

# UPGRADING THE CAMPSITE FIRE PIT

*The Fabulous Campbell's Step-by-Step Guide to Building the Perfect Fire Pit • June 14, 2026*

*There is something deeply satisfying about clearing a patch of earth, gathering stones, and building a place for a crackling fire to sit around. The process was straightforward, the sweat equity was well worth it, and today we are going to give you the exact step-by-step instructions we used to put in our own campsite fire pit.*

**Disclaimer:** Please note that we have links to several of the products that we used to build our fire pit, and if you click on them, we may earn a commission. We truly appreciate your support of The Fabulous Campbell's and the outdoors!

## Four Things to Know Before You Dig

### 1. KNOW THE LAWS

Check local ordinances on where you can place an open flame. Our local rule required 10 feet of clearance from structures, but we prefer 25 feet to be entirely safe.

### 2. CAMP APPROVALS

If you are renting a seasonal site like us, ensure you have explicit approval. Some campgrounds are incredibly particular about installations and aesthetics.

### 3. CALL 811 FIRST

Never dig without utility marking. Lines can be shallow; our campground's septic sewer lines sit only a few inches below the surface!

### 4. SIZE LIMITS

Know how large of a pit you are allowed to construct. In our case, the maximum allowable size restriction was 36 inches round.

## The Toolbox & Materials Checklist



*The essential tools lined up and ready for a little weekend sweat equity.*

#### TOOLS NEEDED

- Shovel & Square Hoe
- 2-foot or 4-foot Level
- Landscape Marking Paint & String
- Scissors & Tape Measure
- Screwdriver, stick, or large nail
- Hand Tamper

#### BUILDING MATERIALS

- 5 bags (0.5 cu. ft. each) Mastercraft Paver Base
- 5 bags (10 lbs each) Black Lava Rock
- 3 bags (0.5 cu. ft. each) River Pebble (3/4 to 1-inch diameter)
- 36-inch Steel Fire Ring (Assembly required)

## The Step-by-Step Build Blueprint

### STEP 1

#### Map Out the Circle

Find a location that is fairly level all the way around, keeping your safe distances in mind. Push a screwdriver or stick firmly into the ground to mark the exact center of your future pit.

Tie your string to that center point, measure out 2.5 feet to your paint can spray nozzle, and cut it. Holding the string taut to maintain a perfect radius, walk in a circle while spraying to establish a crisp 5-foot diameter workspace boundary.



*A crisp, concentric fit ensuring exactly 12 inches of border room on all sides.*

## **STEP 2**

### **Clear the Sod and Excavate**

Remove the grass inside your marked boundary down to a consistent 3-inch depth across the entire workspace. Because our soil was incredibly compact, a standard shovel was not enough; we had to break out a hoe to chip away at the stubborn turf. Use your tape measure and level periodically to ensure a completely flat, recessed basin floor.



*Clearing away the heavy sod down to a flat, 3-inch recessed basin.*

### STEP 3

## Lay the Foundation

A fire pit is only as good as its base. Pour all 5 bags of your paver base into the excavated hole to create a uniform 1.5-inch layer. Use a hoe or rake to smooth it out evenly, and then grab your hand tamper. Pack the material down aggressively until it forms a hard, unyielding, perfectly level foundation that prevents the ring from settling or shifting out of true over time.



*Emptying the first layer of paver base over the packed earth and tamping it perfectly flat.*

**STEP 4****Center the Fire Ring**

Set your 36-inch steel fire ring directly into the pit. To make sure it sits dead-center, use your tape measure to check the distance from the outer edge of the steel ring to the edge of your dug-out circle. It should measure exactly 12 inches all the way around. Because our fire ring came unassembled, it was not perfectly round initially—we adjusted it several times to achieve the right concentric fit.

**STEP 5****Add the Internal Lava Rock**

With the ring resting flat and true, pour your black lava rock right into the center of the ring and level it out. We originally started with 3 bags (30 lbs total), but quickly discovered it did not quite offer the dense coverage we wanted. We ended up adding 2 more bags a week later to give the inside a professional, fully finished appearance.

**STEP 6****The Decorative Border**

To wrap things up, pour your 3 bags of river pebble into the 12-inch gap on the outside of the steel ring. These pebbles run about 3/4 to 1 inch in size, creating a clean, high-contrast frame that keeps the wild grass safely away from the heat of the steel.



*The final result—clean lines, solid drainage, and ready for wood and a match.*

When the last stone is raked into place, step back and admire the view. What was a patch of weeds just a few hours ago is now the focal point of the entire campsite. All that is left to do is pull up a couple of lawn chairs, pour a cold drink, and wait for twilight.

---

*"For the love of the outdoors, and each other."*