



mind the CRACKS

You don't need a tradie for easy patch-up work – you can knock off the job yourself!

Gaps and cracks come in many forms – sometimes essential, sometimes as a DIY stuff-up – but unless it's a structural issue, they are easy to deal with. The necessary space between timber floor and surrounding wall allows for natural expansion, but can be neatly concealed by skirting boards. And holes left by old hangings or cracks opened up by building movement can be neatly smoothed over. Here's how to cover up the evidence – go on, get cracking!



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Gap fix 1

Correct problem cornices

If fixings fail or there's movement in a room, gaps may appear where cornice meets ceiling. You can do a quick cover-up, but it's best to firmly set the cornice back in place.

Gather your supplies

- Cornice cement
- Plasterboard screws

You'll also need

Paint scraper; bucket; drill; lint-free rag or sponge; fine sandpaper; painting equipment; sealer undercoat; acrylic paint to match ceiling colour

Here's how

STEP 1 Use paint scraper to remove any loose paint or plaster along crack.

STEP 2 Mix cornice cement in bucket to form a paste. Use scraper to fill gap between cornice and ceiling with cornice cement.

STEP 3 Use drill to screw plasterboard screws up through cornice into ceiling so cement oozes out of crack. Remove excess cement with scraper and use to fill screw heads.

STEP 4 Leave cornice cement for a few minutes to start setting, then wipe along crack with damp lint-free rag or sponge for a smooth finish.

STEP 5 When cement has fully dried, sand lightly if required, then apply sealer undercoat. Let dry and follow with two coats using acrylic paint to match ceiling colour.



steps

Gap fix 2

Plug holes in brick walls

As you decorate your home and move artworks and picture frames around, you're left with unsightly holes filled with garish wall plugs. But don't worry, patching the holes is easy.

Gather your supplies

- Ready-mixed gap filler (such as Selleys Spakfilla Rapid)

You'll also need

Utility knife; paint scraper; fine sandpaper; painting equipment; undercoat; acrylic paint to match wall colour

Here's how

STEP 1 Use utility knife to dig out ends of wall plugs so they

are a few millimetres below wall surface.

STEP 2 Use paint scraper to fill holes with ready-mixed gap filler. Make filler slightly proud of wall. Let dry, then use fine sandpaper to sand flush with wall.

STEP 3 Spot prime filled areas with undercoat and let dry. Apply acrylic paint as required to blend patches with wall.



steps

Gap fix 3

Install skirting boards

The job of skirting boards is to hide the gap between floor and wall. Fixing to a plasterboard wall is as simple as gluing and nailing, but going into a masonry wall requires a little more attention.

Gather your supplies

- Skirting boards, profile to suit
- White wall plugs
- Construction adhesive

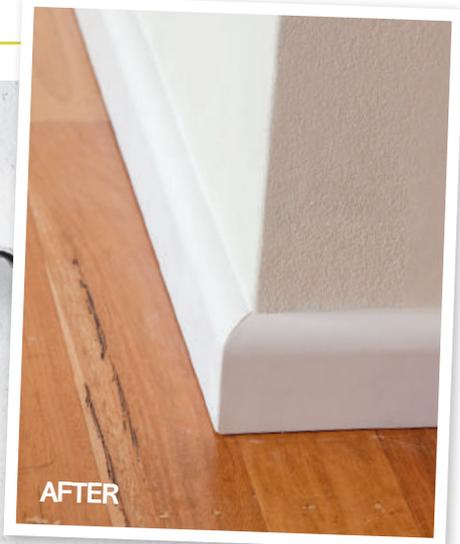
You'll also need

Power saw; coping saw; hammer; 65mm nails; drill; 5mm masonry drill bit; nail punch; wood putty; sandpaper; acrylic gap filler; painting equipment; undercoat; selected enamel paint

Here's how

STEP 1 Using power saw, cut skirting to suit length of wall, allowing extra for mitred joints. At external corners, cut on a 45° angle to create mitres where necessary.

STEP 2 Create a scribed joint where skirtings meet at internal corners by butting one side of skirting into corner, then cutting through a second piece of skirting at a 45° angle. Use coping saw to cut along line where face of skirting meets angled cut. Butt this cut into face of first piece of fixed skirting.



STEP 3 Place skirting in position against wall. Use hammer to drive a 65mm nail through until it hits wall.

STEP 4 Remove skirting and, using drill with 5mm masonry drill bit, make hole in wall where marked by nail.

STEP 5 Use hammer to tap white wall plug into hole and make flush with wall.

STEP 6 Spread construction adhesive along back of skirting. Place against wall and hammer nails through skirting into wall plug to secure.

STEP 7 Use nail punch to knock head of nail below surface of skirting.

STEP 8 Fill holes with wood putty, let dry, then sand smooth. Fill gap between skirting and wall and in corners with acrylic gap filler. Spot prime filled areas with undercoat, then paint with selected enamel paint.



Gap fix 4

Smooth cracks and holes in brick walls

There's no flexibility in a brick wall, so even the slightest building movement will result in a crack.

Gather your supplies

- Caulking gun
- Flexible gap filler (try Sikaflex-11FC)

You'll also need

Utility knife; vacuum cleaner; paint scraper; lint-free rag or sponge; solvent appropriate for filler; painting equipment; undercoat; acrylic paint to match wall colour

Here's how

STEP 1 Use utility knife to remove any loose paint and scrape back edges of crack. Vacuum along crack to remove dust.

STEP 2 Using caulking gun, squirt flexible gap filler into crack. Overfill so gap filler is proud of wall.

STEP 3 Use paint scraper to run along wall over gap filler, removing excess and making filler flush with wall. To remove any excess on wall, use lint-free rag or sponge with solvent. Let dry.

STEP 4 Spot prime filled areas with undercoat. Let dry. Apply two coats of acrylic paint to match wall.



Quick fixes

Tackle these common repairs and save dosh

Those little niggling jobs around the home are easier than you think. Here are a few quick fixes that'll improve the look of your place, give you the confidence to fix even more stuff and save you lots of cash in the process.



Quick fix 1

Paint a timber window

A new paint job on a timber window not only improves the look of your home, it can also save you money. Paint stops water from getting into the timber and rotting it, so you won't have to shell out on repairs or, worse, a whole new window.

Gather your supplies

- Acrylic undercoat (we used Dulux 1 Step Primer, Sealer & Undercoat)
- Topcoat paint, to suit window (we used Dulux Aquanamel Gloss in Vivid White)

You'll also need

Lead test kit; paint scraper; 80- and 120-grit sandpaper; sanding block; vacuum cleaner; lint-free rag; painter's tape; paintbrush



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3

Lead paint safety

High concentrations of lead were used in house paints up to 1970. Exposure to even a small amount of dust or paint chips containing lead is a health hazard. To find out if lead is in the painted surface you'll be working with, use an inexpensive lead testing kit. If it's positive for lead, you'll need to take special precautions. For info on working with lead paint, visit environment.gov.au.



Here's how

STEP 1 Use lead test kit to check for lead paint (see Lead paint safety, left). If safe to proceed, use paint scraper to remove all loose and flaking paint.

STEP 2 Wrap 80-grit sandpaper around sanding block and begin sanding the worst areas to remove any loose paint. Switch to 120-grit sandpaper to smooth off these areas. Also use this grade on rest of window to abrade surface in preparation for coats of paint. Remove dust with vacuum cleaner. Wipe down timber with damp lint-free rag to remove residual dust.

STEP 3 Mask adjacent surface using painter's tape. If you don't have a steady hand, also mask around glass. Keep edge of masking tape about a millimetre away from putty so paint seals the joint between putty and glass.

STEP 4 Apply acrylic undercoat to all bare timber. If any existing paint is sound, you do not need to apply undercoat to it. Let paint dry, then give a light sand with 120-grit sandpaper to remove any timber grain raised by undercoat and give a smoother finish for top coats. Remove dust with damp lint-free rag.

STEP 5 Apply topcoat to window. Start by painting sashes, then move out to paint frame of window itself. For double-hung windows, as here, where sashes slide against frame, use enamel paint. This will make surfaces less likely to bind as they slide against each other. For other types of windows, use exterior acrylic paint. Let first coat dry, then lightly sand before applying second coat.

STEP 6 Carefully remove all painter's tape around window before paint dries.



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



Quickfix 2

Reset a doorjamb

Sometimes DIY can be a steep learning curve, causing more problems than it fixes (don't worry, even the pros get it wrong sometimes!). That's what happened when this doorjamb was installed. Instead of being up against the tiles in the bathroom, it was made flush with the wall on the other side, leaving an ugly gap that's a lot harder to fix than if the door had been installed properly. Here, we saved the jamb and just moved it to the correct position.

Gather your supplies

- Timber trim – 18 x 18mm pine quad moulding

You'll also need

Drill; measuring tape; pencil; powered multi tool; reciprocating saw; pincers; hammer; cold chisel; spirit level; plastic packers; screws; coping saw; nail gun and nails; flexible gap filler; wood filler; sandpaper; undercoat (we used Dulux 1 Step Primer, Sealer & Undercoat); enamel paint (we used Dulux Aquanamel Semi Gloss in Vivid White); white silicone

Here's how

STEP 1 Use drill to unscrew door from jamb and set aside.

STEP 2 Before removing jamb, mark base so you can cut it to fit over tiles in bathroom, which are at a different level to floor outside. Use tape measure to measure distance from inside edge of jamb to tiles on wall. Mark same distance from same edge of jamb back onto it.

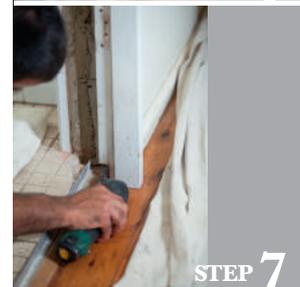
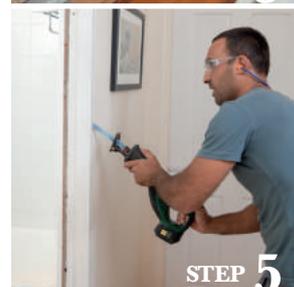
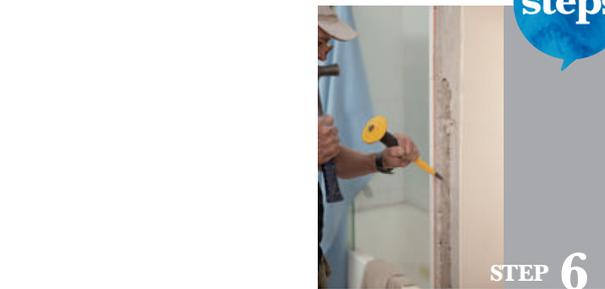
STEP 3 Using powered multi tool, cut through jamb horizontally at same level as floor. Start at edge closest to tiles and stop at line marked in Step 2.

STEP 4 Repeat Steps 2 and 3 to cut jamb at other side of doorway.

STEP 5 Use reciprocating saw to cut nails holding jamb into walls. Remove jamb from opening. Use pincers to remove cut nails from jamb and wall.

STEP 6 Using hammer and cold chisel, remove any tile glue at edge of tiles that may impede jamb when it is repositioned. Take care that you do not crack any tiles.

STEP 7 Using multi tool, cut jamb vertically at mark made in Step 2 to meet up



with horizontal cut done in Step 3. Remove waste timber. Repeat for other side of jamb.

STEP 8 Place jamb back in opening so hinge side is against tiles. Make plumb using spirit level on edge of jamb.

STEP 9 Move spirit level to face of jamb. At top, middle and bottom, use plastic packers between wall and

jamb to bring it into plumb. Where packers have been positioned, screw through jamb into wall to secure.

STEP 10 To ensure existing door will sit properly in jamb, rehang door using original hinge positions. Swing door to closed position, then adjust latch side of jamb so the gap between it and door is the same all the way around. Also make sure door

steps



STEP 10



STEP 11



STEP 13

closes against jamb evenly. Pack between wall and jamb then screw through jamb into wall to secure.

STEP 11 To get a neat finish on trim hiding gap between wall and jamb, use a scribed joint in corner where they meet, not a mitre. Create scribe on trim at sides of jamb by cutting a 45° angle through one end of an over-long piece. Use coping saw to cut along line where rounded face meets angled cut. Repeat for trim on other side of jamb.

STEP 12 To install trim, cut length to fit along top of jamb with square ends butting into wall on each side. Nail in place. Cut side trim to length so scribed end butts into length along top, and square end butts into floor.

STEP 13 Fill all gaps using flexible gap filler. Use wood filler on nail and screw holes. Let dry, then sand smooth. Paint all new work with undercoat. Let dry, then apply two coats of enamel paint, allowing to dry after each coat. Where jamb meets wall tiles, fill gap with white silicone.



Quick fix 3

Repair a damaged window

The timber reveals around an aluminium window give a neat finish while holding the window in place. You might not have an anxious pooch who likes to chew reveals, as here, but termites and water leaks can be just as damaging.



Gather your supplies

- Timber reveals to match existing ones
- Architraves

You'll also need

Chisel, two hammers; powered multi tool or mini hacksaw; pincers; drill; countersinking bit; 3mm drill bit; 25 and 50mm wood screws; PVA glue; window flashing; staple gun; spirit level; plastic packers; nails; flexible gap filler; wood filler; sandpaper; paintbrush; undercoat (we used Dulux 1 Step Sealer, Primer & Undercoat); enamel paint (we used Dulux Aquanamel Semi Gloss in Vivid White)

Here's how

STEP 1 Using chisel and one of the hammers, pry off architraves around window. Discard or keep as scrap.

STEP 2 Using powered multi tool or mini hacksaw, cut nails going through reveal into timber wall frame to loosen window.

STEP 3 With a helper, carefully remove window. You may have to gently tap window from outside to loosen it from surrounding brickwork. Cut flashing attached to window as close as you can to window frame.

STEP 4 Place chisel between reveal and fin on window frame it is attached to. Prise reveal away from fin to loosen staple.

STEP 5 Knock reveal back into window so staple is proud of frame. Using pincers, remove staple. Repeat for all staples around window.

steps



STEP 1



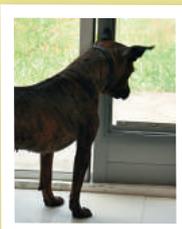
STEP 2



STEP 4



STEP 5



DOGGY DEMOLITION

Isla is a Staffordshire bull terrier with severe separation anxiety. When her owners go out, she turns to anything she can get her teeth into – furniture, carpets, even the timber reveals around the windows (above).

steps



STEP 6

STEP 6 As removing staples can distort fin on window frame, flatten them before proceeding. To do this, place one hammer on one side of fin and hit against it on other side with second hammer.



STEP 7

STEP 7 Using existing reveals as a guide, cut new reveals to length. On reveal at top of window, drill a pair of countersink holes 9mm from one end. Repeat for other end and for both ends of reveal at bottom of window.



STEP 11

STEP 8 Using drill fitted with 3mm bit, drill pilot holes through fins for screws. Place top reveal against fin at top of window. Make sure it is sitting down on inside of window frame. Predrill and screw through holes in fin into reveal using 25mm wood screws. Turn window over and repeat for reveal at bottom of window.



STEP 8

STEP 9 Spread PVA glue on ends of reveal for side of window. Place between top and bottom reveals and make flush with their ends. Predrill into side reveals through holes in top reveal drilled in Step 7. Screw together using 50mm wood screws. Repeat to attach reveal at other side of window, then turn window over and screw through bottom reveal into side reveals.



STEP 12

old flashing originally attached to window.

STEP 11 Use spirit level to ensure inside edge of reveal is flush with face of plasterboard on wall. Level bottom of window, packing it if required. Plumb side reveals and place plastic packers between reveal and wall frame to keep it in that position.

STEP 12 Predrill and screw through reveal into timber wall frame where packers are located. For large windows, put screws at top, middle and bottom of window. Smaller windows only require screws at top and bottom. Do not screw through bottom or top reveals.

STEP 13 Cut architraves to fit around window. Set edge of architraves 5mm from inside edge of reveal and cut ends at a 45° angle to mitre joints at corners. Spread PVA glue on back of architrave and sit against wall. Nail through architrave into reveal and wall frame. Repeat to attach all architraves around window.

Tip Only put a couple of nails in each length of architrave to hold it at first. That way you can slightly adjust its position to make joints in the corners tight. When they're good, nail off rest of architrave.



STEP 9

STEP 10 Run window flashing under bottom reveal of window. Fold up on inside edge of reveal and up sides. Use staple gun to staple flashing to reveal at side of window. Place window back in opening so flashing overlaps



STEP 13

STEP 14 Fill all gaps with flexible gap filler. In all nail and screw holes, use wood filler. Let dry then sand smooth. Apply undercoat to reveals and architraves and let dry. Follow with two coats of enamel paint, allowing to dry after each coat.



STEP 10



STEP 14

Let's hope Isla the dog doesn't sink her teeth into our hard work!



Quickfix 4

Replace a torn flyscreen

Ripped flyscreens are unsightly and annoying – think of all those buzzing mozzies you’re letting in! The good news is that fixing them is really simple.

Gather your supplies

- Flyscreen mesh, to suit size of frames

You’ll also need

Long-nosed pliers; spline roller; spline (if existing one has perished); utility knife

Here’s how

STEP 1 Remove flyscreens from window. Place down on bench and find end of rubber tube (called the spline) holding screen in frame. Use long-nosed pliers to pull spline out of whole frame. Remove old flyscreen.

STEP 2 Spread new flyscreen mesh over frame so edges overhang on all sides. At one corner, push one end of

spline back firmly into groove on frame. Using spline roller, run along one side of frame, pushing spline into groove. Make sure flyscreen doesn’t crease as you do this.

STEP 3 Continue rolling spline around adjacent side of frame, making sure screen isn’t creased as you go. Pushing spline into last two sides will make screen taut, as long as it isn’t too loose to begin with. If you make a mistake, simply pull spline out and try again. Cut excess spline when you reach point where you started.

STEP 4 Using utility knife, cut off excess mesh hanging over the frame. Position frame back in window.

STOCKISTS

Power tools, **Bosch Australia, 1300 307 044, bosch.com.au**. 80- and 120-grit sandpaper, \$11.18/5m. 38mm painter’s tape, \$15.97/roll. 18 x 18mm pine quad moulding, \$5.75/2.4m. Flexible gap filler, \$1.97/475g. Timbermate Wood Filler, \$16.25/500g. White silicone, \$4.97/300g. 1830mm fibreglass flyscreen, \$15.20/m, **Bunnings Warehouse, (03) 8831 9777, bunnings.com.au**. 1 Step Primer, Sealer & Undercoat, \$39.90/1L. Aquanamel Gloss and Semi Gloss, \$45.35 each/1L. **Dulux, 13 25 25, dulux.com.au**. Hand tools, **Stanley, 1800 338 002, stanleytools.com.au**.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4