PRINTABLE CHECKLIST · FENCES

Fence rules and checklist (BC): heights, corner lots and pool fences by city

Fence height limits, corner sightline triangles and pool-fence rules for 14 BC places, straight from the bylaws, plus a four-part printable checklist from property line to gate latch.

By **Mark Dupuis** · Last reviewed: September 28, 2026

Built from the zoning, fence, traffic and pool bylaws of 14 BC places, read September 25–28, 2026 · Independent site — not a municipality or the Province

This checklist is a preparation aid, not a guarantee of passing inspection. Your inspector's decision and the current code and bylaw govern.

A fence is mostly a **zoning** job, not a building-code job. The questions that get fences cut down or rebuilt are about **where** the fence sits and **how tall** it is: the front-yard limit, the side and rear limit, the sightline triangle on a corner lot, and the extra rules for a fence around a pool or hot tub. The BC Building Code 2024 has no general fence rules, and most cities don't ask for a building permit for an ordinary fence. They enforce height and location through the zoning bylaw, often after a neighbour complains.

So this page starts with a table of the fence numbers for 14 BC places, taken from each city's own zoning, fence, traffic or pool bylaw. Where we couldn't confirm a number in an official document, the cell says "verify with the city". After the table: how cities measure height, how corner sightlines work, and a printable checklist that follows a fence from the property line to the last gate latch.

Address: _____ Permit no.: _____ Inspector / phone: _____

Inspection booked for: _____

Fence heights, corner sightlines and pool rules in 14 BC places

Heights are for ordinary residential lots (single-detached and similar zones). Commercial, industrial, agricultural and many multi-unit zones have different limits. Every figure links to the official bylaw it came from. Bylaws change, so open the link before you buy materials.

Place	Max height, front yard	Max height, rear and side	Corner-lot sightline triangle	Pool fence height and gate	Official bylaw
Vancouver	1.2 m in a required front yard in R districts (Zoning By-law s.10.10.4). No permit up to 4 ft on a single	1.9 m in required side and rear yards (s.10.10.3). Near a boundary retaining wall, reduce by half	*Verify with the city*	At least 1.5 m around pools over 450 mm deep; openings 100 mm max; self-closing gate, spring lock at	Zoning s.10 · fences page · VBBL Vol. 2

Place	Max height, front yard	Max height, rear and side	Corner-lot sightline triangle	Pool fence height and gate	Official bylaw
	detached or duplex lot.	the wall height (s.10.10.5). Over-height needs a development permit.		least 1,070 mm up, openable only from the pool side (VBBL 9.8.8.1).	
Victoria	1.22 m (Schedule S – Fences).	1.83 m on a lot with an existing residential use.	Nothing over 1 m inside the triangle formed by points 3 m from the corner along each lot line (6 m if one street is an arterial).	*Verify with the city*	Schedule S
Saanich	1.5 m between the house setback line and a street lot line (Zoning Bylaw 8200 s.6.2(f)(i)).	1.9 m in other yards (s.6.2(f)(ii)).	RS/RD zones: 1 m max inside the triangle 9.0 m along each lot line at a street corner (s.6.3(b)).	Bylaw 6016: at least 1.2 m, 10 cm max ground gap, chain-link openings 50 mm max; self-closing, self-locking gate latch at the top, inside. Permit needed.	Zoning 8200 · Pool Bylaw 6016
Langford	1.2 m in a front setback facing a highway, see-through wrought iron or picket style (Zoning Bylaw 300 s.3.21.03(3)).	1.8 m (s.3.21.03(4)(a)).	No fence in a sight triangle that blocks the view between points 0.9 m above each road (s.3.17.03).	Building Bylaw 1160 s.6.0.2: at least 1.5 m, 10 cm max ground gap, openings 5 cm max; self-latching spring-hinge gate, latch inside top. Permit needed.	Zoning Part 3 · Bylaw 1160
Duncan	No permit up to 1.2 m in the front-yard setback; taller needs a permit. Zoning maximum: *verify with the city*.	No permit up to 2 m (single-family). Zoning maximum: *verify with the city*.	*Verify with the city*	Any pool fence needs a building permit. Height and gate: *verify with the city*.	Do I need a permit? (PDF)
Cowichan Valley Regional District (rural)	*Verify with the city* (zoning differs by electoral area)	*Verify with the city*	*Verify with the city*	*Verify with the city*	CVRD permit FAQ
Surrey	1.2 m in a front or flanking street yard (Zoning Bylaw 12000 Part 4 s.23).	1.8 m. On a retaining wall, the wall counts; if the total tops 1.8 m, the fence itself can be up to 1.0 m. See-through chain link or mesh is exempt.	1.0 m max inside the triangle 9 m along each lot line at a corner.	Bylaw 4450: at least 4 ft, openings 4 in max; self-closing gate that returns to locked, spring lock at least 3 ft 6 in up, opens only from the pool side.	Zoning 12000 · Pool Bylaw 4450
Burnaby	1.07 m in the required front yard (new Zoning Bylaw, in force July 1, 2026, Part 4 s.4.5).	1.8 m behind the front yard in R, C and P districts. Measured from average grade within 0.9 m on both sides.	1.07 m max within 9.0 m of a street/street corner and 6.0 m of a lane/street corner; nothing within 3.0 m at a lane/lane corner (s.1.5).	Non-climbable enclosure at least 1.5 m (City fence guide, citing the Swimming Pool Enclosure Bylaw). Gate: *verify with the city*.	Zoning Part 4 · Fence guide

Place	Max height, front yard	Max height, rear and side	Corner-lot sightline triangle	Pool fence height and gate	Official bylaw
Richmond	1.2 m in the front yard (Zoning Bylaw 8500 s.6.8; Bulletin Building-44).	2.0 m; 1.2 m in a corner lot's exterior side yard. Measured from average grade 1.0 m on both sides.	Nothing over 0.9 m (from the curb) inside the triangle 7.5 m along each property line (s.6.1.1).	Building Regulation Bylaw 7230 s.9.1: at least 1.2 m, openings 100 mm max, not climbable; self-closing gate with the latch on the pool side.	Zoning s.6 · Bulletin Building-44 · Bylaw 7230
Kelowna	1.2 m within the minimum front or flanking setback (Zoning Bylaw 12375 s.7.5.2).	2.0 m in suburban and multi-dwelling zones.	Traffic Bylaw 8120 s.2.2.1: nothing between 1.0 m and 3.0 m high inside the Schedule J sight triangle (up to 8 m along the property lines).	Building Bylaw 7245 s.11.3: at least 1.07 m, 10 cm sphere must not pass; self-closing gate that returns to locked, spring lock on the pool side at least 90 cm up.	Zoning 12375 · Traffic 8120 Part 2 · Building Bylaw 7245
Kamloops	1.2 m in the front or side-street setback (Zoning Bylaw 55 s.5.7).	2 m behind the front setback and in interior side and rear yards.	Nothing over 1 m inside the area bounded by the street centre lines and a line joining points 25 m from their intersection (s.5.9.1).	Building Bylaw 11-84 ss.19.4–19.9: at least 1.5 m, openings 10 cm max; self-closing, self-latching gate, latch on the pool side. Inspected before filling.	Zoning 55 · Building Bylaw 11-84
Nanaimo	1.2 m in R1 and similar zones (Zoning Bylaw 4500 s.6.10.2).	2.4 m side and rear; 1.8 m in a flanking side yard.	No obstruction between 1.2 m and 3 m high inside the 7 m triangle (s.6.9.1).	Building Bylaw 7224 s.23.2: at least 1.5 m, bottom 100 mm max off the ground; self-closing gate, self-latching device on the pool side at least 1 m up (or outside at 1.5 m).	Zoning Part 6 · Building Bylaw 7224
Coquitlam	1.3 m forward of the front face of the house (Zoning Bylaw 3000 s.516, low-density residential).	1.8 m behind the front face.	1 m max within 6 m of an exterior lot corner; nothing in a 3 m × 3 m area at a lane/street corner.	*Verify with the city*	Zoning Part 5
Abbotsford	1.2 m in RS/RM zones (City fence FAQ, 2021, based on Zoning Bylaw 2014 s.140.5.4).	1.8 m; 1.2 m on a side yard next to a road.	No obstruction between 1.0 m and 3.0 m high inside the area bounded by points 3 m and 25 m from the junction.	Private Swimming Pool Regulation Bylaw: at least 1,200 mm, openings 100 mm max; self-closing gate returning to locked, spring lock at least 1,050 mm up, openable only from the pool side. Inspected before filling.	Fence FAQ · Pool bylaw

Read September 25–28, 2026. Burnaby's new zoning bylaw took effect July 1, 2026; its pool figure comes from the City's fence guide (revised 2022). Abbotsford's figures come from the City's 2021 fence FAQ. Kelowna's building bylaw is the consolidation posted on the City site.

Patterns worth knowing: front-yard limits cluster around 1.2 m (Burnaby is lower at 1.07 m, Saanich higher at 1.5 m); rear and side limits run from 1.8 m to 2.4 m (Nanaimo). Pool fence minimums range from 1.07 m (Kelowna) to 1.5 m (Vancouver, Langford, Burnaby, Kamloops, Nanaimo). The sightline triangle ranges from 3 m (Victoria) to 25 m measured from street centre lines (Kamloops, Abbotsford), which is why a corner-lot fence copied from a neighbour in another city can be illegal.

How cities measure fence height

The same fence can be legal in one city and over height in the next because of how the height is measured:

- **Average grade on both sides.** Burnaby averages grade within 0.9 m of each side of the fence, and Richmond within 1.0 m. On a slope, the uphill neighbour's side pulls the number down.
- **From natural grade, highest side.** Victoria's Schedule S measures from natural grade, and on a retaining wall from the higher side.
- **Retaining walls count.** Surrey includes the wall in the fence height; if wall plus fence would top 1.8 m, the fence alone can be up to 1.0 m. Vancouver cuts the allowed fence height by half the wall height within 1 m of a boundary retaining wall.
- **Step-downs on slopes.** Panels that step down a hill leave high corners. Measure at the high point of each panel, not the middle.
- **Lattice, post caps and arbours.** Vancouver counts arbours, gates, pergolas, screens and trellises as fences. Elsewhere, verify with the city whether a lattice topper counts.

Corner lots: the sightline triangle

On a corner lot, cities keep a triangle of clear view so drivers can see cross traffic and people on the sidewalk. You measure a set distance along each lot line (or, in Kamloops and Abbotsford, along the street centre lines) from the corner and join the two points. Inside that triangle, fences, hedges and walls are capped low (typically 0.9 m to 1.07 m), or there's a band between about 1 m and 3 m high where nothing is allowed (Kelowna, Nanaimo, Abbotsford). Driveways and lanes can have their own triangles: Burnaby uses 6.0 m at a lane/street corner, and Coquitlam keeps a 3 m × 3 m area clear. Hedges count in most of these rules, so a legal fence behind an overgrown hedge can still draw a complaint.

When a fence does need a permit

- **Over height.** Vancouver needs a development permit for over-height fences; Duncan needs a building permit above 1.2 m in the front setback or 2 m at the side and rear.
- **Around a pool.** Saanich, Langford and Duncan require a permit for pool fences, and Kamloops and Abbotsford inspect the enclosure before the pool is filled.
- **On a retaining wall.** The wall may need its own permit or engineering. The permit quiz covers retaining walls for the same 14 places.
- **Everything else.** An ordinary fence within the zoning limits needs no building permit in most of the 14 places. The zoning limits still apply, and the city can order an over-height fence cut down.

The printable fence checklist

Checklist 1: Plan the fence line

Most fence disputes start here, before the first post hole.

- [ ] You know where the property line is. The City of Vancouver says it can't locate boundaries and tells owners to hire a BC land surveyor; boundary disputes are civil matters. (City of Vancouver)
- [ ] You've looked up your front-yard and rear/side limits in the table above, for your actual zone.
- [ ] Corner lot or next to a driveway or lane: you've marked the sightline triangle on the ground and kept the fence (and any hedge) under the limit inside it.
- [ ] Front-yard style fits the rule (Langford wants a see-through wrought iron or picket style in a front setback facing a road).
- [ ] The fence stays on your side of the line and off City property and boulevards.
- [ ] Pool, hot tub or spa: you've checked the pool-fence rule for your city and applied for any permit it needs.
- [ ] Retaining wall under the fence: you've checked whether the wall counts toward fence height and whether it needs its own permit.
- [ ] You've talked to the neighbour about a shared fence, cost split and which side faces out.

Checklist 2: Set the posts

Posts set the height and line for everything after. Most fences have no footing inspection; for a permitted pool fence or over-height fence, ask whether the inspector wants to see anything before concrete.

- [ ] Buried utilities are located and marked before digging.
- [ ] A string line is pulled between the corner posts, inside the property line.
- [ ] Post spacing matches your rail and panel length (check the materials list in the calculator).
- [ ] Hole depth suits the post height and soil. On clay or fill, ask a supplier or designer; there is no general BC Building Code fence-footing rule.
- [ ] Posts are plumb and braced while the concrete sets, and tops are marked for the finished height, measured the way your city measures.

- [ ] Pool fences: posts are laid out so the finished fence has no climbable rails on the outside where the rule forbids them (Vancouver: between 100 and 900 mm above ground).

Checklist 3: Rails, boards and gates

Measure height as you go. Height and ground gap are the most common problems.

- [ ] Finished height at the high point of each panel is within the limit for that yard.
- [ ] Front-yard sections drop to the front-yard limit where the fence turns the corner of the house or setback line.
- [ ] Inside a corner sightline triangle, the fence is at or under the limit, or out of the no-obstruction band.
- [ ] Pool fences: height at every point meets your city's minimum, and the ground gap and openings are within limits (for example 10 cm ground gap in Saanich and Langford; 100 mm openings in Vancouver, Surrey, Richmond and Abbotsford). (see table)
- [ ] Pool fences: the good side (smooth face) is on the outside so there are no footholds.
- [ ] Gates swing clear of the sidewalk and don't open onto City property.

Checklist 4: Final walk (and pool-fence inspection, if permitted)

If your fence was permitted, book any final inspection your permit lists. Otherwise, walk the fence with this list.

- [ ] Pool gates self-close and self-latch from any open position, and the latch is where your city puts it (on the pool side, at the height in the table).
- [ ] The pool enclosure is continuous, with no gaps at the house wall, sheds or neighbour fences.
- [ ] Nothing climbable (planters, benches, bins, firewood) sits against the outside of a pool fence.
- [ ] Height re-measured after landscaping, since added soil or bark changes it.
- [ ] Hedges and plantings inside a sightline triangle are trimmed to the limit.
- [ ] Any permit is signed off, and you've kept the record. Pool enclosures must be kept in good repair; Saanich's bylaw makes that the owner's duty.

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Related: permit quiz (fences, retaining walls and hot tubs for 14 places) · deck, shed and fence materials cost calculator (posts, concrete, rails, boards and screws with dated BC prices) · deck checklist · shed checklist · BC permit wait times.

Frequently asked questions

How high can a fence be in BC?

There is no provincial fence height. Each city sets it in its zoning bylaw. For ordinary residential lots, front-yard limits in the 14 places we checked run from 1.07 m (Burnaby) to 1.5 m (Saanich), and rear and side limits from 1.8 m to 2.4 m (Nanaimo). See the table for your city.

What is a corner-lot sightline triangle?

An area at a street corner where fences, walls and hedges must stay low so drivers can see. You measure a set distance along each lot line from the corner (for example 7.5 m in Richmond or 9 m in Surrey and Saanich) and join the points. Inside the triangle the limit is usually around 1 m.

How high does a pool fence have to be in BC?

It depends on the city: at least 1.07 m in Kelowna, 1.2 m in Saanich, Richmond and Abbotsford, 4 ft in Surrey, and 1.5 m in Vancouver, Langford, Burnaby, Kamloops and Nanaimo. Gates must be self-closing and self-latching in all of the cities where we found the rule.

Do I need a permit to build a fence in BC?

Usually not a building permit for an ordinary fence within the zoning height limits. Over-height fences (a development permit in Vancouver, a building permit in Duncan) and pool fences in several cities do need one.

Does a retaining wall count toward fence height?

In some cities, yes. Surrey counts the wall, and Vancouver reduces the allowed fence height near a boundary retaining wall. Victoria measures from the higher side. Check your city.

Does this checklist guarantee my fence will pass?

No. This checklist is a preparation aid, not a guarantee of passing inspection. Your inspector's decision and the current code and bylaw govern.

Independent information only. This guide is a planning aid, not legal, engineering or building-code advice. Codes and bylaws change, and the building official for your address has the final say. Confirm every requirement before you design, apply or dig.

Sources and official links

This guide relies on the official pages below. Rules, fees and processes change, so check the authority before you apply or spend money.

- Vancouver: Zoning s.10
- Vancouver: fences page
- Vancouver: VBBL Vol. 2
- Victoria: Schedule S
- Saanich: Zoning 8200
- Saanich: Pool Bylaw 6016
- Langford: Zoning Part 3
- Langford: Bylaw 1160
- Duncan: Do I need a permit? (PDF)
- Cowichan Valley Regional District: CVRD permit FAQ
- Surrey: Zoning 12000
- Surrey: Pool Bylaw 4450
- Burnaby: Zoning Part 4
- Burnaby: Fence guide
- Richmond: Zoning s.6
- Richmond: Bulletin Building-44
- Richmond: Bylaw 7230
- Kelowna: Zoning 12375
- Kelowna: Traffic 8120 Part 2
- Kelowna: Building Bylaw 7245
- Kamloops: Zoning 55
- Kamloops: Building Bylaw 11-84
- Nanaimo: Zoning Part 6
- Nanaimo: Building Bylaw 7224
- Coquitlam: Zoning Part 5
- Abbotsford: Fence FAQ
- Abbotsford: Pool bylaw
- Province of BC: BC Building Code 2024

Links checked September 28, 2026. Found an error or a broken link? Report it.