The walls were called Changcheng, translated to “Great Wall”. They were mostly created by tampering earth with some areas made of stone. Some areas included garrisons, beacon towers and watch towers in order to counter invading forces with shock tactics and signal the cities of intruders.

This series of walls was created mainly for two purposes: Expansion control and Defense from invasion. Major aggressive forces such as the Qin and Yan state built walls upon further conquest of their neighboring states. This would ensure protection from push back. Walls were also built to defend, such as the Wei state building to the west of the Yellow River in order to combat the increasing aggression from the growing Qin power. Building walls such as Zhao and Qi also guaranteed protection for their state capitals, enhancing their ability to combat invading forces. Long rivalries such as Zhao and Yan also resulted in walls being built to protect Yan’s border as well as northern state line in order to prevent invasion from the migrant Donghu Barbarians from the North.
The walls built within the Qin and Han Dynasty were primarily focused on unifying China’s new borders and protecting from Mongolian invaders in the north. It was also used to protect the Silk Road and other important trade routes from being pillaged.

Considering most of the wall was being built on desert arid areas, they needed to build differently than in the past. In order to build the wall they wove out frames by using rose willow and reeds, then filled the frames with gravel and sand. After which they could pile up in layers to raise the height. Other main types of construction was ramming loess (Gobi Desert Soil) in layers and using reed adobe when clay soil that would bind became available. They also implemented beacon towers every 3.1 miles that were guarded by soldiers in case of emergencies. In such cases, they would trigger smoke fire signals to warn the town of invasions.

Most of the Northern walls were built as a result from wars with the Huns. While peace had been maintained through marriage, Emperor Wu struck back as the national economy grew stronger, reclaiming previously lost territory and reinforcing borders with walls. A large majority of walls were built to reinforce the silk road as well. This would be used to guarantee safe trade between East and West China. A large portion of the previous walls were also torn down to take down the divisions in the empire.
The Great Wall stopped being constructed for the most part until the Ming Dynasty where they made several additions to it. Unlike earlier dynasties, construction under the Ming Dynasty was a lot stronger and elaborate due to use of stone and brick. The wall was routinely repaired and reinforced along with the area near Beijing being the strongest walls.

The construction of more walls resumed primarily due to Mongolian tribes gaining the upper hand against the empire in combat. Considering the Mongols controlled the Ordos Desert, the wall was constructed along the southern edge of the desert. A more simple wall was also built around the Liaodong Province to aid from the invasions of the Jianzhou Jurchen and Jurched-Mongol Oriyanghan from the north, along with further fortifications near their capital.

In the early 1600’s, the wall effectively helped against Manchu invasions, even after Liaodong was compromised. It wasn’t until 1644 when the Manchu were able to cross the wall and overthrow the empire, shortly being replaced by the Qing Dynasty. After which the wall lost it’s purpose. The borders were extended north beyond the walls as Mongolia was annexed and there was no reason to rebuild along their new borders. Most of the remaining walls today serve as tourist exhibits and are maintained for historic reasons.