

## Five Important Tips For Building The Perfect Fence

A familiar old saying claims, “Good fences make good neighbors.” That’s true, but good fences also provide better security, privacy and esthetic value. Building a fence can be an involved and costly project, and you want your fence to be durable and long lasting. Be sure to review these five important considerations for building a fence: planning, design, material, building method and construction fasteners.

### Five Important Steps for Building the Perfect Fence:

#### **Planning:**

- Your first step must be to learn about all of the codes and ordinances that apply to the area where you want to build your fence. You will need to check with your neighborhood association, your city or town, and your county offices. You may not think there are any restrictions in your area, but it is very likely there are some codes and/or ordinances. It is better to be aware ahead of time, and build your fence within these regulations, than to have to tear down your new fence and start over.
- Contact all of the local utility offices and have them mark the location of their lines within the area. You may not personally use all of the utilities—gas, phone, electricity, cable, etc.—but those lines may cross your property. If you do not know where these potential dangers are, you could cause substantial problems and possibly even injure or kill someone unintentionally.
- Additionally, find and mark the location of your sprinkler system, if you have one. Mark not only the sprinkler heads, but also all connecting pipes.
- If the fence you are planning to build is on a property line, it is best to discuss this project with the neighbor before beginning any construction. Be sure the neighbor is okay with the idea of a fence and that you agree on the location of the property line. If there is a discrepancy on the exact boundaries, it’s a good idea to hire a professional surveyor. This is another point to clarify within local codes or ordinances; a property line affidavit may be necessary.

#### **Designing your fence:**

- Prior to designing your fence and developing a construction plan, it’s important to consider the purpose of the fence.
- If privacy is your ultimate goal, you will want a fence that is at least six feet tall (remember the local limitations) and has little, or no, gaps between the boards.
- A fence that is intended only as a barrier may be shorter and feature openings between the railings and/or boards.
- If you are building a fence to constrain pets, you will want a different fence to restrict a Chihuahua than if you need to keep a Great Dane in his yard. Additionally, consider how much contact you want your dog to have with people outside the fence.
- The terrain of your property is another important factor. If you are building a fence along a steep slope or terraced area, you will need to decide if you want your fence to be stair-stepped or if utilizing a variable fence height will be the best solution.

#### **Selecting material:**

- There is a wide variety of material available to use when building a fence. These materials include wood, steel, chain link, vinyl, and even barbed wire.

- Wood and wood-plastic composite are the most commonly used for fencing. With composite materials, the need for painting and rot-resistant treatments is greatly reduced, if not eliminated.
- When using wood for fence construction, it is important to use only pressure-treated wood that is decay- and termite-resistant. The most commonly used woods are redwood, western cedar and cypress.

One of the most important items needed for successful fence building is a reliable construction fastener. Without the proper fasteners, even the most beautiful fence could fall apart during the first big windstorm.

- **SCRAIL**<sup>®</sup> fasteners are an exceptional choice for use when building a wood or composite fence. These construction fasteners can dramatically increase construction speed while also increasing the strength and durability of the fence—or any building project.
  - **BeckDeck**<sup>®</sup> fasteners are part of the SCRAIL<sup>®</sup> Faster Fastener<sup>®</sup> family, which work well on most low density composite materials by incorporating a unique double thread which eliminates mushrooming.
  - All SCRAIL<sup>®</sup> construction fasteners, including **BeckDeck**<sup>®</sup> fasteners, feature a unique thread configuration, which creates increased holding power when compared to the common ring shank nail.
  - When pneumatically applied with a collated nailer, SCRAIL<sup>®</sup> fasteners are twice as fast as the typical collated screw and eight times faster than manually installed bulk screws.
  - SCRAIL<sup>®</sup> fasteners are designed specifically for use in most commercially available coil or strip nailers. This provides increased speed of application, resulting in significant labor cost savings.

### ***Building your fence:***

- Marking the location of the fence posts:
  - As a general rule, fence posts should be set 6' to 8' apart. The spacing may vary depending on the terrain, the type of fence, and the purpose of the fence. Also, consider the local weather when deciding on the post spacing.
  - The corner or end posts should be set first. Stretching a string from each corner or end post will allow you to align all the posts precisely. Measure the locations of the posts and mark their exact position with a stake. Both the stability and the appearance of your fence will depend on the accuracy of the post placement.
- Setting the fence posts:
  - All wood or composite posts must be set with at least one-third of their total length buried in the ground. This is especially vital for corner posts, end posts, posts that will carry extra weight such as gates, and posts in areas with high winds.
  - Treat the section of the post that will be underground with a wood preservative. You can set the posts upright in the preservative overnight to allow the wood to become well saturated.
  - At each stake marker, use a post hole digger to dig a straight hole to the depth you have determined as optimal. It is beneficial to make the holes slightly larger at the bottom and add gravel or small stones at the bottom. This provides drainage and will help prevent moisture from collecting in the hole.
  - Fill the hole around the posts with dirt or concrete. Make sure the posts are properly upright by using a level. Also, check the alignment of the post by sighting along the string running between the end posts.
  - After you have the post in its proper position, brace the post with stakes if you are using cement, and leave the stakes in place until the cement has set. After the cement around the

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- buried portion of the post has hardened, add additional cement in a mound around the post, sloping away from the wood. This will prevent water from collecting around the wood post.
- If you are using dirt to anchor the post, tamp it thoroughly around the base of the post. Recheck alignment periodically with your level and by sighting along the string. Tamp the dirt into the hole around the post, then build a slight mound to assist with water runoff.
  - Allow the posts to stand for two to three days before adding the rest of the fence. There may be some settling and additional cement or dirt may be necessary. Remember to firmly tamp any dirt around the posts.
  - To further eliminate water accumulation, consider rounding or slanting the top of each post.
- Adding rails:
    - Attach the top and bottom rails first. Rails can be added by simply nailing them to the posts, attaching with a bracket or block, or by cutting a groove for the rail. For any of these methods, one choice for making this a sturdy connection will be a **SCRAIL**<sup>®</sup> fastener.
    - It's important to ensure the top and bottom rails are all fastened the same distance apart on each post. After you have measured and positioned the first section, cut a measuring stick that equals the distance between these rails. You can use this measuring stick on the rest of the fence to maintain the same measurement on each post. It is recommended that the bottom rail be placed at least 2" from the ground to reduce the possibility of moisture damage.
    - Once all of the top and bottom rails are in place, you can proceed to add the remainder of the rails. The positioning of these rails will depend on the design you have chosen—basket weave, picket, vertical or horizontal—or a design of your own.
    - After all of the posts and rails are in place, treat the wood with paint, preservative or weatherproofing.

By following these steps, and using **SCRAIL**<sup>®</sup> fasteners, you will have a well-built fence that will last for years.

To learn more about **BeckDeck**<sup>®</sup> fasteners and other **SCRAIL**<sup>®</sup> construction fasteners, [contact](#) our main office or the regional manager serving your area. Additional information is also available on the **SCRAIL**<sup>®</sup> [Facebook Page](#) and videos are on [YouTube](#).

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