

COZY HOME CORNER
By the Zerodraft House Doctor

Weatherstrip Wood-Framed Sliding Windows to Stop Drafts and Improve Comfort

Properly weatherstripping wooden-framed sliding windows can improve the durability, energy efficiency and comfort of your house.

Old-fashioned wooden-framed sliding windows can be big energy wasters and allow cold drafts because they have many paths where air leakage can occur. Usually found in older homes, they rarely have existing weatherstripping, are often slightly warped from the passage of time and can be very loose. In this column, we'll discuss installing professional-grade weatherseals to stop those drafts and improve comfort.

To get the best air seal, you'll want to use a 'V' type of weatherstripping. You can find the foldable V type, usually in rolls, at your local hardware or home improvement store. However, these kinds tend to take a permanent set very quickly. An alternative is to use a molded V type product (e.g. Polyflex) available from industrial suppliers. This type comes in two widths: 1/2-inch and 1-1/4-inch; and two colours: white and tan. Although the weatherstripping is adhesive-backed, you will want to apply a spray contact adhesive to the bearing surface to ensure a strong bond.

To start, make sure your window operates freely. In the case of a vertical slider, open the bottom as far as you can and pull it to one side to make the gap on the opposite side as wide as possible. Thoroughly clean the sliding channel into which the weatherstripping will be applied.

Measure and cut a piece of the wider V seal to the height of the operable section and apply your contact adhesive to the sliding channel. When the adhesive is nearly dry, install the weatherstripping into the sliding channel. Most of these old windows only open 3/4 of the way, so you will need to slide the weatherstripping upwards into position between the window and sliding channel.

Once you've installed the weatherstripping on the first side, pull the window over to that side to widen the gap on the opposite side and repeat the procedure. Seal the base of the window using the 1/2-inch sized weatherstripping on the back of the sill so the window slides into it when closing. You can also repeat this process for the top half of the window.

With the sides and base installed, it's time to deal with the centre meeting rail (sometimes also called a check rail). Install a piece of the thinner V strip on the back of the meeting rail on the lower sash so that it's concealed when the window is closed. You can get the same air seal performance by installing the weatherstripping to the upper rail, but it will be visible when the window is open.

If your window has pulleys, you should seal the pulley holes using special plastic pulley covers designed to cover the exposed edge and rope, while allowing both to operate freely. Remove the backing of the foam gasket and apply it to the pulley seal, pull the sash rope away from the jamb and slide the pulley seal down onto the rope, then remove the second backing from the gasket and position the cover over the pulley. Repeat the procedure for the second pulley. You may have to remount the hole in the pulley seal that allows the rope to move freely, due to the difference in diameters of the ropes found on different windows.

To finish, caulk the trim and sill of the window using clear siliconized latex to complete air seal continuity.

Properly air sealing your wood-framed sliding windows will make a big difference to the comfort and energy efficiency of your home.

