

Best Practices for Painting or Staining Fences in Spokane, WA

Spokane's climate—with its cold winters, hot summers, and wet springs—demands careful preparation and product selection for fence painting or staining. Below are expert-backed best practices for achieving a durable, attractive finish:

1. Decide: Paint or Stain?

- **Stain is generally preferred** for wood fences in the Pacific Northwest. Stain penetrates wood, resists peeling, and is easier to maintain than paint, which can flake and peel in Spokane's variable weather^{[1][2][3]}.
- If you want an opaque, painted look but with easier maintenance, use a solid-body stain instead of traditional paint^{[1][3][2]}.

2. Choose the Right Product

- **For stain:** Select a product formulated for the Pacific Northwest, with UV inhibitors and mildewcides to protect against sun and moisture^{[3][4]}.
- **For paint:** Use high-quality exterior paint designed for wood and outdoor use^{[5][6]}. For metal or vinyl fences, use primers and paints specifically formulated for those materials^[7].
- Always check product labels for temperature and humidity recommendations.

3. Preparation is Key

- **Clear the Area:** Move plants, furniture, and cover nearby surfaces with tarps or plastic sheeting^{[6][7][8]}.
- **Clean Thoroughly:** Remove dirt, mold, and mildew using a wire brush, outdoor detergent, or a specialized cleaner. For moss and algae, use a fungicidal wash or a product like "30 Seconds" (green version for spray-and-wait, blue for scrub-and-rinse)^{[6][9][4]}.
- **Repairs:** Fix or replace damaged boards. Fill holes or cracks with exterior wood filler and let dry^[6].
- **Sanding:** Sand away any flaky old paint or rough spots to ensure good adhesion^{[6][1]}.
- **Drying:** Let the fence dry completely after cleaning, especially if you've pressure washed it. Moisture in the wood will prevent stain or paint from adhering properly^{[1][3]}.

4. Priming (If Painting)

- Apply an exterior wood primer, especially on bare or previously painted wood^{[6][9]}.
- For metal or vinyl, use a primer designed for those materials^[7].

5. Application Tips

- **Weather:** Paint or stain on a dry day with temperatures between 35°F and 100°F and low humidity. Ensure no rain is forecast for at least 24–36 hours^{[7][3]}.
- **Tools:** Use a brush or roller for control, especially near the house or plants. For large, open areas, a sprayer can save time but requires careful masking to prevent overspray^{[3][10][6]}.
- **Technique:** Apply stain or paint along the wood grain in long, even strokes. Avoid pooling or drips. For stain, keep a wet edge to prevent lap marks^[3].
- **Coverage:** Plan for two coats for best durability, especially with paint. For stain, one coat may suffice, but a second can deepen color and protection^{[9][3]}.

6. Post-Application

- Allow the finish to dry thoroughly before exposing the fence to moisture or heavy use. Drying times vary by product and weather conditions—typically 24–48 hours^{[3][7]}.
- Clean tools promptly and dispose of any waste according to local regulations.

7. Maintenance

- Inspect your fence annually. Clean off debris, touch up any worn spots, and reapply stain or paint as needed to maximize longevity^{[11][3]}.

Quick Comparison: Paint vs. Stain for Spokane Fences

Feature	Paint	Stain (Solid/Semi)
Longevity	Prone to peeling/flaking ^[1]	Wears gradually, easy to renew ^{[1][3]}
Maintenance	More prep for touch-ups	Easier to reapply, less prep
Appearance	Opaque, wide color choice	Natural wood look (semi), solid color (solid stain)
Best for Spokane?	Not recommended for wood	Recommended for wood fences

Local Pro Tip

For the best long-term results, **pre-stain or pre-paint all sides of wood boards before assembly**, especially where boards overlap. This prevents water intrusion and premature peeling or rot^[12].

By following these best practices and choosing products suited for Spokane's climate, you'll ensure your fence remains attractive and protected for years.

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1. https://www.reddit.com/r/paint/comments/1d73t3w/debating_between_staining_or_painting_my_fence/
2. <https://fenceworksnnw.com/blog/to-paint-or-to-stain-the-best-way-to-protect-your-fence/>
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5. <https://hensleybrothers.com/spokane-wa-fence-painting>
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7. <https://www.benjaminmoore.com/en-us/interior-exterior-paints-stains/how-to-advice/exterior/painting-outdoor-fence>
8. <https://www.sherwin-williams.com/en-us/project-center/paint/how-to-paint-wood-fence>
9. https://www.reddit.com/r/diynz/comments/10e7a0b/definitive_guide_to_preparing_a_fence_for_painting/
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11. <https://www.mrhandyman.com/spokane/carpentry/fence-installation-repair/>
12. <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2022/jun/11/ask-the-builder-get-fancy-with-wood-fencing/>