

Draught-proofing your home

Draught proofing is the cheapest and easiest way to reduce your heating bills. The aim is to eliminate uncontrolled draughts, making sure you maintain ventilation when and where you need it, for example for a fire, in the kitchen or in the bathroom.

❖ Doors and windows

- These are probably the most common sources of draughts.
- Front doors are usually designed with holes in them. A flap with brushes on your letter box and a flap to cover the key-hole will reduce draughts.
- Doors often have gaps around the edges, especially the bottom, so fitting brushes, draught strips or wiper strips will give a good seal.
- A door curtain is another great way to keep warm – especially if your door goes straight into a living room.



Examples of a door curtain and application of joint filler



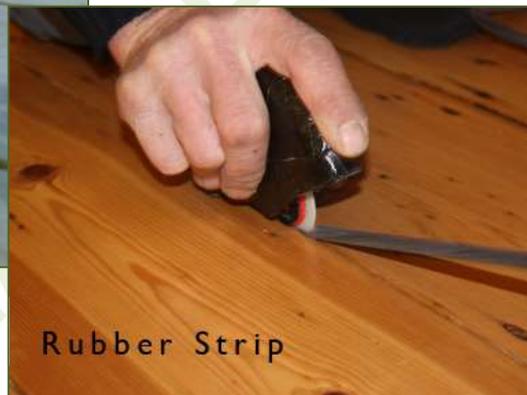
- Windows need regular checking for draughts. Periodically it may be necessary to tighten closer mechanisms or replace draught strips.
- It's also well worth checking around door and window frames and underneath window sills every now and then, just to make sure small cracks haven't opened up that can allow in draughts. These can be filled with flexible filler – use decorators caulk if you want to over paint them – see photo.

❖ Floors and skirting boards

- Suspended wooden floors, especially older ones, can be very draughty. Don't block off outside air bricks to stop this – this could lead to condensation, damp and rot of floor joists. Instead, seal gaps and cracks in the floor and around skirting boards.
 - To do this, you can use filler (as in the photo above) or stuff something soft like gardeners' fleece into cracks with a thin ruler. If you want to strip the floor and leave the boards visible though, this might not be suitable.
 - Instead, you can either use thin wedges of reclaimed wood to wedge into cracks and sand down (time consuming) or use a compressed rubber strip such as Draughtex – see: www.draughtex.co.uk



Filling cracks in floorboards
with wood and rubber strips



- Gaps around skirting boards (top and bottom) should also be filled.
- Ideally, you should also insulate the floor – see Energy Factsheet No. 23, *Insulating Suspended Timber Floors*.

❖ Chimneys

- Chimneys are designed to create a draught so, if you have an old fireplace, this will mean you are losing heat. If you definitely don't want to use the fireplace again, the chimney can be blocked at the top with a cowl. This is a job for a roofer but check that they use a proper cowl with small vent holes, as you may need to allow some trickle ventilation to avoid condensation building up.
- If you want to keep the flue open, when it isn't in use you can use a chimney balloon or other removable device that blocks the flue when you don't need it, but can be removed when you do.

❖ Pipes and electrical fittings

- Wherever anything breaks the wall surface, inside or out, there is the chance of draughts. Check pipes and drains and fill cracks or fit a plastic grommet to seal gaps.



*Cracking around pipe outlet
and external fan vent*

- Ideally extractor fans should have vents that shut when the fan isn't in use to stop air blowing in.

❖ Upstairs

- Draughts need to get into a building but they also need a compensating airflow going out. Often, this is up in the loft space.
- Loft hatches are often draughty, so these should be sealed with draught strip.
- You can sometimes get cracks along the ceiling to wall joints as plaster shrinks. These should be filled with flexible sealer.

*Cracks between wall and ceiling
and draught-stripped loft-hatch*



❖ Plasterboard walls

- Many modern homes are built using 'dot and dab' plasterboard fixing. This is where sheets of plasterboard are fixed direct to the wall with dots of adhesive. If the external wall hasn't had a cement screed seal, this can mean that draughts can enter through the wall cavity and then move around behind the plasterboard.
- Without removing and replacing the plasterboard (expensive and very disruptive) it's very difficult to treat this but, if you can seal any small gaps around light switches, electrical sockets, and skirting boards and doorframes, this should help.
- If you are getting any building work done, make sure you specify that:
 - if using dot and dab, plasterboard is fixed with a continuous ribbon of adhesive around all the edges and around any openings
 - or, preferably, plaster straight onto the internal wall surface.

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