Live Staking

A field companion for species, material, installation and follow-up checks

How to use this sheet	Live staking inserts dormant stem cuttings into suitable soil so they can root and produce shoots. Read this beside the Live Staking Field Guide and use it to organize observations; establishment depends on site moisture, material condition, timing, installation and weather.

Before installation

Diagnose the site	Confirm the bank, slope or disturbed area can retain a stake long enough to establish. Active scour can remove stakes before rooting.
Match species and source	The course names willows, black cottonwood/balsam poplar and red-osier dogwood as reliable BC cutting groups. Match source conditions to the restoration site.
Prepare dormant cuttings	Work before bud break; confirm the course size and preparation requirements for the intended application; soak clean material as directed.

Installation checks

• Drive or insert the stake deeply enough to reach available soil moisture while leaving the intended above-ground portion exposed.

• Keep the correct orientation and maintain firm soil contact around the stake.

• Use site-appropriate spacing and pattern from the course, design and project specification.

• Record sections with shallow soil, exposed roots, active scour, dry coarse substrate or other constraints.

After installation

• Inspect for loose stakes, exposed cut ends, broken bark and drying soil.

• Check whether runoff, sediment movement, animals or equipment may disturb the installation.

• Plan follow-up observations around moisture, rooting and shoot development; do not infer success from first-season appearance alone.

Common mistakes

• Installing after bud break or with poorly prepared material.

• Choosing species by availability alone.

• Using live stakes where active scour or unstable substrate will remove them.

• Leaving gaps in soil contact or failing to record sections that need a different treatment.

Field check before you leave the site

[ ] Cause of erosion or instability identified	[ ] Species and local source fit checked
[ ] Dormant timing confirmed	[ ] Cutting size and preparation checked
[ ] Depth and soil contact inspected	[ ] Follow-up observations and constraints recorded

Limits and next step	Establishment depends on site moisture, species, material condition, timing, installation and follow-up. Use this companion alongside the course and the project design; it does not replace site assessment or monitoring.

Grounded in current course topics. Sources: Open the course | Read the source topics