



## Avoiding Treehouse Catastrophes

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It's a sunny day and the kids are out playing. They have just loved the new treehouse you put up. The tire swing hanging from the lowest branch completes the inviting atmosphere of the play area. Looking out the back window, the ladder leading to the treehouse seems to be a portal to a land of adventures.

You have been blessed to hear only cries of joy and a few small scuffles of sibling rivalry. Making the decision to put the tree house up was difficult. You had heard the stories. The Petersons down the road put up a tree house two years ago and their daughter fell, breaking her arm and ankle. Then there was the tree house at your sister's place. Her house was an older home with a beautiful yard. The tree house was already built before her family moved in. It appeared to be in perfect condition, but some of the boards had rotted out. Your nephew was fortunate to not have any serious injuries when he fell through when the wood gave out.

So what put your concerns at rest? Doing research for a quality, treehouse plan and following safety tips, your treehouse became a safe place for the children to play. Here are some basic tips from eHow's Home and Garden article: *How to Install Treehouse Safety Features*:

**Step 1** Inspect the ladder. Do not assume any ladder is in good condition. Check for cracks or splits and make sure the hardware is in place. Secure the ladder to the structure with heavy rope so it cannot fall away.

**Step 2** Do not use glass in the treehouse. Instead, construct the windows from a material that will not shatter, such as polycarbonate. Your kids will still enjoy a great view without the danger of broken glass.

**Step 3** Secure the windows so they can not open unless they are over a balcony or porch. There should be as many barriers as possible between the child and a nasty fall to the ground.

**Step 4** Measure the distance between balusters on porches and balconies. The distance should be such that a child cannot slip through them. If the existing structures are too wide, replace them or add more.

**Step 5** Lean on the railing to feel for weakness. If the railing feels even slightly unstable, secure it or replace it altogether.

**Step 6** Place a safety barrier, such as a half-door or gate, across the treehouse entrance.

**Step 7** Remove any nails that stick out. Hammer them in or replace them with screws.

**Step 8** Step inside the tree house with your child. If it is sturdy enough for an adult or two, it will be sturdy enough for your little ones.