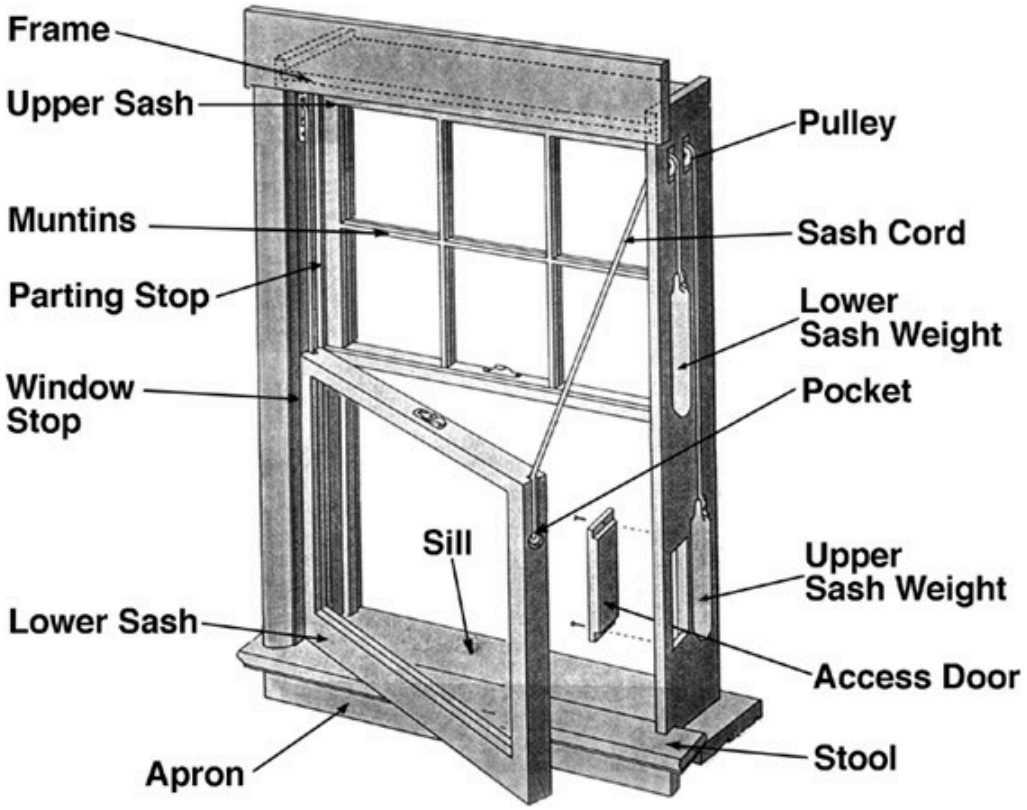
HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

SASH CORD REPAIR

For several hundred years, double-hung windows have been the most popular windows used in homes. They have evolved little during that time. They basically consist of two separate pieces of glass, each enclosed in a wood frame. These two pieces are known as the lower and upper **sash**. The two sashes are then inserted into a wooden **frame** that has channels on each side to guide the sashes. A system of **weights and pulleys** allow the sashes to go up and down easily.

The part of this system that needs periodic maintenance is the rope that connects the sash to the weight, commonly known as the **sash cord.** (Other materials have been used instead of rope, such as chains and wires, but here we will focus on replacing rope.)



The parts of a double-hung window

REMOVING THE LOWER SASH

1. Remove the **window stops** – the strips of molding, one to two inches wide, on each side of the window frame *(see illustration.)* You don't need to remove the molding along the top of the window. Careful prying with a wide prybar or a stiff putty knife will help prevent these strips from breaking. (If, however, any of the parts do happen to break while you're working to remove or replace them, you can purchase replacements inexpensively at any lumberyard.)

2. At this point, the bottom sash can be taken out. Swing out one side at a time. If either of the ropes is still attached, you can pull it out of the **pocket** (the slot in the side of the window.) The cord is usually just sitting in there, but sometimes you may need to remove a small nail that holds the cord in place. Then, you can set the sash aside.

REMOVING THE UPPER SASH

There are two rectangular pieces of wood, called **parting stops,** which hold the top sash in place (just like the window stops hold the bottom sash.) These parting stops sit in two grooves, and should pull out. They are usually not nailed, but they may be stuck in by old paint. Careful prying should remove them without breaking them. Again, you don't need to remove the top one. You can now remove the top sash as you did the bottom one.

REPLACING THE SASH CORDS

1. At each side of the window frame near the bottom, there is an **access door** cut into the wood. It's usually held in with screws. After you have removed the doors, you will be able to get to the sash weights. There are two weights on each side of the window – one for the upper sash, and one for the lower.
2. The replacement sash cord should be the same size as the old cord that you'll find tied to the weight, or still attached to the sash. Run the new cord through the pulley at the top of the window frame down to the sash weight. (Sometimes a straightened-out clothes hanger is helpful in fishing the rope down to the weight.)
3. Tie it securely to the weight; then, tie a large knot inside the window frame at the pulley. The knot is in the right place when the weight is just suspended off the bottom and hanging in the air when the knot is tight against the pulley holding the weight up. Cut off any extra cord with scissors or a utility knife.

> **TIP**
>
> Repeat this procedure with the other sash cords. It is usually best to replace all the cords in a window at the same time, even if they're not all broken.

REASSEMBLING THE WINDOWS

After replacing all the cords, replace the access doors and reassemble the window by reversing the steps you used to take it apart: first, slip the sash cords into the pockets on the upper sash; work in one side, and then the other. Insert the upper sash into the frame, and replace the parting stops. Then, do the same for the lower sash.

Finish by rubbing a bar of soap into the inside of the channels that the sashes ride up and down in, so they will move more freely.

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

WWW.HRRC-CH.ORG **+1.216.381.6100** **2520 Noble Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44121**

© 2026, Home Repair Resource Center