

Fence Project Preparation Checklist

The intent of this checklist is to cover broad elements of a fence installation to help both customer and contractor achieve a successful project. The information is provided as a general guideline. Individual contractors' practices may vary so be sure to discuss them thoroughly with your selected company. Local building codes, utility company policies regarding excavation around utilities, practices for setting posts based on local soil conditions, etc. may supersede any suggestions noted on this document.

Establishing and Clearing the Fence line

In order to determine where the fence line will run, locate your property markers (sometimes called pins) and ensure they are placed in the correct location. If the markers are no longer available, you may be able to determine the location of your property line(s) from your plat map (usually included with your mortgage paperwork) or from your county's online resources. You may also need to review the property line(s) with your neighbors and/or contact a surveyor.

Note: Each municipality has its own regulations and code requirements when it comes to issues such as sidewalk or curb offsets, visibility around street corners, height restrictions, etc. They may also require building permits. In most cases, your questions can be answered by calling planning & zoning offices for your jurisdiction or looking online for the codes.

Utilities: In most areas, the responsibility for property utility location resides with the party excavating the holes. Check with your contractor to ensure you both clearly understand who is responsible for arranging the location of utility markings and the cost of any potential damage. There is often a third party resource that will coordinate the marking of all main utilities such as gas, water, electric, cable TV, etc. It's a good idea to learn about utility location and it is typically easy to find the entity that takes care of that service either by searching online or from your local municipality. If you have any concerns about your utilities, you may want to have them located prior to signing with a contractor to identify any alterations to the locations of your fence line. In almost all cases, if there is a utility in the way, you will have to arrange for your fence line or the utility to be moved. Remember, some utilities can be very dangerous and preventative measures will not only avoid headaches and costs, it can also save lives.

It is not uncommon for a property owner to install sprinklers, gas lines to fire pits, perimeter electrical wiring, etc. These are not typically considered utilities and are not likely to be found through locators. Be prepared to making arrangements to have them moved or to work with your contractor to avoid damaging them as best as possible. Damage from setting fence posts when these local underground elements are in place is often one of the most difficult situations for a contractor and buyer to resolve if incidents occurs during the installation.

Neighbors: A fence can make a significant difference in the aesthetics and function of a property. In most cases, a simple discussion with your neighbors will help set expectations and avoid any surprises. Whether your neighbors are participating or not with the installation, it's always a good idea to bring them up to speed on your plans. Keep in mind that if you are building on a property line, there is a good

chance that they have underground elements such as sprinklers or wiring that could just as easily be affected by a fence installation as yours would be.

Stringing a line: Once you have established the location of your property lines, you may want to consider using stakes and string lines to create visual markings for the fence line. This will be very helpful for you to determine if there are any obstructions in the fence line such as sprinklers, boulders, vegetation, etc. Typically, the responsibility to clear the line resides with the buyer, but check to see if your fence company will clear the line for you.

Sprinklers: If there are sprinklers running on or next to the fence line, you may want to consider pulling them back from the fence line to avoid potential breakage. Keep in mind that the excavated post hole could be quite a bit wider than the post itself. Since sprinklers are local installations, they are not marked by utility companies so it is likely that your fence contractor will not know where they are. Check with your contractor to determine how they handle issues concerning sprinklers. Some offer landscaping services while others defer them to the buyer for other arrangements.

Note: Ensuring that the fence line is clear prior to installation is important to help keep the project on schedule and avoid potential obstacles that will inhibit your contractor's ability to build the fence.

Other Considerations

It may be difficult for you to visualize how your new fence will look on your property. The following considerations will help you make good decisions for the aesthetics, protection, and longevity of your fence.

Grading: Rough grade (i.e., grade within 1" - 2" of the final ground level) should be completed before the fence is installed to ensure that the fence line flows smoothly and does not have any unnecessary gaps.

Removal of existing fence: If you are taking care of removing and disposing of an existing fence check with your contractor to determine how to handle end and corner posts (and any concrete curbing if applicable) before pulling them out. They are easier to remove if the post is still in place.

Preparation process

Initial walk through: A fence contractor will typically want to meet with you at the property prior to the commencement of the installation to discuss details about the construction of the fence, mark corner, end, and gate posts, and answer any questions about the schedule, installation process, etc. Keep in mind that while the typical fence contractor is an experienced professional, the specific elements of your project should be thoroughly discussed to ensure both parties understand each other's expectations.

Hole excavation: Some contractors use digging equipment. Make sure you understand what impact that might have on the landscaping of your property. Keep in mind that while fence building is usually light construction, you can expect some wear from the work so if there are any preliminary concerns, be sure to communicate them before the project is underway.

Final walk through: The contractor will usually want to walk through the job with you once it is complete or close to completion. It's a good idea to do as thorough a walk-through as possible so both can agree that the project is complete. The contractor will most likely have other obligations right after your project is closed and it is costly to remobilize. If there are any adjustments to be made, having that discussion while at the project site gives the contractor an opportunity to finish at that time or to work with you to determine other timing and expectations for completing the work.

Preparation Checklist (General Guidelines)	Completed
Research your property (utility locations, property lines established, municipality requirements, etc.)	
Discuss plans with neighbors	
Perform initial project review and walk through (if applicable; you may need to do this more than once if there is property preparation that needs to be done before installation)	
Grading/terrain adjustment (if applicable)	
Removal and disposal of existing fence/curbing (if applicable)	
Other specific steps (e.g. moving sprinklers, concrete work, etc., if applicable)	
Final clearance of fence line to enable crew/equipment access	
Installation walk through	
Inspection and final walk through	