



Home Maintenance Guide

Congratulations, you have moved into your new Shield home! Here's a guide to keeping your home in the best condition for years to come.

Shrinkage

During the construction of your new home, materials will have absorbed a great deal of moisture. As your new home is now lived in and heated, various parts will naturally dry and shrink. This can cause small cracks in the plaster especially between plasterwork and woodwork – such as where door frames and skirting touch walls.

Shrinkage affects all new homes and you can minimise the effects by keeping your home well ventilated and not overheating it for at least the first 12 to 18 months. The quicker it dries out the more pronounced the effects of shrinkage will be.

To help assist the drying out process, your walls and ceilings will have been painted in a breathable emulsion. This provides an attractive finish, while allowing moisture from the building fabric to escape. This paint is essential to the process but will be less durable if rubbed or scuffed.

Repairing shrinkage cracks

Shrinkage cracks smaller than 2mm wide, or 4mm on staircases, would be classed as normal home maintenance and repairs would not be covered by your warranty.

Cracks in plasterwork

Follow these simple steps for a neat and tidy repair of fine cracks along walls.

You will need:

- A filling knife
- Filler, either powdered or ready to use
- 80-grit sandpaper and a sanding block
- Paint and brushes



Step by step:

1. Put a protective floor covering down directly under the crack you wish to repair.
2. Use the corner of the filling knife to widen the cracks you wish to fill. Drag the edge of the knife through the crack, raking out a little of the plaster to make sure that the gaps are large enough to push filler into. Run a dry paintbrush along the crack to brush out any loose dust.
3. If using powdered filler mix up a little of the filler according to the manufacturer's instructions. Wipe the areas to be filled with a damp cloth immediately before applying the filler to help it stick to the surfaces.
4. Using the filling knife, push filler firmly into the cracks and flatten down. Leave it to dry.
5. Lightly sand back the filled surface until the filler is level with the rest of the wall.
6. Wipe with a damp cloth to remove dust and paint to match the rest of the wall.

Cracks around skirting boards and door frames

The most common effect of shrinkage is the appearance of cracks between woodwork and walls. Fortunately, repairing these is pretty straightforward.

You will need:

- A tube of white decorators' caulk
- A sealant gun
- A sharp knife

Step by step:

- Put a protective floor covering down directly under the crack you wish to repair.
- Unscrew the nozzle from the tube of caulk and cut off the sealed end.
- Replace the nozzle and trim the end at about a 45-degree angle.



- Place the tube into the sealant gun and use it to squeeze out a line of caulk along the crack. You should aim to trail with the longer side of the angled nozzle, as this will help to push it into the crack.
- Finally, wet your finger and run it smoothly along the bead of caulk. This should produce a smooth finish along the join between wood and plaster.
- Leave to dry and paint as necessary.

Repairing nail pops

‘Nail pops’ are a common result of shrinkage and settlement (when the various parts of a new building dry out after construction), and appear as raised, round bumps on walls and ceilings. Follow the guide below to fix them.

You will need:

- A hammer
- A punch, or a long nail or screw
- A filling knife
- Filler, either powdered or ready to use
- 80-grit sandpaper and a sanding block
- Paint and brushes

Step by step:

1. Although we call this issue ‘nail pops’, plasterboard is always screwed into place.
2. Put a dust sheet or other protective floor covering down directly under the crack you wish to repair.
3. Use the corner of the filling knife to dig out any plaster directly over the head of the screw that has ‘popped’.



4. Place the tip of your punch, nail or screw onto the head of the screw that has popped and strike the head firmly with a hammer to drive the screw into the wall so that it sits well below the plastered surface.
5. Use a dry paint brush to brush out any loose dust from the area.
6. If using powdered filler, mix up a little of the filler according to the manufacturer's instructions. Immediately before applying the filler, wipe the areas to be filled with a damp cloth to help it stick to the surfaces in question.
7. Using the filling knife, push filler firmly into the hole and flatten down. Leave it just a little proud of the surface and allow to dry.
8. Lightly sand back the filled surface until it's level with the rest of the area.
9. Wipe once more with a damp cloth to remove dust and paint to match the rest of the area.

Condensation

During the drying out period (which can last anything from six months to two years), your home will be more susceptible to condensation, which can cause staining and even mould. We recommend:

- You keep the trickle vents in windows open at all time, including winter.
- Open windows as often as possible.
- When cooking or having a bath or shower, please use the extractor fan. This will reduce the amount of steam.
- Any condensation that does form should be wiped up to prevent damage from occurring.
- Don't dry clothes or towels inside or on radiators.



Preventing black residue around internal door hinges

Internal door hinges should be regularly lubricated using a 3-in-1 oil to prevent dry friction. Please do not use a non-silicon-based product such as WD-40, as this is not a suitable lubricant for this purpose.

How to look after tile grout and mastic

- After each bath or shower, we recommend you wipe any moisture off your tiles to help maintain their appearance and prevent build-up of dirt.
- Any mildew that does appear should be cleaned with a suitable household cleaning product.
- You should check your grout and mastic regularly and carry out any repairs as required or every 6 months. It is the homeowners responsibility to do this.





What colour are the walls painted?

We use a standard paint colour on our internal walls; Dulux White Cotton Matt Emulsion.

Can I put up wallpaper?

Yes, however we do not advise making any home improvements such as wallpapering during the first 12 months, whilst your home dries out.

Guttering and downpipes

Your gutters can get clogged with debris and leaves, especially during the autumn. Cleaning gutters regularly is an important part of home maintenance. Working high up can be dangerous, so if in doubt, call in a qualified tradesperson to do this.

How often do I need to treat external woodwork?

- External finishes will dull over time and, where appropriate, should be washed on a regular basis.
- Outside woodwork should be regularly repainted or stained to preserve the wood.
- The first repainting outside will probably be needed after 2 years.

I have a pest control issue with my property, what should I do?

Wasps, mice and other pests can enter any home, this is not normally caused by a build defect. If you do experience an issue, please contact a professional pest control company for further advice.