

Handy hints

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Handy hints for householders

www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

**Solihull**
community housing

This booklet gives straightforward guidance on some of the basic tasks that you can do around the home.

- You don't have to be a DIY expert.
- You only need a basic tool kit.
- When you've done it once, you will find it so much easier next time.

Carrying out these simple jobs can save you time, money and the hassle of having to arrange for someone else to do them.

- Make sure you have the tools and parts you need for the job.
- Follow the step-by-step instructions.
- Use the diagrams to identify the parts.
- Check you will not be disturbing any materials that contain asbestos. See **Asbestos** below.

Asbestos. Some of our properties contain asbestos. Asbestos materials are not dangerous if they are sealed, in good condition and left undisturbed. However, you are at risk if you disturb it by drilling, cutting or breaking it.

If you carry out DIY, such as drilling boards to fix shelves, removing ducts or bath panels or lifting floor tiles, and you are unsure about whether it contains asbestos, you must contact us to arrange for a surveyor to visit you. Contact us on 0121 717 1515.

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Before you start

A basic tool kit

- Radiator key
- Can of oil
- Screwdriver - slothead
- Screwdriver - crosshead (Phillips)
- Adjustable spanner
- Pliers
- Hammer
- Plunger
- Step ladder
- Personal protective equipment



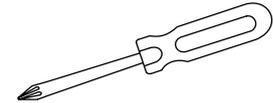
radiator key



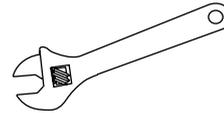
can of oil



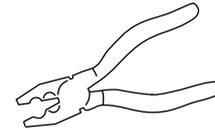
slothead screwdriver



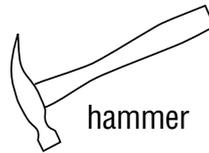
crosshead screwdriver (Phillips)



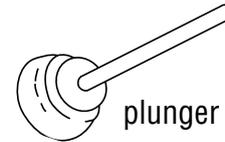
adjustable spanner



pliers



hammer



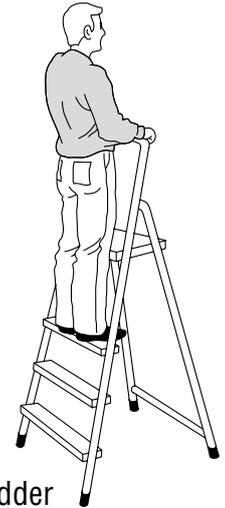
plunger



gloves



goggles

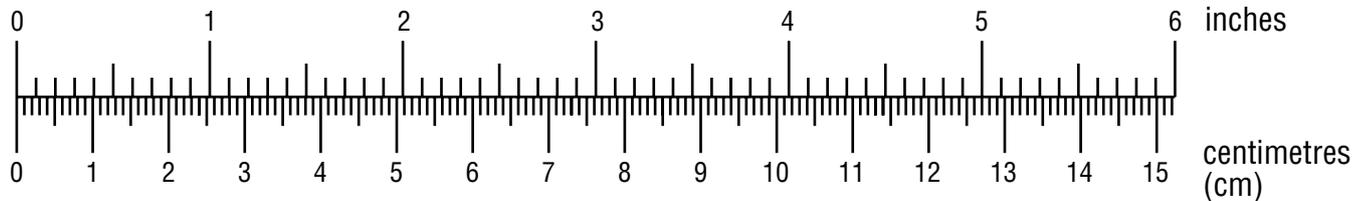


step ladder

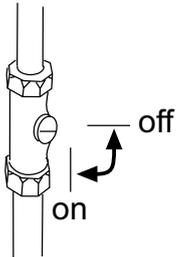
1

Terms used in this booklet

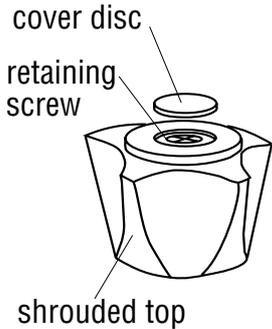
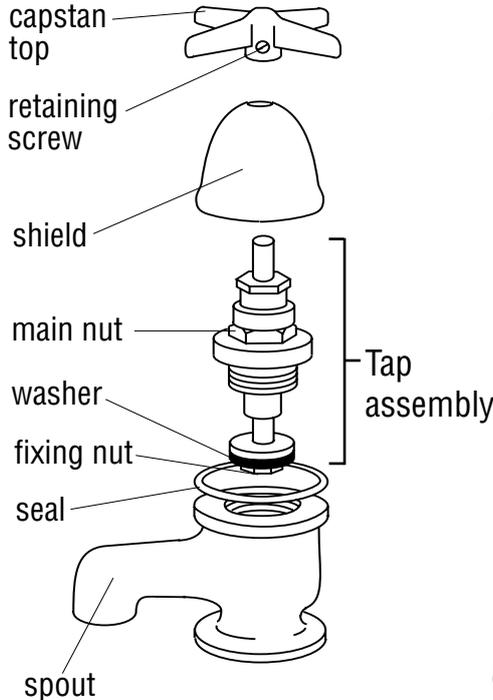
- 1. Loosen** - undo, but do not remove.
- 2. Remove** - take off or take out an existing part.
- 3. Re-assemble** - put parts together again.
- 4. Renew** - put a new part back in place of an old one.
- 5. Unscrew** - undo by screwing anti-clockwise.
- 6. Screw** - do up by screwing clockwise.
- 7. Tighten** - do up by hand or with a spanner or screwdriver.



Rewashing a dripping tap



Service valve



shrouded top

3

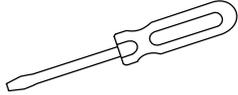
Advice

- To turn off the supply of water to a tap you need to turn the service valve on the pipe that leads to the tap.
- If there is no service valve you need to turn off either the main stop tap or one of the gatevalves, depending on which tap you are dealing with:
 - for cold water taps in the kitchen turn off the main stoptap. This is usually under the kitchen sink
 - for other cold water taps turn off the gatevalve from the main tank (usually in the attic)
 - for hot taps turn off the gatevalve by the hot water cylinder.

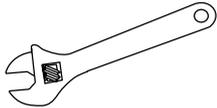
(See page 9 for pictures of a stoptap and a gatevalve.)

You need

- Screwdriver



- Adjustable spanner



- New tap washer

15mm for basin/sink

22mm for bath taps



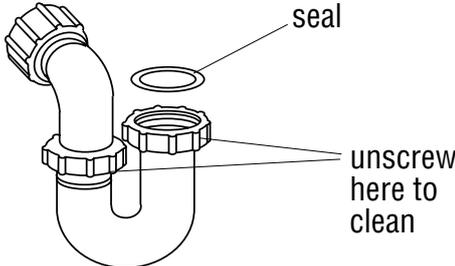
What to do

- 1 Turn off the water supply to the tap. See **Advice** on page 3.
- 2 Turn on the tap and wait until the water that is left in the pipe stops flowing.
- 3 Remove the tap head:
 - for capstan tops, undo the retaining screw, lift off the capstan and remove the tap shield by unscrewing it (anti-clockwise)
 - for shrouded tops, prise off the cover disc, undo the retaining screw and lift off the top.
- 4 Loosen the main nut. Unscrew and lift out the tap assembly. Take care not to damage the seal.
- 5 Loosen and remove the fixing nut (if there is one), remove the old washer and put a new washer in position. Replace the fixing nut and tighten up.
- 6 Re-assemble the tap, making sure that the seal is in position and the main nut and retaining screw are done up tightly.
- 7 Make sure the tap is turned off and turn the water supply back on.

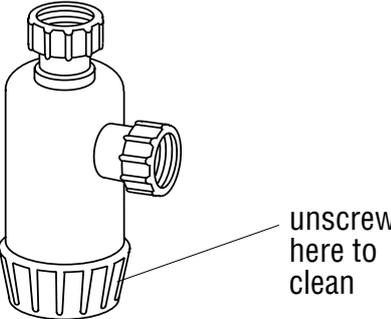
Clearing a blocked basin or sink



Unblocking a sink



U-bend trap



Bottle trap

You need

- Plunger



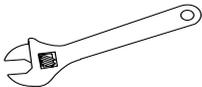
- Rag or dishcloth



- Bowl



- Adjustable spanner



What to do

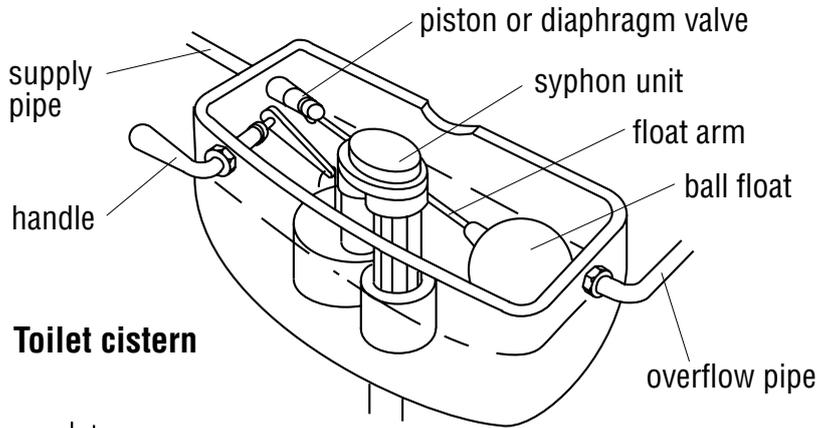
Unblocking a basin or sink

- 1 Remove as much of the water as you can.
- 2 Hold the rag tightly over the overflow opening to seal it.
- 3 Place the plunger head over the plughole.
- 4 Pump the plunger up and down rapidly but always keep the head of the plunger in contact with the basin over the plughole.
- 5 This should clear the blockage sufficiently to allow water to drain away. To finish, clean out the trap.

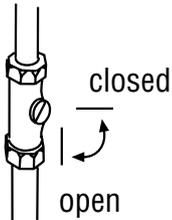
Cleaning the trap

- 1 Place a bowl underneath the trap.
- 2 Unscrew the joints and remove the trap. Don't lose the seal rings.
- 3 Remember, do not use the taps or pour water into the sink whilst the trap is removed.
- 4 Clean the trap thoroughly. Re-assemble, checking that the seals are in place and that all joints are screwed up tightly.

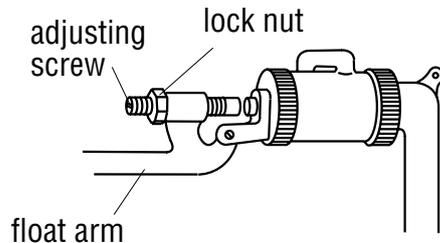
Adjusting a toilet overflow



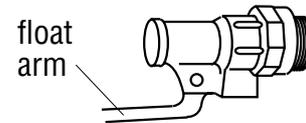
Toilet cistern



Service valve



Plastic diaphragm valve



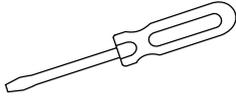
Metal piston valve

Advice

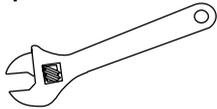
- If water is coming out of the overflow, flush the toilet and lift the ball float up. If the water stops, the ball valve needs adjusting. If water continues to drip through, the ball valve will need replacing or rewashing by a plumber.
- Check to see if a service valve is fitted on the supply pipe to the cistern. If one is fitted, the water supply to the cistern can be turned off temporarily. To turn off the water, turn the screw on the valve a quarter turn.

You need

- Small screwdriver



- Small adjustable spanner



What to do

- 1 Remove the cistern lid and flush the toilet.
- 2 Check what type of valve it is - piston or diaphragm.

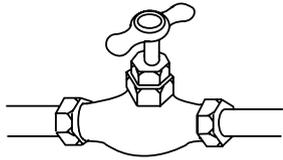
3 For a metal piston valve:

- carefully bend the float arm down so that the ball float is about 2.5 cm (1 inch) lower
- let the cistern fill and check that the new water level is below the outlet to the overflow pipe
- bend the float arm further if necessary.

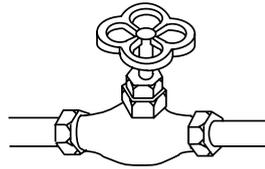
For a plastic diaphragm valve:

- loosen the lock nut (anti-clockwise)
- turn the adjusting screw on the float arm a couple of turns (clockwise)
- let the cistern fill and check that the new water level is below the outlet to the overflow pipe
- adjust the float arm further if necessary
- tighten the lock nut (clockwise).

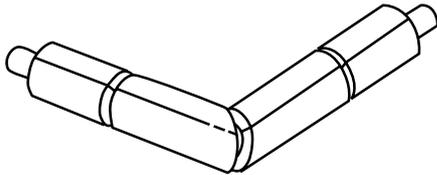
Frozen or burst pipes



Stoptap



Gatevalve



Pipe lagging

Advice

- Know where your stoptap is. It is where the water pipe enters the house, usually under the kitchen sink.
- Know where the gatevalves for the hot and cold water tanks are. They are usually by the hot water and cold water tanks.
- Make sure that you can easily turn all taps and valves.
- Make sure pipes and tanks in your roof space are lagged. Never insulate underneath the water tank in the attic. It needs some heat to come through from below.
- If you are going away for some weeks during the winter, drain down the hot and cold water systems. See **Burst pipes** on page 10.

What to do

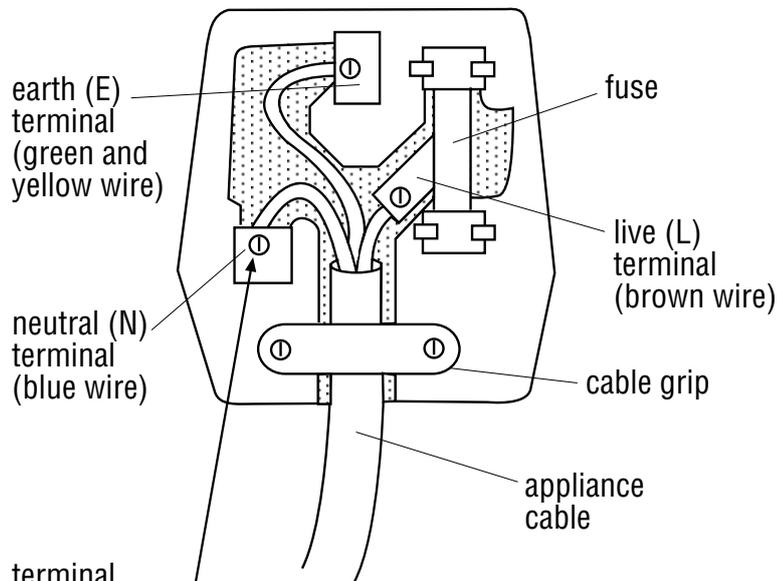
Frozen pipes

- 1 Turn off the water at the main stoptap.
- 2 You are probably best to leave the pipes frozen but you may try to thaw them using hot water bottles.
- 3 If the hot water system is frozen, turn off the water heater.

Burst pipes

- 1 Turn off the water at the main stoptap.
- 2 Turn off any water heaters.
- 3 Turn on all taps to drain water from the system. This may take about 15 minutes.
- 4 When the water stops running, turn off all the taps.
- 5 If electrics are getting wet, **do not touch. Turn off electricity at the consumer unit.**
- 6 If water leaks and makes the ceiling bulge, place a bucket under the bulge and pierce a hole to let the water through. To do this use something such as a screwdriver. Doing this could prevent the ceiling falling down.

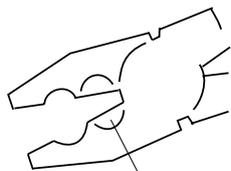
Wiring a plug



terminal screw



Terminal



notch on pliers to help with wire stripping

Advice

- **You need different fuses for different appliances.** Check the plug fuses are correct for each appliance:

3 amp (Red)

table lamp, radio, clock, stereo, TV*, computer.

5 amp (Black)

iron, vacuum cleaner, hair drier, TV*, video, drill, food mixer, toaster, fridge or fridge freezer.

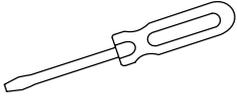
13 amp (Brown)

electric fire, kettle, washing machine, microwave*, freezer, fat fryer.

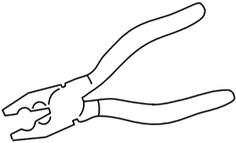
*Check the advice on your appliance instruction leaflet.

You need

- Screwdriver



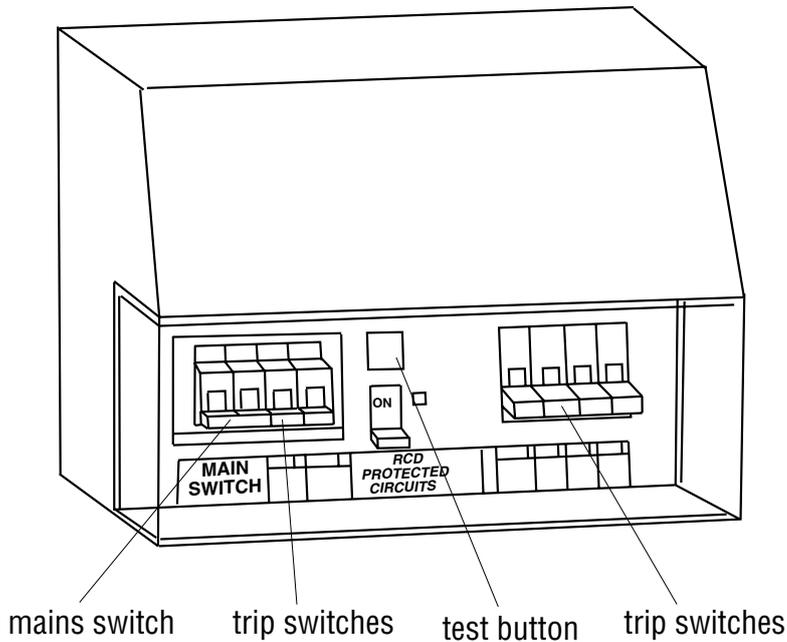
- Pliers with wire stripping notch



What to do

- 1 Undo the screw in the centre of the plug to remove the top.
- 2 Loosen the cable grip and terminal screws, and remove the fuse.
- 3 Strip off about 5 cm (2 inches) of the outer plastic insulation from the appliance cable. **Do not cut through the coloured insulation of the three inner wires.**
- 4 Cut each coloured wire so that it can reach its correct terminal inside the plug. (The earth wire will be longest.)
- 5 For each wire strip off about 1 cm (½ inch) of the coloured insulation and twist the exposed end.
- 6 Pass the cable back under the cable grip.
- 7 Connect up each wire to its correct terminal by pushing the twisted end into its hole. Tighten the terminal screw to hold the wire firmly in place.
- 8 Tighten the cable grip screws. Put in the correct fuse for the type of appliance.
- 9 Screw the plug top back into place.

Resetting a trip switch



**Consumer unit
(Trip switches)**

13

Advice

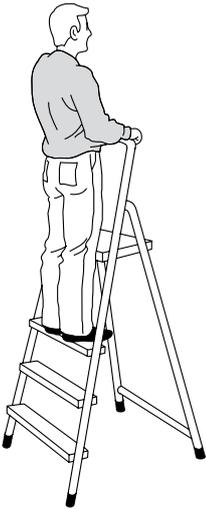
- There are many different types of consumer units. Some have up/down switches, others have push buttons.
- All switches or buttons will be in the **ON** position until a fault 'trips' one or all of them to the **OFF** position.
 - switches **ON** = lever down
 - **OFF** = lever up
 - buttons **ON** = pushed in
 - **OFF** = popped out
- Power and lighting have separate switches or buttons.
- Switches or buttons can trip if:
 - a light bulb blows
 - a circuit is overloaded by having too many appliances connected to it
 - an appliance is faulty
 - wires touch each other and short circuit.

You need

- Torch



- Step ladder



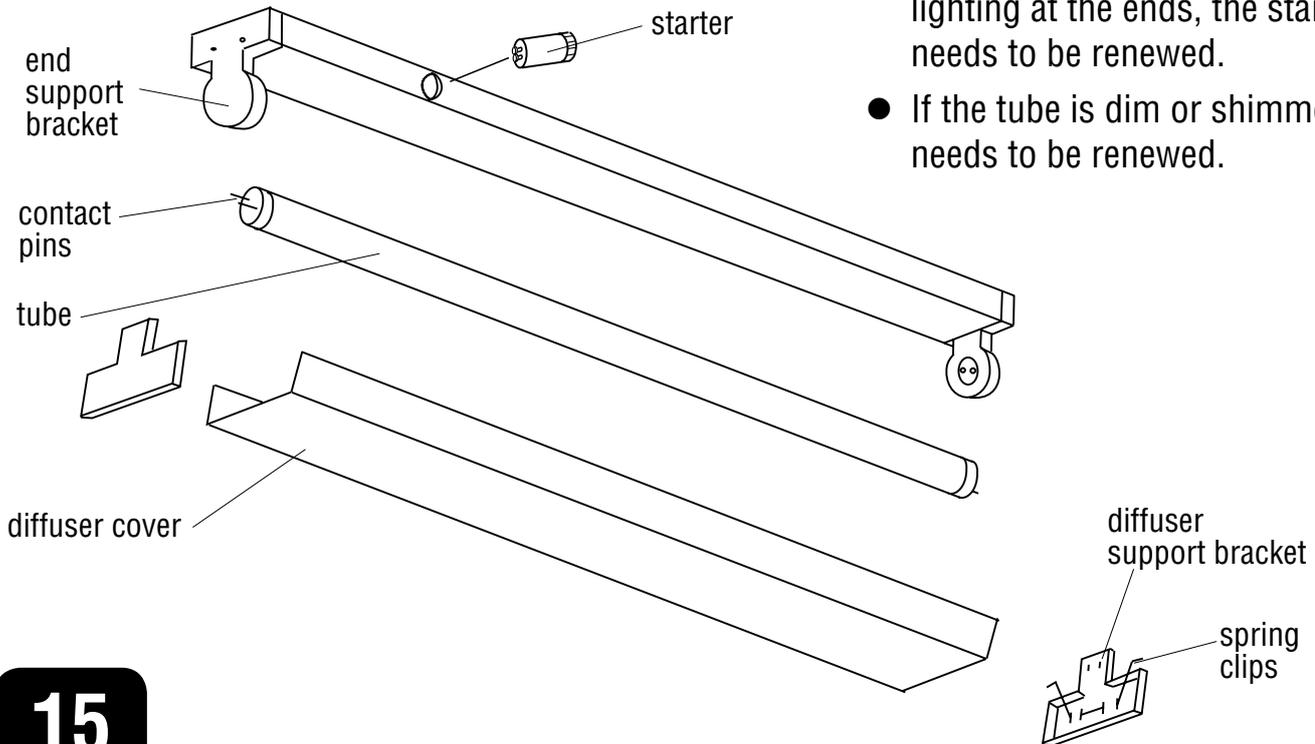
What to do

- 1 Open the cover on the consumer unit.
- 2 Check which trip switch or button is in the **OFF** position.
- 3 Put this switch or button back to the **ON** position.
- 4 If the trip goes again:
 - check all the rooms in the house to see which lights or sockets are not working
 - unplug any appliances on the problem circuit and if necessary switch off the immersion heater
 - reset the 'tripped' switch in the consumer unit to the **ON** position
 - plug the appliances back in one at a time. If a switch or button trips again as you switch on an appliance, unplug the appliance and have it checked by an electrician.

Changing a fluorescent tube or starter

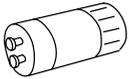
Advice

- If the tube is flickering or only lighting at the ends, the starter needs to be renewed.
- If the tube is dim or shimmering, it needs to be renewed.



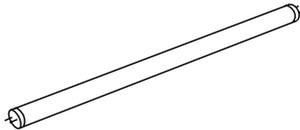
You need

- New starter of the correct amp rating



or

- New tube of the correct length



What to do

- 1 Turn off the light at the switch.
- 2 If the light has a diffuser cover, remove it by pulling away the diffuser support bracket at one end and releasing the cover.

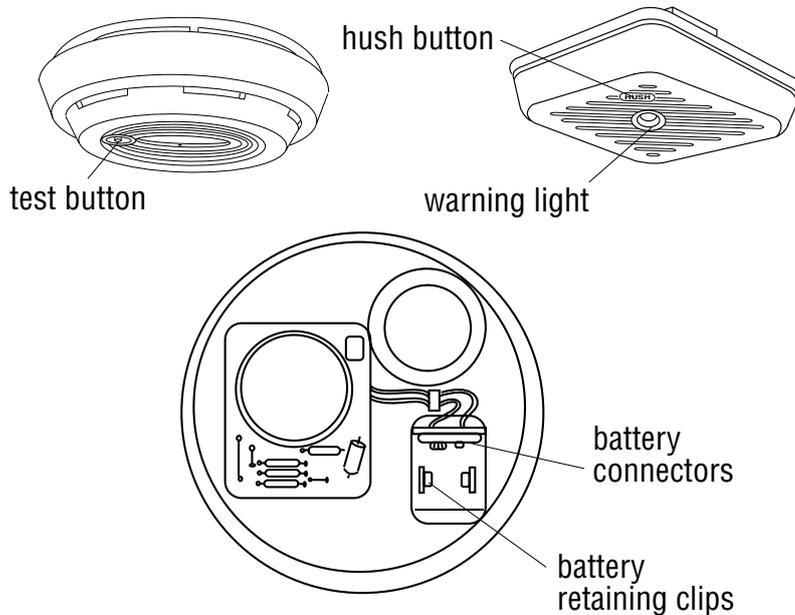
3 To renew the starter:

- twist the existing starter anti-clockwise (a quarter turn) and pull it out
- put a new starter in and turn it clockwise to lock it in position.

To renew the tube:

- release the tube by pulling away one end support bracket. You may have to twist the tube (a quarter turn) to allow the contact pins to drop down through grooves in each support bracket
 - fit the new tube by inserting the contact pins into the holes in each support bracket. Again, you may have to twist the tube to fix it in place.
- 4 Replace the diffuser cover.
 - 5 Your regular household waste collection will not take the old tube. You need to take it to your local household waste recycling centre.

Changing the battery in a battery-operated smoke detector



Advice

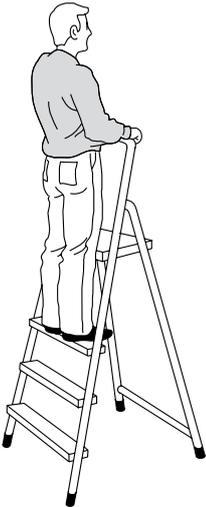
- Battery operated detectors will beep at intervals if the battery is low.
- Smoke detectors can be battery operated or mains operated. Some mains operated ones have a battery back-up.
- If you have a mains operated detector and the alarm goes off in error, switch off the circuit at the consumer unit. Wait at least 5 minutes before turning the circuit back on.

You need

- New 9v battery



- Step ladder

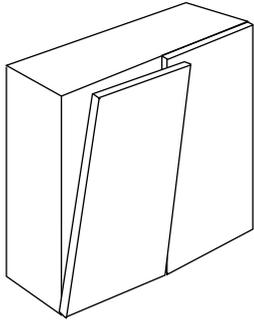


What to do

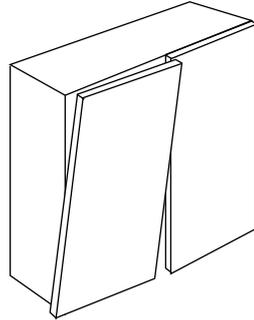
(**Note:** If your smoke detector is linked into the electrical wiring in your home you **do not need to change the battery.**)

- 1 Unclip the cover of the detector.
- 2 Remove the existing battery from its retaining clips and unclip the connectors.
- 3 Clip the new battery into the connectors and put it back into the retaining clips.
- 4 Close the detector and check it by pushing in the test button. The alarm will sound for a short time.

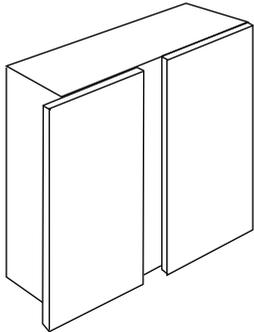
Adjusting kitchen cupboard doors



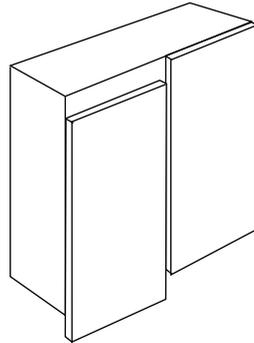
Sticks out



Not square



Side or middle gap

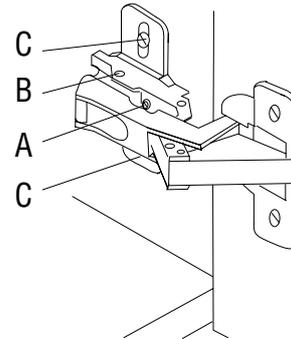


Top or bottom gap

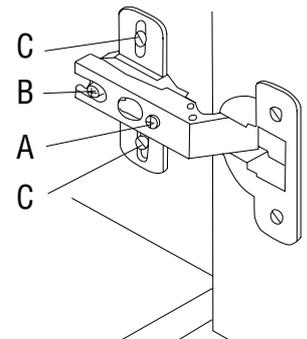
19

Advice

- You will have either a 90° hinge or a 180° hinge. The instructions are the same for both types, but you need to look at the correct picture below to see where the screws A, B and C are.
- Do all adjustments with the door fully open. It can help if someone else holds the door while you do the adjustments.



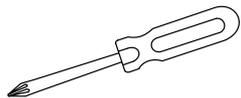
180° Hinge



90° Hinge

You need

- Small screwdriver (usually a 'Phillips' crosshead type)



What to do

If one door sticks out further from the cupboard than the other

- 1 Loosen screw B (one turn anti-clockwise) on both the top and bottom hinges.
- 2 Move the door to the correct position.
- 3 Tighten screw B on both hinges.

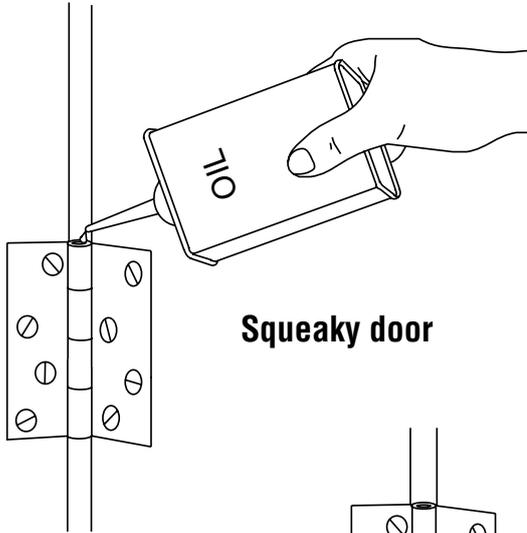
If doors are not square with the cupboard

- 1 Turn screw A gradually clockwise or anti-clockwise to lift or drop the door until you get it to the correct position. You may need to loosen screw B a little to allow the door to move.
- 2 Tighten screws A and B when you have finished.

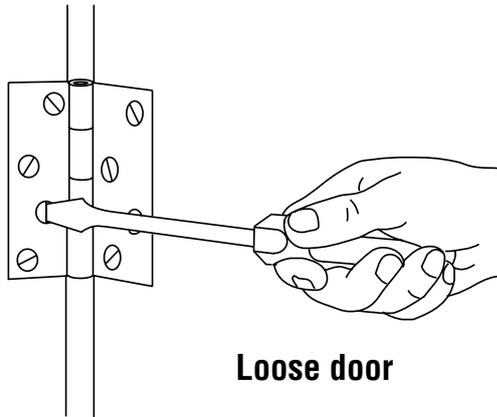
If there is a gap where the door meets the cupboard

- 1 For a gap at the side or middle turn screw A on both hinges by the same amount in the same direction until the door fits correctly.
- 2 For a gap at the top or bottom loosen screw C on both hinges. Adjust the door until it is in the correct position. Tighten up both screws.

Adjusting a squeaky or loose door



Squeaky door



Loose door

Advice

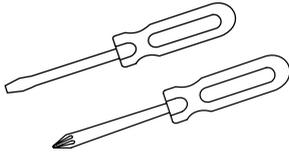
- Always use the right size screwdriver. It must fit tightly into the screw slot. If it doesn't, it will damage the slot and then you will not be able to unscrew it. This is particularly a problem with brass screws as brass is a very soft metal.
- Before unscrewing, scrape any paint away from the screw head and slot.
- Before you use a can of oil, check for manufacturer's instructions **and** be sure to follow them.

You need

- Can of oil



- Screwdriver -
slothead and/or
crosshead



What to do

Squeaking door

This is usually because the hinge is stiff or clogged with dirt.

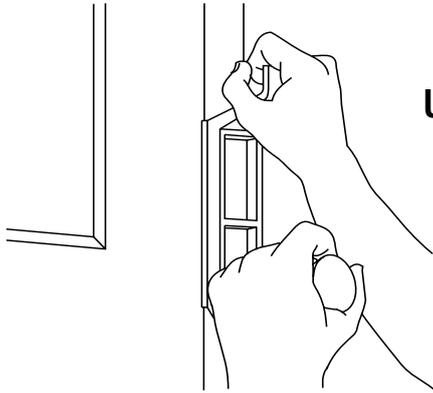
- 1 Put a drop of oil at the top of each metal hinge and allow it to soak in.
- 2 Move the door backwards and forwards a bit to work the oil in. It will gradually stop squeaking.
- 3 Wipe away any oil left on the surface.

If this doesn't work, the door may need adjusting. See page 23.

Loose door

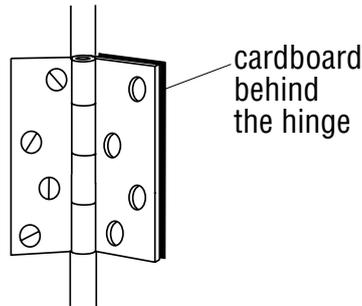
- 1 Open the door wide to open the hinges.
- 2 Put a wedge under the door to raise it to the correct position.
- 3 Tighten any screws that seem loose.
- 4 If a screw will not hold because the hole is too big you can 'pack' the hole with a match stick or other small piece of soft wood before putting the screw back in.

Adjusting a sticking door



Using a surform

Packing a hinge

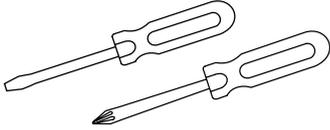


Advice

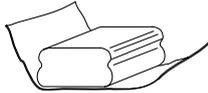
- Always use the right size screwdriver. It must fit tightly into the screw slot. If it doesn't, it will damage the slot and then you will not be able to unscrew it. This is particularly a problem with brass screws as brass is a very soft metal.
- Before unscrewing, scrape any paint away from the screw head and slot.
- If a screw is stuck, put the screwdriver in the slot and strike the end sharply with a hammer. If this doesn't work, try tightening the screw before unscrewing it.

You need

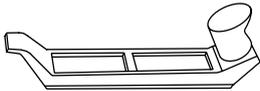
- Screwdriver - sloithead or crosshead



- Coarse sandpaper



- Surform



What to do

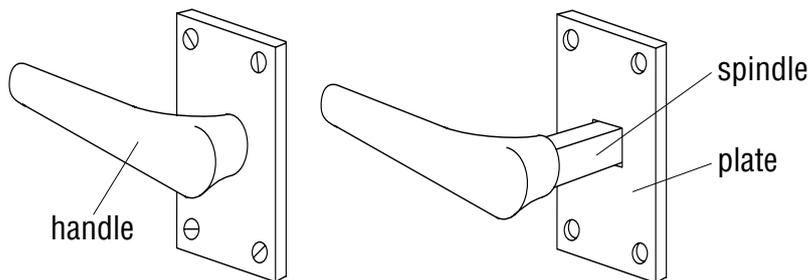
Sticking at bottom because door has dropped. The hinges have probably worked loose. See **loose door** on page 21.

Sticking at the bottom, top or opening side. Use some coarse sandpaper to take a small amount of wood off the sticking side. If this is at the bottom, slide the sandpaper under the door and move the door back and forwards. If this doesn't work you may have to plane it down with a surform. This may involve taking the door off its hinges.

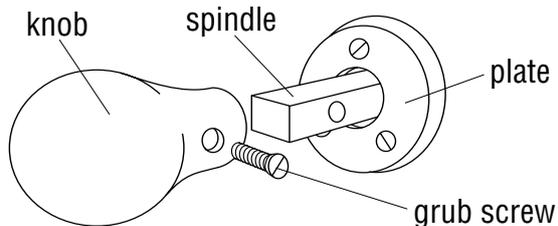
Sticking at the hinge side. If any screws are sticking out, screw them in further. If the hinges look fine it may be that one or both hinges are set too far into the door or the frame. You should try 'packing' the hinge; unscrew the side of the hinge that appears to be set too deep and put a piece of cardboard behind it before putting the screws back in.

To keep the door from moving while you work, put a wedge firmly under the door.

Replacing a set of handles (or knobs)



Replacing a set of handles



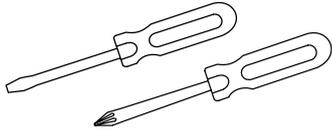
Replacing a set of knobs

Advice

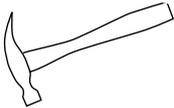
- To keep the door from moving while you work, put a wedge firmly under the door.
- Always use the right size screwdriver. It must fit tightly into the screw slot. If it doesn't, it will damage the slot and then you will not be able to unscrew it. This is particularly a problem with brass screws as brass is a very soft metal.
- If the screws on the new plate are at different places from the old plate, you will need to prepare **small** 'guiding' holes for the screws to grip into (also to make sure they go in straight).

You need

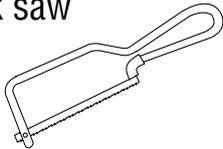
- Screwdriver -
slothead and/or
crosshead



- Hammer



- Hack saw



What to do

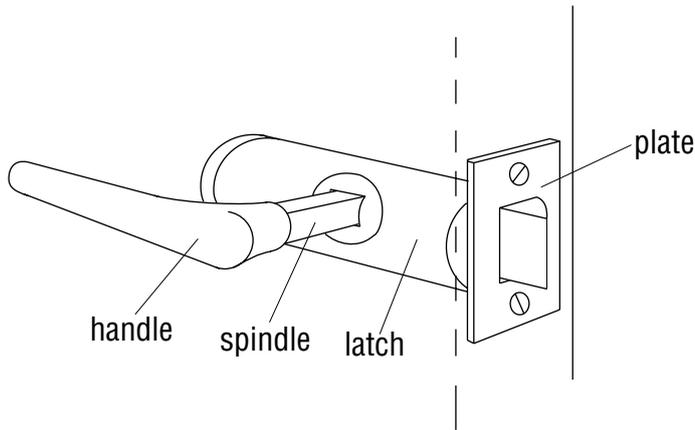
Replacing a set of handles

- 1 Unscrew the screws on the plates of the existing set of handles. Do this on both sides of the door and take out the spindle. Be sure to put something else into the hole to help you open the door in the meantime (a large screwdriver or a piece of wood).
- 2 Using a hack saw, cut the spindle of the new handle to the same length as the old one, or re-use the old spindle.
- 3 Put the new spindle into the hole in the door, slip the plate and handles into place and screw the plate on tightly. You may need to make new holes. See **Advice** on page 25.

Replacing a set of knobs

- 1 Unscrew the grub screws on the neck of the knob on both sides of the door. Take off the knob and take out the spindle.
- 2 Using a hack saw, cut the spindle of the new handle to the same length as the old one, or re-use the old spindle.
- 3 Put the new spindle into the hole in the door, slip the plate and knobs into place and tighten the grub screws on both sides.

Replacing a mortice latch (internal door)



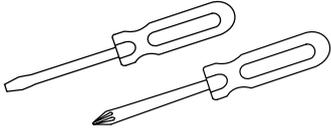
Replacing a mortice latch

Advice

- If a screw will not hold because the hole is too big you can 'pack' the hole with a match stick, cocktail stick or other small piece of soft wood before putting the screw back in.
- If the screws on the new latch go in at different places from the old latch, you will need to prepare **small** 'guiding' holes for the screws to grip into and to make sure they go in straight.

You need

- Screwdriver - slothead and/or crosshead

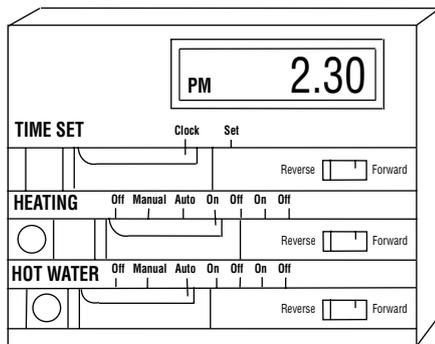
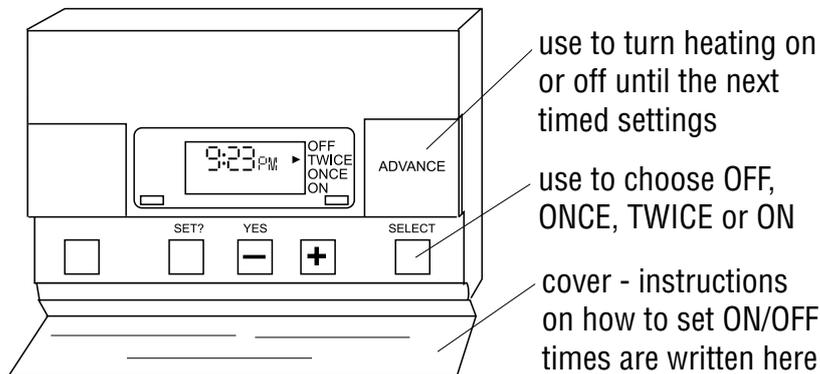


What to do

Replacing a mortice latch

- 1 Unscrew the handle on both sides and remove the spindle.
- 2 Unscrew the plate and remove the whole latch. You may need to use your screwdriver in the spindle hole to wriggle the latch loose.
- 3 Take the old latch with you when you go to buy a new one. You need to find a replacement which fits exactly into the hole taken up by the old one. Also check that the distance between the plate and the spindle is the same.
- 4 Slip the new latch into the hole and screw into place. See **Advice** on page 27.
- 5 Re-assemble the handle mechanism; first the spindle and then the handles.

Setting a digital programmer



Advice

- You can override the timings at any time: switch to **MANUAL** or **ADVANCE** depending on which type of programmer you have. If you switch to **MANUAL** you need to switch it back to **AUTO** when you want to go back to your set timings.
- On some programmers you can select **ONCE** or **TWICE**:

ONCE will come on at the start of the first setting and go off at the end of the last setting. This suits people who are at home all day.

TWICE will come on and go off at the two times you have selected - usually early morning and evening. This suits people who are away from home for most of the day.

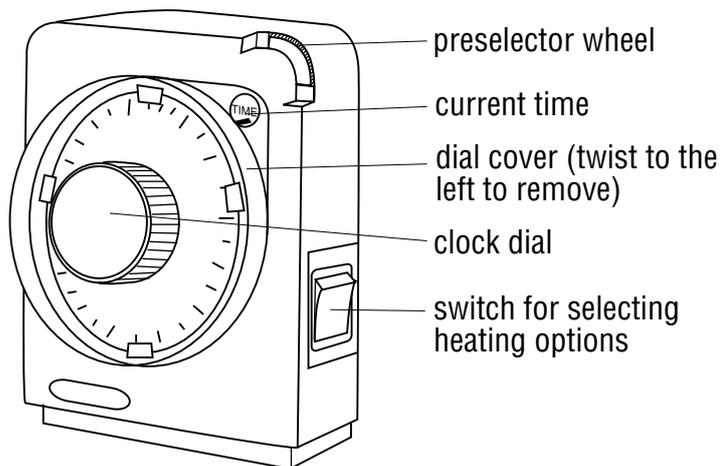
What to do

To set a digital programmer

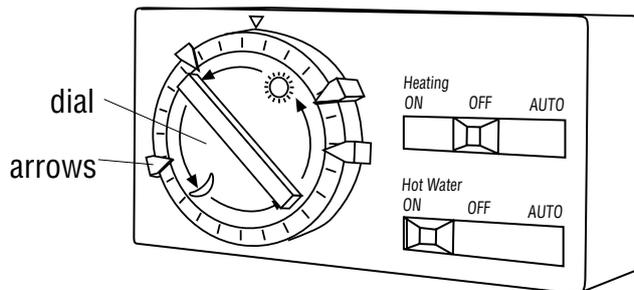
This is a general outline of how a digital programmer works. There are many different types of digital programmers and so yours may not be quite like the one shown on the opposite page. There are usually exact instructions provided with the programmer.

- 1 Check the clock is showing the correct time.
- 2 If not, switch to **CLOCK** and adjust the time setting using the **FORWARD (+)** or **REVERSE (-)** buttons.
- 3 Decide when you want your heating to come on and go off. Switch to **HEATING** and for each setting of **ON** and **OFF**, adjust the time settings using the **FORWARD (+)** or **REVERSE (-)** button to the time you want.
- 4 You may need to switch the programmer to '**AUTO**' to activate the setting.

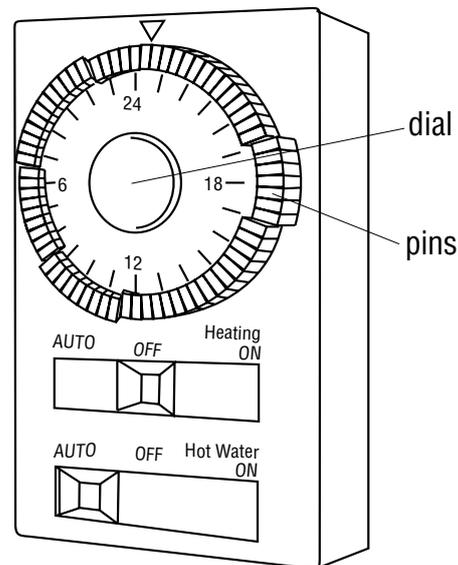
Setting on/off times with a timeclock programmer



Programmer with once/twice options



Programmer with arrows



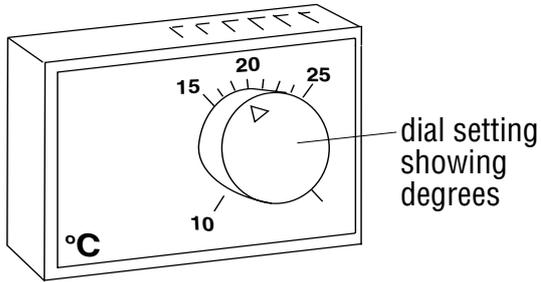
Programmer with pins

What to do

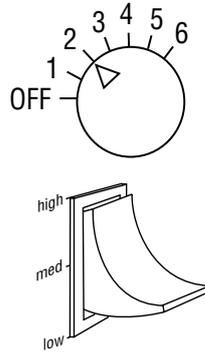
This is a general outline of how a timeclock programmer works. There are different types of timeclock programmers. Yours may not be exactly like the one shown on the opposite page. There are usually exact instructions provided with the programmer.

- 1 Check the clock is showing the correct time. If not adjust the dial.
- 2 Your timeclock will have either pins or arrows:
 - **Pins.** Push them in against the time you want the heating to come on. Pull them out against the time you want the heating to go off.
 - **Arrows.** Slide the 'on' arrows (usually red and may be marked A and C) around to the time you want the heating to come on. Slide the 'off' arrows (usually white or blue and may be marked B and D) around to the time you want the heating to go off.
- 3 Select the heating option you want: hot water only, heating only, or heating and hot water together, by sliding the switches to **AUTO** or using a heating options switch.
- 4 You can override the timings at any time by switching the programmer to **MANUAL, ON** or **OFF**. Remember to switch back to **AUTO** to go back to the fixed settings.
If you have a preselector wheel you can choose different options, for example:
 - **on until D** will keep it on all day until it reaches D;
 - **off until A** will keep it off all day until the next day.

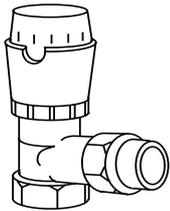
Controlling heating temperature



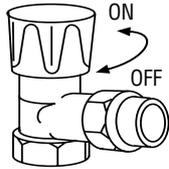
Room thermostat



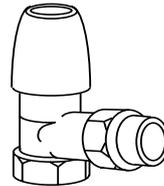
Boiler thermostats



thermostatic valve



gate valve



lockshield valve
(do not turn)

Radiator valves

Advice

- The room thermostat sets the temperature for the whole system, it checks the temperature of the area where it is fixed. If the temperature falls it switches on the heating and if the temperature rises it switches off the heating.
- A comfortable temperature is around 18 to 22 degrees.
- Radiator valves can be used to turn off the heating in individual rooms.
- Thermostatic radiator valves will adjust the temperature in individual rooms to your setting.
- The hot water temperature is set by the boiler thermostat. Modern boilers are fitted with a control that will fix a maximum hot water temperature of 62 degrees.

What to do

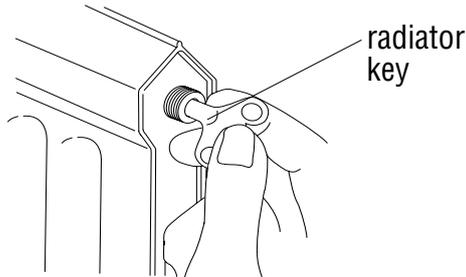
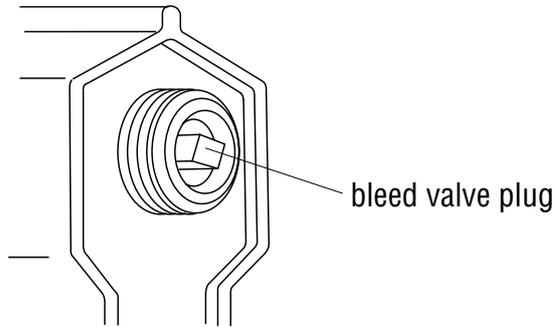
Room Heating

- 1** To set the temperature for the whole system, turn the dial on the room thermostat so that the arrow or marker is against the temperature setting you want.
- 2** To reduce the temperature in individual rooms, use the valves on the radiators:
 - one of the valves on a radiator turns the radiator on or off
 - if you have thermostatic valves, you can set these to the temperature you want for the room.

Water Heating

- 1** Your boiler may have a dial or switch for setting the water temperature.
- 2** Choose a mid range setting. You normally only need to change this for a summer and a winter setting.
- 3** The higher you set the temperature the more fuel you use.

Bleeding a radiator



Advice

- If the top part of a radiator is cold, air is trapped in the system. Bleeding the radiator releases this air and allows hot water to fill the radiator.
- If more than one radiator is cold, the whole heating system will need to be checked by a heating engineer.
- If you have a **combination** boiler you must check the water pressure before you bleed the radiator. Look at the pressure gauge on the boiler. It should be between 0.8 and 1.00 when the system is cold. If it is below this level when you start, or falls below this while you are bleeding your radiator, you must stop what you are doing. You will need to contact a qualified heating engineer to solve the problem.

You need

- Radiator key



- Rag or cloth

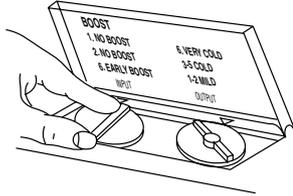


What to do

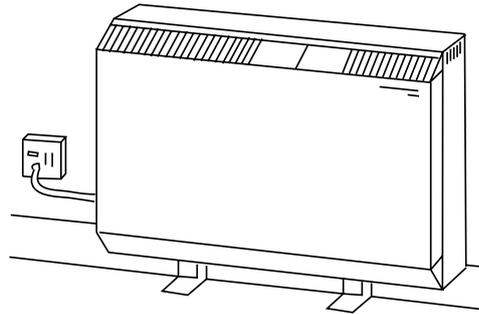
Before you start, check what type of boiler you have. If your boiler has either a pressure gauge (on the front or underside of the boiler) or a low pressure light, you have a **combination** boiler. With this type of boiler you must make sure you keep the water level topped up. See **Advice** on page 35.

- 1 Turn off the heating system.
- 2 Find the bleed valve. It is the small square nut at one end of the top of the radiator.
- 3 Place the key over the valve and hold the cloth around it to catch any water that seeps out. The water will be hot.
- 4 Loosen the valve by turning the key slowly (anti-clockwise) until you hear a hiss. This is the air being released.
- 5 **Do not** unscrew the valve completely or the plug will come out and **hot** water will pour out.
- 6 Wait until all the air has been released and a little water seeps out. Turn the key back (clockwise) to tighten up the valve again.

Using storage and panel heaters



Storage heater



If you need further guidance or advice, look in the user manual or call our Contact Centre on 0121 717 1515.

How storage heaters work

- The heaters use electricity at night when it costs less. The heat is released during the day and the heater cools off at night.
- You may be able to set your heaters to have an additional boost of heat in the afternoon or evening.
- The main heat comes from the whole surface of the heater but most heaters also have a grill at the top of the heater where any 'Boost' heat comes from.
- When you change the setting for a heater, it does not happen immediately. It will take 24 hours to come into effect. So think ahead.
- You can adjust each heater to suit your requirements for that room.
- If you do not use your heater at all, turn it off at the wall switch.

Storage heaters - how to set the heating level

There are two controls: OUTPUT and INPUT. These are usually on the top right hand side of the heater under a hinged cover.

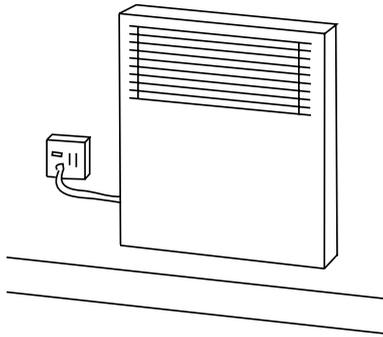
- OUTPUT sets when the heat is released. It can be the same all day (gradually cooling off in the afternoon or evening) or you can set it to have a boost in the second half of the day.
- INPUT controls the level of heat. It controls the amount of heat you need to build up in the heater overnight depending on what temperature you want and whether you want it to have a boost later in the day.

Storage heaters - getting the temperature right

- On the INPUT dial 1 = cool and 6 = hot.
- For a normal comfortable warmth set the INPUT at 4. Leave it like this until the following evening. Then decide whether you want to turn it up or down a bit. **It will take 24 hours for the heater to adjust to any new temperature you set.** As the seasons change you will need to make adjustments.

The heater will cool off towards the end of the day but if the heater has a 'Boost' facility you can use the OUTPUT control to give another boost of heat later in the day.

- Set the OUTPUT control between 6 and 3 depending on when you want the boost to happen. 6 = early afternoon and 3 = evening.
- Set it to 1 if you do not need a boost.



Panel heater

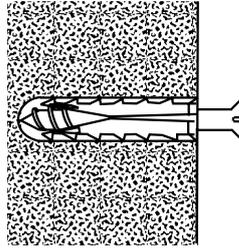
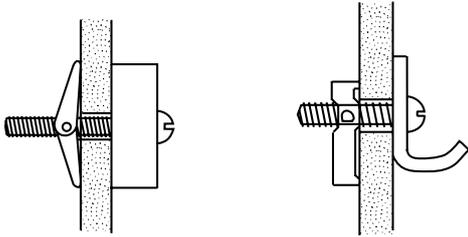
How panel heaters work

- Panel heaters are different from storage heaters. They use electricity whenever you have them on so you do not benefit from 'economy' fuel rates. You need to make sure you use the heaters efficiently.
- You set the temperature you want by using a dial you can find on the top corner of the panel.
- You can also set a switch to 'full' or 'half' heat. Half heat uses less electricity and reduces the heat on the surface of the panel.
- Some panel heaters also have a timer which you use to set when you want it to come on and go off.

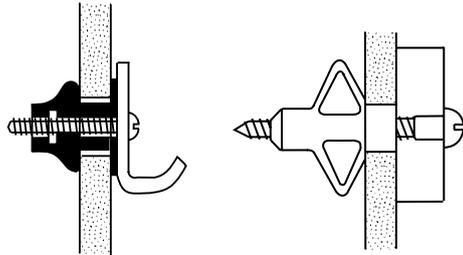
Looking after your room heater

- **Do not put anything too close to it.** There needs to be a good amount of free space around the heater to allow the heat to warm up the room properly.
- **Keep the room ventilated.** Like any form of heating there will be some fumes which need to escape. Make sure you do not block ventilation grilles. Also open windows regularly to let in fresh air.
- **Clean the heater.** This will keep it looking good and will prevent dust and dirt building up in the grill. Use a soft dry cloth. Do not use furniture polish or scratchy powders.
- **Do not cover the heater.** As the heaters are hot they can burn clothing and melt plastics etc. Make sure curtains are at least 150mm above any heater and do not put furniture too near as these can burn or become very dry and damaged.
- **Do not touch the heater with wet hands or put wet items on it.** The heaters are electrical appliances and if they get wet this will create short circuiting and electric shocks.
- **Never move the heater or take it apart.** If you decide you want to remove one of the heaters or you want to change its position, you must discuss these changes with us.
- **Do not put anything on top of the heater,** for example candles, toys or ornaments. This is a serious fire risk.
- **Don't get burnt.** The surface of the heater can get very hot and can cause burns, especially to children or elderly people. You can buy protective guards to prevent people touching the heater by mistake.

Fixing items to walls and doors



Solid wall fixing



Hollow board fixings



wood bit



masonry bit

Drill bits

- Always use the correct size and type of drill bit for the job you are doing.

Screw Size	Drill Size
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4-5-6	8
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7-8-9	10
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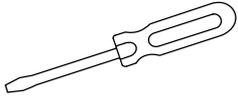
10-12	14
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13-15	16
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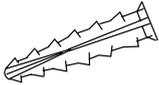
- Always use sharp drill bits.
- Before drilling check that you will not hit a water pipe or electric cable. Look to see where your light or electric power sockets are. Electric cables will usually run vertically or horizontally to these points. To be absolutely certain you can use a mini metal detector you can buy from a DIY store.

You need

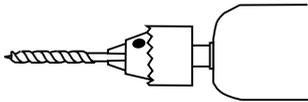
- Screwdriver



- Wall plug



- Drill and bit



What to do

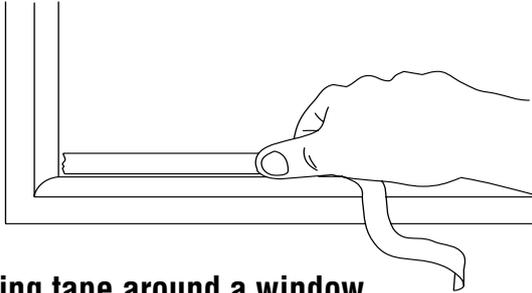
Fixing into brick or concrete

- 1 Choose a wall plug to match the screw size.
- 2 Drill a hole in the wall, about 1 cm ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch) longer than the wall plug.
- 3 Push the plug into the hole and screw the screw into the plug.

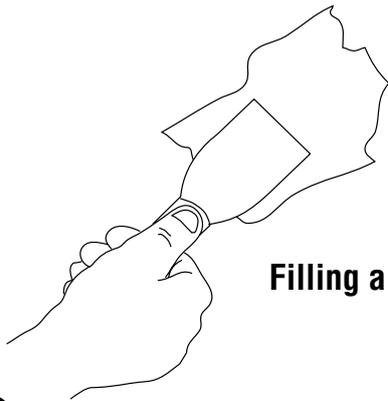
Fixing into hollow plasterboard or hollow doors

- 1 Choose one of the special plugs which expands inside to spread the load to prevent it pulling out.
- 2 Drill the hole through the plasterboard or door. Take care not to go through to the other panel of wall plasterboard or the panel on the other side of the door.
- 3 Push the plug into the hole and screw the screw into the plug. As you screw in, the toggle at the back of the plug will expand.

Decorating - preparation



Masking tape around a window



Filling a hole

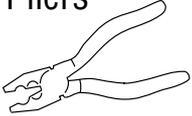
43

Advice

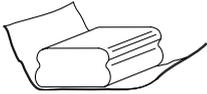
- Make sure that the room is free from dust or anything else that might settle on the paint before it dries.
- Cover all furniture and carpets to protect them from dust and paint.
- Make sure children and pets do not come into the room.
- Wear old clothes or overalls and rubber gloves to prevent yourself from getting covered in paint or dust.
- Open a window to allow any paint fumes to escape.
- If you want to put up wallpaper, you need to plan this carefully and get various pieces of equipment. It is best to buy a good DIY book and read about it before deciding to go ahead.

You need

- Pliers



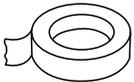
- Sandpaper



- Cloth and sugarsoap



- Masking tape



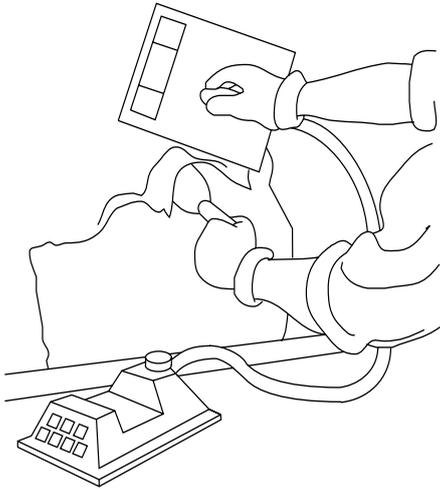
- Filler paste



What to do

- 1** Remove any picture hooks or nails with pliers, and fill in any small holes or cracks with filler paste.
- 2** Check for any weakness in the plaster by tapping a few areas. If it sounds hollow you need to get the area replastered professionally.
- 3** Rub down plaster or wood with sand paper to loosen any previous paint that is flaking, to make the surface even (particularly if you have done filling), and to roughen the surface to help the paint to hold. If you cannot get an even surface for painting you should put up lining paper.
- 4** Run a strip of masking tape around the edge of glass panes to prevent any paint getting on the glass. Also, protect the floor or carpet just next to any skirting you are planning to paint.
- 5** Loosen or remove any handles, knockers, keyholes, switches and sockets etc, or surround them with masking tape.
- 6** Wipe down all surfaces with warm water and sugar soap or washing-up liquid to take off any dust and grease.

Decorating - wallpaper stripping



Holding a steamer against a wall



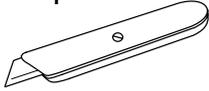
Lifting the wallpaper with a scraper

Advice

- If you want to paint where there is already wallpaper, you do not necessarily need to strip the wallpaper off - it can provide a good smooth surface to paint onto.
- When using a wallpaper scraper take care not to damage the plaster.
- When using a steamer, follow the instructions **precisely**. You can easily damage the wall plaster if you hold the steamer against the wall for too long.
- If you want to put up wallpaper, you need to plan this carefully and get various pieces of equipment. It is a good idea to buy a good DIY book and read about it before deciding to go ahead.

You need

- Sharp knife



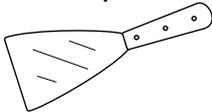
- Cloth



- Bucket of water

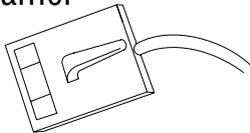


- Wall scraper



or

- Steamer



What to do

Before you start, use a sharp knife to cut lines about 2 cm apart in a criss-cross pattern on the existing wallpaper. This allows the water or steam to get underneath.

Warm water

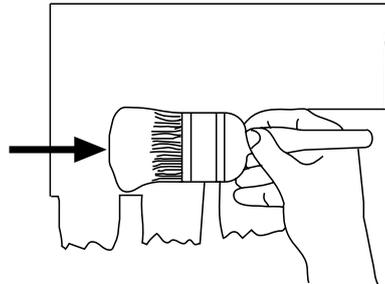
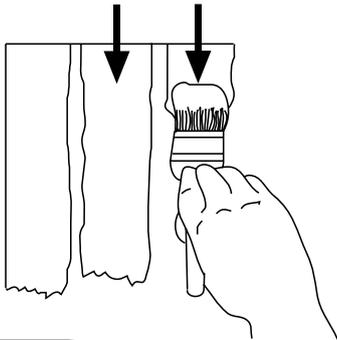
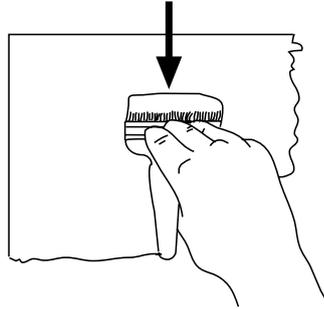
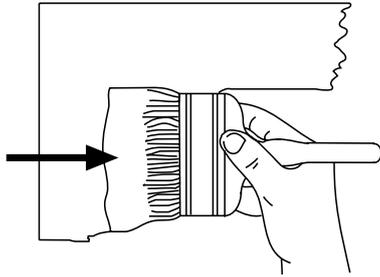
- 1 Soak a cloth or sponge in warm water and wipe it generously over an area of wallpaper. Allow it to soak in for a while.
- 2 Lift the paper using the scraper. If it is still quite dry underneath you need to soak it again.

Steaming

- 1 Wait until the steam is coming out of the plate and then hold it flat against the wallpaper for **10 seconds (no longer!)**. The wallpaper should come away easily using a wall scraper. Test out a small area first.
- 2 Continue around the room moving the plate to the area immediately next to the one you have just done.

After the paper has come off, the wall may be slippery with the old glue. Wash it off with water and washing-up liquid.

Decorating - painting



Choosing paint and brushes

- For walls, you need a **water-based** paint (emulsion) and wide brushes or you might use a roller. Emulsion paint is available in either a matt (non-shiny) finish or a silk/sheen (shiny) finish.
- For bathrooms and kitchens where there is a lot of steam you can get special paints that you can wipe down.
- For woodwork (for example window cills or skirting), you will need an **oil-based** paint. You may also need a primer paint if the wood is new or repaired.
- Always follow the instructions on the tin of paint.

You need

- Brushes



- Damp cloth



- Paint tin

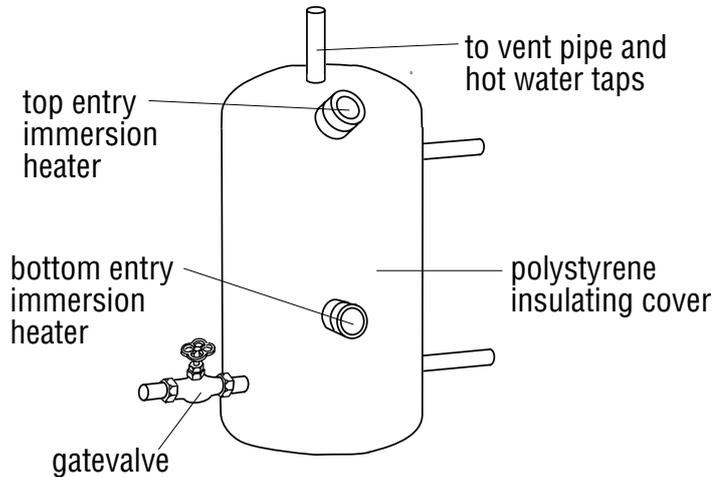


What to do

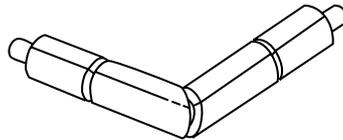
Painting

- 1** Check on the tin of paint to see whether you need to stir the pot before you start. If you are using a roller you need to fill the deeper end of the paint tray with paint.
- 2** Dip your brush or roller into the paint. Don't try to hold too much paint on it or it will drip everywhere. You can use the shallow part of the tray to spread the paint evenly on the roller.
- 3** Apply paint evenly with strokes that just overlap. Work the strokes from side to side first, then up and down. If you use a roller you may need to use a brush to get a clean finish at the edges and corners.
- 4** Do one covering and let it dry completely. It will look different when dry. If necessary go over it again to get an even finish.
- 5** Clean brushes carefully so you can use them again. There are usually instructions on the tin of paint you have used.
- 7** Do not close windows or doors, re-attach handles, put furniture back in place, or re-hang curtains until the paint is completely dry. Oil-based paints take quite a long time to dry.

Effective use of heat

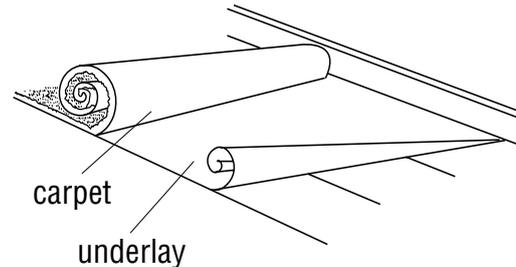


Hot water cylinder



Lagged pipes

- In very cold weather keep a low background heat on all the time.
- Remember all properties need ventilation to prevent condensation and the build up of fumes. Open some windows on warmer days to allow a change of air.



What to do

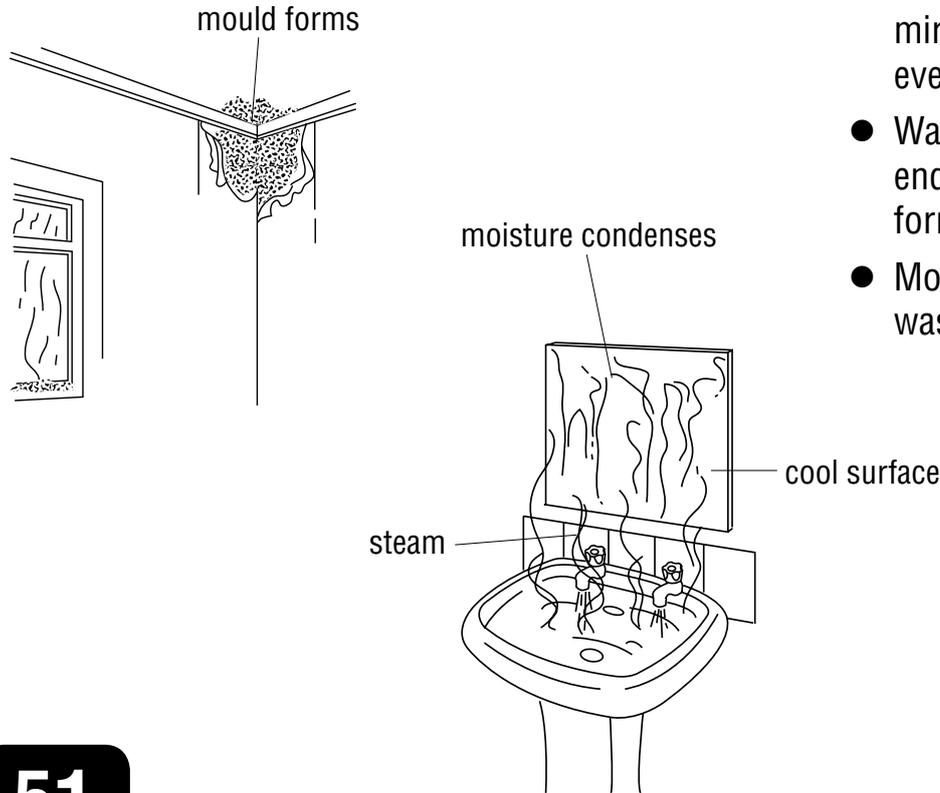
1 Prevent cold air coming in from outside:

- fit draught excluders around doors, window frames, letterplates etc.
- use thick curtains and tuck them onto window cills
- close internal doors when moving from room to room
- take particular care to close internal doors when opening external doors.

2 Keep the heat for as long as possible:

- do not cover radiators with curtains or furniture
- put a good underlay under carpets
- put lagging around hot water pipes.

Dealing with condensation



- Moist air condenses on cool surfaces such as outside walls, mirrors, wall tiles, windows and even some clothes.
- Warm moist air rises and often ends up in colder bedrooms and forms mould.
- Moisture is produced by cooking, washing and the use of gas.

What to do

1 Control excess moisture:

- close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into other colder rooms
- open kitchen and bathroom windows when cooking or washing so that steam can escape
- open some windows in other rooms for a while each day to allow a change of air
- avoid using bottled gas heaters
- wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould
- do not block air vents.

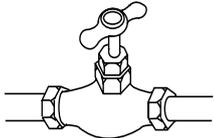
2 Produce less moisture:

- dry clothes outdoors whenever possible, otherwise use well ventilated rooms
- cover pans when cooking
- vent any tumble driers to the outside.

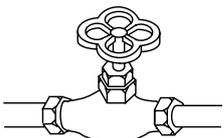
3 Keep your house warm:

- take steps to prevent heat loss
- maintain low background heat.

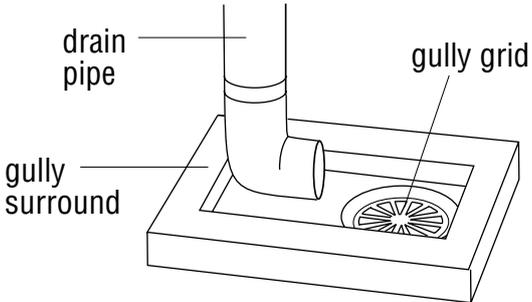
Care of the home



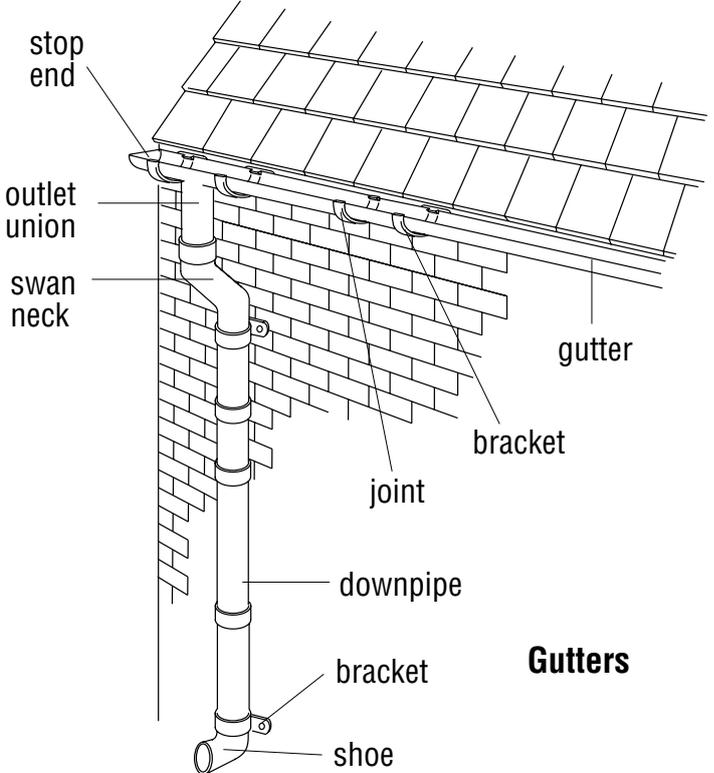
Stoptap



Gate valve



Gully



What to do

Regular jobs you can do

- 1 **Windows:** wipe down sills to remove condensation puddles.
- 2 **Wastepipes:** clean through sink wastes with a clearing solution*.
- 3 **Limescale:** remove limescale from kettles and taps with a descaling solution*.
- 4 **Gullies:** clear any leaves or debris from covers.
- 5 **Hinges and locks:** lubricate with a little lubricating oil*.
- 6 **Taps:** rewasher any dripping taps.

Regular checks for repairs

- 1 **Stoptaps and gatevalves:** can you turn them freely?
- 2 **Roofs:** are any tiles or slates loose or missing?
- 3 **Gutters and downpipes:** are any leaking or blocked?
- 4 **Heating:** has the system been serviced?

* Always check for manufacturer's instructions and be sure to follow them.

Saving energy and water

Why make the effort?

- From a purely personal point of view it will save you money.
- To protect the environment by reducing carbon dioxide emissions (CO₂) which is one of the main gases that are causing global warming and climate change. Around a quarter (25%) of all CO₂ emissions released into the air come from the gas, electricity or solid fuel we use in our homes. Every effort you make to reduce emissions makes a little bit of difference.
- Weather patterns are changing and we are getting many more periods without rain. We are also using much more water per household than we used to. This means that water supplies run out more easily. You can save a lot of water by controlling how much you use.

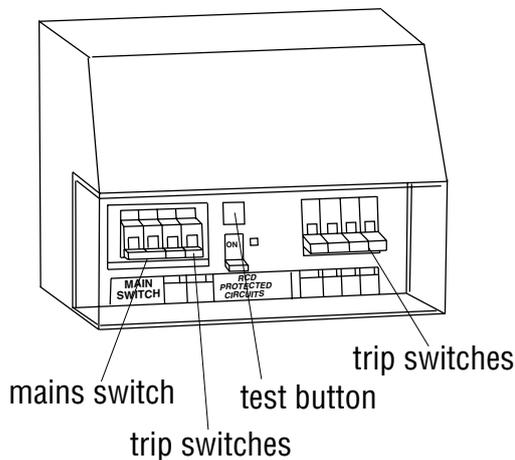
Save water

- If you have a garden, collect rainwater in a water butt and use this to water your plants.
- If you have a shower, use it instead of a bath and don't run taps while you clean your teeth or wash up.
- Make sure no taps are dripping. If a tap drips for a week, it wastes enough water to fill half a bath. Remember, a dripping hot water tap wastes water **and** energy.
- Wait until you have a full load of washing before using your washing machine.
- If you wash your car at home, use a bucket - not a hosepipe - and use water from your water butt.

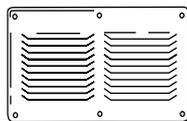
Use less electricity and gas

- Fit energy efficient light bulbs. They will last about 12 times longer and use much less electricity.
- Switch off the lights when you are not using a room and switch off electrical goods, such as your TV, video, DVD or computer at the socket. This is because they continue to use up electricity when they are left on standby. For the same reason, do not leave mobile phones or other items on charge. When they have finished charging switch off the charger at the socket.
- Don't have your water too hot. The thermostat on your cylinder should be no higher than 60°C.
- When washing clothes, put a full load into your machine. Also, use an economy or low temperature programme. Whenever possible, dry your clothes on a washing line outside.
- Whenever possible buy A-rated electrical goods as they save energy.
- When boiling the kettle, only put as much water as you need (but always cover the element).
- Turn your heating down. Every one degree you turn it down will cut your bill by about 10%.
- In winter, stop draughts and loss of heat by fitting draught excluders if your windows and doors do not fit tightly, and draw your curtains at night.
- Use your fridge and freezer efficiently:
 - do not position them next to a cooker or radiator
 - let food cool down before you put it in the fridge or freezer
 - fill any empty space with piles of newspaper placed inside plastic bags.

Electrical safety



**Consumer unit
(Trip switches)**



Air vent

- Use the correct fuses in plugs.
- Check flexes and plugs regularly to ensure there are no loose or bare wires.
- Isolate any faulty socket or switch by switching off the trip switch at the consumer unit.
- **Do not** touch wet fittings or exposed wires.
- **Do not** overload sockets. Have no more than a total of 13 amps on each socket.

Different electrical appliances use different fuses inside the plug:

3 amp (Red) table lamp, radio, clock, stereo, TV*, computer.

5 amp (Black) iron, vacuum cleaner, hair drier, TV*, video, drill, food mixer, toaster, fridge or fridge freezer.

13 amp (Brown) electric fire, kettle, washing machine, microwave*, freezer, fat fryer.

*Check the advice on your appliance instruction leaflet.

Gas safety

Smell of gas - take action immediately

- 1 **Turn off your gas supply.** Put the lever in the horizontal position.
- 2 **Open the doors and windows** to let fresh air in.
- 3 **Don't smoke, use a lighter or switch anything electrical on or off,** including lights, until the problem is fixed.
- 4 **Get out of the building** if you can still smell gas.
- 5 **Phone National Grid (Gas) immediately on 0800 111999** using a phone outside your home. **DO NOT use a phone inside your home** - not even a mobile phone or your intercom system because this could spark an explosion.



Mains gas tap

Gas safety

- **Do not** seal off or obstruct vents in walls and doors.
- Check gas appliances for signs of poor functioning - orange flame or staining around the burner.
- When putting in new gas appliances, always use CORGI registered installers. CORGI registered installers are members of the Council of Registered Gas Installers. **Note.** You must get our permission to put in any new gas appliances.
- We arrange for gas appliances in the property (apart from your own appliances) to be serviced once a year by a CORGI registered engineer. It is your responsibility to have your own appliances serviced once a year by a CORGI registered engineer at your own cost.

Contact information

You can contact us about all housing enquiries and repairs by:

- phoning 0121 717 1515 (24 hours)
- sending a text message to 07781 474722
- e-mailing **info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk**
- visiting our website **www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk**
- visiting an area housing office or Solihull Connect
- writing to us at:

Freepost RLSS-UEBA-RTUZ
Solihull Community Housing
Endeavour House
Meriden Drive
Solihull B37 6BX

This guide will help you do some basic tasks in your home. If you would like the information in this guide in another language, in **large print** or on audio tape, please phone 0121 717 1515.

Ce guide vous aidera à effectuer quelques tâches de base chez vous. Si vous souhaitez les informations contenues dans ce guide dans une autre langue, en **caractères larges** ou sur cassette audio, veuillez appeler le 0121 717 1515.

French

این راهنما در زمینه انجام برخی کارهای ساده در منزل به شما کمک می کند. اگر می خواهید اطلاعات درج شده در این راهنما را به زبانی دیگر، با حروف بزرگ چاپی یا بروی نوار داشته باشید، لطفاً به شماره 0121 717 1515 تلفن کنید.

Farsi

دا لارښود به تاسو سره په خپل کور کښې د ځینې اساسي کارونو کولو کښې مرسته وکړي. که تاسو غواړئ چې په دې لارښود کښې ورکړي شوي معلومات په بله ژبه کښې، په غټ چاپ کښې یا غږېدونکي تېپ (audio tape) باندې تر لاسه کړئ، نو لطفاً په دې شمېره باندې تېلېفون وکړئ 0121 717 1515.

Pushto

Warning.

The information contained in this

handbook is not definitive and is for guidance only.

While all reasonable care has been taken in the preparation

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