



Sharing what we know... Sheet 16: Draught-proofing



Sealing the unwanted gaps around your doors and windows will help keep the heat in, and will cut down on cold draughts throughout your home

40% of heat is lost through doors, windows and floors

Benefits

Easy to fit in many houses

Lasts for years

Can be DIY or professionally fitted

Every external door and every opening window in your home has a gap round the edge that should seal tight when the door or window is fully closed. If the seal isn't good enough, then cold air can blow in through the gap, and warm air can blow out.

Generally speaking, the older a door or window the more likely it is to have a draught problem. A new window or outside door ought to seal well and be pretty much free from draughts. But even a new door or window can be draughty if it is poor quality or has not been fitted well.

If your house is very draughty you will know this just from feeling draughts in the house, especially when the weather is cold and windy. You can walk round the house holding your hand against each edge of every window to work out where the draughts are coming from.

Doors can have extra gaps around a letter box, cat flap or keyhole

Draught-proofing an existing door or window is fairly straightforward, provided you use the right materials for each job. You can either pay a professional to choose the right products and fit them correctly, or you can buy your own and fit them yourself.

Windows - old or badly fitted windows can have gaps around the frame or glass even if they don't open

Draught-proofing is different to double glazing, and it does a different job. Double glazing is designed to stop heat escaping through the glass itself. Draught-proofing is designed to stop heat escaping through gaps around the edges.

Foam strips around the frames and openings can be easily stuck on. A more long-lasting solution that costs a little more are plastic strips.

Pipes - where pipes enter and exit buildings gaps can bring cold air in fill in the gaps with silicone or foam.

Gaps between skirting boards and floor boards cause cold draughts but can be filled with decorators caulk or silicone to plug the gap

Chimneys can act as funnels for warm air to escape to the outside – even when the fire is lit – sometimes if you are sitting in a draft you can feel colder as drafts may increase to provide the draw for the fire.

It's a good idea to block any unused chimneys or fireplaces to reduce drafts.

Fit a draft draught excluder: a handy device fitted inside the chimney or around the fireplace, to stop the warm air going up and the cold draughts coming in. There are several options - an inflatable draught excluder, which will fit snugly inside your chimney; a draught excluder made for the specific size of your chimney. Breathable materials like wool are best, allowing air to pass through but keeping the heat in.

And one more (very important) thing: don't forget to remove the draught excluder from inside the chimney before you light a fire!

A more permanent option is getting your chimney fitted with a 'cap', normally made from terracotta. This provides better insulation and protection, from moisture and birds as well as draughts. But it is more expensive. It also needs to be done by a professional. When you're looking for the right trader for the job, remember to follow our tips:

- Ask friends and family for recommendations.
- Check for membership of a trade association.
- Always get at least three quotes.

How to do it

Draught-proofing is relatively straightforward to do.

If you want to fit draught-proofing yourself, then you can get a wide range of products and materials at any good DIY store. Two things to remember:

Make sure you're buying the right product for the job. If you have a sash window, for example, you need to buy a draught-proofing kit specifically for sash windows. Follow the instructions – some systems are obvious but others are more complicated.

If you have draughts then you will save energy by blocking them off, but...

- You shouldn't block off any deliberate ventilation such as air bricks and wall vents – they were put there for a reason.
- If you have a condensation problem in a room, then you need to sort that out before blocking off any draughts in that room. If you can fix the condensation by producing less water (e.g. not drying clothes in that room) or by increasing your controlled ventilation (e.g. turning the extractor fan on more often) then you could then try fixing any uncontrolled draughts.

Walking our Talk...

Eco Retrofit

South Downs Eco Lodge

