

How to Caulk

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- Difficulty: Beginner
- Duration: 2 hours



With its myriad of applications, caulk is one of the most commonly used home improvement products around. It is very easy to apply and the techniques are pretty much the same, whether you're repairing flashing on a roof, trimming out a new door or window, installing crown moulding, or painting a room.

This project guide will show you the steps to caulking around a bathroom sink. Start here, or on your next painting project, and you'll see why it's great product that enables professional looking results all around the home

Preparation

- Make sure the surface you are caulking is free of dirt and debris and is dry.
- Make sure you have a supply of cotton rags to wipe up any excess caulk.

Safety

- Keep children and pets away from freshly applied caulk until the area is completely dry.

Savings

- If you don't own a caulk gun and you are tackling a small caulk job, such as a single bowl sink, look for caulk in a squeezable tube.

WHAT YOU NEED FOR THIS JOB:

TOOLS:

- Caulking tool
- Putty knife
- Caulk gun

MATERIALS:

- Caulk
- Painter's tape

Step 1: Prepare the surface



If you are replacing old caulk, carefully cut the old caulk out with a utility knife, or scraper. Remove all dirt, dust, grease and debris. In the case of removing silicone caulk, ensure all residue is completely removed.

Use a rag to wipe the joint surface with rubbing alcohol or an over-the-counter disinfecting spray, rinse thoroughly with water and dry.

Important note: If the gap you are caulking is greater than 1/2", press a foam backer rod into the space.

Step 2: Tape the area



Apply the painter's tape to mask off areas around the joint where the caulk should not appear. This will give you a straight line of caulk and will improve the final appearance.

Read the product packaging thoroughly for manufacturer's instructions and recommendations for product-specific information.

Step 3: Cut the nozzle



Read the instructions of your selected product for how to cut the nozzle as some nozzles have a foil seal that will need to be punctured, and some nozzles also need to be removed to trim an inside seal. If using a squeeze tube, remove the cap and then trim the nozzle with scissors. For rigid plastic tubes, use a utility knife to cut the tip of the nozzle off at a 45-degree angle. The further down the nozzle the cut is made, the wider the line (or "bead") of caulk will be.

Step 4: Apply the caulk



If using a rigid plastic cartridge, place the cartridge in the caulking gun. There's no need for a caulk gun if you are using a squeeze tube.

Applying steady pressure to the trigger (or squeeze tube, based on your product selection), fill the gap with an even bead of caulk. It is best to push the caulk ahead of the nozzle to ensure that it gets into the joint. **Tip:** Some clear caulks will apply white and dry clear in 7 to 14 days, depending on humidity and temperature. To reuse any remaining caulk on a future project, tightly reseal the cartridge and store within the manufacturer's recommended temperatures.

Step 5: Smooth it out



For a neat and professional looking finish, it is recommended to "tool" or smooth the bead of caulk. Lightly drag a caulk finishing tool to smooth the bead. If you applied painter's tape, remove the tape prior to the caulk skinning over ("skinning over" means that the product has developed a firm skin formation on the surface which normally occurs after approximately 2-6 hours at 70-degrees Fahrenheit and 50% humidity). To correctly remove the tape, lift the edge up at a 45-degree angle away from you, and carefully place in a trashcan.

Tip: Some clear caulks will apply white and dry clear in 7 to 14 days, depending on humidity and temperature. To reuse any remaining caulk on a future project, tightly reseal the cartridge and store within the manufacturer's recommended temperatures.

Wipe away excess caulk with water and a damp cloth before the caulk dries. Excess dried caulk will need to be cut or scraped away.