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DECK

Step 1

Mark off the deck area using string and "batterboards" making sure that it is square. Batterboards are boards hammered in to the ground just outside the corners of where the deck will be. See Fig 1. The string will help you visualize the size and appearance of the finished deck and will also serve as a guide for excavation and post placement. But trust me, it will always look smaller this way than when it is done.

SQUARING WITH STRING

1. Attach string to house and/or batterboards to make sure its level.
2. Use a felt tip marker to mark the string 3' from the corner in one direction and 4' from the corner in

other direction.

3. When the diagonal connecting these 2 points is 5', you have a right triangle and the angle at the corner will be 90°.

Note: To obtain the 5' measurement, move the string attached to batter board to the left or right until correct.

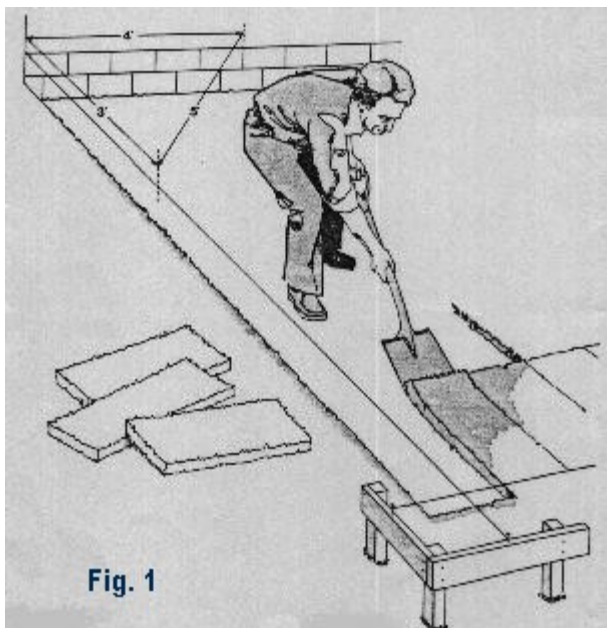


Fig. 1

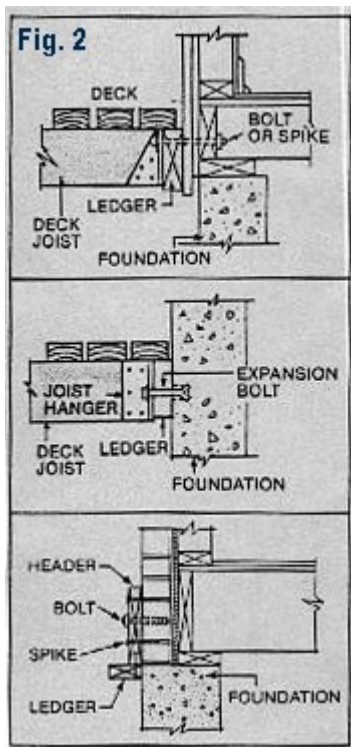


Fig. 2

Step 2

Prepare the site. With a spade or sod cutter, remove sod to a depth of 2 or 3 ". Uncover an area approximately 2 ft. larger than the planned deck. It's unlikely that grass would be able to grow in the shadow of your deck, so you might as well transfer the sod to a bare spot in your yard where it would be useful. To prevent weeds and unwanted vegetation from growing up through the deck, spread a sheet of polyethylene film over the area. You'll have to slit this to embed posts in the ground. After the posts have been installed, cover the sheet with gravel, pebbles or wood chips.

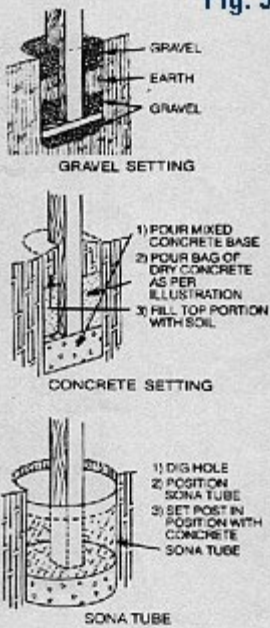
Step 3

A ledger/header board is the next step if you are attaching your deck to an existing structure.

The placement of the ledger/header determines the level of the deck floor, so be sure it is positioned at the correct height and is horizontal.

When fastening ledger/header boards to wood, the ledger should be held securely with bolts through the wall or lag screws. Use aluminum flashing to keep water from getting behind your ledger board.

Fig. 3



This should tuck up under your siding and bend down over the ledger, then down the face of the ledger board. Where aluminum or vinyl siding is in place, carefully cut siding away from house so that ledger/header board can be secured directly to the house. You may be able to use the bottom edge pieces of the siding above the deck to refinish the lower edge, so save these if possible. See figure 2. I will assume the joists are hung from the ledger and not resting on it, but be sure you account for the height of your deck boards when figuring the placement of the ledger. (Typically just 1 ½ inches down from the final height of the deck.)

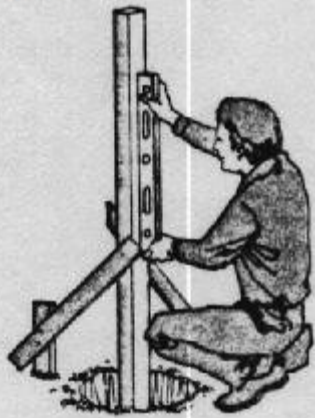
Step 4

Locate and dig holes for footings. In normal soil the holes should be a minimum of 24 to 36 inches deep, although the actual depth will depend on the height of the column and the depth of the frost line. Posts should go deeper than the frost line to avoid heaving during freeze and thaw cycles. Again, this is usually specified by code when the deck is attached to the house.

If you have many holes to dig and/or have difficult soil to dig in, you should rent a power posthole digger. These can be operated by one person, and certainly make the digging go MUCH faster.

You can use pressure treated wood in the ground for your footings as follows. Fill the bottom of the hole with 6 inches of gravel and place a wood footer plate (2" x 6", or 2" x 8" cut off) on top of the gravel. Upright posts can then be positioned on this base (Fig. 3). Fill the posthole with alternating layers of 4 to 5 inches of gravel and earth. Tamp each layer until the hole is filled and post is plumb and solid. If concrete collars are used, taper the tops downward and away from the post for drainage. Posts can also be set in concrete. Or my preferred method, uses a cement footing to just above the ground level. Fill the post hole completely with cement and use a section of "sono tube" (a heavy cardboard tube, 8 inches in diameter) to finish off the hole at ground level. Make sure you have already purchased the hardware to attach the posts to the cement so you can set the bolts in the cement while it is wet.

Fig. 4



When setting the posts directly in the holes, make sure they are plumb and in alignment with one another. Use a carpenter's level to check for vertical alignment (Fig. 4).

One advantage of using the cement footings and the wood attached to them above ground, is the leveling and exact location can be set later, when the beams are positioned. It allows for some adjusting later (a little, but that is all you are usually looking for.)

Step 5

Secure beams to posts. Using a string and level, find the desired deck floor height on the posts. Or extend a long straight 2 by 4 from the ledger board to the posts and placing a level on the board, determine the post height. By subtracting the thickness of the joist (use the actual dimension not the nominal one), you will have determined the correct height for securing the top of the beam to the post. Carefully mark all 4 sides of the posts. Beams can rest on top of the post, or be fastened to the side. You may cut all posts except those serving as railing supports at this time. Fasten the beam to the post, keeping post and beam flush. Or set the beam atop the post nailing it down to the post.

Step 6

Attach joists. Joists are attached to the house with joist hangers and/or supported by a ledger board. Joists are placed on 16" or 24" centers, and attached to the beams and ribbon joist. Joists can be attached to the beams using joist hangers, or rest on the beam. If the joists are to extend over a beam, do not extend them more than 1/3 of their length.

Step 7

Install deck boards using hot-dipped zinc-coated 16-penny nails.

Separate boards using a small finishing nail as a spacer or set boards right up against each other. If pressure treated wood came dry, a space would be necessary for some expansion may take place when it gets wet. However, it typically is quite wet and will always shrink. I have found that when placed

tight against each other they will shrink leaving an adequate gap. If you leave to large a gap while they are still wet, the gap may get quite large .

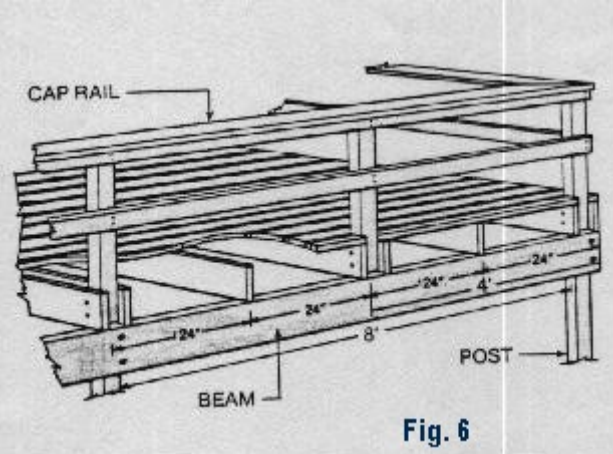
Your deck surface is an important part of your project, and the most visible. Make it simple with the boards set to end on the joists. If you could not get decking long enough to span your deck, stagger the butt end joints so they do not all end along the same joist.

You can trim your deck after nailing to assure a straight line (see Fig. 5). Do not allow an overhang exceeding 1 1/2". For a more finished appearance, cut boards flush to the joist and add a fascia board.

If a board is slightly humped, install it with the bark side up when possible to minimize cupping. The weight of people and objects on the deck, and of the board itself, will tend to flatten it. A curved board can also be used; use a board to pry it to the desired position and nail securely.

Fig. 5





Step 8

Install posts for railing. These can be a continuation of the posts which support the deck, or railing posts may be bolted to the outside joist or joist extensions.

Notice in Fig. 6 how the main posts continue up from the actual deck floor level and by doing so provide a good sturdy post. Intermittent posts or spacer posts can be used between the main support posts. The top railing member can be easily nailed to the side of the main posts at desired height. Posts can then be cut off. Spacer post height can be determined and added for additional support and appearance. Railing cap of suitable size can now be added as well as additional rails. More railing ideas are illustrated below.

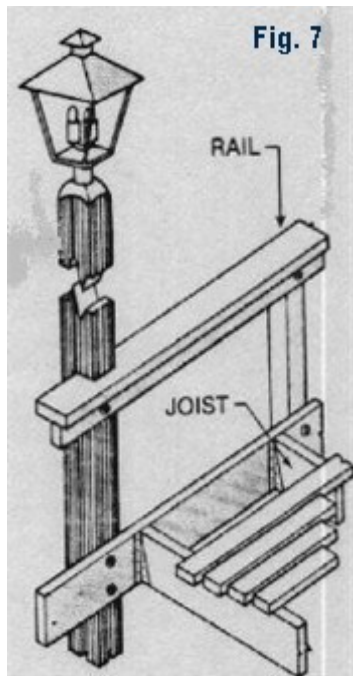


Fig. 7

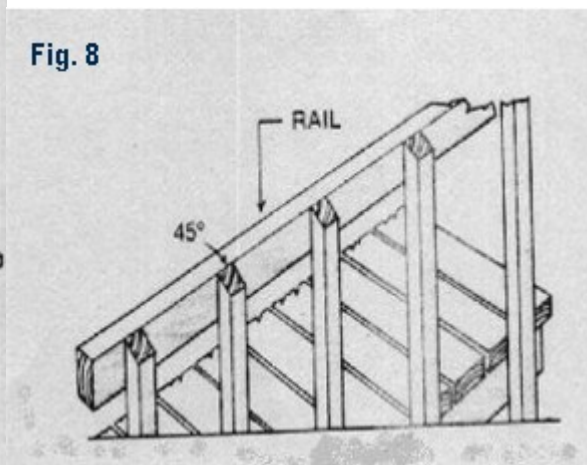


Fig. 8

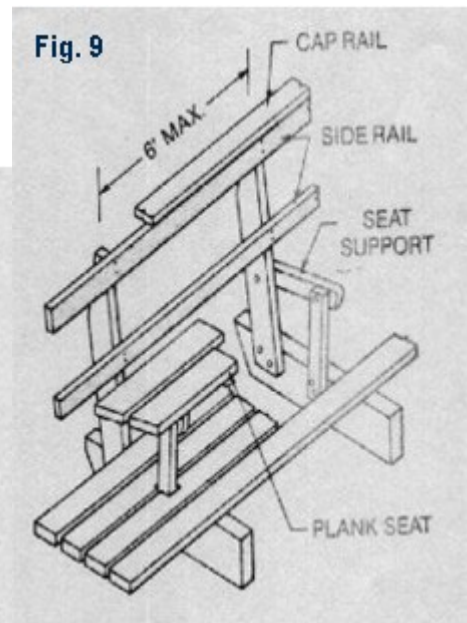


Fig. 9

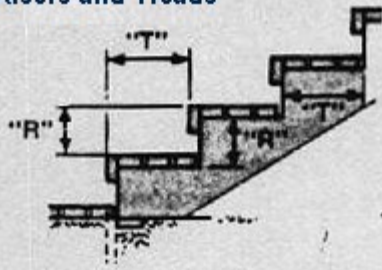
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safety and beauty of your deck are enhanced by its railings. They can be plain or very elaborate, offering as much opportunity for individual preference as a fence.

Benches can be integrated into the railing on one or all sides. Bench seats should be at least 15" wide and 15" to 18" above the deck floor.

Privacy screens can enhance the beauty of your deck, as well as offering you privacy. They can also be used effectively under an elevated deck to create a storage facility or hide an unsightly hillside.

Suggested Ratios for Risers and Treads



"R"	"T"
7"	11"
6"	15½"
5½"	16"
5"	17"
4½"	18½"
4"	19½"

Table A

Step 9

Construct steps. Measure the vertical rise and decide upon the best riser size for each step. This will determine the number of steps needed. The adjacent table shows some recommended ratios of tread length and riser height. Multiply the number of steps by the tread length to find the overall run of the stairs.

Using 2 x 4 or 2 x 6 boards for treads will reduce cupping problems common with wider boards.

It is also possible to purchase precut steps at certain lumberyards. A call ahead might eliminate some of the more difficult angle cutting you need to do.