

# Should I Stain or Paint My Fence?



July 21, 2020



Many proud owners of new fences ask, should I stain my fence or paint it?. The most important thing is to protect your wood with *something* before weather ravages *your beautiful new fence*. While plain wood is pretty, it's all too vulnerable to damage caused by snow, rain, sun, dirt and mold. Both wood and paint provide protective waterproofing for your fence. Let's look at the pros and cons of each.

## Paint

Many homeowners have heard that horizontal surfaces, such as decks, should be stained. It's true that stain holds up better underfoot. But since no one besides the cat is likely to climb your fence, you have more leeway with vertical surfaces.

Paint's biggest advantage is variety. Choose to paint your fence and you'll have a vast choice of colors and finishes. Want a purple fence to match the wisteria growing over your door? Paint is the way to go. You can also choose your sheen with paint, unlike stain, which is only available in flat.

Need to get your gate painted before an imminent change in weather? Most latex paint dries to the touch within an hour and is thoroughly dry in four to eight hours. Stain takes closer to two days to set.

However, paint also has its downsides. It's more expensive, requires primer, takes more application time to achieve color uniformity, and may crack or peel.

## Stain

Stain is a whole different material. As soon as you open the can, you notice its thinness. Instead of sitting on top of the wood, stain changes the color by soaking in. Stain is more forgiving than paint – it may not require primer, and you don't have to work so hard to get a uniform color. If you have a textured or rough-hewn fence style, stain will work much better than paint. It enhances raw wood's natural beauty and texture. But if you're painting a highly absorbent surface, your gate may surprise you by how much stain it requires.

Manufacturers have increased their stain selection. Consumers can choose anything from clear to a hint of color to opaque. Usually you'll only need one coat of stain. Unlike paint, stain won't peel, crack or blister.

However, stain can be fussy. For proper drying, only stain your fence when the temperature is at least 50 degrees and rain is not predicted for at least two days.

## Does paint or stain last longer on a fence?

Stain tends to last longer than paint – but it can be more difficult to apply. Keep in mind that stain will fade over time and may need to be reapplied, even if it does outlast normal paint.

## Maintenance

Painted and stained fences both require regular maintenance. Plan to reapply stain at least every three years, and to repaint every five or six.