

What did your fence actually cost? Not the number on the quote. The number after the change order, the extra posts, the disposal line that appeared on the final invoice, and the summer weekend you spent re-staining cedar the salesperson called maintenance-free. Ask ten property owners across the GTA that question and you will get ten different answers, because the price of a fence is a story told in reviews long before it shows up on an invoice. Reading fence contractor reviews through a cost lens changes how you budget, how you compare bids, and how you choose between options you did not know you had. Here is what to look for, and what to do with it.

What a Star Rating Never Tells You About Money

Stars measure emotion, not price. Two owners can review the same fence, installed by the same crew in the same week, and one will call it a bargain while the other calls it robbery, because their expectations were different, not their invoices. When you read a cost complaint, ask who is complaining. A reviewer who expected a wood fence to last forever without maintenance, or who compared a cedar quote against a chain-link price, is telling you more about their research than about the contractor's pricing.

Notice also what reviews rarely contain: the actual numbers. Very few reviewers post the price they paid, and the ones who do are usually writing from memory about a job that ended two years earlier, when materials and labor costs were different. Treat any specific figure in a review as a rumor with a date on it, and use it only to understand the shape of the pricing, not the price itself.

That does not mean cost complaints are useless. It means they need translation. A complaint that says "the final bill was higher than the quote" is common, vague, and almost always missing the part that matters: why. Your job, while reading, is to find the reviews that explain the why, because those reviews are describing the pricing behavior you will experience yourself.

Where Cost Complaints Hide in Reviews

Change Orders and the Fine Print

Search any established fence company's reviews for the word "extra" and you will find a pattern. Rock under the topsoil, buried concrete from an old shed pad, roots the size of your arm, a neighbor dispute discovered on day one. Each of these changes the job, and each one is a legitimate reason a final invoice differs from a quote. The reviews worth studying are the ones where the owner says the contractor explained the change, showed the problem, and got approval before proceeding. That behavior is the entire ballgame. The opposite pattern, where the owner discovered the extra charge on the invoice, is the red flag that should send you to the next company.

The factors that drive those extras are the same across the region: material type, linear footage, fence height, the number of gates, terrain and slope, site access, whether an old fence needs demolition and disposal, and the post installation method the soil demands. Clay soil in parts of Vaughan and Markham may call for deeper holes or different backfill than the sandy ground closer to the lake in parts of Toronto and Pickering. None of these has a fixed number attached. Each one changes the scope, and the final price depends on scope and on the market at the time you buy.

The Quoted Price Versus the Final Invoice

Read the one- and two-star reviews twice, because they are where invoice behavior shows up. Legitimate reviews in this bucket describe a specific surprise: a gate that needed custom hardware, an access problem that required hand-carrying materials, a fence line that turned out to sit on a slope that needed grading. Vague reviews in this

bucket describe a feeling: "they nickel-and-dimed me," "the price kept going up," "I should have gotten more quotes." A company with ten years of specific, explainable cost complaints is a company that works in the real world. A company whose cost complaints are all vague, or all about the same hidden fee, is a company hiding something.

Ask for an itemized breakdown before you sign, and let the reviews tell you which line items deserve scrutiny. If a company's reviews mention disposal fees appearing at the end, ask about disposal at the start. If they mention gate hardware as an add-on, ask whether gates are included in the per-foot price. Every recurring complaint in their history is a question you can put to them directly, and their answer tells you whether the pattern is being managed or repeated.

Deposits deserve their own line in your reading. Owners rarely complain about paying a deposit that matches the work booked. They complain about deposits that disappear, about being asked for more money mid-project, and about paying a large balance before the final inspection. Note how the company's reviews treat money flow, and mirror those expectations in the payment schedule you agree to. A written schedule that ties payments to completed, verified stages protects you without insulting a legitimate contractor.

The Cheap Bid From an Unreviewed Company

The most expensive quote you will ever get is the one that comes in far lower than everyone else from a company that has no review history to speak of. That is not a coincidence. New companies have to price aggressively to get work, and some of them do good work and grow into solid businesses. But when you cannot find reviews, you are buying the cheapest version of an unknown quantity, and the fence business punishes that bet more than most trades because the defects are buried in the ground.

If the low bid attracts you, spend the same review-reading effort on the company that has no reviews: ask why there are none, ask for the full list of references, ask to visit an install from the current season. A new crew that is proud of its work will show it to you. A crew that cannot, at any price, is priced that way for a reason.

This is also where the distinction between residential and commercial work shows up in the review record. A company that builds residential fences may have excellent reviews and no experience with the approvals, access, and security demands of a commercial lot, a strip-mall parking perimeter, or an industrial yard. If your project is commercial, filter the reviews by project type before you filter by rating, and ask for commercial references directly.

What Reading Fence Contractor Reviews Should Change About Your Decisions

Reviews do their best work before the quote, when they are shaping the choices you bring into the conversation. The most common owner mistake is treating the decision as a single one: which company. In reality you are making several decisions, and the reviews inform all of them.



- Reviews of cedar, pressure-treated pine, vinyl, aluminum, and chain link all mention the same themes: upkeep, fading, warping, and how the material holds up to snow load and winter wind. Match the material's reputation to your tolerance for maintenance rather than to its price alone.
- Owners who review a repair say the same thing over and over: fixing a section of an old fence is often harder than replacing it, because the new section never matches the old one. Reviews that describe repairs will tell you whether a company steers you honestly.

- Gate complaints dominate fence reviews out of proportion to the number of gates involved, because gates carry hardware and hardware fails. If you need two gates, read everything the company's reviewers say about sagging and latches before you decide.
- In Toronto and the older suburbs, half your fence may be a boundary fence shared with a neighbor. Reviews that mention neighbor disputes, survey costs, and disagreements about who pays are a preview of the conversation you will need to have before anyone digs.
- Spring thaw, summer backlog, fall rush before the snow. Reviews that complain about waits will cluster in the season you are planning to build in, and that tells you when to book, not just who to book.

Reviews also surface options you may not have considered, and reading for them is free education. Owners mention snow fencing versus solid panels for wind-exposed runs, lattice toppers for privacy without the cost of full height, double gates that let a truck into a side yard, and rails on the neighbor's side that keep a fence presentable from both yards. When several reviewers mention the same option in the same approving tone, it is usually an option worth asking about, and asking about it in the quote conversation is exactly how reviews change your final fence.

Notice what the list leaves out: the lowest price. Owners who choose on price alone tend to write the reviews that other owners read to avoid choosing on price alone. The decisions above are the ones that actually determine whether you are happy in year three, and they are the decisions the reviews are quietly making for you while you read.

Building Your Own Cost File

Before you request quotes, build a one-page file from your reading. List the factors your property actually has: the footage along each fence line, the heights you want, the number and width of gates, the slope and soil conditions, the access for equipment, whether old fencing needs removal, and any finish or treatment you expect. Write down every cost complaint you found in each company's history and the question it generates. When the quotes arrive, compare them factor by factor rather than bottom line to bottom line, because two quotes for the same fence can differ in height, post spacing, gate hardware, and disposal terms while showing the same total.

Two checks belong on that file. First, verify with your municipality whether your project needs a permit or has rules about fence height, placement, or pool enclosures, because a surprise compliance cost is the one change order nobody reviews for. Second, verify with your insurer or a qualified professional what coverage and liability expectations apply to the work. Both checks take minutes, and both protect the budget you built from reviews.

The Decision Reviews Can't Make For You

Here is the honest limit of reading fence contractor reviews: they can tell you how a company behaved on other properties, but they cannot tell you how it will behave on yours. What they can do is raise the quality of your questions, **local residential fence contractor** sharpen your budget, and retire the bad options before they waste your afternoon. Budget like the change order is coming, choose like the fence will be there in ten years, and treat the reviews as the research they are: the best available evidence, never the final word.

Read with your wallet open on the table, and the fence will cost what it costs, on purpose.