

Composite Doors – The Do's And Don'ts

Composite Doors have become very popular with the general public, due in the main to the vast range of colours and easy clean finish, amongst other benefits.

However, whilst the doors may look superb the problems can sour the customer experience, should the performance of the door fail to match the cosmetic appearance, writes our expert technical author Don Waterworth.

Traditional skills

Composite doors must be installed, and set-up just like a traditional wooden door & frame (traditional wood).

As a 'single rebate' door the Composite Door will have the same installer challenges as the traditional wood. You do not have the same leeway nor large tolerances between door and frame as you do with a 'double rebate' PVC-U door and frame.

The PVCu door and frame are very forgiving and any errors in installing can usually not be a problem to the customer.

If the door is draught proof, then the customer is usually happy.

The story of course is completely different with the Composite Door

- The customer can readily see the gap around the door, if this is not 'uniform' then they complain.
- The seal on the door is not a 'compression' double seal as with PVC-U. This easily leads to draughts (very bad news for the installer).

- The cheaper Composite Doors have a glass fibre skin with foam - these can distort, especially on South Facing aspects.

Care and consideration

Care and consideration when installing Composite Doors can reduce, if not, eliminate the problems listed above, and it is important that any Composite Door and frame be installed exactly like a traditional wooden door and frame. That is:

A. Once the old door and frame have been removed and the aperture cleaned.

B. Set door frame in aperture, wedged around all 4 sides plumb and level, also check diagonals. You must use a 6ft level for the jambs.

C. Fix the hinge jamb first plumb and without distortion and check with 6ft level.

D. Leave the head, cill and closing jamb unfixed but wedged.

E. Bring the door leaf to the closing jamb and facilitate door fit, this may mean that the closing jamb is slightly out of plumb, however this should not be of concern as it is vitally important that the closing jamb be made fit to the door skin on this leading edge.

F. You must try to attain what would be referred to in the past as a 'penny fit' the penny referred to was the old fashioned penny (before decimal coins) and refers to a gap between the door and frame around the full perimeter of 2mm or thereabouts, although larger tolerances would be acceptable.

Save for finishing off and ensur-

ing that the fixing distances are correct and that the suitable practices have been adhered to as set out in the GGF 2011 Guide, then you have done all you can to facilitate a reasonable fit of the door in the door frame.

PVC-U has its place

However, it would be a mistake in my opinion to assume that a single rebate Composite Door would perform as well on draught proofing as a double rebate PVC-U Door.

Double rebate Composite Door

I am aware that Bowater Doors have recognised the difficulty experienced by some installers regarding the installing of Composite Doors and the matter of draught proofing of these Composite Doors once installed and in fact have brought out a double rebate Composite Door and frame which is installed exactly like a PVC-U door and frame, which in my opinion is a good option, as you do not have the problems of a 'penny fit', distorted door leaves or inadequate compression of the door seals. See last month's edition of The Installer (Jan 18).

What do you say?

I would like to hear from any Composite Door Manufacturer who disagrees with my opinion, which, as always, is based upon experience of inspecting at least 40 Composite Doors in the last 2 years or so, which have been ill fitting and also in many cases, poorly installed. [f](#)