

Helping Hands for Solo Framing

by Rich Blumer

I work by myself, and oftentimes find myself wishing for an extra pair of hands. When I was building a pergola recently, for example, I needed to install a pair of overhead beams while making sure the posts that would support the pergola framing stayed plumb.

To do this, I poured a pair of footings, installed metal post bases, and fastened the posts to their bases. Then I nailed blocking around each post to the framing, so the posts were locked in place (1) while I finished installing the decking. To make it easier to plumb the posts—and keep them plumb while I worked on the pergola framing—I attached simple plastic post levels (johnsonlevel.com) to the posts and left them there after I braced the posts into position (2).

Next, I cut four 2x4 assist braces that were $\frac{1}{4}$ inch shorter than the proposed height of my beams above the deck, and attached a 2x4 cleat to each assist brace to prevent the beams from rolling over while they were sitting on top of the braces. I temporarily fastened the 2x4 braces to the posts. Then it was a simple matter of lifting the beams in place on top of the braces and leveling them with shims (3).



When the beams were level and the posts plumb, I fastened them together with $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-diameter galvanized carriage bolts, removed the braces, and installed

the rest of the pergola framing. ♦

Rich Blumer owns BREM Construction Co., in Streamwood, Ill.

Send Us Your Tips

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