

Simple DIY draught-proofing

How to keep the cold air out

A draughty house is not only uncomfortable, it's also a waste of money if the heat that you've paid for escapes through gaps in the house and cold air comes whistling in from outside.

The good news is that draught-proofing is easy. A bit of DIY can go a long way to plugging those gaps and keeping cosy at home. You'll stop wasting money on your heating bills and cut down on your carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions too.

So, where do the draughts come from? Most houses, particularly old ones, have cracks and gaps through which warm air goes out and cold air blows in.

For more information about draught-proofing windows, see our **secondary glazing factsheet**. Read on to find out how you can draught proof different areas of your home.

Note: Never block boiler flues, air bricks, or window trickle vents. Avoid over draught-proofing windows in kitchens and bathrooms where the moist air needs to escape, unless there is an extractor fan.

The most common draughty areas and DIY solutions to dealing with them.

Windows: Use foam, metal or plastic draught strips (see below for instructions), or brush seals for sash windows.

Exterior doors: Fit brush or hinged-flap draught excluders, fitted along the bottom of the doors.

Interior doors: Cut draughts with ‘snake’ draught excluders or similar strips of material.

Unused chimneys: Chimney draught excluders are available from most DIY stores. Plastic bags stuffed with other plastic bags also work – but remember to remove it in summer to let the air circulate, and if you use the fire.

Around pipework: Apply silicone mastic, wall-filler or expanding foam as appropriate.

Floorboards and skirting boards: Fill the gaps with flexible fillers, clear or brown silicone mastic, decorators' caulk or similar products.

Cracks in walls: Use cement or a hard-setting decorators' wall-filler.

Redundant extractor fan outlets: These should be blocked up. This can be done with expanding foam and should then be covered over internally and externally. This can be done with vent covers or by adding plasterboard internally and matching the look of the external wall.

Loft hatches: Fit strips of draught-excluder around the edges of the frame, and don't forget to insulate the hatch itself with fibrous or solid board insulation.

Lighting and electrical fittings: Plug the gaps around the fittings with wall-filler.

Letterboxes: Fit flaps or brushes to keep the cold air out and the warm air in. See below for instructions.

How to fit a door brush

1. Use a tape measure to measure the width of the door and cut the brush to the right length (a hacksaw is good for doing this).
2. Position the brush against the door so the brush is just touching the floor.
3. Using a pencil, make guide marks on the door through the pre-drilled holes in the excluder to show where the screws will go.
4. Drill pilot holes in the points you marked and loosely screw the excluder in place.

5. Open and close the door to ensure it creates a good seal before tightening the screws or adjusting the height if necessary. The excluder should not be placed so low that it makes it difficult to open or close the door.

How to fit a letterbox draught-excluder

1. Place the draught-excluder over your letterbox and use a pencil to mark the fixing points through the pre-drilled holes. Maybe a friend could hold the draught-excluder in place while you check that letters can pass through it.
2. Drill pilot holes at the points you marked and loosely screw the draught-excluder onto the door.
3. Check that letters can pass through the brushes before tightening the screws, adjusting its position if necessary.

Fixing a perimeter seal around a window or door using foam draught-excluder

Foam draught excluder strips come in different thicknesses, and it's important to get the right thickness otherwise either your door won't close properly, or the draught excluder won't exclude the draughts.

1. Ideally you need a short length - about 50mm - to use as a test strip. Stick this to the door frame (not the door itself), as close as possible to the edge nearest you.
2. Close the door and slip a plastic card, such as a bank card, between the test strip and the door. It should be a comfortable fit. If you have to force it, the excluder is probably too thick; if the credit card is loose and falls out, the excluder is probably too thin. Once you've done the test, remove the test strip.
3. When you're satisfied you have the right thickness of foam excluder, measure the frame of your door and cut the foam strip to the required lengths.

4. Clean and dry the door frame to ensure the adhesive sticks properly, then apply to the door frame, as near to the edge as possible, checking it isn't difficult to open or close the door.

You can use exactly the same technique to seal a window using a foam seal.



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