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# How to install a new window sill without taking the window out

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07-13-10 07:19 PM

#1

**RONBOB**  
Member

Join Date: Jul 2010  
Location: USA  
Posts: 1

I have a fairly new 96" wide window, but the sill is rotten all the way under the frame? (not sure of the proper terminology) of the window. The "frame" is metal/vinyl. My thought is that being this long if I just take the whole sill inside and out, how do you replace the sill without the whole window falling? The interior is gutted down to the studs. Any help would be welcomed.  
Thanks

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07-15-10 04:26 PM

#2

**Just Bill**  
MemberJoin Date: Oct 2006  
Location: Wilmington  
Posts: 4,142

The sill has little to do with the window support. It can be replaced, but it may or may not be simple. Pics would help us considerably, as well as manufacturer of window.

need project

Type of job:

ZIP:

search

07-16-10 05:27 AM

#3

**marksr**  
Forum Topic ModeratorJoin Date: Mar 2005  
Location: east tenn  
Posts: 20,527

<http://forum.doityourself.com/electr...your-post.html>

btw - *welcome to the forums!*

retired painter/contractor 😊 avid DIYer

08-10-10 05:30 PM

#4

**indiy**  
MemberJoin Date: Jul 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 14

I have a similar problem and hope for some help. I have Weathershield windows and have been able to get replacement parts, the sill and the sill nose. I have replaced the sill nose in the past and have attempted to repair the sill but it does not work well.

I had one sill replaced by a company and they did it without needing to take off any interior trim. I am hoping to do the same.

My only issue is that I have not done this before and am wondering how the sill fits in place since it normally sits on an angle and is somehow attached to the bottom of the window. I don't think that I will have an issue with removing the sill and cutting off any nails or staples where it is attached, but how is the sill kept on a slant and tight up against the bottom of the window without needing to take out the whole window? What am I missing?

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Last edited by indiy; 08-10-10 at 06:06 PM.

08-10-10 06:11 PM

#5



**XSleepers**  
Member

Join Date: Dec 2004  
Location: Midwest/Plains  
Posts: 7,890

The sides of the window (jambs) are long enough to extend beyond the bottom of the sill, and they have a dado in them that the sill fits in between. The jambs are then stapled to the ends of the sill.

The best way to cut out an old sill is to carefully reciprocate the sill into a minimum of three pieces. If you cut a couple inches away from the side jambs, you will be able to remove the center piece (interior finish nails will be holding it to the stool or casing, so be careful removing it. Then the side pieces that are left can usually be split with a chisel, and the staples can be snapped off.

As you reinstall the new sill, be sure it is the correct length, and use a block of wood to tap it into place. Insert some insulation under the sill before you tap it all the way back. Once it's in place you probably won't be able to remove it, so there likely won't be any "test fits".

When you remove the sill nose, there may be a finish nail through the bottom of the sill nose, and into the brickmould. Watch out for that if you want to save / reuse the brickmould.

08-10-10 06:27 PM

#6



**indiy**  
Member

Join Date: Jul 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 14

Thanks. So the intent is to slide the new jamb into the existing dado, correct? I think the left jamb may be a little weathered as well, but it sounds like removing the existing sill should not be hard.

I installed the sill nose in the picture, so it is newer than the sill. When I installed it, I did not drive nails up into the jamb. Should I?

Also, would it be helpful to fully prime all sides of the sill before installing?

And when the sill nose is installed, should it be caulked as well, or just nailed in?

08-10-10 07:37 PM

#7

Join Date: Aug 2010

Location:  
Posts:USA  
55

Xsleeper,  
Very good how-to. Thanks I can use that.

08-10-10 08:23 PM

#8

Join Date: Dec 2004  
Location: Midwest/Plains  
Posts: 7,890 Originally Posted by **indiy**

Thanks. So the intent is to slide the new jamb into the existing dado, correct? I think the left jamb may be a little weathered as well, but it sounds like removing the existing sill should not be hard.

Exactly. In some cases, if the sill is really rotten, the dado will also be rotten. If that's the case you just need to make some triangle shaped wedges that will support the sill and keep it at the proper height. You can make these wedges out of anything you like and nail them to the subsill. The main thing is getting them the right height, since if the rough opening is out of level, the wedge on one side might need to be thicker than the other. After the sill is in, you'll want to try and toenail it to the jamb sides. A couple trim screws on each side work well.

 Originally Posted by **indiy**

I installed the sill nose in the picture, so it is newer than the sill. When I installed it, I did not drive nails up into the jamb. Should I?

You can, but if you have a tight fit, and the sill nose doesn't gap open when you put a little downward pressure on it, I wouldn't worry about it.

 Originally Posted by **indiy**

Also, would it be helpful to fully prime all sides of the sill before installing?

ABSOLUTELY! Prime \*and\* paint all sides if you have the time. This is the best thing you can do to help wood nowadays hold paint.

 Originally Posted by **indiy**

And when the sill nose is installed, should it be caulked as well, or just nailed in?

You can caulk it, just to help keep water out of the joint.

 Originally Posted by **Oldblades**

Xsleeper,  
Very good how-to. Thanks I can use that.

Thanks for the kudos, Oldblades!

08-11-10 04:50 PM

#9

Join Date: Jul 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 14

Thanks, I hope to try it this weekend. Will let you know how it goes and maybe send a few pictures of the

process.

08-14-10 02:44 PM

#10

**indiy**  
Member

Join Date: Jul 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 14

Well for anyone interested, here is how I replaced my window sill. I did get a replacement sill and sill nose from a local Weathershield supplier, but my guess is that standard wood or pvc sill would work as well. This was actually quite simple and took less than 2 hours for my first one. I intend to do about 6 more when it cools off.

Window with rotted sill. Brick mold and jamb slightly damaged. Brick mold to be replaced in the near future. Just trying this to see if I could do it.



Cut out close to end with reciprocating saw. This will help chisel out wood and get access to staples.







Exposed staples



Staples cut with saw. Note dado for sill.



Sill replaced. Brick molding needed to be pulled back for sill to fit. Also added low rise foam for insulation.



Sill nose replaced. Caulked and waiting for painting.



Last edited by indiy; 08-14-10 at 03:12 PM.

08-14-10 03:28 PM

#11

**Oldblades**  
Member

Join Date: Aug 2010  
Location: USA  
Posts: 55

Looks good Indiy,  
Thanks for taking the time for the pics.

09-08-10 11:21 AM

#12

 **MsCathy**  
Member

Join Date: Sep 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 12

Thanks a million Indiy for posting the pics. I was getting ready to attempt this same project, but couldn't visualize what was "inside" the sill. Your pics helped enormously.

Thanks also to XSleeper for the explanations. They were very helpful.

But I wasn't able to finish the job in 2 hours - it took me the whole Labor Day weekend. ☹️

My window is a 15-year-old Weathershield in a 65-year-old house. I started to work on the old sill with a chisel and a power reciprocating saw (which, frankly, I have trouble controlling because it's so heavy).

Oops! I soon discovered there was electrical wiring running under the sill from side to side. I immediately turned off the power to the house, and changed to a small cordless saw, a Black & Decker Compact Saw. It's light (i.e. controllable by a 125-lb. woman) and blades can be inserted in either jigsaw or reciprocating mode. Not terribly powerful, but adequate.

With a tiny 3" blade in jigsaw mode (blade facing away from me), I was able to saw upwards from the front of the sill to the back. That got the old sill into pieces without cutting the electrical wire.

Another big obstacle was the old weatherstripping. It was exactly like the new strip Indiy shows in his photo of his new components. But my predecessor had glued it to both the back of the sill and to the back of the interior room casing. It was very tough to pry, cut, or saw. Drove me nuts getting it out.

As for the side staples, yep, I found those. I couldn't get my saw blade in there, and didn't have a hand



tool that would cut them. But using needle-nosed pliers, I twisted them until they broke off from metal fatigue. They were pretty rusty.

So it took me 6 hours of chiseling, prying, cutting, and sawing to get the old sill and its hardware out. Whew!

For a replacement, I bought a length of one-piece sill (sill+nose in one) at Home Depot. They sell it by the foot, already primed.

Before cutting it, I measured the newly-cleared space where the new sill would go. My space had the little dados, or angled shelf-like pieces, to support the new sill.

But each side of the space wasn't a simple L (right side) or reverse-L (left side) angle. There was a little dog-leg in the pattern, due to the house.

So I made a pattern out of corrugated cardboard. I tested and modified it until it fit the space exactly. Then, to see if the pattern worked in 3 dimensions, I cut the right side of the pattern into a 6-inch piece of the new sill material.

When that tested out ok, I cut the new sill and put it in. It was a good tight fit. I don't think it can move on its own, but I did nail it into the subsill with one galvanized finishing nail. No way was I going to glue, staple, or multi-nail it in - I want the next guy to have an easier time of it.

The outer molding is also rotten, but I've left that project for an upcoming weekend.

What a workout! I love my new windowsill, but I can see why you can't hire people to do projects like that.

Thanks to all for the hints, explanations, and pictures. 😊

09-08-10 11:48 AM

#13

**bradshwart**  
Member

Join Date: Aug 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 10

I've found that the amount of time suggested by experts needs to be multiplied by five or ten when I take on a project. First of all, I'm usually doing something for the first or second time, not the millionth and I inevitably run into some anomaly that isn't described in the instructions or is described poorly....all of labor day weekend sounds about right. At least you have a nice new sill to show for it.

09-08-10 12:06 PM

#14

 **MsCathy**  
Member

Join Date: Sep 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 12

You're right, bradshwart. I wasn't really surprised at how long it took. It was well worth it; the sill was in bad shape.

For me, big first-time projects are stressful because I worry that I'll get the thing apart, or partially apart, and not be able to put it back together again.

I didn't get much sleep Saturday or Sunday night - once you start chiseling the outside of your house and exposing wires, there's no going back. It was a great relief to finish it and have it turn out well.

09-08-10 01:58 PM

#15

**indiy**  
Member

Join Date: Jul 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 14

Thanks. I posted the pictures because it took me a while to figure it out. I also paid \$300 for someone to do another window, including brick mold, but for me, that is way too much. I think I can get a sill and brick mold in in 4 hours. I have about 6 more windows to do and am waiting for the parts now.

I am curious as to how the generic sill worked and fit. The nose on the ones I see is build into the sill and not 2 parts like Weathershield. Didn't know about the one you used.

09-08-10 02:29 PM

#16



**MsCathy**  
Member

Join Date: Sep 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 12

indiy, the sill material I used is sold by Home Depot in their moulding aisle. They sell it by the foot, and it's labeled as "Sill".

It's about 6 1/2" wide and 1 1/4" thick. The top surface has the sill+nose contours you'd expect. The underside has some lengthwise grooves that would be useful if you wanted/needed to create a ledge from side to side on the undersill to get the right angle for the sill, i.e. if you didn't have those angled ledge/dados on the sides like you and I had.

Since it's all one piece, you have to cut the ends to match the space and overhang. I couldn't have gotten that right without making my cardboard pattern first.

In my case, I remember when my window was installed 15 years ago (too bad I didn't watch!). It was a nonstandard size, and custom-ordered. The house is old, and nothing is standard, level, or square. So I didn't even bother to look for a finished replacement sill to install. It wouldn't have fit.

The Home Depot sill material worked fine. Once it was in, it was exactly the right height, too. I didn't have to change the height of the dados/ledges. The finished sill sits right up under the bottom of the window when it's in its locked position - just right.

I think I paid \$7.50 a foot for it.

09-08-10 09:23 PM

#17

**indiy**  
Member

Join Date: Jul 2010  
Location: usa  
Posts: 14

Thanks for the input. The price is better than mine, I am paying about \$45 for a 3' wide window sill and nose. But they are an exact match for what I have. Exact parts are hard to come by and the dealer I am buying from now will not be selling replacement parts anymore. Only new windows. Too much time and expense for old parts orders.

By the way, I also ended up using PVC brick mold (or is it mould) since even some molding I replaced a few years ago started to rot already (finger joint pine).

I did learn a few tricks from the person who installed my other sill though (and brick mold). I good caulking on the outside of the brick mold, and in my case, against the vinyl siding, helps prevent water from getting behind the mold. When the house was built about 16 years ago, all the installers did was put a few screws in the vinyl to attach to the brick mold.

The window in my pictures faces south, and gets extreme sun and heat in the summer here in central Indiana. I think the caulk in that location, which I have not done before, will be a big help. Also primed all sides of all wood and used Minwax High Performance Wood Hardener on the ends, before priming and painting. I am hoping to not replace these again for a long time. My paint is Sherwin Williams Duration Satin, which I think works and looks well.

09-09-10 05:57 AM

#18

Join Date: Sep 2010

**MsCathy**  
MemberLocation:  
Posts:usa  
12

indiy, it sounds like yours will last a long time. I'm in Massachusetts, and my window faces north and sits under a huge shade tree. Wood rot is an ongoing threat. Every time it snows I pull snow off the roof and off the windowsills, but Mother Nature is a determined lady.

I've used the Minwax Wood Hardener in the past, too, with good results. It can be hard to find around here. The big box stores (Home Depot and Lowe's) don't sell it; I've only found it at the small neighborhood hardware store.

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