

According to Robert Frost, "good fences make good neighbors." While fences maintain privacy -- and peace -- between neighbors, they also keep pets and young children inside your yard and keep predators out. Installing a fence may be a time-consuming task, but you can reduce the expense significantly by building it yourself.

1 Call the local utility companies to locate and mark all buried lines. Do not dig until the utility company representatives have identified and marked all the buried lines. You can also call 811 to get information about power lines.

2 Brush the posts and fencing panels with oil-based wood stain. Wipe off excess stain and allow everything to dry completely.

3 Paint the fence posts with wood preservative to one-third of their height and allow them to dry thoroughly, following the manufacturer's instructions. This retards rot from the contact with the damp soil and the underground sections of the posts.

4 Dig a hole that is twice the diameter of the post and one-third of the height of the post, using a posthole digger. Make the bottom of the hole slightly larger than the top. Place the dirt you remove on a tarp, as you will need it later.

5 Remove any large rocks and roots from the hole. If necessary, cut large roots free.

6 Add 4 to 5 inches (10.16 to 12.7 cm) of gravel to the hole, spreading it evenly across the bottom. This allows proper drainage away from the fence posts during inclement weather.

7 Set the first fence post into the hole, and add 6 to 8 inches (15.24 to 20.32 cm) of soil. Check the level of the fence post by placing a carpenter's level on at least 2 sides. When the fence post is level, tamp the soil to compact it solidly into the hole.

8 Add another 6 to 8 inches (15.24 to 20.32 cm) of soil, check the level and tamp the soil. Repeat until you have filled the hole completely.

9 Mound dirt around the fence post at ground level, rounding it with a trowel. This will direct rain and snow melt away from the fence post.

10 Place a stake at the location for the next corner fence post.

11 Attach the twine to the fence post, about 6 inches (15.24 cm) from the ground. Stretch the twine to the stake, pull it taut and affix it to the stake. Set the corner fence post and then repeat for the remaining corners.

12 Measure the width of the fence panels and mark the distance with stakes. Set fence posts at each stake, aligning them with the twine line and mounding soil around them above ground level.

13 Set a fence panel between the first 2 fence posts. Use wooden wedges to level the panel. Attach the panel with screws, maintaining the level.

14 Repeat attaching the fence panels to the fence posts until the fence is complete.

