TECH TIP

Choosing the Correct Side Wall

Rainier Tent regularly answers these questions, which sidewall should I choose? What works best for your event? The answer may not be “one size fits all” and can depend on both function and preference. Part of your tent wall system could require one style while another an entirely different style. The back of the tent may require solid walls to hide the catering station and the front of the tent could require clear sidewalls to enhance the visual appearance. This Tech-Tip presents answers on how to choose tent walls guided by the options available to you.

Clear vs. Solid

Clear sidewalls allow natural light and let guests see in and out of the tent. The clear PVC section of the wall is framed within a solid/translucent vinyl border for strength. (Please also see our tech tip regarding special considerations when using clear vinyl).

Additional clear wall options are listed below:

- 16-pane windows, often called French Window Walls
- Café walls with a clear rectangular window covering the upper two-thirds of the wall panel
- Bay Window walls are like Café Walls but have a curved top to the clear section

Solid walls hide unpleasant scenery, cover unsightly event elements, and shade from harsh lighting. In this case, the material options are block-out or translucent vinyl.

Fabric Material

Rainier Tent offers different grades and qualities of solid/translucent vinyl and clear PVC. Some tent operators subscribe to the idea that a sidewall is a disposable item and opt for the least expensive materials. Other tent operators see value in using higher-grade materials that last longer and emphasize careful handling of the walls to maximize life.

Regardless of where you may fall on this spectrum, know that many fabric grades, and colors, are available.

The screen wall material is an increasingly popular option to protect from rain and bugs but allow air to pass through the mesh. Vision through the wall is limited but not completely blocked. The screen material is also available in different colors and percent openness.

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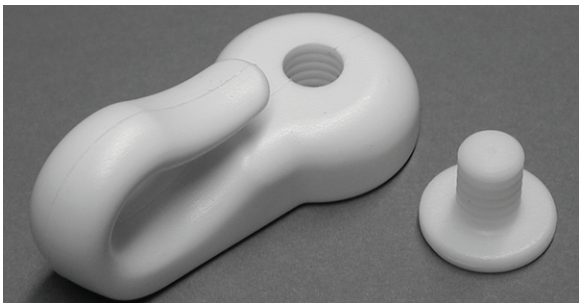
Sidewall Connection to the Tent

Next, how do sidewalls attach to your tent? If you have a Keder Style Frame Tent or Structure, you can have sidewalls that mount directly to the frame/eave purlin of the tent. This feature uses rollers or sliders that attach at the top edge of the sidewall and fit into a channel of the tent frame.



This allows the user to separate the wall in the middle (typically by unlacing, unzipping, or separating the Velcro that binds the two halves of the wall) and push the halves to the leg, opening the wall panels like a shower curtain. Secure the sidewalls to the leg with a tie at each leg and improve the appearance of the tent. The primary advantage of this system is that it allows the sides to seamlessly open or close for changing weather conditions without completely removing the wall. In many cases, these adjustments can be made real-time by the event attendees without the involvement of the tent operator.

Keder Style Frame Tents and Structures also allow the sidewall edges to mount directly to the legs of the tent. This is accomplished by using Keder on the vertical edges of the sidewall and sliding it into the Keder track of the tent leg. This continuous connection of fabric-to-frame provides a sleek-looking and sealed tent environment (which can be very important when heating or cooling your tent) and mitigate sidewall movement in windy conditions.

For non-Keder tents, the top sidewall attachment hooks hang onto a nylon rope and are stitched into the fabric edges of the tent top. Sidewall hooks are restricted from moving horizontally and prevent the wall from sliding open, unlike 2-piece walls with rollers or sliders at the top. These walls are either installed on the tent or left off the tent. If the side height of the tent is over 7', then quick removal is strenuous and requires step ladders to remove the walls. This sidewall style can roll up and be secured, thus allowing the walls to be in place and released if needed. This process takes time and can be unsightly when the sidewall bunches up at the top of the wall.

The vertical edges of sidewalls for non-kedered tents attach to adjoining sections of the wall. This process uses several methods such as hooks and rings, Velcro, Quick Release Buckles, etc. To attach the wall to the tent leg, sever the wall overlap (where the leg is enclosed in the overlapping edges) grommets, webbing with buckles, etc.

Please note that mounting sidewalls to tents can be some variation or combination of the walls described above. For example, a sidewall can keder into the legs of a tent and hook to a rope line at the top.

Bottom of the Sidewall

Because vinyl side walls are pliable, they tend to move with the wind. This presents a problem for keeping the tent heated, rain from penetrating the tent, and fabric wear factors from the side wall snapping back and forth. The sidewalls can contain a battening system at the bottom of the wall. Over time, we included grommets and/or beckets (web loops) to the bottom of the wall and small spikes through the grommet/becket into the ground. Keder-style walls offer efficient battening systems with a horizontal pocket sewn into the bottom of the sidewall. A metal pole slides into the pocket, then secures to the bottom of the tent legs, tightening the wall and making it more rigid. Clear walls have the added benefit of removing wrinkles in the clear PVC and improving appearance and visibility.

Sidewalls often have some reinforcement at the bottom of the wall to improve the strength and durability of the edge that touches the ground. This reinforcement can be as simple as fabric doubling that is welded/sewn, the addition of weldable webbing, etc. We incorporate rain flaps into the bottom of the walls. Rain flaps lag on the ground outside of the tent and divert the rainwater that sheds off the tent top away from the tent interior.