HOW-TO Timber Paling Fence

This guide has been written and compiled for the home handyperson. Following these instructions will help you achieve an excellent result that you will be proud of.

However, for a truly professional finish, we suggest you contract a professional landscaper to do the job for you. The method followed in this guide is used by many professional landscapers but many will have their own individual variations or in some cases completely different approaches. Please remember, this is not the only method for building a fence, just the method we have found to offer the greatest balance of cost and labour.

Tools

- String line and pegs
- Spirit level
- Tape measure
- Hand or power saw
- Hammer or Air nailer
- Impact driver
- Shovel and digging spade
- Concrete mixer
- Carton of beer

Materials

- Pine or Hardwood Posts & Rails
- Pine Palings
- Nails to suit application
- Batten screws to fix rails
- Concrete blend & cement
- Drainage gravel

Before you start your fencing project, make sure you consider the following:

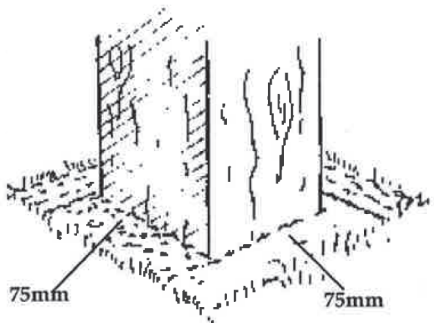
- If planning a boundary fence, discuss your plans with the neighbours. Depending on circumstances you may be able to share the costs. Check out your local council website for more information. Brisbane City Council provide a great resource to guide you in your boundary fence project.
- Generally fences up to 1800mm high do not require building permits. However, check with your local authority on possible bylaws concerning heights or other requirements.
- Choose a style of fence which will harmonise your home and be sympathetic to your suburb or other design choices you have made throughout your home.
- If the fence is to act as a wind-shelter it should have equal parts solids to gaps reducing wind resistance.
- The majority of fence styles can be built around a simple post and rail frame easily constructed following these steps.

STEP ONE Setting out

Mark out where you intend to build the fence with a string line, timber pegs and line marking paint. Position the line to indicate when the front of the posts will be. Mark out along the line with paint each post at a maximum of 2.4m apart. This distance suites a rail length of 4.8m allowing the rail to span across three posts. If your fence is not perfectly divisible by 2.4m, modify the distance between posts ensuring they are even and no more than 2.4m. For example, on a 9m span of fence, allow 2.25m between post centers.

STEP TWO Excavation

Post holes should be dug 700mm deep using a post hole borer, square mouth digging spade or post hole digger. Check the position of the string line regularly to ensure the post holes are square and in line. Remove all loose material from the holes. The width of the hole should leave at least a 75mm gap between the post position and edge of the hole. If using a 100mm square post, the hole must be minimum 250mm x 250mm square.

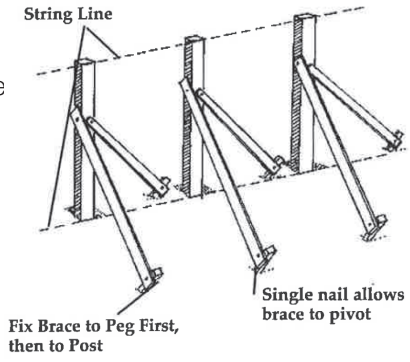


STEP THREE Positioning the posts

Post sizes for various height fences are shown in the table below. Position the end of corner post to within 1mm of the string line. Spend some times adjusting the post height by removing or adding drainage gravel as required. Securely brand the posts in position making sure they are plumb in both directions.

Attach a second string line across the top of the end or corner posts to act as a height guide and to aid in getting perfectly vertical posts. Although this should be achieved using a spirit level.

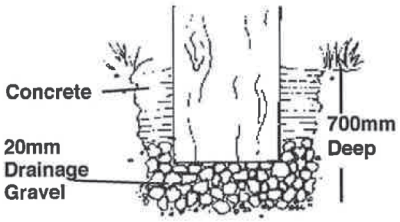
Brace and plumb posts in both directions.



Fence Height	Post Length	Post Size	Hole Depth
1800mm	2400mm	100x75mm (100x100mm for ends, gates and corners)	700mm (100mm drainage gravel in base).
1500mm	2400mm (300mm wastage)	100x75mm (100x100mm for ends, gates and corners)	700mm (100mm drainage gravel in base).
1200mm	1800mm	100x75mm (100x100mm for ends, gates and corners)	700mm (100mm drainage gravel in base).

STEP FOUR Concreting the Posts

Before you concrete the posts, check again that they're all in line, plumb, accurately spaces and securely braced. Remove the string lines and carefully shovel concrete (proportions 1 part cement to 5 parts concrete blend), into each post hole taking care not to disturb the hole or post. Make sure the concrete is well distributed around the post and not under by tamping with a piece of waster timber. Fill the holes to ground level, sloping the concrete away from the timber post to prevent water pooling. Allow adequate time to dry before moving on to step five.

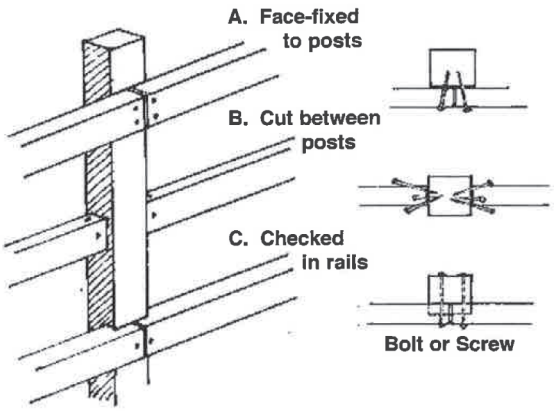


STEP FIVE Fixing the rails

Fences up to 1200mm in height require only 2 rails, whereas fences over this height require at least three rails. Fix the bottom rail at a maximum of 150mm above finished ground level and the top rail 150mm below the top of the finished post height.

There are 3 methods for fixing rails. Rails can be (a) face-fixed to posts, (b) cut between posts or (c) checked in to the rails. The most effective method will depend on your carpentry skill, we recommend either method A or C.

Prior to installing the rails, it is recommended the posts or primed and painted to make application easier. This is particularly important if you have checked in the rails. Ensure you use quality **galvanised** fixings such as batten screws and bolts to ensure longevity and strength.

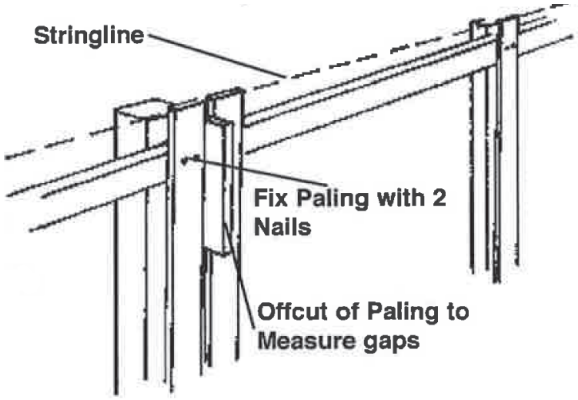


STEP SIX Fixing the palings

At your corner post, fix one paling at your finished height, then move to the other end of your fence and repeat. Run a string line between the finished height of each paling and pull tight. Attach the rest of your palings using the string line as a guide. A 1800mm high fence with three rails will require 6 nails (2 offset into each rail).

A simple method for even spacing is to use an off-cut of a paling. Turn it on its side, butt it up against the fixed paling and push the next paling hard against it and fix. This will give you a 15mm gap. Alternatively, you map prefer a tighter look and butt each paling up against its neighbour. In this case, make sure you consider the wind loading that may be present on the fence.

Other layouts may include overlapping the palings or a 'good neighbour' style with palings offset down both sides of the fence.



Handy Hints...

- As soon as the timber arrives is should be stacked level and flat at least 150mm off the ground.
- Allow a 40-50mm gap between the bottom of the paling and ground level.
- Painting your timber fence will ensure it lasts, unpainted fences will warp and deteriorate in a short time.
- All fixings (bolts, nails and screws) must be hot-dipped galvanised to prevent corrosion cause by the chemical treatment in the timber and weather.
- Regularly tighten bolts and screws as timber ages and shrinks over time.

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