

# Blocking Draughts FAQ



## What is the most cost effective retrofit?

Blocking up draughts is particularly important in older homes, and can often be the single most effective way to keep warm in winter and cool during summer time too. When energy experts calculate 'pay back periods' on energy efficiency measures – blocking up draughts will often come out in front. This is because households typically spend half of all their energy bills on heating and cooling, and that blocking up draughts mostly involves inexpensive materials and measures.

## Where do draughts occur? What can I do about it?

There are draught throughout our homes, leaking in cold air in winter and driving up our energy bills. Draughts can occur through every opening or installation in walls, floors and ceilings, including electrical switches and power points, plumbing, wall vents, gaps between floor boards as well as simply around doors and windows. See the table for a few of our favourite draughts and how to fix them.

## How can you tell if there are draughts? Can you measure it?

Draughts can be spotted in a number of different ways. Sometimes it's as simple as seeing daylight under doors or around window frames, but sometimes you have to be on the lookout for them as they can be hard to detect. Here's a few ways that we have used to detect draughts;

- + Seeing curtains or blinds move when it's windy outside.
- + Holding tissue paper up around fireplaces or over floor boards and see if the tissue moves.
- + Watching the way smoke from an incense stick moves.

| Draught source  | What can I do?   |
|---|--|
| Gaps around plumbing in kitchen and bathroom<br>Gaps around split air conditioner hoses | Acrylic or silicon sealant or caulking<br>Foam fillers<br>Minor carpentry      |
| Bathroom extraction fan   | 'Draught Stoppa' exhaust fan hat   |
| Gaps around window and door frames  | Weather strips and seals<br>Acrylic or silicon caulking                        |
| Wall vents  | Piece of contact<br>Wooden cover with magnets                                  |
| Gaps between floor boards   | Put the carpet back<br>Under-floor insulation<br>Rugs or mats<br>Timber filler |
| Unused fire places  | Inflatable draught bladder<br>Bag stuffed with newspaper                       |
| Around window architraves and skirting boards   | Acrylic sealer or caulking   |
| Wall / window mounted air conditioners (not split systems)                              | Make a canvas or wooden cover to place over the box on the outside.            |

- + Hearing windows rattle in the frames during storms.
- + Simply feeling air moving against your hand or on wet skin.

The high-tech way to actually measure the draughts in a building is called a blower-door test. This is a service that some energy auditor and draught blocking specialists use. It usually involves taping a few large fan in the front door and trying to measure the pressure or resistance against the fan. Some houses we have measured get as bad as 25 air-changes every hour, this means that all the air in room replaces itself every 2 or 3 minutes!

## Can blocking draughts be unhealthy? What if we don't have enough air to breathe?

If your home has been recently built in the last 5 years then draughts are not likely to be an issue. This is because building regs have

improved and many new homes are reasonably well sealed. Older homes in Victoria can be leaky as a sieve! It is important to make sure there's enough fresh air inside, but the typical house in Melbourne has 3 to 8 times more fresh air (air changes per hour) than we need for health and oxygen supply.

Generally speaking, a lack of ventilation in a home is usually noticed by damp or even mouldy conditions forming – if this happens in your place then we'd recommend not blocking up draughts and seek advice on natural ventilation or damp issues.

When in doubt, ask for a professional opinion through a Home Energy Assessment, or you can even arrange for a blower-door test if you have serious concerns.

