



# Pergola Buyer's Guide

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## Welcome to the Pergola Depot Buyer's Guide!

At Pergola Depot, we've been helping homeowners, contractors, and businesses of all types across the country reinvent their outdoor spaces since 2008.

We're so glad to see you take the first steps to transforming your backyard into your happy place with a classic handcrafted pergola.

While there are many considerations to make when choosing your perfect pergola (space, preferred dimensions, attached vs freestanding), we're here to guide you through the process with the information we've written in this Buyer's Guide.

We also offer consultations with our specialists for an efficient way to get information about our products and get questions answered. [Schedule your consultation now to learn more.](#)

*Thank you for choosing Pergola Depot!*  
*The Pergola Depot Team*

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## Pergola Kits Buying Guide!

Check out our helpful pergola kits buying guide for choosing the best pergola for your backyard space. Adding a pergola to your backyard is a stylish way to improve your outdoor space. Learn all the key steps to purchasing the best pergola kits for your outdoor landscape design from the experts at Pergola Depot! One of the most used (and favorite) spaces for homeowners is their backyard. But many outdoor areas fall short of the vision due to free time, money, or just old-fashioned know-how.

Wood pergola kits are a simple way to complete a space for a true outdoor experience without breaking the bank. Why a pergola kit? Pergolas add depth and character to an otherwise plain-looking patio. They create a gathering area to bring friends and family together. They outline a space and make a bit more privacy. And, a wood structure like a pergola can offer much-needed shade to a sunny spot. Pergolas blend naturally with the outdoors to create a definite space.

Whether you want to cover your backyard patio, enhance a gathering spot at your home or business, or create some poolside shade, a pergola kit can transform your outdoor space in a few simple steps. We've made it easier for the average person to make that a reality with our pergola kits. How do I add a pergola to my outdoor landscape design? Start by defining how you want to use the space. Will the space you're creating accommodate a structure that stands alone and detached from your building (freestanding) or one that attaches to your home or other building?



## Choose Your Pergola Attachment

The first choice you'll make is whether you want a detached freestanding pergola or a pergola that will be attached to a wall.

### Freestanding Pergola Kits

Freestanding detached pergola kits are a good choice if you are creating a space that you'd like some separation from the home or other structure. Outdoor patio designs featuring a 4, 6, or 8 post wood pergola can be used as the centerpiece of an open-air party room.

Year-round entertaining is easy when you add a patio cover near a stone fireplace or fire pit. Perhaps you want to build an outdoor picnic area near your swimming pool for a shady spot to cool off.

Oftentimes, a freestanding pergola is used as a cover for your grill station or outdoor kitchen. Restaurant owners or property managers use pergola kits to cover an outdoor dining room, picnic area, or community gathering spot.



#### POPULAR USES FOR FREESTANDING PERGOLAS:

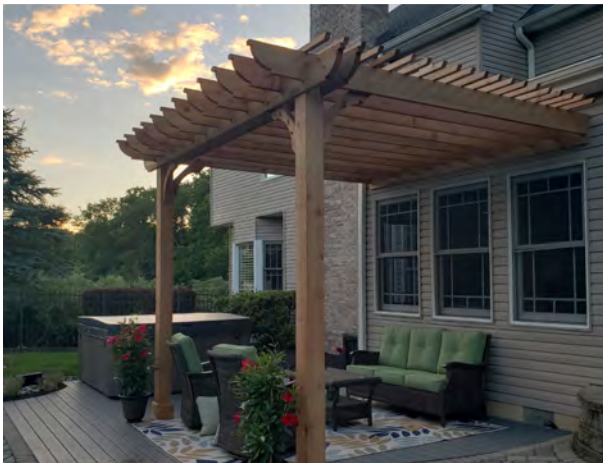
- Extend a living room or kitchen
- Create a larger awning or patio cover
- Enclose an existing patio to make a private open air dining room

## Attached Pergola Kits

Attached pergola kits are a great way to expand your existing space. Standard pergola sizes for attached pergolas are 8 feet x 8 feet all the way up to 20 feet x 20 feet.

We can also build custom attached pergola kits in any size you need to fit your space.

If you order an attached pergola kit to attach to your house or other structure, your kit will include a ledger board and hardware to attach the pergola.



### POPULAR USES FOR ATTACHED PERGOLAS:

- Extend a living room or kitchen
- Create a larger awning or patio cover
- Enclose an existing patio to make a private open air dining room

## Pick Your Style And Pergola Roof

Either choice of pergola kit (freestanding vs. attached) can be built in a variety of styles and coverage options. The roof of our pergolas can be built with a varied number of top slats to create the amount of shade you desire for your outdoor room.

The biggest difference between our best seller full-size pergolas is the number of rafters and top slats. This choice will determine how much coverage you'll get from the pergola once it's installed. If you already know you want maximum coverage, then you can start at the Big Kahuna page that shows all 90 sizes of Big Kahuna pergola kits. The Big Kahuna provides the most coverage offering more rafters and top slats than the Sombrero and Fedora.

This section of our buying guide for pergola kits describes each style, amount of pergola roof coverage, and typical uses for a pergola.

### Big Kahuna Pergola Kits for Maximum Shade Coverage

- Classic pergola design
- Built for maximum sun coverage
- Engineered for extreme weather conditions
- Available in solar-ready
- The Big Kahuna is our signature kit that combines strength and style and provides maximum coverage. This sturdy, quality pergola is built using 6x6 posts, 2x8 double beams, 2x8 rafters (every 12 inches) and 2x2 top slats (every 6 inches). Standard pergola sizes range in size from 8x8 up to 20x20.

The Big Kahuna term is associated with the meaning expert in an art or profession, oftentimes relating to surfing. Big Kahuna Pergola Kit name originates with the designer of the Big Kahuna and his passion for surfing big waves on the Florida coast where our pergolas come to life. That zeal continues through our pergola craftsmen who are passionate about building quality crafted pergola kits.

The Big Kahuna is engineered to withstand 160 MPH wind gusts. In designing all of our kits at our Florida-based beginnings, we had to make sure that our pergolas would be able to withstand extreme Florida-type weather situations all year round such as:

- Hurricanes
- The second highest air salt content in the world
- Daily summer rain storms
- Tornadoes
- Winter drought conditions

These elements can be detrimental to the life of the materials used on outdoor wood structure products. So, as you can see we have good reason to be sure that our pergolas were strongly designed with quality materials that could stand up to these harsh elements.

## **Sombrero Pergola Kits for Medium Coverage**

- Our Big Kahuna design with half the rafters & top slats
- Built for medium sun coverage

A sombrero hat conjures up images of a wide-brim high crown hat that provides coverage from the sun. Our Sombrero provides that coverage for outdoor patios. Sharing a solid design with our Big Kahuna, the Sombrero pergola kit has half the top slats and rafters, which translates to a solid pergola that captures the open feel of the outdoors. Offered at an even more affordable price point than the Big Kahuna, the Sombrero is also offered in both freestanding and attached in standard 8x8 up to 20x20, as well as custom sizes. Standard sizes come with 6x6 posts, double 2x8 beams, 2x8 notched rafters, and 2x2 top slats. Since the rafters are placed on 24 inch centers and the top slats on 12 inch centers, this pergola style creates a more exposed feel than the Big Kahuna, but with more coverage than many other pergolas for sale.

## **Fedora Pergola Kits for Maximum Shade Coverage**

- Classic pergola style
- Open design
- Taller/ un-notched roofing system.

The Fedora patio cover kit is an open design pergola that can be placed in a backyard garden to create a sitting area over an outdoor kitchen or patio. Much like the timeless hat the Fedora, this pergola design is simple yet stylish. We build the Fedora with 6×6 posts, double 2×8 beams, 2×8 rafters, 2×2 top slats and stainless steel hardware. In this design, the rafters are un-notched and configured in 3 sets of 2 for sizes 8x8 to 15x15, or 4 sets of 2 for larger sizes. Standard size pergola kits for the Fedora are 8x8 all the way up to 20x20. All standard sizes that have rafters size 8'-15' will include 8 top slats. All standard sizes with rafters 16'-20' include 10 top slats.

## **Brim Pergola Kits for Garden and Patio Enhancement**

- Wooden trellis like design
- Perfect as a patio or walkway border, for hanging plants or lighting

The brim of a hat is the projecting edge along the bottom rim. Our Brim pergola kit is a beautiful trellis like structure, perfect for the edge of a garden, patio, or deck. Standard pergola kit sizes for the Brim are 8 feet up to 20 feet. Custom sizes are available upon request. Uses for this border style pergola include plant hanger, garden border, pergola hammock hanger, or a simple and elegant garden decorative feature.

## **Visor Pergola Kits for Awnings and Garden Use**

- Wooden awning
- Enhances and provides shade above a window or door opening

A visor is sometimes known as an edge of the front of a hat or a protective screen from unwanted light. Our Visor pergola kit serves a similar purpose. The Visor is our awning-style pergola that enhances the look of your windows and door openings, or enhances a blank outer wall of a home or enclosed porch. For our Visor, we build standard sizes from 6 to 20 feet, using 2x8 beams, 2x6 rafters and 2x2 top slats. Custom sizes are always an option.

## Pergola Comparison Chart

A side-by-side comparison can help you decide which is best for your space. This section of our buying guide for pergola kits describes each style, amount of pergola roof coverage, and typical uses for a pergola.

Shade	Shade	Sizes	Styles	Uses
BIG KAHUNA PERGOLA	maximum	8x8-20x20 + custom	Freestanding, Attached	Patio cover for outdoor kitchen, living room, pool deck
SOMBRERO PERGOLA	medium	8x8-20x20 + custom	Freestanding, Attached	Patio cover for outdoor kitchen, living room, pool deck
FEDORA PERGOLA	light	8x8-20x20 + custom	Freestanding, Attached	Patio cover for outdoor kitchen, living room, pool deck
BRIM PERGOLA	N/A	8', 10', 12', 14', 16', 18', 20' + custom	Freestanding	Border or trellis
VISOR PERGOLA	N/A	6', 8', 10', 12', 14', 16', 18', 20' + custom	Attached	Decorative accent or protection over window or garage door

## Choose Your Overall Pergola Sizes

Since there are unlimited sizes of patios and landscapes, we have a size and style to fit most landscapes. All of our pergolas big or small are suitable for year-round use. Choose a pergola that fits your lifestyle – to cool off in the shade poolside, or to rest under and get cozy by the fire.

### Small, Medium, or Large? Square or Rectangle?

Our full size wood pergola kits are offered in over 90 standard sizes. Some of the most popular sizes are 10x16, 12x14, 13x13, 14x16, 18x18, and 20x20. You may need a smaller size to fit a townhome outdoor patio with limited space for your outdoor dining room. Maybe you're on a rooftop in a downtown area and want a cover for outdoor relaxation but don't have much patio space to accommodate a larger patio cover. Medium size patios commonly found in suburban areas or small-town landscapes can make room for a wide variety of our standard sizes. Sprawling backyards with lots of acreage, waterfront access, or large open space have limitless options for pergolas.

### Small Pergola Kits for Small Yards or Outdoor Spaces

Our small pergola kits are offered in various styles. The Brim pergola kit and the Visor pergola kit can be used for borders or accents for your home or yard. Our full-size kits can be ordered in smaller sizes to fit smaller spaces while providing a lot or a little protection from the sun. City patio or small backyards will accommodate most of the smaller size Big Kahuna, Sombrero, and Fedora. These styles come in sizes such as 8x8, 9x11, 10x16 and many other sizes in between.



## Medium Pergola Kits for Medium Yards or Outdoor Spaces

Creating an outdoor sitting area, dining room, or retreat for your home or commercial business can be done with a medium size pergola. Attach a pergola to the outside of your home and create an instant room. Or design a completely separate area where you can relax by a fire with family and friends.



## Large Pergola Kits for Large Spaces

If your backyard space can accommodate a larger pergola, you have the luxury of designing a completely separate room and add landscaping to enhance the area even more! A pool deck is the perfect place to add some patio coverage, so you'll have a shady spot to enjoy refreshments. If you like to entertain and throw backyard parties, a patio with a fire ring or an outdoor dining room can be the focal point of your landscape design.



Custom sizes of attached pergolas or freestanding pergolas can be built for any size yard. Maybe you have a small space in your backyard next to your pool that you'd like to cover so you can enjoy it even in the midday sun. Or you have multiple acres with a big open space that you'd like to design a place to escape and relax away from the hustle and bustle.

## Choose Pergola Wood

### Pergola Wood Comparison

You may have been researching best wood types for outdoor structures to use for your patio cover. Along with compatibility with climate in your area, weigh in on your personal preferences. Do you want a wood type that you can paint or stain right away when you receive your pergola, or can it wait few months? Do you prefer a more rustic look, or smooth lines? Which types of pergola wood work best where you live? Do you have severe weather?

Most people answer yes due to dry climate, humid climate, high winds, harsh winters, extreme heat, or a combination of those. That's why we chose two of the sturdiest wood types for our pergolas, so either choice you make will ensure you have a quality outdoor structure that will last for many years.

#### Pressure Treated #1 Southern Yellow Pine

Pressure treated pine is smooth sawn, is able to withstand severe weather, and is very rot and insect resistant. The chemicals added to this classic, sturdy wood type gives it those properties. Pressure treated pine comes with a green appearance, but as it dries will turn to a beautiful golden brown. After a couple months drying time after the pergola kit is assembled, you can apply stain or water sealant to maintain the golden color. If not water sealed or stained, the wood will turn gray over time. Since the pine lumber will be saturated with the pressure treatment when it arrives, you'll need to wait a few months before staining or painting it. Southern yellow pine is sustainably harvested in the southeastern United States.

#### Western Red Rough Sawn Tight Knot Cedar

Western Red Cedar has a rustic look with a beautiful light amber color. This wood type is used to build cedar pergola kits for locations where exposure to the elements is continually severe. Western cedar's resistance to decay and sturdy qualities make it ideal for outdoor use. Its appealing fragrance adds another attractive feature to its qualities. Its close, even grain can be easily worked and finished smooth with little effort if you choose to do so. Western red cedar takes paints and stains very well and those can be applied as soon as your pergola kit arrives. Western red cedar contains no chemicals, is 100% natural, and is sustainably harvested in North America.

***“ We use two of the sturdiest wood types, so either choice you make will ensure you have a quality outdoor structure that will last for many years.*”**

#### Want to Stain Right Away?

Do you want to stain or paint your pergola right away? If you can't wait, you'll need to choose cedar.

Pressure treated pine needs a couple months for the treatment to dry before staining or painting.

## Measuring for Your Pergola

Here are a couple simple steps to follow when measuring for pergolas.

### Plan your Space.

How will you be using the pergola? Will it be attached to your house or will it be a stand-alone pergola structure? Once you decide how much usable space you'd like underneath the pergola, you'll be ready to start taking actual measurements.

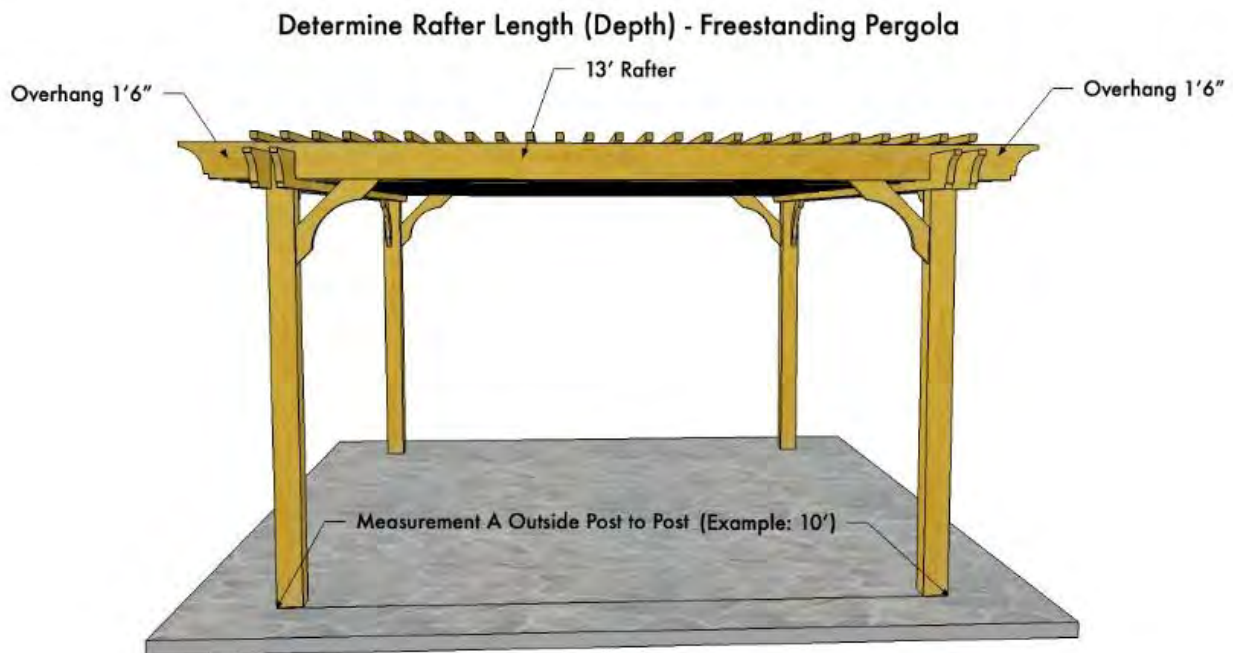
## How Long?

### Determine Rafter Length (Freestanding Pergolas)

The calculation will be slightly different for an attached pergola kit vs. a freestanding pergola kit. With a free standing pergola, the difference will be that the rafter will not be attached to a wall, so there will be overhang on both ends. The depth of the rafters (also referred to as "Length"), will be calculated by measuring your desired distance between the outside of the posts, and add that to the overhang.

Using your tape measure, pull the first measurement from the place you'd like the outside edge of the first set of posts, to the place where you'd like the outside edge of the second set of posts to land. This will be Measurement A. Next, add the overhang to Measurement A. The freestanding Big Kahuna Pergola has a total overhang of 3 feet (a 1'6" overhang past the outside edge of the post on each side). Freestanding pergola Rafter Length will be **Measurement A** + 3 feet. Make a note of this measurement, because it will be the first number in the pergola size you choose. (In our example showing a 13'x19' Big Kahuna freestanding pergola, this calculation would be: 10' + 1'6" + 1'6" = 13' = Rafter Length of 13 feet)

Measurement A + Beam Side Overhang = Rafter Length (Depth) for Freestanding Pergola

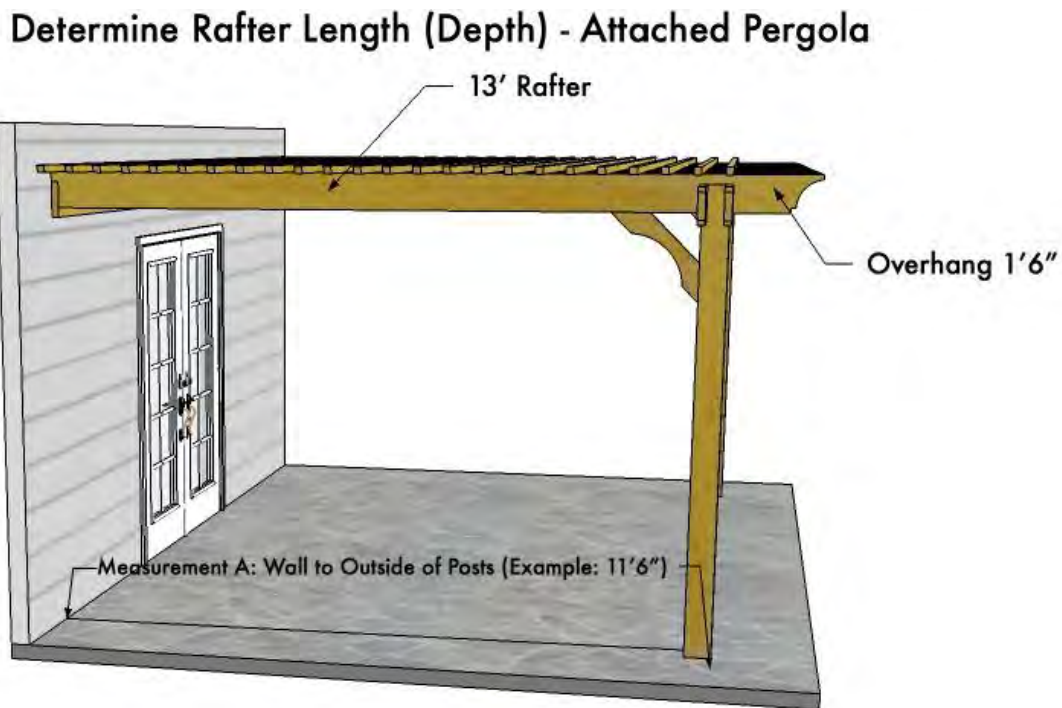


## Determine Rafter Length (Attached Pergolas)

Rafter length for attached pergolas will be calculated by measuring the amount of space (distance) you'd like from the wall to the outside of the pergola posts, and add the overhang. Using your tape measure, pull the first measurement from the spot the pergola will be attached (the wall) to the place where you'd like the outside edge of the posts to land. This will be Measurement A. Next, add Measurement A to the overhang. The attached Big Kahuna Pergola has a 1'6" overhang past the outside edge of the post.

Attached pergola Rafter Length will be Measurement A + 1'6". Make a note of this measurement, as this will be the first number in the size pergola you'll choose for your space. (In our example showing a 13'x19' Big Kahuna attached pergola, this calculation would be: 11'6" + 1'6" = 13' = Rafter Length of 13 feet).

Measurement A + Beam Side Overhang = Rafter Length (Depth) for Attached Pergola



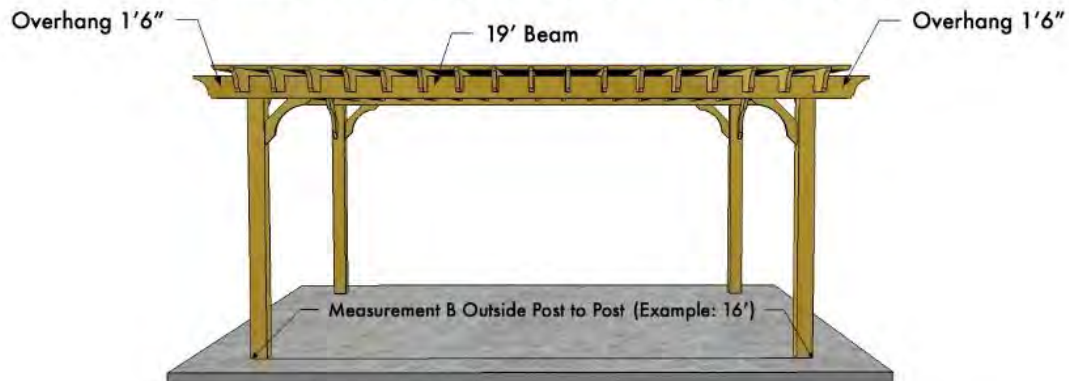
## How Wide?

### Determine Beam Length

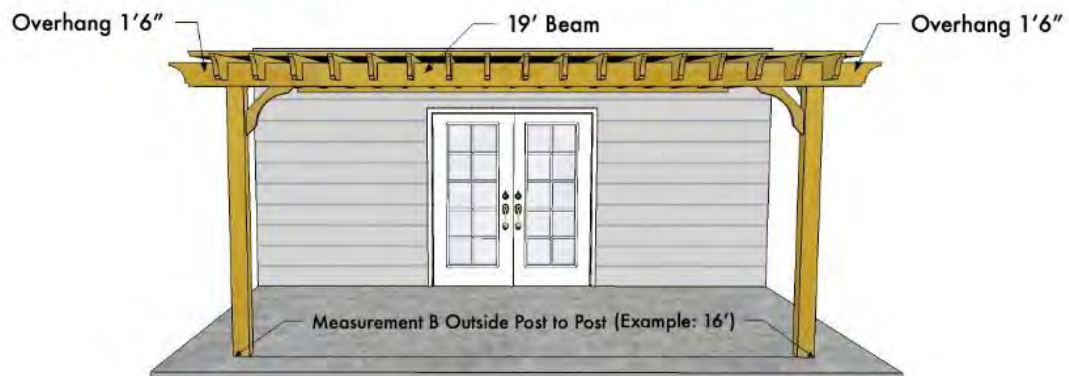
The width of the beams (or “beam length”), will be calculated by measuring your desired (outside) post to post width and add that to the overhang. Using your tape measure, pull the second measurement between the points where you’d like the outside edges of the posts to land. This will be Measurement B. Next, add Measurement B to the overhang on each end. Both the attached and the freestanding Big Kahuna Pergola have a 1’6” overhang past the outside edge of the posts on each end of the beam, for a total of 3 feet in overhang. So to calculate the length of your beam for either attached or freestanding, take your Measurement B + 3’. Make a note of this measurement, as this will be the second number in the size pergola you’ll choose. (In our example showing a 13’x19’ Big Kahuna attached pergola and Big Kahuna freestanding pergola, this calculation would be: 16’ + 3’ = 19’ = Beam Length of 19 feet).

Measurement B + Beam Side Overhang = Beam Length (Overall Width)

### Determine Beam Length (Width) - Freestanding Pergola



### Determine Beam Length (Width) - Attached Pergola



## Calculate Overall Dimensions for Your Pergola

How much space do you need to fit that outdoor bar and grill station and outdoor dining furniture? Your overall dimensions will equate to the Length of Rafter x the Length of Beam. This is the size you'll choose. For our pergola kits, we list our pergola sizes as Rafter (depth or projection) x Beam (width). Your overall pergola dimensions measured tip to tip are equal to Rafter x Beam.

## How Tall?

### Decide the Height for Your Pergola

After you've decided on overall size, you'll choose your post height, or how tall you want your pergola to be. Considerations include post installation method and desired height above the ground. How much space do you want to have to walk underneath the pergola? How will you be installing the posts? Will the posts be buried in a concrete footer, or installed on top of an existing concrete slab or concrete footer?

Height is definitely a preference, but general rule of thumb here: For the Big Kahuna and Sombrero, 8 or 10-foot posts suit most situations unless you're installing your posts more than 2' in the ground. For the Fedora, we recommend 10' posts on a slab or footer and 12' posts if going in the ground. Shorter posts generally match well with the smaller pergola kits. But remember to take into account any accessories like ceiling fans, and enough head room above a dining table or hot tub to accommodate taller people that may be enjoying your new outdoor retreat.

Once you've jotted down your measurements, you'll be ready to make the remaining choices to customize your pergola.

## Customize Your Pergola

You can customize your chosen pergola and we'll build it for you based on your specifications. Anything from size and wood type, to how tall your pergola will be and whether or not you'll want a pergola that you can attach to your home or other structure. You can also customize our pergolas with finishing touches such as end cut and post base trim.

The biggest difference between our best seller full-size pergolas is the number of rafters and top slats. This choice will determine how much coverage you'll get from the pergola once it's installed. If you already know you want maximum coverage, then you can start at the Big Kahuna page that shows all 90 sizes of Big Kahuna pergola kits. The Big Kahuna provides the most coverage offering more rafters and top slats than the Sombrero and Fedora.

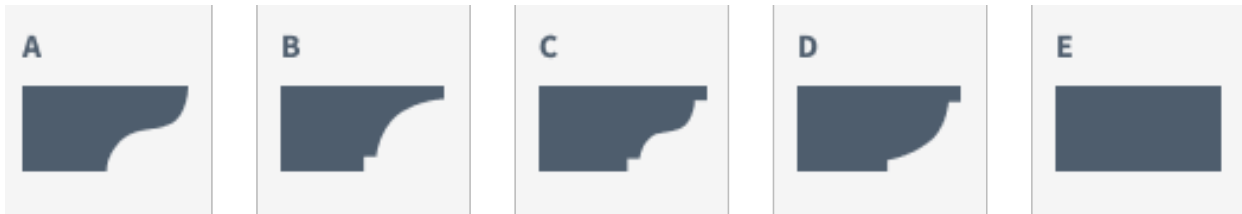
The length of your posts will determine the height of your pergola, along with your post mounting method. For example, if you choose a 12'x12' pergola kit in either the Big Kahuna pergola kit or the Sombrero pergola kit, you'll have 3 post lengths to choose from: 8', 10', or 12'.

The post installation method you choose will determine the overall height. If you're installing on top of a concrete slab or footer will be slightly taller than if you're installing buried in a concrete footer.

The final selections you'll make are for the shape of your end cuts and whether or not you'd like post base trim.

## End Cuts

The end cut you choose are a finishing touch you can choose to match your desired style. Ranging from elegant to classic, choose from these 5 end cuts for your pergola rafters and beams:




## Post Base Trim

Post base trim is for our full-size pergola kits (The Big Kahuna, The Sombrero, and The Fedora). It provides a decorative cover over the post base mounting hardware. Made to match your wood selection, the trim will measure approximately 1" thick by 8" high, and arrives assembled for you to slide onto the posts during installation.

## Accessorize!

There are many other finishing touches you can put on your pergola once you've assembled it. Add curtains to soften the corners or string lights to create soft lighting in the evening. Shade canopies are a great way to add a little color to your patio cover, and provide some extra shade. We offer retractable canopies and shade sails sized to fit our pergolas in a variety of fabric and colors.

By following these steps in our pergola kit buying guide, you'll be well on your way to transforming your outdoor space. Find your perfect pergola today! If you have questions or need help deciding, feel free to give us a call and we're happy to help!

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