



sheet: 18

Simple Home Hacks

There are some simple home hacks that we are sharing are useful, simple, cheap and easy actions that may be useful.

Quick wins!

Draught Proofing

Draught-proofing is one of the cheapest and most effective ways to save energy – and money – in any type of building. 40% of heat is lost through doors, windows and floor.

Get rid of draughts, but keep your home well ventilated

Homes need to be able to breathe to make sure that fresh air comes in and dirty air goes out. Controlled ventilation helps reduce condensation and damp, by letting fresh air in when needed. Air indoors can build up high levels of moisture, odours, gases, dust, and other air pollutants.

Never block or seal extractor fans, wall vents, trickle vents on windows, underfloor airblocks or grilles. Rooms with open fires or open flues and rooms where a lot of moisture is produced, such as kitchens and bathrooms particularly need good ventilation.

These are the most common areas to find draughts, with suggestions on how to fix them:

1. Windows

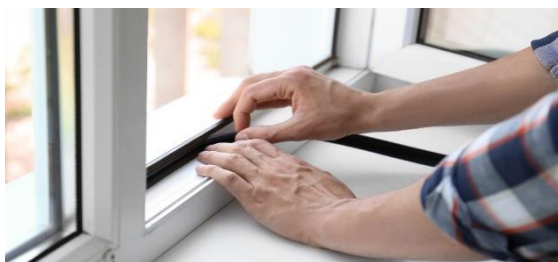
Tap on each glass pane in your windows to see if they rattle or move. In some cases, you can feel drafts by holding a damp hand near the seals of your window. To identify drafts from hidden issues, use a lit candle or incense stick. On a day when the wind is blowing, hold the candle or incense stick near the seals. For windows that open, buy draught-proofing strips to stick around the window frame and fill the gap between the window and the frame. There are two types:

- Self-adhesive foam strips – these are cheap and easy to install, but may not last long.
- Metal or plastic strips with brushes or wipers attached, which are long-lasting, but cost a little more.

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Make sure the strip is the right size to fill the gap in your window. If the strip is too big, it will get crushed and you may not be able to close the window. If it's too small, there will still be a gap.

For sliding sash windows, foam strips do not work well. It's best to fit brush strips or consult a professional. For windows that don't open, use a silicone sealant.



2. Doors

Draught-proofing external doors can stop a lot of heat from escaping, and won't cost you much. There are four main areas to consider draught-proofing:

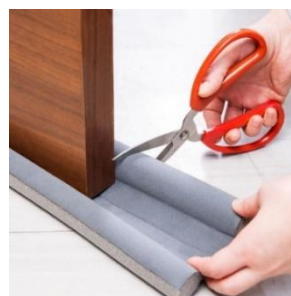
- Keyhole – buy a purpose-made cover that drops a metal disc over the keyhole or make felted wool one from sheep or lama wool.
- Letterbox – use a letterbox flap or brush, but remember to measure your letterbox before you buy.
- Gap at the bottom – use a brush or hinged flap draught excluder.
- Gaps around the edges – fit foam, brush or wiper strips like those used for windows.

Internal doors need draught-proofing if they lead to a room you don't normally heat, such as your spare room or kitchen. Keep those doors closed to stop the cold air

from moving into the rest of the house. If there is a gap at the bottom of the door, block it with a draught excluder – you can make one stuffed with used plastic bags or bits of spare material.

Internal doors between two heated rooms don't need draught-proofing, as you don't lose energy when warm air circulates.

Doors stoppers – a simple home-made door stopper can be really effective at stopping drafts coming under the door



3. Chimneys

If you have a fireplace you do not use, your chimney is probably a source of unnecessary draughts.

There are two main ways to draught-proof a chimney:

Fit a cap over the chimney pot – this might be better done by a professional.

Buy a chimney draught excluder – these help stop draughts and heat loss through the chimney, and are usually fitted inside the chimney or around the fireplace. Remember to remove the draught-proofing if you decide to light a fire!



4. Floorboards

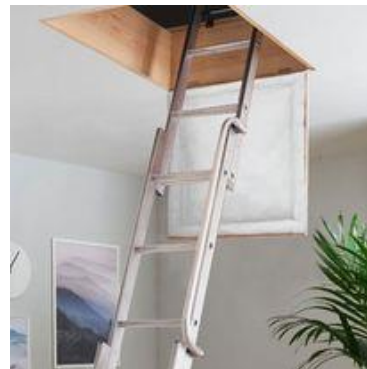
You can block cracks in your floor by squirting filler into the gaps. Floorboards and skirting boards often contract, expand or move slightly with everyday use, so you should use a filler that can tolerate movement – these are usually silicone-based. Look for the following products:

- flexible fillers
- decorator's caulk
- mastic-type products

Fillers come in different colours, and for indoor and outdoor use. They block gaps permanently so be careful when you apply them – wipe off any excess with a damp cloth before it dries. Fillers may break down over time, but can easily be reapplied.

5. Loft Hatches

Hot air rises and gets lost in the cold space in your loft or attic, so it's worth blocking off draughts around your loft hatch. Use strip insulation, as you would on a door. Don't forget to insulate the loft hatch too!



6. Pipes

You can fill small gaps around pipework with silicone fillers, similar to the fillers used for skirting boards and floorboards. Fill larger gaps with expanding polyurethane foam. This is sprayed into the gap, expands as it dries, and sets hard.

7. Old Extractor Fan Outlets

Old fan outlets may need to be filled with bricks or concrete blocks and sealed from both the inside and outside.

Insulating

Insulation is one of the most efficient ways to save energy at home since it keeps it warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

a. Roof Insulation – see Advice Sheet 14

b. Insulate your windows

During the summer, the heat will come in almost unimpeded and in the winter, the cold will do the same thing. You can fix this! You can create your own plastic window covers or simply use heavy curtains or blankets to cover them up. It won't let as much sunlight in but it will help keep the heat and cold out.

c. Aluminium Foil behind radiators

Foil is a reflective surface that DOES reflect "some" heat away from the wall and back at the radiator. Want to amplify the effect of your radiator? All you need is a roll of aluminium foil. Roll out a piece of foil of the same length as your radiator and stick this to the back of your radiator with some masking tape. Repeat this process for all of your radiators. The heat from the radiator will be reflected by the aluminium foil



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d. Hot water tank or cylinder and pipes

Modern hot water cylinders are fitted with hardened foam which often means that they're already sufficiently insulated. Older cylinders, on the other hand, could do with insulation to prevent heat loss. Insulating with cylinder jackets and foam tubing is usually a straightforward DIY job and tends to pay for itself very quickly.

Other ways to save energy:

LED lightbulbs In the UK, lighting accounts for 15% of a typical household's electricity bill. You can save £2-3 per year for every traditional halogen bulb you switch to a similarly bright LED bulb. If the average UK household replaced all of their bulbs with LEDs, it would cost about £100 and save about £40 a year on bills.

Install **motion sensors** on outdoor lights so that you are not wasting when the lights aren't needed – An easy way of conserving electricity

Remember to keep **curtains** open during the day to catch the warmth of the sun

To check your **fridge seal** close a £5 note in your fridge door. When the fridge door is shut and you try and pull out the note, there should be some resistance if the seal is working properly. Keep your fridge at 3-5°C.



