

Bridleways or byways may pass through boundaries which need to be deer-proof and therefore the gate must be the same height as the fence (generally 1.8m).

The minimum width between posts for a bridleway is 1.5m. On a byway, the BHS is unlikely to accept a gate less than 1.6m other than in exceptional circumstances and even 1.6m will depend on the location. However, locations requiring a gate wider than 1.6m are probably unlikely to coincide with a need for deer fencing so this may not be a difficulty but please consult your local BHS Access and Bridleways Officer if necessary.

A 1.5 or 1.6m gate at 1.8m high will be heavy so it is crucial that the posts are strong enough and are properly embedded to be able to support the weight of the gate so that it swings freely. Some manufacturers will provide a metal gate of this size on an H frame, with the lower part of the H sunk in the ground for extra stability. Wooden gates will need substantial hanging posts which are well-secured, as for long field gates. The [Outdoor Access Design Guide](#) (Scotland) includes a specification for a deer gate.

Gates wider than 1.6m are unlikely to be convenient to open at this height because of their weight. Where access is required for four wheeled motor vehicles and there is not space to make the vehicular access separate from the bridleway, then a double gate (two gates hung to meet in the middle of the track) may be necessary. The gate intended for bridleway users should be no more than 1.6m; the other gate must be fixed to the ground so that it does not move when the bridleway gate is unlatched.

Where self-closing gates are essential, the closing speed should be at least eight seconds, taking into account prevailing wind conditions.

The latch mechanism must be operable from either side of the gate, on foot or mounted on a horse. To be operable from a horse, a lever must be extended to reach the top of the gate or no less than 1.2m from the ground.

Latching mechanisms which require a rider to dismount are



Image 1 : Standard lever with high fixing point

undesirable as a rider has less control while dismounting or mounting and, if mobility impaired, may have difficulty without assistance. Having to dismount, even for an agile rider, is an inconvenience.

Extended lever mechanisms for spring or gravity latches mean that latches can be installed which can be conveniently operated from either side of the gate, on foot and on horseback.

The lever for a spring latch should ideally extend above the top of the gate but on a deer gate may be accepted at a minimum height of 1.2 m so long as it can be operated easily without risk of being caught or trapped by the rails of the gate, bearing in mind that a rider may be reaching down to it (a person on foot would usually be level with the lever). Standard gate latch kits can be used if the latch point can be above mid-height of the gate (Image 1).



Image 2: This ring pull is on an ordinary field gate but the same principle would apply to a deer gate.



Image 3: Chain extension to top of extra piece of wood. It would be better anchored to the top of the

Gravity latches may be operated when mounted by welding an extension rod to the top of the latch (Image 2).

Attaching a length of chain or rope from the gravity latch to the top of the gate or post also works (Image 3). The rider lifts the latch by pulling the chain upwards (so it must have enough slack to be picked up when wearing gloves). The chain in image 3 has been raised by means of an extra piece of wood attached to the gatepost. It is more robust than it looks but is an unnecessary potential hazard as the top of the gatepost would be easily reached by riders.

Ideally the latch should be on the gate with the striker on the gate post so that the hand pulling the latch can also move the gate rather than needing both hands or to swap hands.

The striker should form a D or U shape to reduce risk of a gouging injury (Image 2 rather than 3).

Space required around the gate is the same as for a standard height gate:

- 1.2m in line with the gate at the latch end (taking account of hedge growth)
- 4m manoeuvring space either side of the gate

This is because the recommended method for opening a gate is to approach from the hinges and reach the latch when parallel with the gate, which requires space for the length of horse in front of the rider (nearly half the horse) beyond the latch so the latch is at the horse's shoulder and the rider is not over-reaching.

Having released the latch, the rider then reverses the horse to pull or push the gate open and pass through the gateway. Space is required on both sides of the gate to manoeuvre into this position.

For more information on gates and gate installation, see advice notes on www.bhs.org.uk/access-and-bridleways/free-leaflets-and-advice

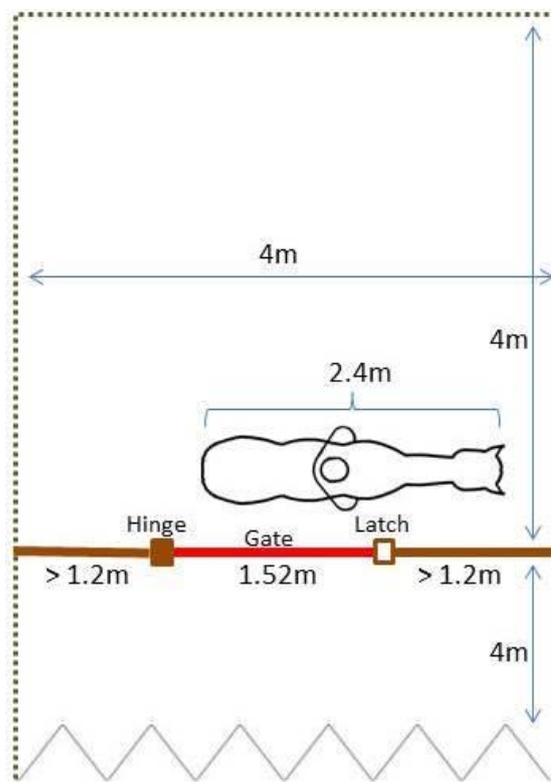


Figure 1 : Plan of space required at a gate

This guidance applies to England and Wales only. For information in Scotland, contact helene.mauchlen@bhs.org.uk 02476 840727 and in Northern Ireland susan.spratt@bhs.org.uk 02476 840736.

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