

Gaps, gates and stiles — Specification

ICS 91.090

Committees responsible for this British Standard

The preparation of this British Standard was entrusted to Technical Committee B/201, Fences and crossing points, upon which the following bodies were represented:

- Association of Security Consultants
- British Precast Concrete Federation Ltd.
- County Surveyors' Society
- Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
[Building Research Establishment (BRE)]
- Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
(Highways Agency)
- European Fencing Industry Association
- Fencing Contractors' Association
- Forestry Commission
- Galvanizers' Association
- National Farmers' Union
- Open Spaces Society
- Security Facilities Executive
- Timber Trade Federation
- UK Forest Products Association
- UK Steel Association

The following bodies were also represented in the drafting of the standard, through subcommittees and panels:

- British Horse Society
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
- British Wood Preserving and Damp-proofing Association
- Country Landowners' Association
- Countryside Agency
- Fieldfare Trust
- Institute of Public Rights of Way Officers
- National Trust
- Ramblers Association
- Co-opted members

This British Standard, having been prepared under the direction of the Sector Committee for Building and Civil Engineering, was published under the authority of the Standards Committee and comes into effect on 15 June 2001

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First published as BS 5709
March 1979
Second edition June 2001

The following BSI references relate to the work on this standard:
Committee reference B/201
Draft for comment 99/108871 DC

ISBN 0 580 33287 X

Amendments issued since publication

Amd. No.	Date	Comments

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Foreword

This British Standard has been prepared by Technical Committee B/201. It is a revision of BS 5709:1979, which is withdrawn.

Country walking, cycling and riding have continued to increase since the first edition of this standard was published in 1979. For path users, recent thinking and legislation has focused on the need for less able bodied and disabled people to be able to access the countryside. The proportion of walkers of advancing years, with decreased mobility associated with arthritis of the knee and hip and other age related disabilities, has also increased.

This revision places emphasis on the needs of all path users in the context of the actual agricultural needs of the landowners.

The United Kingdom is noted for the variety of stiles and other devices which enable crossings to be made of boundaries where animals need to be contained. Whilst local traditional forms of gates and stiles should not be lightly discarded for a standard design, it should be borne in mind that the main objective is for gates and stiles to be adequately stockproof while providing good access for all legitimate users. Accordingly this edition specifies structures by their functional performance, thus allowing many types of structure to conform to the requirements. However, it also tries to meet the need for actual buildable designs by means of examples that meet the functional performance criteria.

This standard is intended to be used by:

- a) those planning, specifying, or approving new structures on paths (e.g. highway authorities, district councils, landowners, tenants, user groups, and others handling diversions, creations or dedications of paths subject to gaps, gates and stiles);
- b) those making and buying gate and stile kits;
- c) those installing gates and stiles (e.g. landowners, contractors, volunteers);
- d) those replacing, maintaining and inspecting gates and stiles (e.g. farmers and highway authority officers).

It also gives guidance on design where field-measurement is physically difficult or subjective.

NOTE This standard confines itself to the main structure across boundaries (e.g. hedge, fence, wall). Where the path is wider than this structure an additional structure needs to fill the rest of the width. This may be the original hedge or fence or a new one.

Gates and stiles, and also gaps where the side structure or growth restrict the full width of the right of way, are legally obstructions unless the path has been dedicated subject to those limitations, or unless they have been authorized by the Highway Authority, or by a public path order or creation agreement (see Highways Act, 1980 [1]). Gates, stiles and the side structures or growth alongside gaps are required to be maintained by the landowner to a standard of repair required to prevent unreasonable interference with the rights of persons using the footpath or bridleway. This British Standard provides specifications for gaps, gates and stiles to ensure that they cause the minimum of inconvenience to users whilst fulfilling the requirement for gates and stiles of substantially preventing the passage of animals and, for all structures, where appropriate and lawful, preventing access to some of those not entitled to use the path.

In considering if and what type of structure is necessary the needs of those with disabilities should be taken into account and possible liabilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 [2] should be considered. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 [3] requires local authorities authorizing the installation of stiles, gates and other works on footpaths and bridleways to have regard to the needs of people with mobility problems.

Annex A is informative.

A British Standard does not purport to include all necessary provisions of a contract. Users of British Standards are responsible for their correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard does not itself confer immunity from legal obligations.

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i to iv, pages 1 to 19 and a back cover.

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1 Scope

This British Standard specifies field-measurable performance requirements for gaps, gates and stiles for footpaths and bridleways. It provides a hierarchy of performance requirements to enable choices to be made as to which type of structure is most appropriate in given circumstances.

This British Standard does not apply to stiles with moving parts.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1

bridle gate

device hinged at one side installed in a boundary such as a fence, hedge or wall which acts as a barrier to livestock and motor vehicles, but which allows the passage of horse-riders, cyclists, pedestrians and their dogs, and mobility vehicles

2.2

cycle

wheeled, non-motorized, pedal or hand powered vehicle

2.3

cyclist

user of wheeled, non-motorized, pedal or hand powered vehicle

2.4

dog gate

device allowing the passage of a dog, whilst preventing the passage of livestock

2.5

gap

unimpeded way through a boundary together with any structure defining its width

2.6

horse stile

non-moving structure designed to allow horses to pass whilst forming a deliberate barrier to motor cycles

2.7

kissing gate

device consisting of a hinged gate that is constrained to swing between two posts at the opening of an enclosure forming part of the structure, and which allows the passage of legitimate users, whilst preventing the passage of livestock etc.

2.8

livestock

animals such as cattle, sheep (including lambs) and horses, but excluding dogs and deer

2.9

manoeuvring space

space needed by persons, horses, cycles, mobility vehicles to traverse the gap or structure conveniently and safely

2.10

mobility vehicle

wheeled vehicle such as a wheelchair, invalid carriage or children's pushchair or pram

NOTE This term includes invalid carriages of Classes 1, 2, and 3 as defined in S.I. 1988 No. 2268 Road traffic — The Use of Invalid Carriages on Highways Regulations 1988 [4].

2.11

pedestrian gate

device hinged at one side, installed in a boundary such as a fence, hedge or wall which acts as a barrier to livestock etc., but which allows the passage of pedestrians and their dogs, and mobility vehicles

2.12

RADAR lock

lock with a key, normally only available to disabled people

NOTE The key is the design of the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR), 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF.

2.13

self-closing gate

gate which always returns to a position touching, or in line with, the closing post

2.14

stile

fixed device allowing the passage of pedestrians over or through a fence, wall or hedge, while forming a barrier to livestock or other animals, cycles and vehicles

NOTE Stiles with moving parts are not covered by this standard because they may be prone to failure or vandalism and may cause a safety hazard.

2.15

stockproof

descriptive of a structure that is intended to prevent the passage of livestock

NOTE Animals other than livestock, including wild animals, may require specially designed structures (e.g. tall kissing gates to prevent the passage of deer).

3 Selection of gap, gate or stile — order of preference

3.1 General

The selection of a gap, gate or stile, which permits people to use a path crossing a field boundary such as a hedge, fence or stone wall, shall result in as little restriction as possible for potential users, while meeting the actual agricultural needs of the landowners (principle of least restrictive option).

The following are legitimate path users with respect to categories of rights of way (see Highways Act 1980 [1] and Countryside Act 1968 [5]):

a) footpaths:

- 1) walkers (pedestrians);
- 2) wheelchair users;
- 3) walkers with dogs under control;
- 4) walkers with prams/pushchairs;

b) bridleways:

- 1) all footpath users;
- 2) horse riders;
- 3) cyclists;
- 4) persons leading horses.

NOTE 1 Where a landowner grants access by concession there is scope to define the range of users differently from those in right of way legislation for public paths. For example, a permissive path could allow walkers and horse riders but preclude cyclists.

NOTE 2 Care is required in planning and installing gaps, gates and stiles on all routes where restrictions to mobility vehicle users, including invalid carriage users and other disabled persons, may be created (see Foreword).

If a gate, kissing gate or stile is to be provided on a path an assessment shall be made of whether such action is reasonable. The following points shall be considered in the assessment:

- a) the likelihood of the structure, taken in the context of its environment, causing some restriction to users (e.g. a gate will be difficult for some people with reach or dexterity difficulties);
- b) the extent of any restriction which will be created (e.g. a stile will create an absolute barrier to wheelchair users and many walkers with pushchairs);
- c) the effort or cost that would be required to take other measures to remove the need for a restriction.