

How to Choose Fencing Materials

1. Work out what kind of fence you want. Questions to answer include...

What do you want to fence in or out?

How high does it need to be?

How large can gaps or holes be?

Do you want your fence to provide privacy or security?

Will it need to support plants?

How much will wind affect it?

Is your fence going to be used to demarcate your boundary?

Is there an issue of shared cost?

Will someone else have to look at the other side and should you speak to them about what kind of fence they want?

How long do you need your fence to last for, is it permanent or temporary?

Are you going to put the fence up yourself?

2. Translating your ideas Into Timber and Metal

Look at the fences around you and work out what will fit in with the surroundings. Find fences that do work well and achieve what you want to achieve, note down how they are made and what with.

If necessary take a photograph, do drawings or make measurements (with permission).

A good fence adds value to your property so take your time.

Measure your fence line and take notes on any corners, variations in ground, obstacles, and changes in projected type or height of fence.

Once you have some ideas talk to your fencing supplier or ask for recommendations for fencing contractors and discuss it with them.

They will be able to tell you what is possible and give you ideas on cost but do remember that good fencing contractors are busy people and usually have very long waiting lists.

3. Fence Specifications

Unless your fence is intended to be temporary then it is sensible to go for the best quality materials you can find. Fencing isn't easy to put up; you don't want it to come down a minute before it has to.

All posts should be *treated for ground contact* and all timber should be *treated for exterior use*.

The best timber for posts is pine or larch. Larch is nearly always Hybrid not European these days unfortunately so many foresters prefer pine which takes a better treatment. Import timber tends to crack and split very badly and it is difficult to be sure what it has been treated with, only buy from highly knowledgeable sources.

Corner posts / strainers don't have to be huge but they do have to be well treated, treatment costs more than timber, the chemical is expensive and the post has to be properly debarked first. Don't buy monolithic strainers covered in bits of bark and expect them to last, they won't. Buy posts which have been properly treated.

Don't use hard timbers for railing unless you are prepared to drill them, larch, even if obtainable can split and crack badly as a rail. Soft timbers such as spruce will usually give a better result for non-specialist fencing.

All wire should be galvanised to above British Standards, the two best makes are Tornado and Sentinel.

Wooden gates should be mortised and preferably made of British timber, imported timber is often too hard and develops splits and cracks early in its life. Gates which have been drilled and screwed together are often made of import timber; the pre-drilling can be an attempt to avoid splitting while the gate is being made.

Gate fittings should always be galvanised not japanned to avoid rust streaks on your gate.

Double gates must be secured in the centre so that they don't bang in the wind and should also be secured back when open so that the gates can't swing and bang into vehicles passing through. If there is heavy traffic through a double gate we recommend a combination of, for instance, one 3m vehicle gate with a 1.2m passenger gate rather than two 2.1m gates both of which would have to be opened by every vehicle.

Metal gates should not be tack welded on one side, try to buy gates with vertical supports which are integral to the gate. Diagonal supports can catch the feet of animals and cause serious injury. Galvanised finishes always last longer than painted finishes.

There are huge variations in the quality of chicken/ rabbit net and rylocks, only buy from a knowledgeable source. Saving yourself a few pounds on your wire can result in a fence that degrades within 3 or 4 years or, for rabbit/chicken net, within a year. The standard specification for rabbit net is 1050mm high, 31mm mesh and 19 gauge weight. Every type of wire from the stuff that you can barely unroll in one piece to the one that lasts 20 years is called 1050/31/19, buy from someone you trust and remember you get what you pay for.

Posts to hang gates should be heavy enough to take the weight, a minimum of 175mm diameter is required for a 3.6m gate and 100mm is needed for a 900mm gate.

Close boarded hit and miss fencing should normally be on 100mm x 100mm posts with heavy hanging rails to avoid wind damage.

Unfortunately new treatments are not as effective as old ones but if you are planning to coat your fence in creosote or some other product do ensure it can't leach into the water table, particularly if you are fencing near a private water supply catchment area.

Don't use old railway sleeper for raised beds particularly not for vegetable beds. They are treated with old-style creosote which is a carcinogen.

For all other questions on specification and quality please do not hesitate to ask us on 01631 563271 or email sales@hodgefencing.co.uk .

Good luck with your fencing