Building the Globe

In 1597, the Theatre was forced to close. It had been built on rented land, and the Burbages’ agreement with the landowner had come to an end. The landowner refused to renew the lease because he hoped to keep the playhouse for himself and reuse its valuable oak timbers. Desperate to find a home for their players, the brothers came up with a plan. During the Christmas holidays of 1598, they hired workmen to pull the Theatre down. They took the oak timbers by boat across the river to Bankside, where they used them to build a new playhouse. They decided to call it the Globe.

Knock Down
The wooden joints of the Theatre were attached with pegs, which meant that the Burbages and their helpers could knock them apart using hammers. The undamaged timbers were then reassembled on the new site to make the frame of the Globe.

Wall Story
After making the frame, the builders installed wall panels. Timber-framed buildings sometimes had walls made from wattle (woven mats of hazel stems) covered with daub (a mixture of clay, lime, straw, horsehair, and dung). Walls were also made using thin strips of wood called lath, plastered with lime, horsehair, and sand.

Something Old, Something New
Inside the Globe, skilled carpenters used special tools to carve, drill, and chisel decorative features. The interior was colorful, with the stage columns painted to look like marble. The Burbages made sure that their new playhouse was an improvement on the old one.

Axes for making small holes
Billhook for pruning and lopping
Hammer
Hand saw
Chisel
Auger for boring holes in wood

Gallery seats
Gentleman’s room for wealthy audience members
Hell (space beneath the stage)
FLYING THE FLAG
Each playhouse had its own flag, flown on days when a play was being performed. The flags could be seen across the river in the city, where most of the potential audience lived. The Globe also had a sign above its entrance, depicting Hercules carrying a globe.

TO TILE OR NOT TO TILE?
Most new buildings in London in 1598 had tiled roofs, but the Burbages decided to use layers of straw or reeds called thatch for the roof of the Globe theater. Thatched roofs were far cheaper than tiles, but they were also much more of a fire risk.

Stamp showing the Globe with eight sides (it actually had 20 sides)

Pole for the playhouse flag

Upper rooms, where cannons were fired as a sound effect

Thatched roof shielded the galleries from the weather

THE WOODEN O
This model gives us an idea of how the "Wooden O," as Shakespeare called his playhouse, may have looked. It is based on a 1596 sketch of the Swan playhouse, and on descriptions by visitors to the original building. Excavations in 1969 revealed that the Globe was 99 feet (30 m) wide.

In a play, the balcony could represent castle battlements or an upper window.

Heavens (stage roof) - the underside was painted to look like a starry sky.

Stage stuck out into the yard, where the poorest people stood to watch the plays.

Two columns held up the heavens.