

Ask the Experts

**Stuck-shut windows can be unsealed with special tools**

**Q:** Once we started repainting the interior of our home we found a continuing problem — we couldn't get windows to open properly after the trim on the frames had been painted.

I suspect that we need to spray the areas where the paint has sealed the windows shut with some kind of paint thinner or remover, but I'm really not sure.

What might be the best ways to alleviate this problem and to make sure it doesn't happen again?

— Tammy Pearson, Okolona

**A:** Many people wrongly assume that a chemical compound or even water, when applied to such troublesome areas, will loosen the paint and make it possible to open those windows.

But this method will make quite a mess and possibly damage the wood in the window frame. Water, if allowed to soak into the frames for too long, can create numerous problems.

Russ Dages, owner of Dages Paint on Oak Street, said there are a couple of tools that can be used to free windows.

He suggests first trying the window zipper — a thin, stainless-steel blade with a handle. The blade has serrated edges.

Jeff Thompson, a sales representative with Roland-Malone Lumber Co., said he knows that same tool as the Dig-Zam window opener made by Hyde Tools.

Slide the blade into the crevice and then work around the window between the window sash and the window stop. The serrated edges and sawing action will break the bond created by the old paint.

Thompson said the Dig-Zam is about 9 inches long and is available at most hardware stores. Cost: \$6 to \$8.

The second tool to help handle the problem is similar but lacks the serrated edges.

This thin, stainless-steel tool is used in combination with the zipper window opener and will usually free your windows, Dages said.

At Dages Paint, it is called a scrape and pry bar, but it is thin enough to work into those crevices and create enough force to break the bond of dried paint.

This tool also can be used after you have painted window frames to ensure that this problem doesn't occur again.

You should also open and close your windows several times through the painting process and leave them open, if possible, as your new paint is drying.

Send your questions on home decorating or repair to Ask the Experts, The Courier-Journal, 525 W. Broadway, P.O. Box 740031, Louisville, KY 40201-7431. Steve Chaplin will research the questions with local business people who specialize in home repair.

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