

What to Do to Build Wooden Fences that Last

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If you want to build wooden fences that are going to last, then you need to follow a few basic principles.

To start with, you always want to use rails and posts that have been pressure-treated. Pressure-treated wood has had a liquid preservative forced into it to protect it against deterioration due to rot or termites. Treatment levels range from .020 retention up to .060 retention. The higher the number, the better the quality of the pressure treatment. When you go to buy your wood, you need to ask for pressure-treated wood specifically, because if you don't then they won't give it to you for whatever crazy reason. If you don't have pressure-treated wood for building your fence, then you are almost guaranteed to have your fence rot.

Next, you want to be aware of what kind of wood you're going to use to build your fence. The most popular woods for fences are cedar and pine. Wind and weather, cold and heat, all take their toll on your fence; and it has been demonstrated through studies that cedar greatly outlasts pine, with cedar fences sometimes being shown to last even up to 100% longer. Some people prefer the look and feel of pine, however. If you are one of these people, then you'll want to have a weather protection stain put on your pine fence.

The industry standard for the fence rails is to use 2X3 boards, but this is not a good practice. It's really there to save money. 2X4 boards are significantly more enduring than 2X3 boards.

Remember that the more height and the more weight your fence's gates will have, the more hinges you'll need to use to make sure it gets held up firmly and smoothly swings. Nearly half of all wooden fences are there to act as "privacy protectors" and they are consequently about eight feet tall. These fences have heavier gates, naturally, than do the standard four-to-six-foot fences. Many experts say to put three or four hinges on a gate of such a large size, but many people are foolish enough or lacking in knowledge enough that they try to save a few bucks and only put in the usual two. In addition, your hinges should be made of brass or steel.

Remember, if you're going to use a contractor to have your fence built, you want them following these same principles. Make sure they use the right number of hinges, pressurized wood of the higher grade, and the kind of wood you want.