

HOW TO BUILD A DRY-STACK WALL



Dry-stacked or dry-laid stonework requires no mortar. You don't need special equipment, super strength, or a fat bank account. If you can handle a shovel, wield a hammer, use a level, and lift small stones; and if you're eager to spend some time working with your hands outdoors, stonescaping is for you.

PLANNING

As in any building project, a little bit of planning and organizing will make your work easier. Before beginning your wall, visualize or sketch the finished structure in its surrounding landscape. Your land may have an existing bank or a natural berm. If it doesn't, you'll need to create a berm by importing soil. Measure the area of your wall to determine its length and height.

HOW MUCH STONE DO I NEED?

Wall stone comes in various sizes and thickness. If the wall is to be no more than 2 ft. high, you can use smaller thin-cut stone to build with. Larger walls require larger stone for more stability.

Let's say that your wall will be 60 ft. long and 2 ft. high. First calculate the area of the face of the wall: $60' \times 2' = 120$ sq. ft. of face. As a general rule, 1 ton of thin-cut rock will yield approximately 30 sq. ft. of face. Thus your calculations indicate that you will need about 4 tons of stone.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Heavy Hammer
- 3 ft. Level
- Pick and Shovel
- Selected Stone
- Backfill Materials

HOW TO START

Using a garden hose or rope, lay out the shape of wall that you plan to build. With a flat shovel, dig a trench about 4-inches deep and about 12-inches wide (or as wide as your widest stone) along the base of your slope at the proposed location for the wall.

NO MORTAR

Use the level to make sure that the trench is level in both directions. If the bottom of the wall rises up a slope, you can stair-step the trench in level steps of 4 to 6 inches. No footing is required for a dry-stack wall since there is no mortar used.

Place large stones on the bottom layer to give the wall a good foundation. Lay the stones flat with the best looking, straightest face in the front. As you stack the wall, use the level to check to see that your wall has level horizontal courses. When each course is finished, fill in the voids and irregularities behind the wall with dirt or fine gravel and compact it as you go.

Place stones so they fit tightly together for strength and appearance. As you build, try to avoid continuous horizontal and vertical joints by breaking them up with larger or smaller stones. Use small "chinking" stones to fill in the small voids left by larger stones. A slight batter on the wall will add stability.

Save some of the larger flat pieces of stone to cap off the top of the wall.

