

How To Erect Wooden Fencing

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1. Choosing Wooden Fencing

Factors to consider include how much privacy you want, how decorative you want your fence to be and what you want to keep in or out.

For privacy the best design is vertical board fencing which is also hard to climb. It can be either single sided with a small gap between boards or double sided with a larger gap that allows the wind through. It is also possible to build a completely closed board fence.

It is important to remember that these fences act as sails, the wind pressure on them is tremendous and so they have to be strong enough not to blow down in a gale.

2. Safety

You will need safety boots, protective eyewear, protective gloves and possibly a helmet. You should also do a basic and informal risk assessment as a bare minimum.

3. Preparing Your Site

Firstly, if this is a boundary fence then please, please speak to your neighbour. With his or her agreement and access from both side then the fence will be much easier to put up.

Secondly, ensure that all obstacles have been removed and anything which will later damage your fence. It would be upsetting to complete your fence only to see a branch land on it.

Decide on the exact line of your fence, try to avoid rock, and then mark both ends using a stake so that you have site lines to aim for. Use the posts to attach a string line.

Check your line for power cables, phone lines and drains

4. Building a 1.8m Double Sided Board Fence.

For demonstration purposes we can use a double sided fence. For a single sided fence simply alter the spacing to suit your own fence.



5. Gather your Materials

Measure your fence line and note any turns or changes in ground height.

The distance between your posts should be determined by the length of your hanging rails (horizontal) as you want one post at each end of each rail and one in the middle. Normally this will give you 1.8m or 2.4m intervals. In this case we will assume that that we are using 3 horizontal rails (top, middle and bottom) of 3.6m x 100mm x 38mm so the posts will be every 1.8m.

For a 1.8m high fence you will need posts at least 2.4m high and 100 x 100mm diameter for strength. These will need to be postcreted or concreted into the ground. As a guide 2 – 3 bags of postcrete per post will do the job.

At every change of direction you will need another post regardless of intervals.

For boundary fences you should ensure that the boards are on the boundary and that the structure of the fence isn't over the boundary.

The number of vertical boards should be calculated by dividing the length of the fence by the coverage each board provides. For instance if you have a 25mm overlap then a 150mm board will provide 125mm coverage. Total number of verticals required = total distance divided by 125mm. Allow a few extra.

If you are cutting boards in half when you hang the board put the cut end to the bottom.

6. Putting In the Posts

If you have a roadside end or a boundary end then start from there.

Dig a hole ideally at least 0.6m deep and big enough to take a couple of bags of postcrete or some cement. Nail some nails half into the post at the end so that the post will grip the postcrete. Put the post into the hole and cement or postcrete it ensuring that it is vertical using a spirit level. The post must also be square to the fenceline.

Take a 3.6m rail and present it to that post at ground level. This is just to mark out the position of the next hole. The next hole should be in the centre of the rail, and the one after that should be at the end. The rail should come to the exact middle of the third post. If the ground doesn't allow you to dig a hole precisely there then shorten the distance rather than trying to lengthen it.

The bottom rail should be about 100mm above the ground.

Professional fencers would put all the posts in at the beginning of the job. However you risk finding that your rails don't fit the gaps doing it this way so you may wish to proceed in sections attaching the rail as you go.

7. Attaching the Rails

It is always best to screw the rail on rather than nailing it and it is only the bottom one which is vital for distances providing that your posts are plumb. The middle and top rails can be done later.

The middle rail should be offset, start by using half a rail so that it meets its next rail on a different post to the top and bottom rails. This increases the strength of the fence. The top rail should be about 300mm below the final fence height for security as this makes it harder to climb.

The middle rail should be in the middle and all three should be parallel although if the ground slopes then they may all be at an angle.

8. Hanging The Boards

Once all your hanging rails are attached begin at the end and attach your first vertical board.

There should still be small gap at the bottom to allow water to run clear of the fence. Use a spirit level to check the board is vertical before nailing or screwing it to the hanging rails.

Make a spacer board to mark off your gaps using a straight piece of wood. It helps to put a handle on it so that it is easier to hold up.

Keep working along the fence line ensuring that you check regularly that your boards are still absolutely vertical.

For double sided fences you should attach your back stays if using before doing the second side. Otherwise proceed to attach the second side as for the first.

9. Very Windy Sites and BackStaying

Back stays are used to give the fence additional strength to stand up against the wind. If you are going to use them then you probably won't need them on every post - they will be needed most at the points which catch most wind.

A backstay runs diagonally from just below the centre of the post to a stub post driven into the ground about a metre or so back, your stay should run at 45degrees to ground level and should meet the stub post at ground level. The stub post should be driven in at a slight angle or postcreted in.

10. Single Sided Fences

Follow the instructions above but adapt the measurements and quantities required.

11. Railing Stock Fences

A 5 bar fence or as required by stock being contained can be built by following the instructions above until the point where the verticals are attached.

For a railing fence it is normally possible to use 75 x 75mm pointed posts which can be driven into the ground rather than dug in. They must be kept square to the line and vertical otherwise it will be difficult to attach the rails.

There is a device called a post holder which can help with this – see our Tools section for a picture.



Fences by Lorne Fowler – see [fencing contractors' listings](#)