Introduction

For some time after the launch of The Sims2, an air of mystery and special secrecy somehow attached itself to constructing split-level stairs! It was implied it was somehow "too difficult" for the ordinary player.

Well, nothing could be further from the truth! ☺

So in this tutorial and its partners, *Building a Free-standing Stairwell* and *Building a Split-Level Staircase,* I'll be explaining in simple steps how to put split-level stairs in your houses – old houses as well as new.

This tutorial will show how to place a split-level staircase in a **corner** of many of your houses. You'll sometimes see these simple stairs called **"L-shaped" stairs**. You can build them equally easily in houses on foundation and houses with no foundation.

So let's go over to an old house we've had lying around, that now needs modernising. (Just like any other TV make-over programme!) ☺

Step 1.

First, have a look at your house, and decide the room and corner where you want the stairs to be. It's important to be aware that 4 wall panels (2 on each wall of the corner) **won't** be able to take windows, so make sure you're happy with the other window arrangements in the room.

Since the mid-level platform is a single floor tile, you may think we're going to build a little 1x1 walled base in the corner you've chosen (as in this pic). This works OK, but instead …..
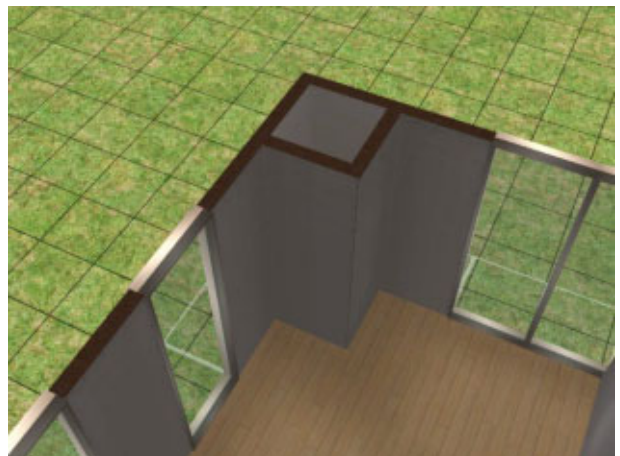
Step 2.

….. to give the stairs a neater finish, let's add some extra walls. We'll make a 3x1 'room' with standard wall panels, as shown here.

This will contain the upper flight of stairs, and prevent them from looking like they're 'hanging down' from the floor above!!!
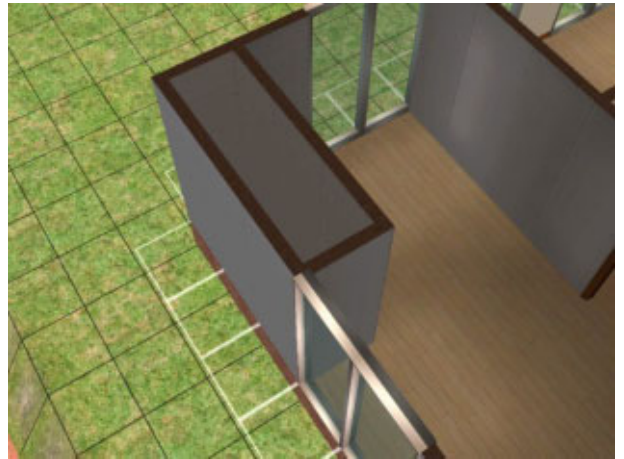
Step 3.

Now go up one level (press PageUp or click the button on your game Control Panel) and place 2 floor tiles of your choice – one in the corner, and one 2 gridsquares away, touching against the wall below.

This second tile will be where the stairs arrive on the upper floor. And the corner tile will be the mid-level platform or landing.
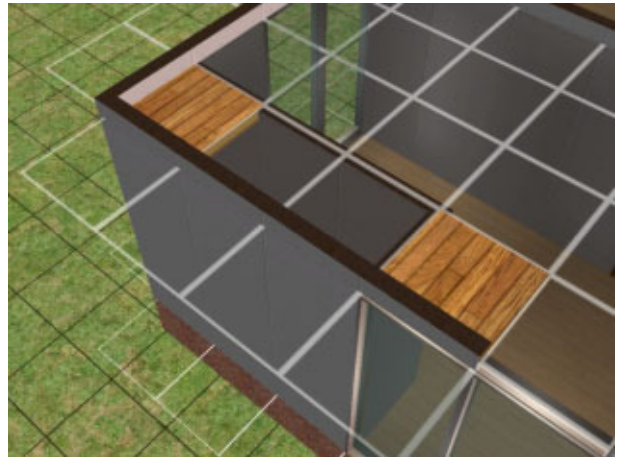
Step 4.

Now scroll outside your house, and place a new single square of foundation at least 3 gridsquares away from the house corner and in line with the corner tile you've just placed. (It's 3 gridsquares away to avoid modifying any other part of the house). If your house doesn't have a foundation, you don't need to do this.

Place a diagonal wall panel on it, as shown (or on the ground if you haven't got foundation elsewhere). It's a diagonal just because it's quicker to delete when we've finished! ;)
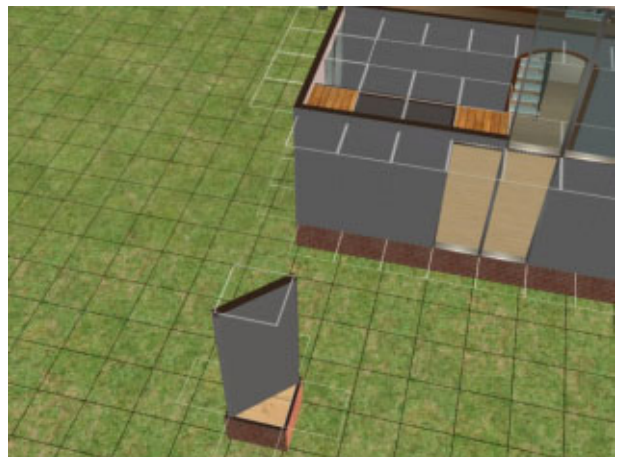
Step 5.

Now place two 4-step units of Connecting Stairs on the ground (they immediately bite down into the ground) as shown here, first one and then – from the new low square you've just made – the other.

This takes us down by 8 clicks or steps. Since a standard wall is 16 clicks high, 8 clicks takes us halfway down – to the height of the mid-level platform for the stairs
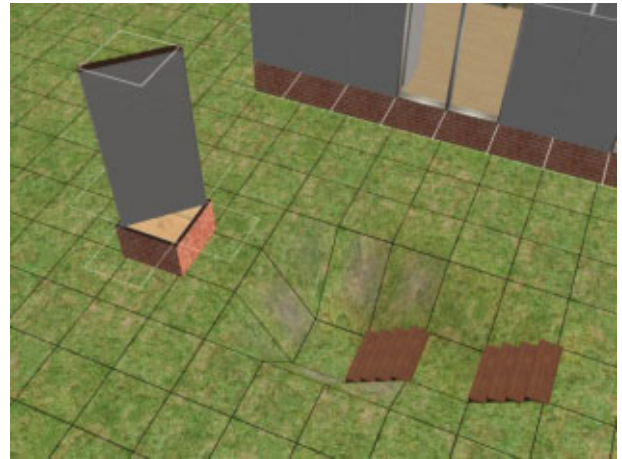
Step 6.

Now we need to turn on the building command which allows us to modify the heights of floors and walls. Hold down Ctrl+Shift and tap C. In the white Commands window that opens at the top of your screen, type:

boolprop constrainfloorelevation false

**boolProp constrainFloorElevation false**

and press Enter. If you've got the words right (the command is almost always called 'CFE' because of the middle phrase), the window will close. (The capital letters don't matter - it's just easier to read.) ☺.

Step 7.

Now use the LevelTerrain tool to slide across from the low flat gridsquare you've created, to somewhere on the far side of the little Foundation square, as shown. If you haven't slid a tool before, you slide simply by holding the LH mouse button down.
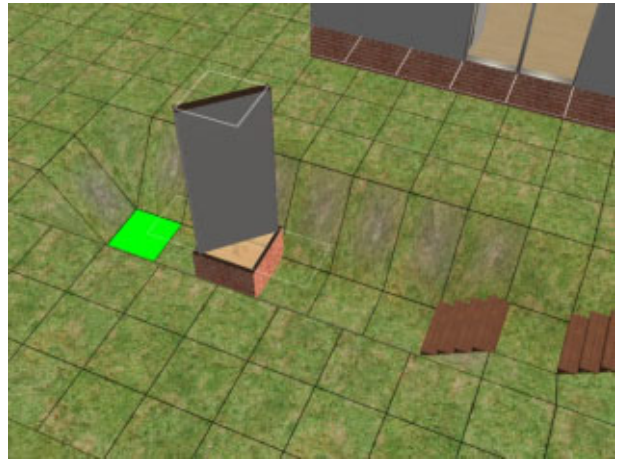
It doesn't matter if you're not quite in line before you start – just make sure you slide underneath all of the little foundation ..... but NOT the house!!!
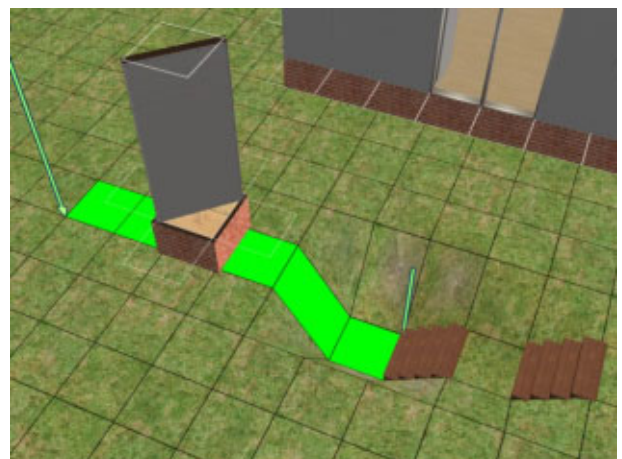
Step 8.

This should be what you end up with.

This will be our 'control column', fixing a new level from which we can modify other levels in the house (in this case our stair platform).

Step 9.

Place the LevelTerrain tool on the empty white gridsquare atop the control column and slide it carefully across to the single floor tile in the corner – our planned mid-level platform – as shown here.
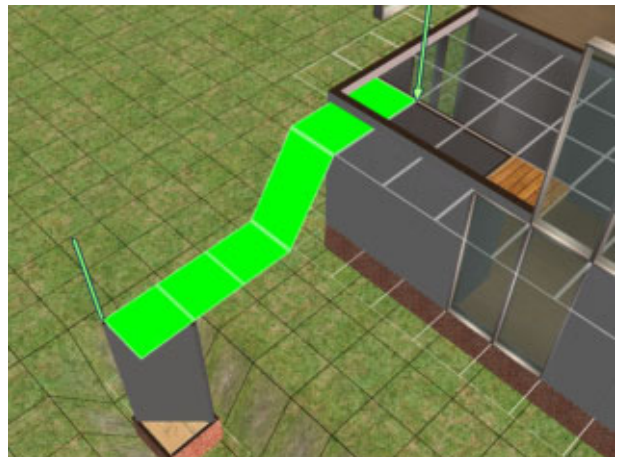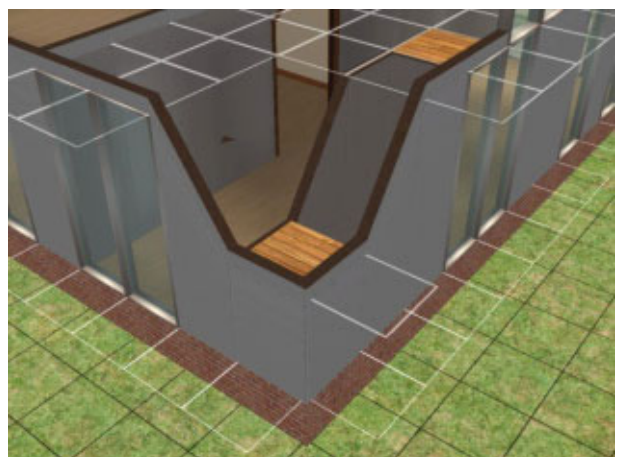

Step 10.

Let go the mouse button, and here's the result.

This is the only new level we need, so you can delete the little (outside) control column and units of Connecting Stair which we made at Steps #4-5.

You can do this with the CFE command still on. If you forget to remove them, do it later on!!! ;)
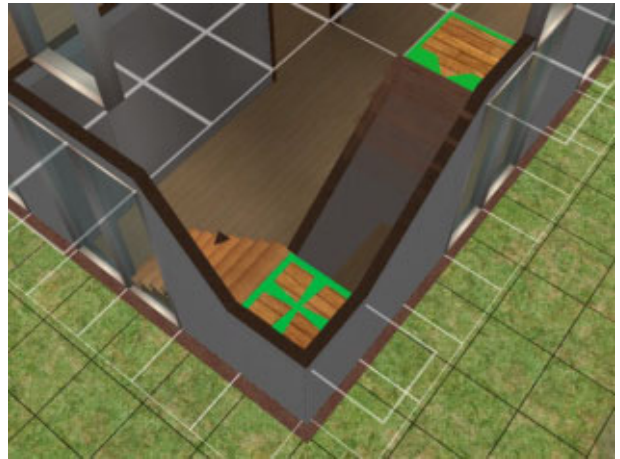
Step 11.

Now we can add some Connecting Stairs. These are the *Steadfast Connecting Stairs* – we're going for a comfortable, country cottage look! ☺

If you compare this pic with the one before (#10), you'll notice that as we add the upper flight of stairs the walls change shape. They mould around the line of the stairs, which I find attractive. (Hope you do!)

Note: This will only work with the CFE command still **ON**. Don't turn off the CFE command until Step #17!
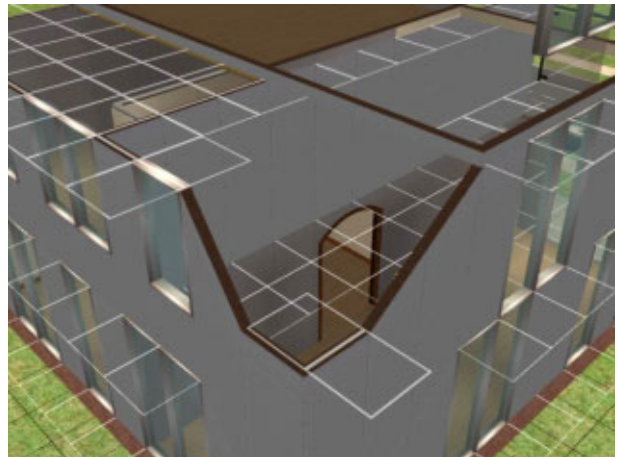

Step 12.

When using the CFE command, any modification we make to a lower level of a building affects all the levels *above* too. So PageUp one level, and you can see the walls above have also clunked down.
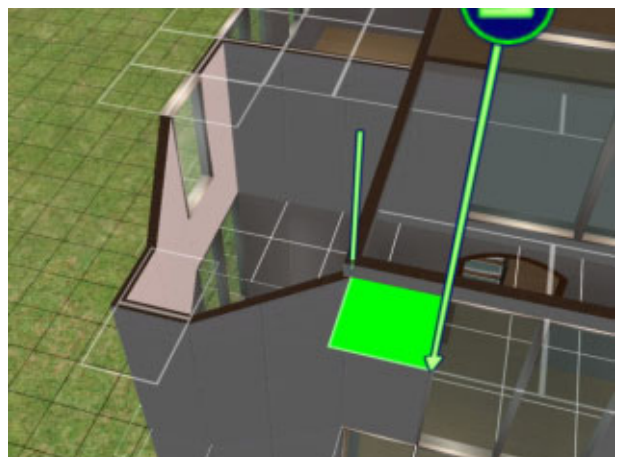
But don't panic! It's easy to fix.

(If you turned the CFE command off at Step #11, turn it back **on** now.)

Step 13.

Place the LevelTerrain tool on an empty white gridsquare next to the dip, one that's at the 'proper' level.
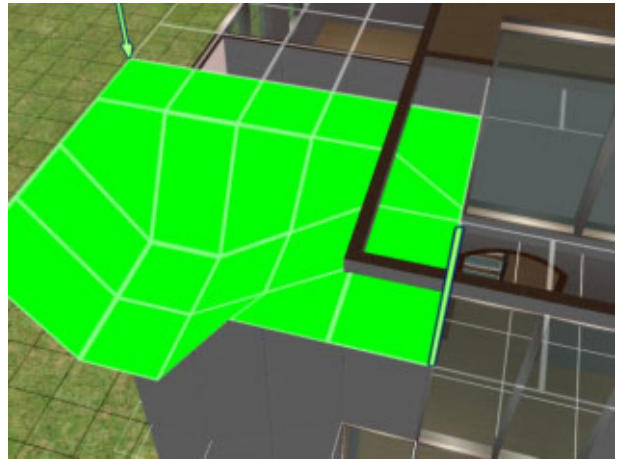
Slide the LevelTerrain tool across the dip to the far side …..

Step 14.

..... as shown here, and release the mouse button.

The dip is levelled at this upper level. Yet because in the world of CFE what we do at a higher level doesn't usually affect levels underneath, the stairs are not affected at all.

Step 15.

Roofs aren't affected by using the CFE command, either. We'll look at how useful this can be in the tutorial on *Building a Split-level Staircase* – roofs which have gable walls actually stretch their walls to fill the gap, while keeping the roof line in place. ☺

For this tutorial, if you're working on a house you've already made, you'll have a roof above the upper level of rooms, like we have here. We can see the roof itself remains in place.
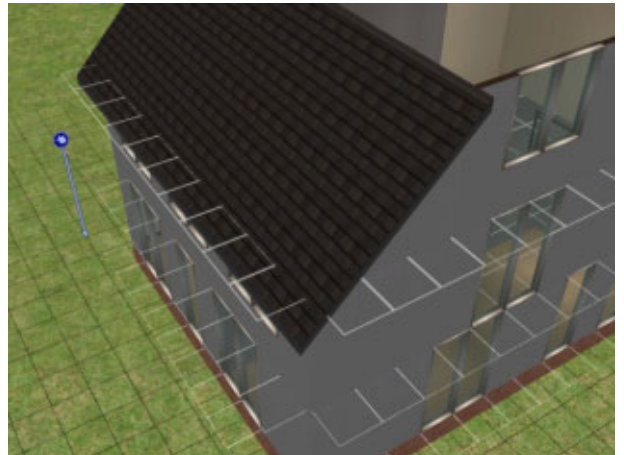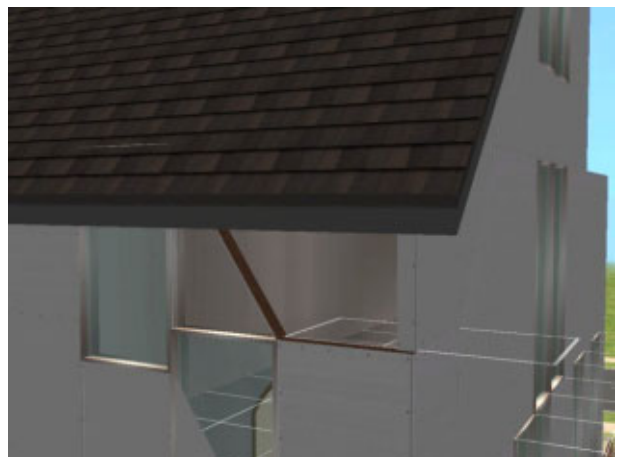

Step 16.

But the walls below are partly pulled out of shape as we saw at Step #12. From the picture you can see that the gable wall of the roof is fine – it's actually stretched down to replace the 'missing' bit of wall underneath.

But on the side nearest us in the pic, the roof edge (the eave) isn't replacing the 'missing' wall – so we **do** have to follow Steps #12–14.

It's useful to know how roofs behave, though, for future designs and building work! ☺

Step 17.

Now we can just add some stair railings, and some *Longhorn Balustrade in Light Wood.* Isn't that charming? Woohoo! (Oh, whoops, wrong word, sorry – anyway YAY-HAY!)

Now we just need to switch off the CFE command. Open the white Commands window again and type in

boolProp constrainFloorElevation true

and press Enter. Now the built levels are locked or 'constrained'.

Step 18.

As I mentioned above at Step #1, those wall panels which have been distorted by making the mid-level platform will NOT take windows.

You can see in this pic how placing a window in a fully stretched wall panel causes the wall to disappear above the window, and to bleed up into the lower area of the window.
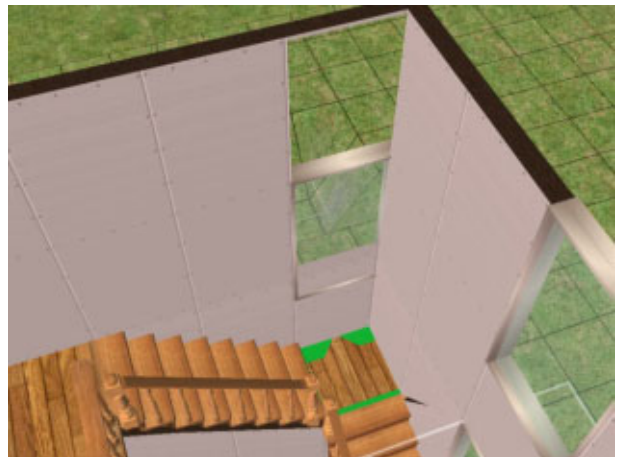

Step 19.

And in this pic you can see how placing a window in a diagonally stretched wall panel cause the upper wall panel to bleed into the window.
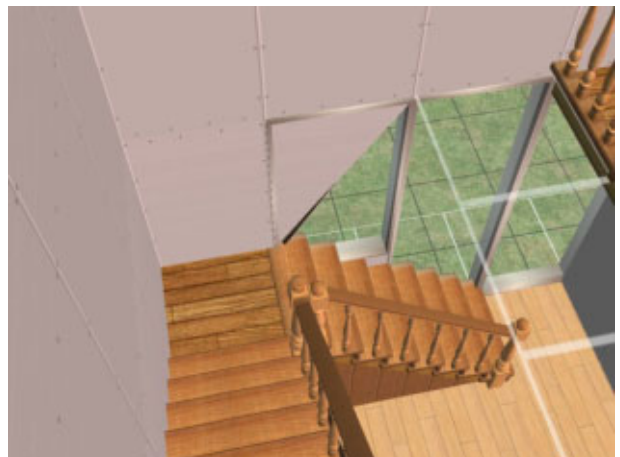
Step 20.

The stretching of our wall panels also shows up if we try to add a wallpaper with horizontal stripes or edges, as you can see here. So it's usually better to use wallpapers with no pattern, or ones with a vertical stripe.

But hey – maybe you just love the sloping patterns ..... so go for it! ☺
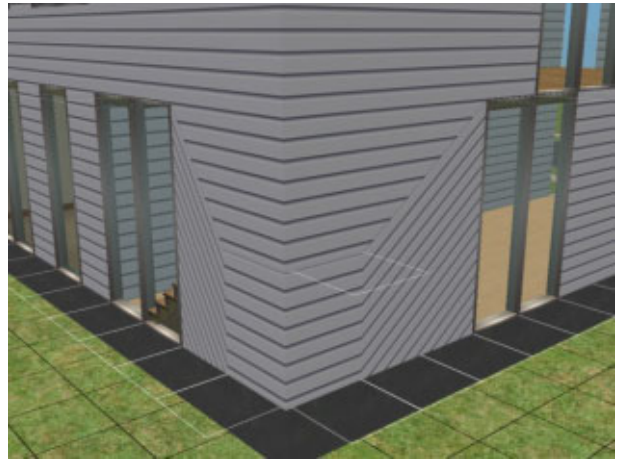
Step 21.

This worn clapboard shows what a vertical stripe looks like, and it goes well with the default planking under the lower flight of stairs (I think so, anyway!).

Step 22.

But common sense (well, my partner Ruth) prevailed, and here's the finished Split-level Corner Stair again, tastefully decorated for our Sims.
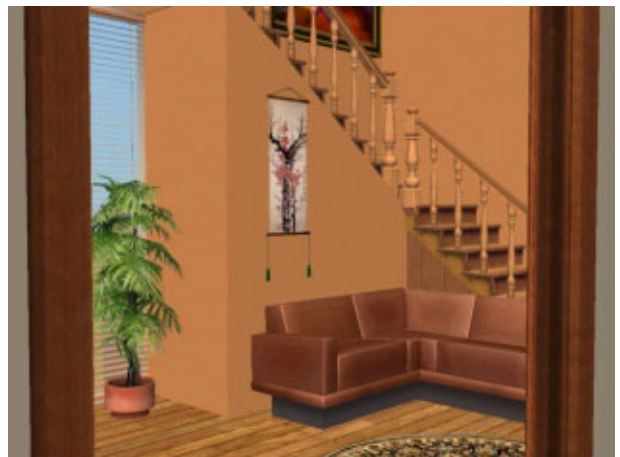
Bye!

Wishing you lots of enjoyment and pleasure as you explore the magical world of Sims2 architecture! ☺