

DIY Guide: Seal leak fixes

Leaking trim seals can cause expensive damage. Effective repairs aren't difficult.



The Bottom Line

Although frustrating, most seal leaks require nothing more than an understanding of how they allow water and air to bypass them. Once established, the solution is either a new seal or an effective repair using a proven product, applied correctly for lasting results.

Windscreen Seal Failure – The Causes

Water leaks due to failing seals can do more damage than first realised if left unchecked. Soaked floor carpets will rot in time, floorpans corrode and interior trim will suffer due to the damp conditions. Windscreen seals eventually lose their elasticity and sealing ability, which allows water to enter. Frost and ice further undermine the failed seal by expanding the breached area, deforming the seal even more. A fine buildup of general dirt and debris then enters and remains in situ, preventing sealing.



The Solutions

The best solution is to remove the screen and fit a new seal. However, this isn't always convenient, so a lasting repair will be your next best option. The way to achieve a lasting repair is to remove the debris, clean the rubber seal and reseal it using a suitable product.



SKILL Home DIY
TIME 10 mins plus
COST £4-£30 average



The method

Use a decorating knife to lift as much dirt and debris as possible while causing minimum disruption to the seal. I used such a knife in conjunction with a vacuum cleaner to prevent debris from falling back into place. Pipe cleaners also work well. It's surprising how much silt and dirt can collect in a compressed space such as this.

Next, ensure the seal and windscreen glass are absolutely dry where they meet. A hairdryer is ideal for this, using the decorating knife to allow

hot air to remove any moisture from the seal / glass cavity. Use the vacuum cleaner again if necessary to remove dusty debris.

My chosen repair product is a flexible black sealant, suitable for outside use and tested extensively over the years on my house guttering. I used the smallest nozzle aperture to apply a thin bead of it roughly 5mm below the surface of the seal.

I then finished the job off using a clean cloth soaked with white spirit to give a smooth surface that water can easily drain off.





WORDS AND PICS: GARY STRETTON



Alternative method

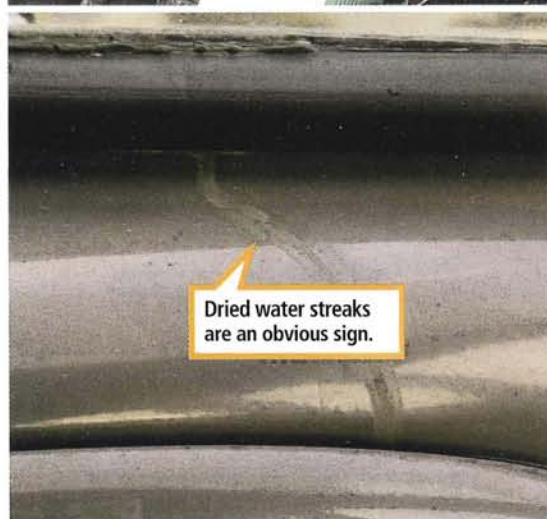
Another product I've used over the years with success is Comma's Seek 'n' Seal. It works best when the affected seal is still in reasonably good condition. Apply it to clean, dry glass and rubber by simply running a generous bead of it along the top of the

glass / rubber joint. Allow up to 10 minutes for it to penetrate and 'find' the path of the leak. Wipe off any excess liquid.

The following morning, water was sitting on top of the seal, indicating the effectiveness of the repair.



Water stains.



Dried water streaks are an obvious sign.

Interior leaks – the signs

Wet carpets, water on rubber footwell mats, standing water in a glovebox or ashtray, dashboard shelf distortion or staining, and soggy soundproofing material are all tell-tale signs. Check for dried water streaks at the base of the windscreen frame.

Leaks such as these will eventually cause corrosion of windscreen pillars and surrounds, bulkhead rot and no end of under-dashboard electrical woes.



Noise leaks – the solution

Door seals also shrink and perish in time, losing their ability to keep out rain and noise. Water in a footwell might also be traced to an A-post seal not doing its job.

A shrinking seal can pull itself away from a door aperture corner or curve,

allowing noise and draughts in. If possible, refit the seal to achieve the best possible fit.

A new seal might be the only realistic solution and a worthy one in the long term – obtrusive road noise and draughts can easily spoil your driving pleasure.



Boot seals

Many boot leaks are not due to the seal failing as such. A buildup of debris will cause water to sit and drain slowly or not at all – breaching the seal.

Check for blocked drainage channels and debris such as leaves and old blossom from trees. If you park your classic on a slope, rainwater might not be able to drain away. Simply turning the car around might be the easiest solution.

Look for areas where water collects.

Drainage hole.