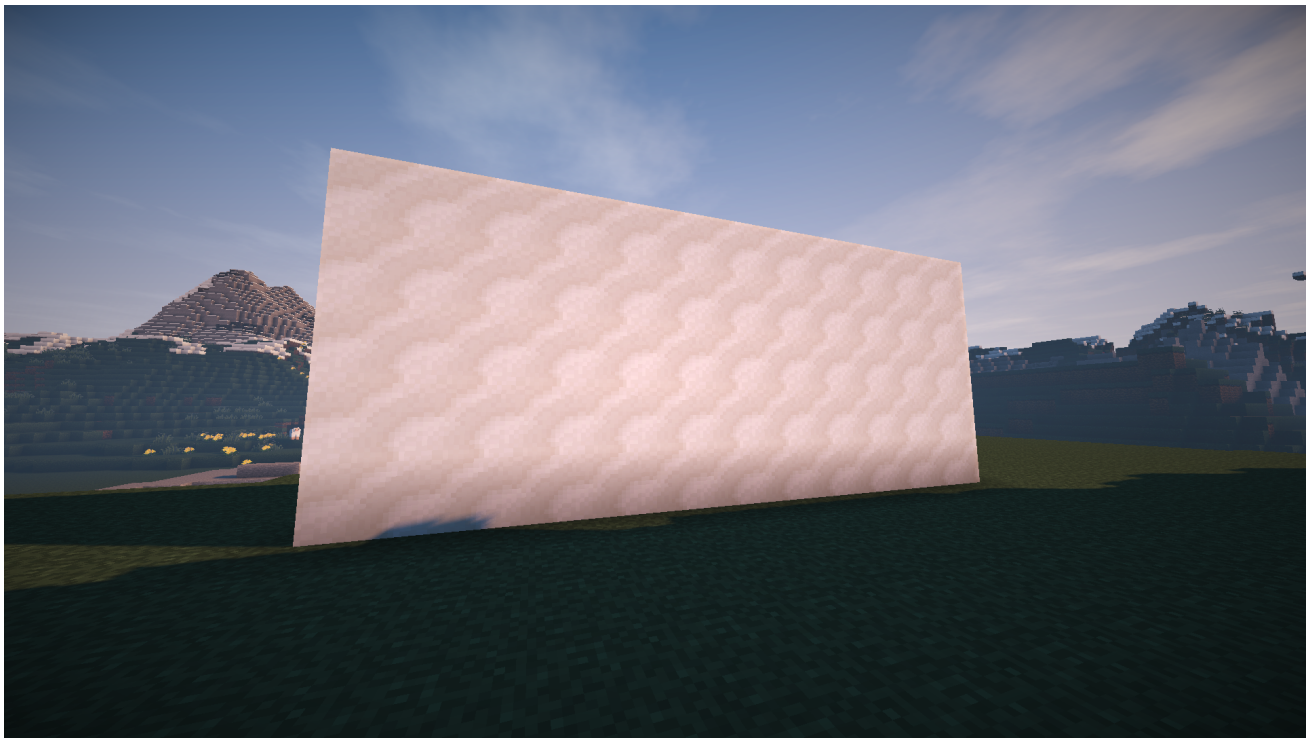
Hearth and Home:



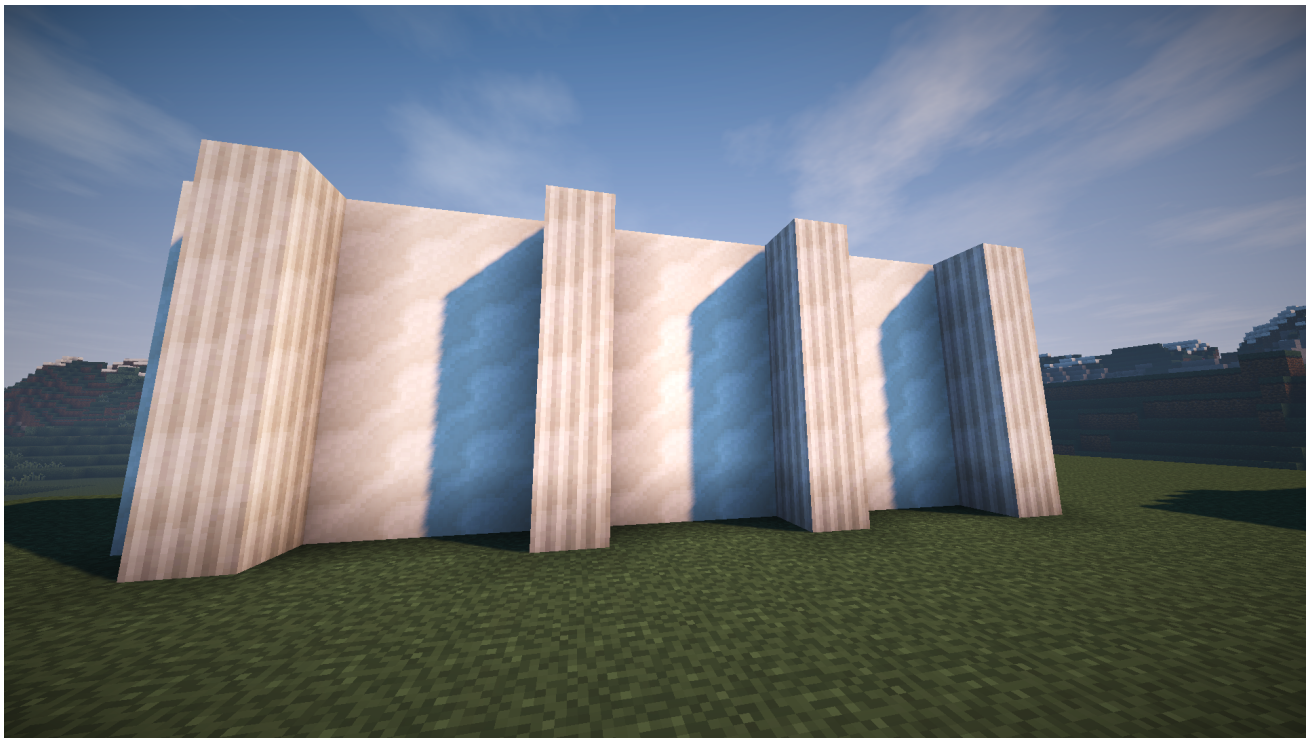
Adding Depth

Depth in building is something that a lot of players don't do, which is why you end up with lots of houses that are just cubes with some furnaces in them. It's surprisingly easy to add depth to your buildings.

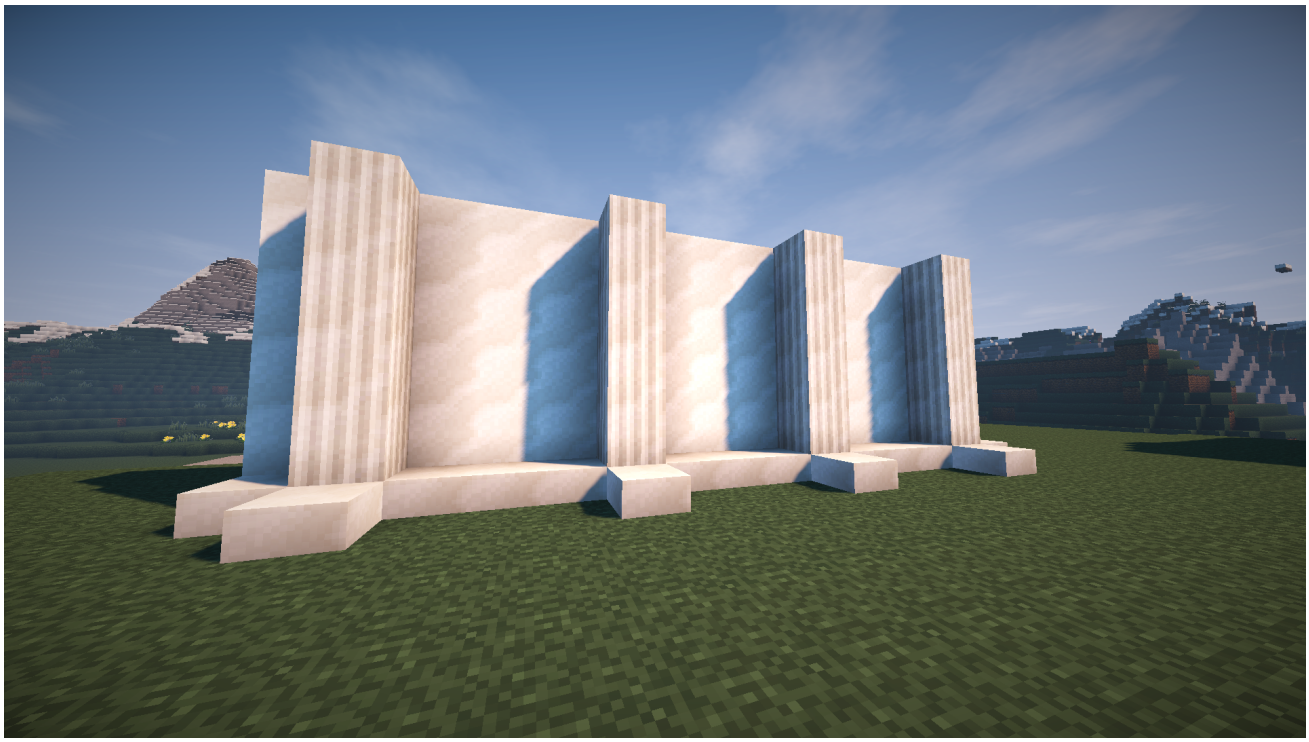
This wall is a simple slab of quartz, sticking out of the earth. It works just fine as a wall, but it certainly doesn't look very good.



We can make it look much better by simply adding some columns to the outside. These columns also serve to divide the wall into three block wide sections.



The wall still looks like it would fall over if a light breeze hit it, so let’s add some support at the bottom using quartz slabs.



Now we need to pull the top edge of the wall out, and push the inside of the sections in. We can do this by adding pretty chiseled quartz to the top and replacing the central blocks of each section with glass panes. Glass panes add depth without building inwards, since they, unlike glass blocks, sit halfway into a block. Notice we're using a colored glass pane, the same one I used in the Ultra Modern palette in the previous section.

The top of our wall is still pretty flat, so we'll add a little height and depth with some quartz slabs on top.

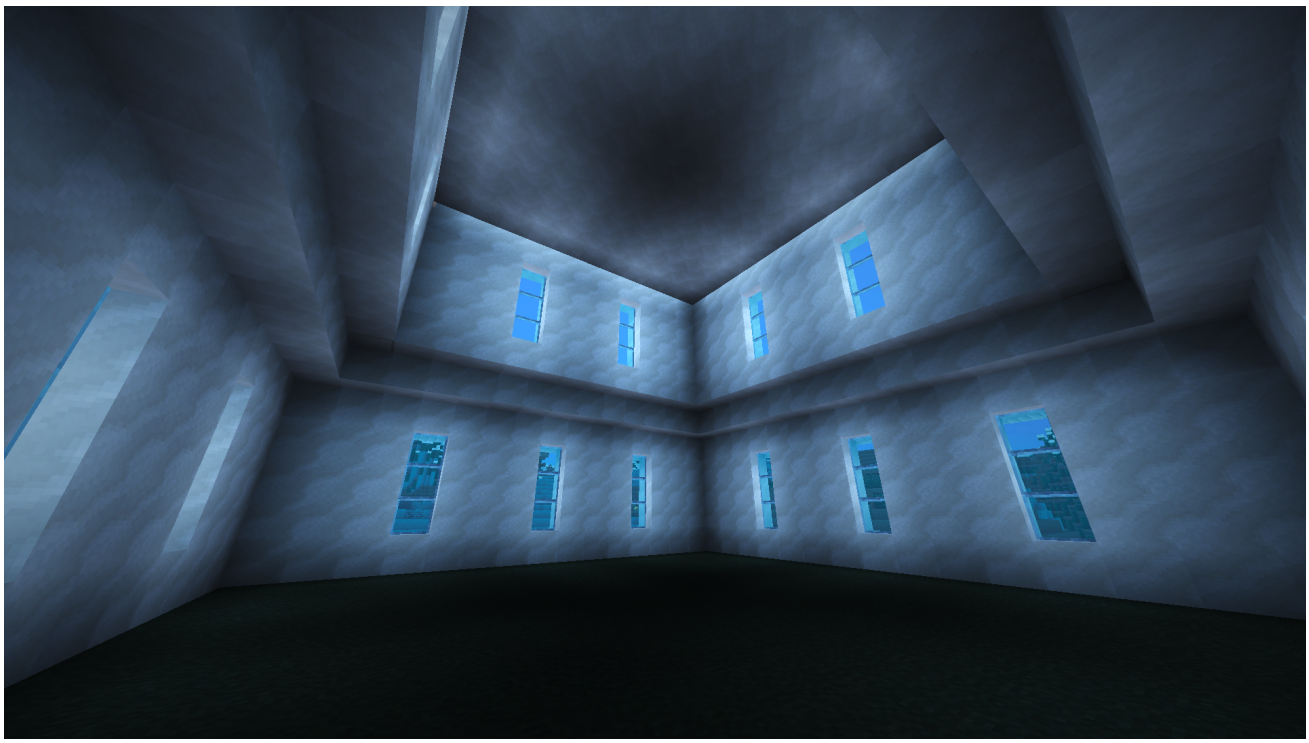
The wall looks a bit heavy at the top compared to our support on the bottom, so we'll replace those slabs with quartz stairs, which also add some nice half-block depth.

Just for fun, here's the finished building, constructed out of nothing else but the wall we just built. It takes a little extra work to blend the walls together on the edges, but you can follow the same principles of depth for that as well.

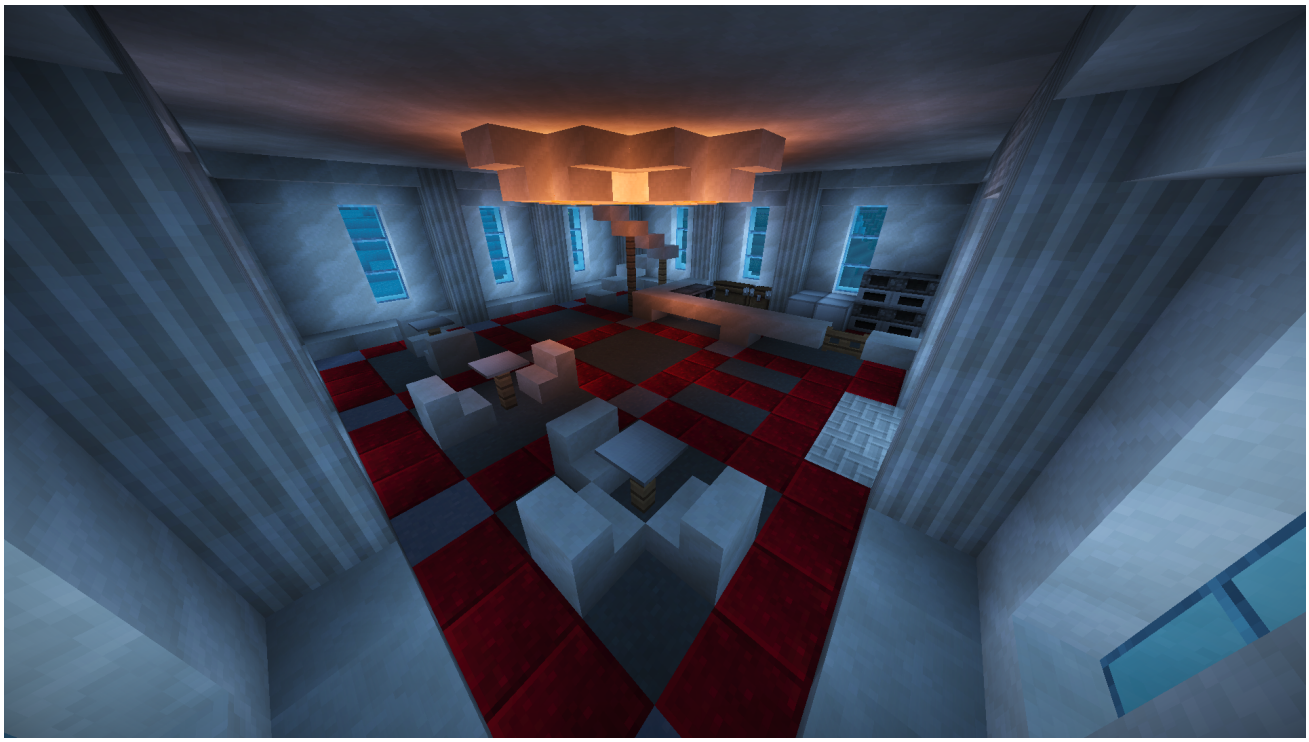
Detailing

Now that we've built the exterior of this building, we can focus on the interior. For this build, we'll go with a fine dining theme.

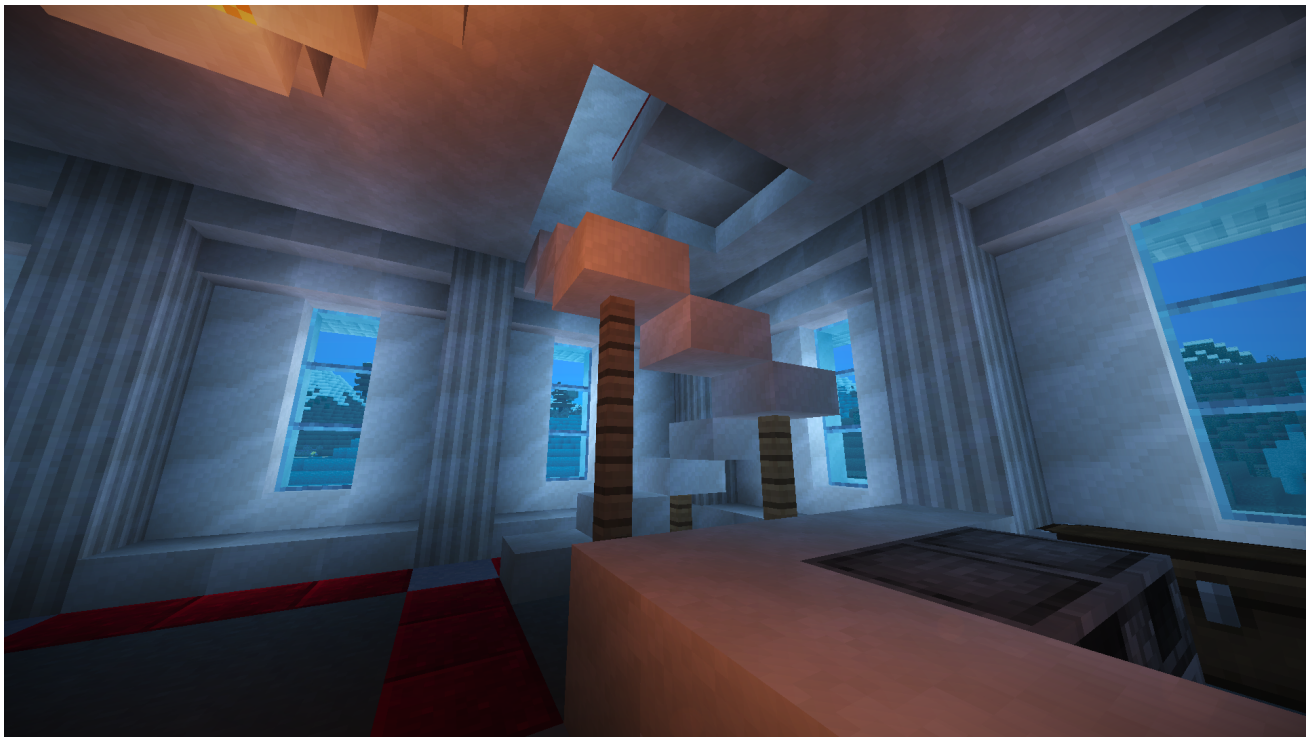
As you can see, the interior is, for the time being, fairly sparse.



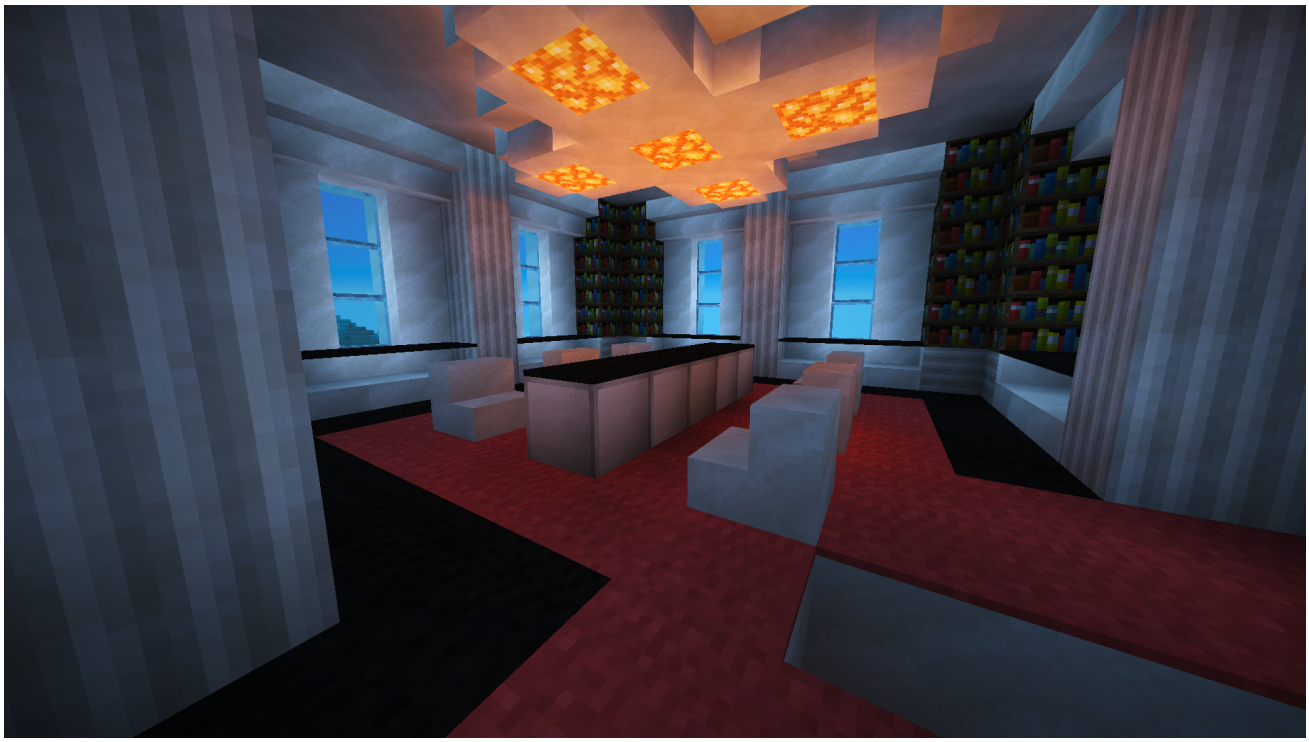
We split the structure into two floors. The bottom floor is going to act as the main dining room. For that, we've added tables on the left edge, and a cooking area on the right edge. The center has been left empty to allow access to the stairs.



For the stairs, we had room to do a spiral staircase out of quartz slabs, holding it up with some fences.



On the upper floor, we built the private dining room, and carpet the floor. If you've been watching, all the interior walls have the same depth concepts applied to them as the outside walls.



Add as much detail as you can to your builds. It helps to make them interesting to look at, and makes you think about what you want the final build to feel like. The more thought you put into a build, the better it will turn out. Remember to keep adding depth if everything starts to look too flat, and always pick a color palette you think will work for the structure you want to build.

Inspiration in Bridge Building

One of the first complicated structures many players build is a bridge. This can be a small structure passing over a river, or a towering colossus connecting two mountains.

The bridge is an excellent choice to start teaching the basics of design, primarily because the function of a bridge is easy to fulfill, and after that, the player is free to focus on form rather than function.

Bridge One: Medieval River Crossing

Bridge Two: Suspension Between Cliffs

Bridge Three: Fantasy

Your Turn!