

Enclosure, also spelled Inclosure,

the division or consolidation of communal fields, meadows, pastures, and other arable lands in western Europe into the carefully delineated and individually owned and managed farm plots of modern times. Before enclosure, much farmland existed in the form of numerous, dispersed strips under the control of individual cultivators only during the growing season and until harvesting was completed for a given year. Thereafter, and until the next growing season, the land was at the disposal of the community for grazing by the village livestock and for other purposes. To enclose land was to put a hedge or fence around a portion of this open land and thus prevent the exercise of common grazing and other rights over it.

In England the movement for enclosure began in the 12th century and proceeded rapidly in the period 1450–1640, when the purpose was mainly to increase the amount of full-time pasturage available to manorial lords. Much enclosure also occurred in the period from 1750 to 1860, when it was done for the sake of agricultural efficiency. By the end of the 19th century the process of the enclosure of common lands in England was virtually complete.

In the rest of Europe enclosure made little progress until the 19th century. Agreements to enclose were not unknown in Germany in the 16th century, but it was not until the second half of the 18th century that the government began to issue decrees encouraging enclosure. Even then, little advance was made in western Germany until after 1850. The same policy of encouragement by decree was followed in France and Denmark from the second half of the 18th century, in Russia after the emancipation of the serfs (1861), and in Czechoslovakia and Poland after World War I. Common rights over arable land—which constitute the most formidable obstacle to modern farming—have now for the most part been extinguished, but some European land is still cultivated in the scattered strips characteristic of common fields, and common rights continue over large areas of pasture and woodland.

"**enclosure.**" Encyclopædia Britannica. *Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Ultimate Reference Suite*. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009.

Tasks: Please, in brief, outline in your own words the English term “enclosures”.

Words:

Cultivator (n.)	<i>Landwirt, Bauern</i>
manorial lord (n.)	<i>Gutsherr</i>
Serf (n.)	<i>Leibeigener</i>