

Project Ideas & Information

Timber Window Repair



Before purchasing tools, timber and materials, read every step thoroughly then talk to one of our experts

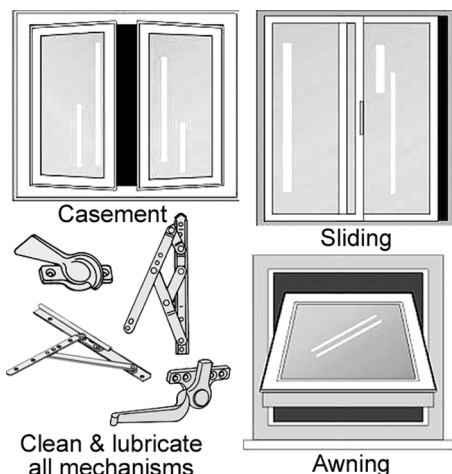
Windows stick for a variety of reasons. Paint, accumulated dirt in sash channels, and warped stops or jambs all can make a window difficult or impossible to open. Or the cause could be a mechanical problem, such as a broken sash cord, faulty spring balance, or malfunctioning crank operator.

Breaking a Paint Seal

Inspect the perimeter of a sash, inside and outside. Often, paint is effectively gluing it to the stops or at the meeting rails. Slice through the seal with several light strokes of a utility knife, then work the blade of a putty knife between the sash and stops and gently pry to loosen the window.

Lubricating Sash Channels

If paint or dirt has built up in the sash channels, scrape them clean. Lightly sand wood jambs, parting strips, and stops, then lubricate them with candle wax. After lubricating, open and close the window several times to spread the lubricant.



Prying a Sash Free

If paint or dirt is not the culprit, slide a piece of paper along the sash edges to determine if a stop or parting strip is binding. If so, pry the window open ... a job best

done from the outside. Slip a flat pry bar under the sash, using a scrap of wood under it for leverage and to prevent damaging the sill. Pry at the corners first, then in the centre.

Spreading Warped Stops

After the window is open, tap a block that is about 3mm wider than the sash channel between the stops and the parting strip. This should spread them slightly to provide the necessary clearance. If not, sand the bottom of each channel and the sides of its stops. You can also reposition inside stops, but don't move them more than about 3 mm or the sash will rattle in the wind.

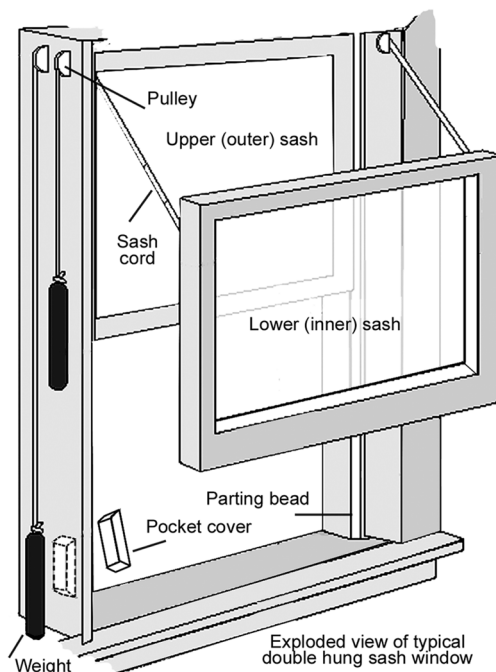
Cranked & Sliding Windows

When a casement, or awning window malfunctions, the problem usually lies with its hinges, the extension arm and track, or the operator mechanism. When a sliding window jams, the track may be bent or dirty, or rollers may need to be adjusted or replaced.

Double Hung Sash Windows

Sash windows are an intrinsic part of a period house and should be repaired rather than replaced if at all possible. They have an upper and lower sash, each counter-balanced by a weight on each side of the window. The weights go up and down inside box sections as the windows are opened or closed.

If you have a broken sash cord, the window will be difficult to open and judder as it is raised or lowered. If both cords are broken, the window will not stay open. It's best to renew all the cords if one has broken.



Removing The Sash

Pry the narrow beading away from the interior of the window frame with a wide-bladed paint scraper or an old chisel.

Make a note of their positions to make replacement easier, start in the middle of one of the side beads and bend the moulding gently outwards until it springs out of the corner joints. Remove the three other pieces and keep to one side.

The next step is to remove the lower sash. The weight ropes usually are held in place with a small nail or screw. Remove the fastener from each side, being careful not to drop the sash, and then pull the rope away. Move the sash to a safe location. This would be an ideal time to repair the frame, re-glaze the window and sand and paint the frame.

To remove the outer sash, pry out the parting bead on one side, starting at one end; it will be held in its groove by a few nails. You should then be able to lift out the outer sash in the same way.

Renewing A Sash Cord

Replace a broken or worn cord with a new length. It is often better to replace all the cords at once ... if one has broken, it's likely that the others will soon follow.

Sash cord is specially woven to resist stretching or wearing. The modern type is made from synthetic fibre and can be prevented from fraying' by melting the end over a match. You also need some 25mm galvanised clout nails to fix it.

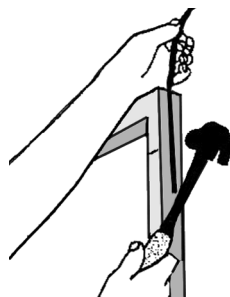
The small slip of wood at the bottom of each frame side may be loose fitted or screwed in place. Remove this to reveal the weights. Vacuum out any building dust in the bottom of the recess and remove the weights and broken cord.

Pass a piece of string with a small weight at the end over the first pulley and allow it to drop to the bottom of the jamb. Attach the other end of the string to a length of the new cord and pull this over the pulley. Thread the end through the hole in the weight and tie it off, copying the old knot.

Rest the upper sash on the window ledge and use galvanised clout nails to fix the cord into the groove on the side of the sash. The highest nail should be fixed at a distance down the groove, at least equal to the measurement from the top of the window frame to the bottom of the pulley, otherwise it will not close fully. Once fixed, trim off the end of the cord.

With both cords fitted, try sliding the sash up and down:

- If it will not go to the bottom of the frame, the cord is too short.
- If the weight hits the bottom of the pocket when the sash is at the top, the cord is too long.
- If the sash jams before it reaches the top, the nail is too far up.



Adjust the cord if necessary, then insert two or three more fixing nails below the first one.

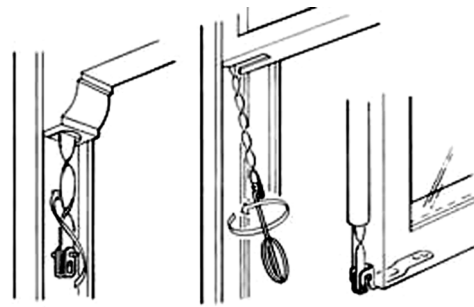
Refit the beading and the pocket covers. Fit each sash in turn and re-fix the retaining beads.

Spring Sash Repairs

Modern sash windows with spring balance mechanisms are much easier to repair than the traditional type. The most common fault is that the spring loses its tension, but this is easy to adjust using the special tool provided by the window maker (or failing that, a stiff piece of bent wire).

If the sash sticks at one point, the most likely cause is that the spiral needs oiling.

To tension a spring, lift the sash as far as it will go and support it with a length of batten. Hook the adjusting tool into the exposed end of the spiral mechanism and pull it down to free it from the catch.



Pull the mechanism down about 150mm without allowing it to untwist and lose the spring's tension. Turn the tool two or three times anti-clockwise to add tension, then hook it back in place.

Remove the prop and test the action ... if the sash continues to

drop, add a turn until it just stays in position.

To oil the spiral mechanism, unhook the mechanism as above, but this time allow it to untwist. Wipe down with an oily rag, then push it back up and wind to add tension.

Oil the spring mechanism by allowing the spiral to untwist fully, then wiping down with an oiled rag. Twist it back up, then tension using the adjuster.

Window Hints

- A stubborn, stuck sash, either inner or outer, may have to be removed and planed using a small block plane to trim down the area of the sash where it is binding
- If the sash is stuck because of temporary swelling due to excessive moisture or humidity and if the window is in good shape the sash will probably free itself once it has dried out sufficiently. If severely swollen, the problem sash may need to be refinished with a paint or wood preservative to prevent problems caused by moisture in the future.
- Loose, rattling windows are a result of the sash and the channels being worn down over time. This, in effect, reduces the friction and reduces the sealing ability of the unit. A loose sash is probably the end of the life of the window.
- Never try to free a stuck sash by pushing up at the middle of the top rail of an inner sash or pulling down on the middle of the bottom rail of an outer sash. Either of these tactics could cause a rail to break loose from the stiles at the sides, and will almost surely break the seal between the glazing compound and the glass.
- Lubricate casement window hinge and scissor arm pivots, and the operator gears with dry silicone spray.

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