

Most every house needs at least one gate. It may be fancy, to grace the front of your home. Or it may just be useful and lead to the backyard. Plain or elegant, a gate is an ideal weekend project. Gates aren't difficult to build, the rewards are nearly immediate, and you get to use and admire your new gate every day.

As the animation shows, a simple frame can take on almost any character you want and go with everything from a plain board fence to a magisterial masonry wall. In each case, the 2-by-4 frame is the same. It's the cladding boards, pickets, lattice that makes the difference.

We show typical dimensions for this project on the next page, but the dimensions you choose may well be different. Gate height and covering will depend on function: high and solid for privacy and security, low and open for a friendly feeling. Cladding can extend beyond the top and bottom of the frame, and as the animation shows, it can be cut in lots of decorative styles. You can make your gate up to 4 feet wide and 6 feet high without affecting the fundamental construction of this project. For a wider opening, use double gates. For a taller gate, change to 2-by-6 framing.

The finished gate should fit into its opening with a 1/2-inch clearance on each side. Allow a 1-inch to 4-inch clearance from the bottom of the gate to the ground. If the ground slopes at the gate opening, regrade it, or hang the gate so it will clear the highest point of the slope.

What you spend for your gate depends largely on the materials you choose. Built of construction-grade redwood, pine, fir or cedar, the 3-by-4-foot gate shown will cost about \$75 if mounted with basic hardware. Build it of teak with bronze hardware, and the cost will be hundreds of dollars at least.

Before we begin, a word about hardware. Gate hinges come in all shapes and sizes: butt hinges, T-hinges, strap hinges and more. Latch sets are just as varied. Be sure your choice allows you to open your gate from both the inside and outside, especially if your gate is too tall to reach over. And remember, when you pick your hardware, it's best to err on the heavy side. Gates must last for years through thousands of openings, closings and slammings, too.

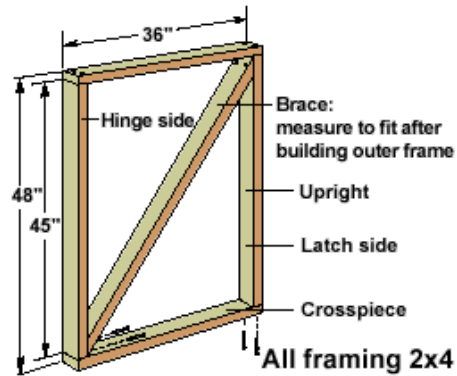
Step by Step

1. Mark and cut the frame pieces. From the 8-foot stock, cut one 36-inch crosspiece and one 45-inch upright. Use these as guides to mark and cut the matching crosspiece and upright.

2. Assemble the outer frame. Working on a flat surface, mark and drill pilot holes for the screws you'll use to assemble your frame. Drill through the crosspieces into the ends of the uprights. (This shelters the end grain of the uprights from rain and helps the gate last longer.) Fasten the resulting butt joints with construction adhesive and 3-inch screws. With the frame assembled, measure diagonally across the frame in both directions with a tape measure. If the gate is square, the measurements will be equal. If they're not, push on a corner to adjust the frame until the measurements are the same. (The frame will be somewhat flexible at this stage.)

3. Add the diagonal brace. Lay the 6-foot 2-by-4 diagonally across the squared frame, and mark diagonal

cuts from beneath with a pencil. For maximum strength, the brace should run from the bottom of the hinge side to the top of the latch side. Position the brace so that an angled cut at each end will fit the brace to the uprights, as shown. This way, the weight of the gate is less likely to pry the frame apart. With a handsaw, cut the brace to size. Position the brace, drill pilot holes and fasten it with adhesive and 2 1/2-inch screws.



4. Cover the completed frame. Cut your cladding material to cover the frame in the pattern you have chosen, then nail it to the "show" side of the gate. At this point, you can paint or stain the gate or apply a clear preservative. You also may decide to let it weather naturally.

5. Mount the finished gate. The most important part of this step is getting the hinges aligned so they don't bind. If the hinge-side upright is very straight, it's largely a matter of setting each hinge the same distance from the upright's edge. Otherwise, snap a chalk line along the edge of the upright and align each hinge leaf to that. Drill pilot holes, then screw the hinges to the gate.

Position the hinges so the screws penetrate the frame, not just the cladding. Next, place the frame on blocks of wood so that it's supported correctly in the gate opening. Wooden shingles or shims (thin strips of wood) are also useful to help center the frame in the opening. With a pen knife or pencil, transfer the location of the hinges on the frame to the post or wall you'll hang the gate from.

That done, remove the frame and use the holes in the other hinge leaf to mark the positions of the screw holes in the post or wall where the gate will hang. Drill pilot holes. Finally, support the gate in position again, and screw the hinges to the post or wall.

Drilling pilot holes first, attach the latch, the catch and any other hardware remaining. Finally, bestow this old English blessing on your new portal, "Bless this house and bless this gate, may all who enter recreate."

CornerHardware.com recommended tools & supplies:

- [Tape measure](#)
- [Circular saw](#)
- [Handsaw](#)
- [Hammer](#)
- [Screwdriver](#)
- [Drill](#)

- [Drill-bit set](#)
- [Hinges and mounting screws or bolts](#)
- [Gate latch set](#)