

OTTAWA WINDOW PROS

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# Window & Door Maintenance

Cleaning, weatherstripping, hardware care, and  
extending window lifespan

5 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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Q1

## Can I replace the weather stripping on my windows myself or is that a pro job?

**Yes, you can definitely replace window weatherstripping yourself** - it's one of the most DIY-friendly window maintenance tasks and doesn't require special tools or expertise.

**Weatherstripping replacement is straightforward** because you're simply removing old material and installing new strips in the same channels. Most residential windows use foam tape, V-strip, or tubular rubber weatherstripping that presses or slides into place. The biggest challenge is usually just removing stubborn old adhesive residue, which comes off with a plastic scraper and some patience.

**For Ottawa's climate, this is actually an important annual maintenance task** since our temperature swings from -30°C to +30°C put serious stress on weatherstripping materials. You'll typically need to replace it every 2-4 years depending on window quality and exposure. The investment is minimal - usually \$20-50 in materials for a whole house - but the energy savings can be significant during our long heating season.

**Choose the right type for your windows:** foam tape for casement windows, V-strip for double-hung sashes, and tubular rubber for sliding windows. Make sure to clean the channels thoroughly before installation and measure twice since most weatherstripping can't be easily repositioned once applied.

**The only time you'd want professional help** is if you discover the weatherstripping channels are damaged, the window frame is warped, or you're dealing with very old windows where the weatherstripping system isn't obvious. Otherwise, this is a perfect weekend project that immediately improves comfort and reduces energy bills.

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Q2

## What's the best way to clean out the grimy tracks on sliding windows?

**Regular cleaning of sliding window tracks prevents buildup and keeps your windows operating smoothly.** Start by vacuuming out loose debris with a narrow attachment, then use a damp cloth or old toothbrush to scrub away grime.

For stubborn buildup, create a cleaning solution with warm water and a few drops of dish soap. **Spray or apply the solution to the tracks and let it sit for 5-10 minutes** to break down accumulated dirt, pollen, and grease. An old toothbrush works perfectly for scrubbing in the corners and crevices where grime tends to collect. For really tight spaces, wrap a thin cloth around a butter knife to reach into the track channels.

**In Ottawa's climate, window tracks collect extra debris from seasonal changes** - salt residue from winter, pollen in spring, and dust from summer construction. Pay special attention to the weep holes (small drainage openings) at the bottom of the track, as these can get clogged and cause water backup issues. Use a thin wire or toothpick to clear these holes.

After cleaning, **dry the tracks thoroughly and apply a small amount of silicone spray lubricant** to keep the window sliding smoothly. Avoid using oil-based lubricants as these attract more dirt. For vinyl windows, you can also use a small amount of car wax on the tracks for smoother operation.

**Clean your window tracks every 3-4 months** to prevent major buildup. If your sliding windows are consistently difficult to operate even after cleaning, the tracks may be worn or the window may need professional adjustment or replacement.

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Q3

## My window screens keep popping out - how do I fix that?

**Window screens that keep popping out are usually caused by worn springs, bent frames, or improper sizing** - most of these issues can be fixed with simple adjustments or replacement parts.

The most common culprit is **worn or damaged screen springs**. These small metal springs in the screen frame create tension to hold the screen in place. Over time, they lose their spring tension or break completely. You can replace these springs by carefully removing the screen, taking it to a hardware store to match the spring type, and installing new ones. The springs should create enough tension that you need to compress the screen slightly to fit it back in the window frame.

**Bent or warped screen frames** are another frequent cause. If your screen frame has been damaged or has warped over time, it won't sit properly in the window tracks. For minor bends, you can carefully straighten aluminum frames by hand or with pliers. However, severely damaged frames should be replaced entirely - a new screen frame typically costs \$20-40 and can be custom-sized at most hardware stores.

**In Ottawa's climate**, temperature changes cause window frames to expand and contract, which can affect how screens fit. Check that your screens are the right size for the current season. Sometimes screens that fit perfectly in summer become loose in winter as the window frame contracts. Also inspect the **window tracks** for debris, paint buildup, or damage that might prevent the screen from seating properly.

If the springs and frame look fine, the issue might be **improper installation technique**. When installing screens, compress them slightly and insert the bottom first, then push the top into place until you hear or feel it click into the

tracks.

For screens that continue to pop out despite these fixes, or if you're dealing with multiple problematic screens, it might be time to consider replacement screens or even new windows if the window frames themselves are warped. For a free assessment of your window screens and frames, Ottawa Window Pros can evaluate whether repair or replacement is the better option.

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Q4

## What is the best window hardware finish for durability?

**Bronze and dark bronze finishes typically offer the best durability for window hardware**, as they resist corrosion and wear better than lighter finishes while hiding minor scratches and weathering that naturally occur over time.

The most durable window hardware finishes are those that can withstand Ottawa's harsh climate conditions, including temperature swings from -30°C winters to +35°C summers, plus high humidity and UV exposure. **Bronze, oil-rubbed bronze, and dark bronze finishes** excel because they're often applied using powder coating or anodizing processes that create a thick, protective barrier against the elements. These darker finishes also naturally camouflage the small scratches and wear marks that inevitably develop on frequently-used hardware like window cranks, locks, and handles.

**White and almond finishes** are also highly durable options, especially when they're baked-on powder coated finishes rather than painted. These lighter colors work well with vinyl windows and don't absorb as much heat, which can help prevent thermal expansion issues. However, they may show dirt and minor scratches more readily than darker finishes. **Brushed nickel and stainless steel finishes** offer excellent corrosion resistance but can show fingerprints and water spots more easily, requiring more frequent cleaning to maintain their appearance.

In Ottawa's climate, avoid **bright brass or gold-tone finishes** unless they're specifically designed for exterior use, as these can tarnish or fade when exposed to UV rays and moisture. The key is ensuring whatever finish you choose is properly applied - quality powder coating or anodizing will always outperform basic paint, regardless of color.

When selecting windows, ask your installer about the specific coating process used on the hardware. **Quality manufacturers typically offer 10-20 year warranties on their hardware finishes**, which is a good indicator of expected durability. For the longest-lasting performance, match your hardware finish to your window frame color when possible, as this creates a cohesive look that ages gracefully together.

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Q5

## What causes window frames to rot, and can it be repaired?

**Window frame rot is primarily caused by moisture infiltration** that allows wood-destroying fungi to break down the cellular structure of wooden frames. This typically occurs when water penetrates through failed caulking,

damaged weatherstripping, or compromised window seals.

**Moisture sources** that lead to frame rot include rain penetration around the window perimeter, condensation buildup from poor ventilation, ice dam formation in Ottawa's harsh winters, and failed flashing or improper installation. Wood frames are particularly vulnerable because they absorb moisture, creating ideal conditions for fungal growth. The freeze-thaw cycles common in Ottawa's climate accelerate this deterioration by expanding trapped moisture and creating cracks where more water can enter.

**Minor surface rot can sometimes be repaired** using wood hardeners and epoxy fillers, but this is typically a temporary solution. The repair process involves cutting away all rotted material, treating with fungicide, applying wood hardener to strengthen remaining wood, and filling with epoxy compound. However, if rot has penetrated deeply into the frame structure or affected the window's structural integrity, replacement is the only reliable long-term solution.

**In Ottawa's climate**, wooden window frames face significant challenges from temperature extremes, high humidity, and frequent precipitation. Modern vinyl, fiberglass, or aluminum frames eliminate rot concerns entirely while providing superior energy efficiency. These materials don't absorb moisture and maintain their structural integrity through Ottawa's harsh seasonal changes.

**Prevention is always more cost-effective** than repair or replacement. Regular maintenance including annual caulking inspection, prompt weatherstripping replacement, and ensuring proper drainage around windows can extend frame life significantly. For homes with recurring rot issues, upgrading to rot-resistant materials during replacement makes financial sense.

For a professional assessment of your window frame condition and replacement options, Ottawa Window Pros can evaluate whether repair is viable or if replacement would be more cost-effective for your specific situation.

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