

BRITISH STANDARD

Gaps, gates and stiles – Specification

ICS 91.090

Confirmed December 2011

BSi
British Standards

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ISBN 0 580 48107 7

The following BSI references relate to the work on this standard:

Committee reference B/201

Draft for comment 05/30144012 DC

Publication history

First published as BS 5709, March 1979

Second edition, June 2001

Third edition, April 2006

Amendments issued since publication

Amd. no.	Date	Text affected
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Contents

Foreword *iii*

- 1** Scope *1*
- 2** Terms and definitions *1*
- 3** Selection of gap, gate or stile – order of preference *3*
- 4** Performance requirements for structures *5*

Annexes

Annex A (informative) Barbed wire, razor wire, farm type electrical fences *25*

Bibliography *26*

List of figures

- Figure 1 – Example of a gap constructed in a hedge *7*
- Figure 2 – Example of a Kent Carriage Gap *8*
- Figure 3 – Example of a one-way opening timber, unlatched, pedestrian gate *10*
- Figure 4 – Example of a self-closing two-way opening timber bridle gate using a slotted plate self-closing mechanism *11*
- Figure 5 – Example of a trapezoidal timber kissing gate *13*
- Figure 6 – Example of a rectangular timber kissing gate *14*
- Figure 7 – Example of a curved metal kissing gate with RADAR bypass *15*
- Figure 8 – Example of a wide post and rail stile *18*
- Figure 9 – Example of a narrow post and rail stile *20*
- Figure 10 – Example of a stone stile *21*
- Figure 11 – Example of a horse stile *22*
- Figure 12 – Example of a dog gate attached to a timber post and rail stile *24*

List of tables

Table 1 – Accessibility of structures conforming to BS 5709 on footpaths *5*

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i to iv, pages 1 to 26, an inside back cover and a back cover.

Foreword

This British Standard was published by BSI and came into effect on 28 April 2006. It was prepared by Technical Committee B/201, *Fences and gates*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

Supersession

This British Standard supersedes BS 5709:2001, which is withdrawn.

Information about this document

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 continues to place emphasis on the needs and safety of all path users in the context of the actual agricultural needs of the landowners. In addition recognizing that the standard applies to many field gates on paths.

The United Kingdom is noted for the variety of structures which enable crossings to be made of boundaries where animals need to be contained. Whilst local traditional forms of structures should not be lightly discarded for a standard design, it should be borne in mind that the main objective is for structures to be adequately stockproof (and sometimes motor vehicle proof) while providing good access for all legitimate users. Accordingly this edition continues to specify structures by their functional performance, thus allowing many designs 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 path structures or kits;
- c) those installing path structures (e.g. landowners, contractors, volunteers);
- d) those replacing, maintaining and inspecting path structures (e.g. farmers, highway authority officers and volunteers).

Most of the functional performance criteria are field measurable but this standard 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.

On public paths, gates and stiles, and also gaps where the side structure or growth restrict the full width of the 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 (see Highways Act 1980, S146 [1]).

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 (see Disability Discrimination Act 1995 [2] and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 [3]). The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 [4] requires local authorities authorizing the installation of gates, stiles and other works on footpaths and bridleways to have regard to the needs of people with mobility problems.

Use of this document

It has been assumed in the preparation of this British Standard that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its requirements are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “shall”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

1 Scope

This British Standard specifies field-measurable performance requirements for gaps, gates and stiles for footpaths and bridleways and other routes used by the public. It can also be used on wholly private ways. 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. In regard to stiles, this standard is aimed at the repair and refurbishment of existing ones.

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 **bridleway**

where the context allows, bridleway includes any route where horses are allowed

2.3 **cycle**

wheeled, non-motorized, pedal or hand powered vehicle

2.4 **cyclist**

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

2.5 **dog gate**

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

2.6 **enclosure [see 'refuge' (2.17)]**

2.7 **footpath**

where the context allows, footpath includes any route where walkers are allowed, e.g. access land

2.8 **gap**

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

2.9 **horse stile**

non-moving structure designed to allow horses to pass whilst forming a deterrent to motorcycles

2.10 **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.

2.11 livestock

animals such as cattle, sheep (including lambs) and horses, but not including dogs and deer

2.12 manoeuvring space

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

2.13 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 [5].

2.14 path

including public and private routes as well as ways through fences onto and from land such as commons and access land where no specific paths exist

2.15 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

2.16 RADAR lock

lock operated by a key (RADAR 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.

2.17 refuge or enclosure

area within which the gate of a kissing gate swings or the area between a pair of gates comprising one structure

2.18 self-closing gate

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

2.19 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 1 Stile does not include horse stile.

NOTE 2 Stiles with moving parts are not covered by this standard because they are prone to failure or vandalism and can cause a safety hazard.

2.20 stockproof

structure that is intended to prevent the passage of livestock and/or the passage by other animals or things, for example rabbits or motorcycles

NOTE Animals other than livestock, including wild animals, might 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, including users of mobility vehicles, while meeting the actual agricultural needs of the landowners (principle of least restrictive option see 3.1.3).

3.1.1 Rights of Way users

Structures shall be assessed to ensure that they are suitable, as a minimum, for the following legitimate path users with respect to categories of rights of way (see Highways Act 1980 as amended [1] and Countryside Act 1968 [6]):

- 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.
- c) restricted byways:
 - 1) all bridleway users;
 - 2) horse drawn vehicles.

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 might be created (see Foreword).

3.1.2 Reasonableness

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 assessment shall as a minimum include the following:

- a) what alternative measures might be taken to avoid the need for a structure or a particular type of structure;

NOTE 1 For example a swathe of land including the path might be fenced-in so as to keep stock completely off the path's surface.

- b) 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);
- c) 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 as well as those with limited agility).

3.1.3 Least restrictive

In general terms the principle of applying the least restrictive option means that a path crossing a field boundary shall in the first instance be through a gap (see 4.1 and 4.2). If a gap is inappropriate, for example because of the need to control livestock, the second choice shall be a gate (see 4.1 and 4.4), which is easy to operate in both directions of travel by all people entitled to use the path. If a gate is inappropriate, a kissing gate (see 4.1 and 4.5) shall be chosen.

New structures shall not be stiles unless exceptional circumstances require them.

NOTE 1 As no single structure provides access across field boundaries that is satisfactory in all situations, this standard provides a hierarchy of performance requirements to enable choices to be made as to which structure is most appropriate.

NOTE 2 This standard does not specify performance requirements for chicanes, hoops and similar structures because of the difficulty in designing such structures to allow most legitimate users whilst forming barriers for most non-legitimate ones. But it should be noted that Class III mobility vehicles are normally a maximum of 830 mm and typically 710 mm wide. Whilst there is no actual length restriction, in practice they may be 1.5 m long and manoeuvring space should be planned accordingly.

3.2 Choice of structure on footpaths

Where there are no explicitly identified counter reasons, the type of structure chosen shall be the least restrictive option in accordance with the following list (displayed in least restrictive option order):

- a) gap;
- b) gate;
- c) kissing gate;
- d) stile.

NOTE 1 The fact that there might be a more restrictive structure or ground condition further along the path is not to be taken as a reason for not choosing a less restrictive structure.

NOTE 2 Table 1 shows the performance normally to be expected from the structures listed in their order of preference.

Table 1 Accessibility of structures conforming to BS 5709 on footpaths

Structure (in order of preference)	Type of structure	Performance
Gap	Defined gap	Allows all users
Gate	Pedestrian gate or bridle gate without latch	Allows most users
	Pedestrian gate or bridle gate with latch	Inhibits some users (e.g. those with dexterity and reach, slight difficulties)
Kissing gate	Kissing gate, without latch	Inhibits some users (e.g. wheelchair users) depending on layout and size
	Kissing gate, with latch	Inhibits some users (e.g. disabled users) and is generally more difficult to use than latchless gates
Stile	Wide post and rail stile	Prevents most pushchairs, and all wheelchair users; inhibits the less agile and some walkers with dogs
	Narrow post and rail stile	

4 Performance requirements for structures

4.1 General requirements applicable to all structures

4.1.1 There shall be no barbed wire, or electric fencing capable of giving a shock, inside the structure or within 1 m of the gap or structure or of the manoeuvring space. Similarly there shall be no scratching, stinging, or common rash making plant within 1 m of the structure.

NOTE Annex A gives guidance on the use of barbed wire.

4.1.2 The structure shall contain no projections such as bolts likely to catch on the clothing of path users or to injure people or animals. All edges likely to come into contact with the user shall be rounded to a radius no sharper than 2 mm or chamfered with at least a 2 mm flat. Protrusions integral to the design (e.g. latches) shall be rounded, e.g. using 'D' loops.

4.1.3 Where moving parts of the structure could trap fingers, for instance at the gate closure line, the area shall be maximized to reduce the point pressure.

NOTE This trapping can be avoided by preventing the gate closing completely, for example by installing a block of resilient material on a part of the closing line.

4.1.4 Any finger or direction post carrying a protruding direction sign shall not form part of the structure, but shall be mounted separately so