



How to...

Fill in gaps and cracks

to keep out the cold

EASTSIDE COMMUNITY TRUST



Why fill in gaps and cracks?

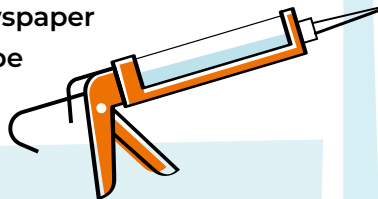
Most houses, especially old ones, have cracks and gaps that let warm air out and cold air in. These draughts are uncomfortable and a waste of money if the heat you've paid for is leaking outside.

How will it help?

Filling in gaps and cracks around floorboards, skirting boards, windows, doors and electrical fittings doesn't cost much and can help keep the warm air in and cold air out through the winter months, making your home more comfortable and less expensive to heat.

What you'll need:

- Clean cloth
- Sealant gun
- Silicone sealant or decorators caulk
- Strong scissors or a sharp blade
- Piece of paper or old newspaper
- Cling film or electrical tape
- Sandpaper



- Check with your neighbours or see if a local **Library of Things** has a sealant gun you can borrow for the job rather than buying new.
- **Decorators caulk** can be painted over. **Silicone** cannot be painted over but is more flexible, so you may want to use it if you are filling a gap in an area that gets damp or has big changes in temperature like a south-facing window.

Make a plan

Look around your home and identify any gaps and cracks that need filling.

- Check for daylight around the edges of door and window frames.
- Lick the back of your finger and hold it up around windows, outlets and skirting boards to feel for cold air coming through.

Sealant will dry out once opened, so it's best to do all of the jobs within a week or two, or share it with a friend or neighbour so it doesn't go to waste.

You can't paint over silicone, so make sure any painting is completed before you start applying sealant.

When to do it?

Fill in gaps and cracks in the summer months or early autumn so you're ready when the cold comes. The sealant will also dry faster then, and you can open windows to ventilate as you work.

Where to do it?

- Skirting boards
- Electrical sockets
- Window and door frames

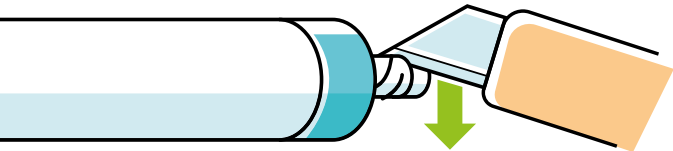


Your step-by-step plan to a warmer home.

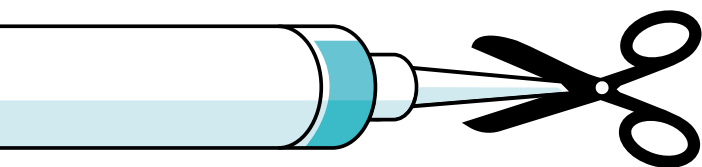
1. Clean and dry the area with a damp cloth.



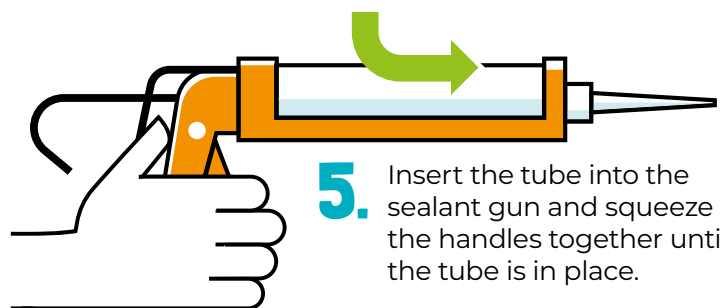
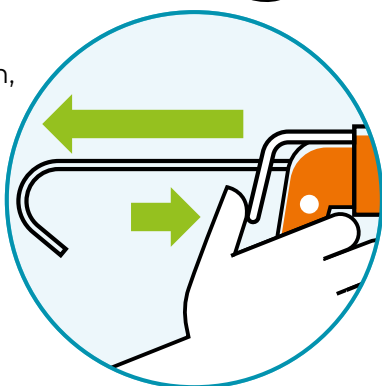
2. Cut the top off the tube of sealant using a utility blade or strong pair of scissors. Be sure to leave the screw threads in place.



3. Screw the nozzle onto the top of the tube, then cut the tip of the nozzle at a 45 degree angle. If you make your first cut close to the end you can cut again further down if you need a larger opening. The bigger the opening, the more sealant will come out at once.

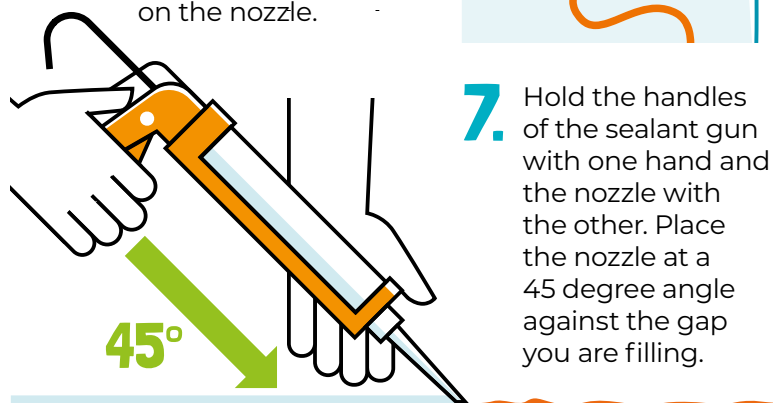


4. To use the sealant gun, hold the back handle and squeeze the small metal plate at the back of the gun with your thumb. Pull the rod back to its full extension with your other hand.



5. Insert the tube into the sealant gun and squeeze the handles together until the tube is in place.

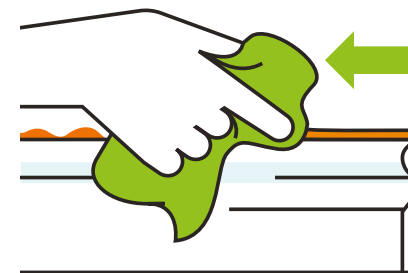
6. Practice on some paper or newspaper before you start. If not enough sealant is coming out, you can cut a larger opening on the nozzle.



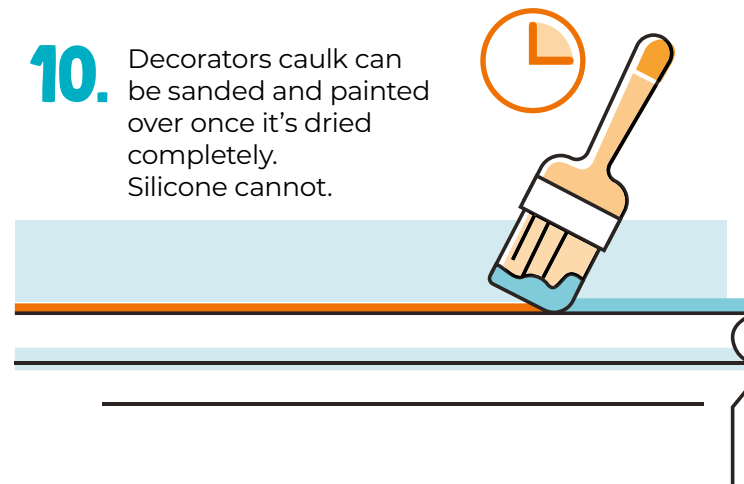
7. Hold the handles of the sealant gun with one hand and the nozzle with the other. Place the nozzle at a 45 degree angle against the gap you are filling.

8. Squeeze the handles together until the sealant begins flowing out of the nozzle, then continue squeezing and guide the nozzle slowly along the length of the gap in a single, steady motion. To fill in deeper cracks, you will need to apply stronger pressure and go slowly to make sure the sealant goes fully down into the crack rather than just sitting on the surface.

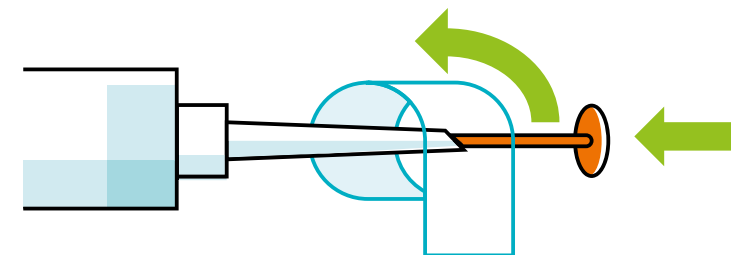
9. Once you reach the end of the gap, smooth over the sealant with a damp cloth before it sets (usually within 15 minutes).



10. Decorators caulk can be sanded and painted over once it's dried completely. Silicone cannot.



11. If there is sealant left in the tube, insert a nail or small piece of plastic into the nozzle of the sealant and wrap with cling film or electrical tape to create an airtight seal. Store in an upright position. Silicone can last for a few months to a year if stored properly.



Set a reminder to check for new gaps or cracks in the summer or early autumn each year so they can be filled in before temperatures drop. Old silicone will need to be removed before applying a fresh layer.

Useful language

- **Draughts:** cold air that comes into your home making it uncomfortable and more expensive to heat.
- **Sealants:** caulk and silicone are both types of sealants that can be used to fill in gaps and cracks. Both are applied using a sealant gun.
- A **sealant gun** is sometimes called a **caulking gun** or **cartridge gun**.

Do your research to find the right product for the job so it will last as long as possible.

- **Silicone sealant** is more flexible and waterproof, making it better for areas that get wet or expand and contract with changing temperatures, like windows that get a lot of sunlight.
- **Sanitary silicone or sealant** can be a good option for areas with lots of moisture like kitchens and bathrooms to reduce the risk of mould developing.
- **Caulk or decorators caulk** is less flexible and usually used for sealing gaps between woodwork and walls, but can be painted over.

Happy People, Healthy Planet

The Community Climate Action Project is an ambitious citywide programme to demonstrate the important role of communities in achieving Bristol's climate and nature ambitions, whilst also improving people's quality of life.

As part of this project, Eastside Community Trust coproduced a Community Climate Action Plan with residents of Easton and Lawrence Hill to identify actions we can take locally that are good for both people and planet. We then developed the Eastside People Power project to put some of these priorities into action.



Bristol Climate &
Nature Partnership



Eastside People Power

Empowering our community to make sustainable changes in our homes and community buildings.

Eastside People Power is a community demonstrator project set up to tackle the challenge of making our homes and buildings comfortable, healthy and affordable to heat in the face of rising energy costs and colder temperatures.

Drawing on priorities from our Community Climate Action Plan, the project's aim is to develop the skills and knowledge our community needs to make changes in our homes and buildings so they use less energy and cost less to heat.



**Link to all our
mini guides, online
resources and
useful information.**

<https://bit.ly/EastsidePeoplePower>



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