
BUILDING A FENCE: 5 STEPS TO GETTING STARTED

When it comes to fences, it is all about form and function. Building a fence needs a lot more forethought than one may think. Consider the following steps to building a fence when getting started:

1. Know your property.

Before marking your perimeter, make sure to know where it really is. Have a clear map of the property lines run before building anything. Check with the city to see if building permits are required or if power lines will be underfoot.

2. Choose the fence style.

There are several different fence styles to choose from when thinking about what is best for your home. Do you want a simple barrier, something to accentuate the home, more privacy, noise control, etc.?

The following are a few of the more popular styles to consider:

- **Picket fence:** a classic fence style that is usually shorter and uses narrow wood or vinyl boards.
- **Cedar Solid Style or Vinyl Privacy fence:** uses a board-on-board or board-and-post style that limits the amount of space between boards to protect a space from visibility.
- **Semi-privacy Vinyl fence:** additional space placed between boards allows more visibility.
- **Cedar and Vinyl Lattice fences:** an ornamental look with a crisscrossing pattern that often appears on the top of a good neighbor or privacy fence.
- **Split Rail fencing:** a reliable, classic style that gives a property a Western look. This is a great style of fence to install for the do-it-yourself person because of the affordability and ease of construction.
- **Decorator fence:** used to accent a home or area of a garden, this fence style alternates wide dog-eared boards and narrow flat boards.
- **Good Neighbor fence:** Popular with neighbors, this style fence appears the same from both sides, providing security while offering a feeling of spaciousness. Quality cedar boards alternate on either side of this fence. It is attractive on both sides and allows the wind to pass through, holding up very well in our northwest winters.
- **Picture Frame fence:** A decorative and popular fence, aesthetically pleasing to the eye, which both neighbors can enjoy. Picture Frame cedar boards are mounted side by side with a minimal gap between them to allow for expansion and contraction.

3. Choose the fence material.

The type of material used to build a fence can reinforce its purpose. There are several different materials one can choose:

- **Wood:** types of wood often used are cedar, pine, spruce, and hemlock. Cedar fencing is often a popular choice because it is more weatherproof than other types of wood. Wood fencing provides a classic look, but also can come with a lot of maintenance.
- **Vinyl:** low-maintenance, strong, and flexible. Vinyl is usually weatherproof, will not rot, splinter, corrode, and is typically made from recycled materials. Most fence styles can be made using vinyl materials.
- **Ornamental Aluminum** offers a combination of durability, strength and clean appearance. Aluminum Fencing will remain structurally sound for a lifetime. The finish will not crack, chip or peel.
- **Chain link:** typically made of galvanized steel to give it a long life.

4. **Choose the fence design.**

Fence design is where form and function really come in to play. There are many decorative and functional elements that can be added to fences such as the way the boards are cut, caps, metal or lattice accents, and gates.

When choosing a design for a fence, one will have to consider the style of the house or building and the style of the landscaping in which the fence will be placed. For example, a small white picket fence may not be appropriate for a major government building.

5. **Have an installation plan**

If you are knowledgeable in the areas of building and construction, it may be worth the money saved to build a fence on your own. However, professional fence installers may have the proper tools and skills to build the type of fence you want. Professionals know how materials will hold up in the soil and weather in your area. They can also more quickly respond to unforeseen issues. The time saved in having to go to the hardware store, take measurements, cut materials, etc. may make hiring a professional worth spending a little more.

One can also consider a mixed approach: have a professional do the heavy lifting (like setting the posts or cutting the boards) and you do the rest. Before starting your project, consult a professional fence installer to get their take on your project, get pointers, and see how you can work together. This method can help you spend less money than having a professional build the whole fence, and still give you the I-did-it-myself pride.

Great fences make more than just great neighbors. They can add that certain flair to your home or building that will make you the envy of the whole block.