

Timber paling fences feel simple until a wet week, a back order on capping, and a neighbour dispute land on the same job. After a few seasons running crews, I stopped thinking of a fence as a **Outstanding fencing timber fence** single task and started treating it like a mini project with distinct stages, gates and all. The difference shows up in schedule predictability and profit margin. A good timeline template anchors pricing, smooths crew workload, and gives clients confidence that you run a tight ship.

This guide lays out practical, field tested templates and rhythms that suit how timber paling work really happens. I am speaking to the solo timber paling fence installer as much as the owner who coordinates multiple teams. The same bones scale. Call yourself a timber paling fence builder or a timber paling fence contractor, the job still hinges on a solid sequence you can repeat and adjust.



What a useful timeline template looks like

A timeline that survives contact with rain, rocks, and last minute gate changes has three traits. It is simple at a glance, it is explicit about dependencies, and it holds buffers in the right places. The shape I trust looks like a lean Gantt with columns for scope, duration, dependencies, and owners, backed by a daily run sheet for the crew and a client touch point plan. You can keep it on paper or in software, but the logic matters more than the tool.

A template asks and answers five questions. What exactly are we building and removing. When do materials land. Who is on site each day. What can slip without killing the week. How do we handle variations without blowing up the plan. If the document cannot answer those quickly, it needs tightening.

The core phases, with realistic durations

You can rename stages to suit your outfit, but the work breaks naturally into scoping, approvals and checks, procurement, site preparation, posts and concrete, rails, paling, caps and finishes, gates and hardware, cleanup and sign off. On a standard suburban run, say 20 to 35 metres at 1.8 metres high with one pedestrian gate, I budget 4 to 7 working days once boots hit the ground, not counting lead time for materials. Rain and access push that out fast. For large corner lots, double gates, or steep ground, you can double it.

Here is how the time usually splits, assuming decent access, timber on hand, and two people on the tools.

- Scoping and quote window. 1 to 3 days to visit, measure, check boundaries, confirm height and style, note removal needs, and send a written quote with an indicative start window.
- Pre start checks. 1 to 10 working days depending on utility clearance, council requirements, neighbour consent, and special materials.
- Procurement. 1 to 3 days for standard MGP pine, H3 paling, and H4 posts. If you need H4 or H5 treated posts in odd lengths, hardwood rails, or special capping, plan 3 to 10 days. New Zealand suppliers and regional yards swing more.
- Demolition and tip. Half a day to a day for 20 to 35 metres of old timber paling, longer for concrete or brick plinths. Add time for nails and wire, overgrown hedges, and hidden services.
- Set out and drill. Half a day to 1.5 days depending on ground. Rocky clay and basalt can triple your hole time. On sand you fly, on fill you curse.

- Posts and concrete. A day for 20 to 30 posts if holes are clean and access is fair. Foam set products save time but read the fine print on cure and backfill strength. For traditional concrete, I allow a full day.
- Rails. Half a day to a day. Speed depends on joiners, scarfed joints, and post spacing accuracy. If you set posts true, rails are a pleasure. If not, you pay for it here.
- Palings. A day to two days. Pencil the first run, hold a clean line, keep gap consistent at 8 to 12 mm for shrinkage if you are doing a lapped and capped job. On board on board, add time.
- Caps, plinths, and gate framing. Half a day to a day. Caps are always slower than you expect because clients look right at them.
- Gates, hardware, and adjustments. Half a day for a pedestrian gate, more if the opening is not square or you add steel frames or auto latches.
- Cleanup and client walk through. A few hours, plus pickup if you delay waste removal.

The above is the jobsite work only. The whole project timeline starts before your first hole and ends after the final invoice clears. A solid template connects those dots.

Pre quote rhythm that pays for itself

The fastest way to add days to a job is to skip a careful first visit. I carry a tape, a laser measure, a decent camera, a post hole bar, and a spray can of paint. I also carry a neighbour consent form and a simple sketch pad. If you are a timber paling fencing installer who likes to quote via photos alone, be ready to lose margin. Pictures hide roots, slope, and buried concrete.

On site, I map the run with lengths, note obvious encroachments, check fences on both sides if possible, and look for power, water, and telecom risks. In Australia and New Zealand, I submit Dial Before You Dig or plan around likely service corridors. I record vehicle access and whether a skip bin can sit safely. I check if the client expects the fence to center on a boundary or sit entirely on their land to avoid dispute. That choice affects neighbours and set out.

I leave a one page scoping sheet with a line diagram showing post spacing, gate swing, cap type, plinth details, and paling style. Then I price with contingency for disposal, hard digging, and delays. Better to be clear than to be cheap and late.

Utility checks and council rules are real work

Timber paling fence installation seems low risk until you hit a shallow fibre run or a live sprinkler. Utility clearance is cheap insurance. In some councils, height and style rules apply to front boundaries and corner lots. A timber paling fence builder who ignores that spends more time fixing than building. Set a template step for approvals. It can be a tick box with a link to the relevant council page, a request for neighbour consent, and a copy saved with the job file.

Boundary surveys matter more than most clients think. If pegs are missing or a neighbour is tense, I pause and suggest a licensed surveyor. A half day delay beats a legal fight. As a timber paling fence contractor, your role is to keep the project lawful, not just straight.

Procurement and lead times without excuses

Material timing is where good installers shine. I keep a standing order format with line items for posts, rails, palings, capping, plinths or sleepers, bags of concrete or aggregate and cement, fasteners, brackets, gate frames

and hardware, and stains or sealers if specified. The template includes lengths and treatments so the yard cannot swap H3 for H4 by accident. I list post lengths by ground conditions and fence height so we do not get caught short in deep holes.

Standard softwood palings and H4 pine posts are common, but odd lengths and special caps wobble in supply. I make a habit of calling the yard during the quote window to ask about current stock. If capping is tight, I offer the client two alternatives with realistic dates. That conversation, written into the quote, saves headaches.

For cash flow, I request a deposit that covers procurement and waste. The timeline includes a deposit due date, order date, vendor confirmation, and delivery window. If rain looms, I push delivery to a clean day or secure a place to keep timber off the ground and under cover. Nothing hurts momentum like wet palings that cup and twist.

Weather and buffers, placed where they do the most good

Rain days are not all equal. I do not pad every line with the same buffer. I hold contingency around set out, hole digging, and concrete cure, and I keep a flexible slot near the end for gates and adjustments. In hot, dry spells, concrete sets quick and you can rail and paling sooner. In winter or in clay, I would rather let posts sit an extra day than fight movement.

Wind matters more than rain when you carry sheets of palings up a ladder or snap a chalk line. High wind slows you, and it beats up accuracy. My template has a weather check the afternoon before site work, then a call to the client if we plan to shift the day. Clients do not mind delays when they are told early.

A simple, tough template for a 20 metre suburban fence

To make this concrete, here is how I map a standard 20 metre side boundary, 1.8 metre high lapped and capped, one 900 mm pedestrian gate, remove and dispose of the old fence.

Pre start, I block out a 2 to 3 week window depending on yard lead times and my crew calendar. The client picks a week, we confirm deposit, then I lock a start day that suits weather and delivery. I ask for side access times to avoid parking wars.

Day 0, timber and waste gear arrive. I stage posts near holes, rails stacked off the ground, palings tied, hardware in a labelled tub. I check lengths and counts. Mistakes found now save a half day later.

Day 1, we remove the old fence, stack and cut to fit the bin, and expose post footings. We probe for services before any digging. If the old footings are heavy and deep, I angle the breaker, not the shovel. By mid afternoon we mark the line, set string, and paint hole positions at 2.3 to 2.4 metres apart depending on rail length and joins. If access or fatigue hits, we finish holes the next morning.

Day 2, we drill and clean holes. In sand, augers fly. In clay or fill, a pinch bar and a narrow spade do work. I clean the bottom of holes and bell them a touch for grip. Posts go in with a dry mix and a water pour or with a premix slurry, depending on brand, with the top of concrete domed to shed water. We brace for vertical and alignment, then check height against a datum string to allow for cap height and ground fall. If the day is hot and dry, we set rails late afternoon on the first half. If not, we let the posts cure.

Day 3, rails go on. I use 3 rails at 1.8 metres to keep palings steady. If the client wants 2 rails, I explain the long term movement, then write it into the scope. Rails get fastened with nails or screws that suit the timber. If posts are a touch out, I pack carefully, but I avoid heroic shimming. It always tells on the palings. By late day, we run the first course of palings at the start end, get a rhythm, and test the gap jig.

Day 4, palings run. One person feeds, one person fixes, switching often to keep pace and attention. The line at the top matters, but I build to the cap, so I keep a consistent reveal to suit. At changes in ground level, I choose stepped or raked. Stepped looks neat on strong slopes, raked suits gentle falls. I ask the client early to avoid surprises.

Day 5, we cap, hang the gate, set latches and drop bolts, and go over nail heads and splinters. We rake, sweep, and magnet the ground for nails. If rain stole a day, gates and caps shift to the next clear day. I make sure the client walks the fence and checks swing before we leave.

That is the skeleton. The template carries the detail and the accountability.

A brief checklist for each job

- Confirm boundary, height, style, and gate swing with the client and, where needed, the neighbour. Save diagrams.
- Lodge utility checks and clarify council constraints. Document the outcome.
- Order timber to spec, confirm delivery date, and stage dry storage if weather turns.
- Sequence demolition, holes, posts, rails, palings, caps, gates, and cleanup with named owners and realistic durations.
- Block weather buffers around hole digging and post set, and hold a floating adjustment window near the end.

Variations that derail schedules, and how to price time

The timeline strains when the client adds an extra gate mid build or asks for a change from standard palings to dressed boards. My template treats variations as mini projects inside the project. We log the request in writing, price the time and materials, reset the schedule for that element, and confirm new dates. If a gate moves or grows into a double swing, I add not only the carpentry time but the extra hardware run and any extra bracing. Clients accept this when you show your working.

On sloped sites, retaining needs creep in. If a fence must retain soil, that is a different structure with different posts, footings, and council rules. I stop and reset scope. A timber paling fencing builder who pushes ahead as if nothing changed risks movement and liability. The timeline expands, and so does the budget. Put it bluntly, retainers add days, not hours.

If you suspect asbestos in an old fence sheeting or post packers, stop work and call a licensed contractor. The pause stings, but the law and safety matter. Build a placeholder in the template for third party remediation and re mobilization.

Multi crew scaling without stepping on rakes

When you run two or more crews, the main risk is a good week that empties the yard and a bad week that stacks jobs. I keep a central board with each job pinned to a three stage rhythm. Pre start green light, onsite works with daily notes, and handover. Each crew lead updates at lunch by text. If a job finishes early, we have a ready list of next holes to drill or deliveries to accept. That keeps idle time down.

Avoid sharing tools that matter in the critical path. One post hole driver between three crews is a false economy. Same for nail guns and spare hoses. Redundancy costs less than downtime. A timber paling fencing contractor learns this the hard way once, then never again.

Communication makes or kills the schedule

When a client understands the arc of the job, little setbacks do not turn into arguments. I send a one page timeline with dates and a short paragraph for each phase. I add photos mid job showing neat holes, tidy rails, and the line of palings. If weather pushes, I call the night before. I avoid promising magic. I promise effort, order, and care.

Neighbours matter. If you work on a boundary, a short note in their letterbox a few days before start can prevent parking blocks, hose wars, and access fights. My template includes a neighbour courtesy note with the dates, my phone number, and a promise to keep the site clean.

Common time traps and how to stay out of them

The first is hidden concrete. Old post footings you plan to leave in place end up right where a new post wants to sit. It can add hours across a run. A careful probe with a bar at the quote visit helps. Price rock and legacy concrete as a separate line.

The second is hard digging in summer clay. Augers polish the hole. You need water, a long breaker, and patience. Factor time for breaks and hydration. I once watched a strong apprentice lose a day simply by fighting the wrong end of a crowbar.

The third is last minute material swaps. The yard delivers 3.0 metre rails when you wrote 2.7. The timeline bleeds while you recut and re space posts. Count and measure on delivery. It takes 20 minutes and saves a day.

The fourth is gate alignment on a fresh set of posts. Hang the gate only after the concrete has taken enough strength not to creep. A saggy hinge post is a longer pain than a delayed latch.

Template bones you can copy into your system

I keep two artifacts. A master Gantt style sheet and a daily run sheet. The master has columns for task, description, owner, duration, earliest start, latest finish, dependencies, and buffer. Each row is a phase or a bundle of small tasks. I include a risk note, like high clay or steep fall, so the buffer makes sense later, not just now.

The daily run sheet has the date, weather, crew names, target tasks, safety checks, material status, photos to capture, and client touch points. At the bottom, a space for lessons to feed back into the template. These are small but compound to make work smooth.

For digital tools, Trello cards or similar can stand in for tasks with checklists inside. Google Sheets is fine for timing. If you fancy dedicated construction apps, pick one you will actually update. The best system is the one your crew uses.

Gates, caps, and the details that govern your last day

Gates chew time because they ask for accuracy and patience. My template blocks time for hinge positioning, latch alignment, and gate brace installation. If you build timber frames, factor in twist risk and a day to adjust after a bit of sun. Steel frames with timber cladding buy speed and stability at the price of lead time and [paling fence repair](#) cost. Let the client pick early by showing both options.

Caps look simple but show every wobble. I cut and dry fit long runs before fixing, and I break the line at a post center instead of mid bay. It creates a clean rhythm. Palings around tree trunks or odd returns belong on a punch list, not squeezed in while you are rushing to finish. Time for finesse saves call backs.

Quality controls that double as time savers

I learned to sign off stages with photos and quick checks. After posts go in, I snap a shot down the line at eye level. It shows plumb and alignment. After rails, I photo each corner and each scarf. After palings, I record the top line and the first and last bay. These images help with disputes, but more importantly, they force you to pause and look. The fix you catch now takes minutes. The fix after caps and gates takes hours.

I also keep a nail and screw count benchmark. If we are short on fixings by a big gap, something odd happened. This kind of simple control keeps standards high.

A small buffer cheat sheet

- Weather margin. One full day for every five days of outdoor site work during wet seasons. Half a day during dry, local climate depending.
- Material float. Two days for special capping or hardwood rails unless the yard confirms stock in writing.
- Subsurface unknowns. Half a day per 20 metres for rocky ground, old concrete, or dense roots, more if you know the area sits on basalt or shale.
- Council and neighbour admin. Two to five working days where consent or special heights apply. Can overlap with procurement.
- Gate adjustments. Two to three hours after initial hang for fine tuning and client tweaks, more for double gates or auto latches.

Cash flow and timing

The timeline is not just about days, it is also about money movement. I position the deposit before ordering, a progress claim after posts are set, and the balance on practical completion. Each claim sits on a milestone in the template with photos. On small jobs, you can keep it to deposit and balance. On longer or complex runs, three steps keep risk fair. Clear terms reduce awkward calls.

Waste removal costs and time are linked. I size bins to the run and book pickup late on the day before final works, not too early where it blocks access. If you cart to the tip, I count a run as a half day, including tie down and unload. Ambitious schedules die on the day you start treating waste as invisible.

Lessons from the field

A few years ago, I took a 40 metre job along a driveway with a gentle fall. The client wanted a raked top for a soft line. My original plan had one day for palings with two installers. By mid morning we realised each bay needed minor adjustments to hold a consistent reveal at the cap line because the fall varied subtly. We added a third set of hands to feed and stage palings. The job finished on time because I kept a flex slot in the week, and because the supplier delivered on the dot. The lesson made it into my template as a note, raked tops add 20 to 30 percent to paling install time on anything but uniform slopes.

Another time, a neighbour called me aggressive over a boundary peg I had not moved. It nearly sank the schedule. I paused the job, called the client, and offered to fund a quick survey if both parties agreed. They did, it came back clean, we reset strings, and we finished. The whole detour added two days, but it saved far worse. Now my pre start includes a polite email template that invites neighbours to raise concerns before we dig, and a line in the quote about peg reliance and survey options.

Bringing it together for different outfits

If you are a solo timber paling fence installer, your template protects your sanity. It keeps late nights at bay because you know tomorrow's tasks, what to stage, and what to tell the client. You can even block rest days. If you run a small team as a timber paling fence contractor, the template scales by adding owners and buffers. Give your lead hand authority to shuffle within the plan and to call you before variations go ahead.

No matter how you label yourself, timber paling fencing builder or timber paling fencing installer, the project bones are the same. When the template is alive and specific, you stop reinventing the wheel each job. You start seeing the same hiccups and solving them earlier. That pays twice, in happier clients and in your own stress levels.

A word on safety and neighbours, because time and safety share a wall

Rushing costs skin and schedule. I schedule daily start checks, not as a box tick but as a five minute conversation. Where are the hazards today, who is cutting, who is drilling, who is on waste. PPE goes on by habit. A lost hour here teaches the wrong lesson. Clear, steady work beats speed every time.

Neighbours who feel respected often become clients. I keep noise civil at the start and end of the day, I sweep their side if any dust or offcuts drift, and I thank them for patience. It costs you minutes and wins you weeks later.

Make your own, then keep tuning it

The templates I have shared are a spine. Take them, shape them to your crew and your region, and keep notes on what really occurs. If your area's clay eats augers, add time on holes. If your supplier nails cap deliveries, tighten your material buffer. If you only hang steel framed gates now, adjust that slice of time. After a dozen jobs, the pattern prints money because it fits your reality.

Treat the timeline as a living promise you make to yourself and your client. The timber paling fence installers who win do not just swing hammers well. They control time. You can be that builder with a few steady habits and a sheet that lays it all out.