

CAULKING

You can't get very far in home DIY without knowing about caulk. Caulk is a rubbery substance (often pure silicon) that you squirt neatly around windows, doorframes, sinks and other things around the house to make them water tight.

If we didn't use caulk, we would have water draining through the edges of the shower and dripping through ceilings everywhere. It is easy to use and for a budding Cragman like you, it should be easy peasy.

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EARN THIS NUGGET

First practice on items that are old, trash, or simply no longer needed, so that you can get used to using caulk and the caulk gun. When you feel ready, find an area in the house that could use some work, especially re-caulking. With your parents' direction, make it look wonderful and waterproof again.

- When re-caulking an area that might look a little past its prime, the first step is to remove the old caulk. This can be done with a putty knife--a plastic one will prevent you from scratching anything that you want to protect. Afterwards, use denatured alcohol or something similar to remove any oily residue that may prevent the caulk from sticking.

- Load a tube of caulk into the caulk gun, and follow the instructions on the tube. In most cases, you need to cut the tip off of the end of the caulk tube.

- Hold the caulk gun over a trash can and gently pull the trigger to get the caulk flowing.

- Point the tip to what you need to seal so that it almost touches the surface that you are filling and gently pull the trigger. As the caulk flows, slide the tip along the crack, leaving a smooth line of caulk. Do not stop until you have caulked from one end of the crack to the other. Consistency is the target.

- Some people like to use masking tape on either side of the crack so that there is a 1/8" gap between the two strips of masking tape so that you can achieve an ultraneat edge.

- Press your finger into the caulk while it is still wet and run your finger along the joint, this will help press the caulk into the joint and give it a neat concave look. If using masking tape, remove immediately after this step. Caulk will take at least twenty-four hours before it can be subjected to water. Again, read the instructions for details.

