

Keeping the cold air out

Simple DIY draught-proofing

No-one likes to live in a draughty house. And, apart from the discomfort, it's a waste of money if the air that you have paid to warm up keeps escaping through gaps in the house and being replaced by cold air 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 you 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 older ones, have cracks and gaps through which warm air goes out and cold air blows in. Not all of these can be dealt with by a DIY-er, but many can, such as the gaps between or around floorboards; around windows and doors; through the letterbox; where pipework comes through external walls; around the loft hatch; and around electrical fittings.

For more information about draught-proofing windows, see our **secondary glazing** advice sheet. Use the checklist (right) to find out where you can draught proof different areas of your home.



A robot-themed draught-proofing 'snake' for a child's bedroom window

Never block boiler flues, air bricks, or window trickle vents and avoid over draught-proofing windows in kitchens and bathrooms where the moist air needs to escape.

Mind the gap

The most common draught-zones ... and DIY solutions to dealing with them

Windows: Use foam, metal or plastic draught strips (see over), or brush seals for sash windows (photo, right). Temporary secondary glazing is another option



Unused chimneys: Chimney 'balloons' are available from most DIY stores. Remember to remove them in the summer to let the air circulate.

Doors: You can reduce cold draughts by fitting door brushes to your front or back doors (see over) or sliding softer draught excluders (pictured) under interior doors



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.

Loft hatches: Use strips of draught excluding material fitted around the edges of the frame, and don't forget to insulate the hatch itself.



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 over for instructions.



See over for instructions on how to fit a door brush, how to fit a letterbox draught-excluder and how to fit draught excluding strip to a window or door



How to fit a door brush to the bottom of a door

First, 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).

Then, position the brush against the door so that the brush is just touching the floor. Using a pencil, make guide marks on the door through the pre-drilled holes in the excluder to show where the screws will go.

Next, drill pilot holes in the points you marked and loosely screw the excluder in place.

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

First, place the draught-excluder over your letterbox and use a pencil to mark the fixing points through the pre-drilled holes. Hold it in place while you check that letters can pass through it.

Drill pilot holes at the points you marked and loosely screw the draught-excluder onto the door. Check again 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

Start by cutting off a 50-60mm piece of the foam draught excluder to use as a test strip. Stick this to the door or window frame (not the door or window itself), as close as possible to the edge nearest you.

Close the door or window and slip a credit card between the test strip and the door. It should be a comfortable fit. If you have to force it, then the excluder is probably too thick; if the credit card is loose and falls out, then the excluder is probably too thin. Once you've done the test, remove the test strip.

When you're satisfied that you have the right thickness of foam excluder, measure the frame of your door or window and cut the excluder to the required lengths using a pair of scissors.

Clean and dry the door or window frame to ensure the adhesive sticks properly, then apply the foam strip to the door or window frame, as near to the edge as possible, checking that it isn't difficult to open or close the door or window!



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