

Replacing a damaged or broken rail on a vinyl privacy fence.

Vinyl fence rails can become damaged by a variety of causes, the most common is falling tree branches that have been broken during a storm. Replacement is fairly simple and can be accomplished with relative ease. Sometimes the impact from a vertical hit can pull a rail end out of the post while shearing the vinyl tab in the process. If not, the rail may have to be cut and it is best to make the cut close to the post. If the post caps have not been glued they will be easily removable and allow access to the end of the top rail so when cut it can be taken out of the post rather than allow it to drop within. A reciprocating saw can handle this cut with no problem and so will a hand saw. Start by sliding the rail out of the post as far as you can to minimize the size of the cut off material that will fall.



Once the rail has been cut and removed the pickets will drop if they didn't do so previously. The slot in the bottom rail should be cleaned of any debris so the pickets mate well. Using a rag or paper towel, dirt and grime can be pushed toward the rail opening in the post and be swept into it. The top rail can now be set up to reinstall the pickets.



Take the replacement rail and slide it into the hole of one of the posts on the section that is being repaired, push it in till the notches are inside the post and the rail will not pull free. Then set the other rail end on the top of the adjacent post as shown below.



Note the difference in the picket edges, most vinyl privacy fences use 'tongue and groove'.



Holding the picket with 'U' channel on it at an angle, place the bottom corner into the slot of the bottom rail, align the top of the picket with the slot in the top rail and move the picket into the vertical position with the 'U' channel flush against the post.





Continue to install more pickets until you reach the point where the space between the rails is too great for the top of the picket to slide into the top rail and remain upright.



At this point, the top rail is carefully slid off the top of the post where it was placed earlier and allowed to rest on the pickets that have just been installed.



Pickets will now be moved into position in a similar manner - sliding them in from the free end of the top rail which can be pulled toward the installer to facilitate the process. The free hand can be used to steady the top rail and prevent it from moving enough to allow the pickets to fall out.



Continue to install pickets in this manner until the last picket to be installed is reached. The second picket with 'U' channel will now be used to finish the 'field'; this part can be a little tricky and will require some patience.



Holding the picket on a slight angle, slide the bottom of the picket into the slot of the lower rail while being mindful that its bottom edge on the opposite side may get caught on the lip of the rail. Very often the picket can be manipulated into place by wiggling it and applying downward pressure. If this does not work, a free hand can be placed between the pickets and used to force the bottom toward the installer while pushing down with the other hand.



When the bottom of the picket is in contact with the bottom of the slot, the top rail is pulled toward the installer with one hand while the other is used to slip the picket top into the slot of the top rail. Much pressure is needed to move the picket into place, but the further that the rail is pulled in the direction of the installer the more mobility the picket has. Slight downward pressure should be maintained on the top rail during this process to prevent the other pickets from coming loose. There is a great deal of flexibility in a quality PVC so there should be no fear of anything snapping.



The picket may need to be 'tapped' or wiggled to mate the tongue and the groove over the length of the picket. The top rail is then slid into the opposite post far enough to allow the end of it to be positioned at the routed hole in the post. The rail is slid into the hole far enough for the vinyl tabs to lock in place.



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