

Striking a caulk bead: Get it right the first time

Dear Billy,

I'm fairly new at installing windows and siding. I must admit that the hardest part of the job for me is applying the sealant. If you screw up the caulking, the whole job looks bad. What can I do to get it right the first time?

Signed: I've Got a Mess on My Hands

Dear Hands,

You are right to be concerned. The sealant not only serves as an air and moisture barrier, but it is also expected to perform aesthetically and must look good. If you don't apply it correctly, the caulk may have a hard time doing either - let alone both - tasks.

First, start with a good exterior sealant. I recommend OSI™ QUAD® Window, Door and Siding Sealant, which is high-performing, self-tooling and comes in over 300 colors to easily match any siding or window you've got.



The next step to a good bead is the tip cut. Failure to cut the tip correctly leaves little chance of applying a good bead. Throw away that notion of cutting the tip at 45° angle. I recommend cutting the tip at 22.5° or less, to allow for a minimum 1/4" round bead. If that sounds too

big, keep in mind that smaller is not better when it comes to sealant beads. If the bead is too small, there will not be enough sealant in the joint to accommodate movement or resist UV degradation.

When cutting the tip, also remember to use a sharp knife for a smooth finish. If your knife is not sharp, it may leave jagged edges on the spout which will leave lines or grooves in your finished bead.

After it is cut, place the sealant tip into the joint, holding it almost 90° to the substrate being caulked. Apply consistent pressure to the trigger and apply at a slow, steady pace. Make sure you do not allow the sealant to flow out the opposite side of the tip as you are pulling. If this happens, speed up the pace or decrease the pressure on the trigger. Always keep the flow in front of the tip. This action should give you a smooth and even bead that does not require tooling.

I hope these tips help. And if you haven't tried OSI QUAD Window, Door and Siding Sealant, take the QUAD Challenge to find out how easy it can be. Ask your local Henkel rep for more details.

Stickin' with you on the job,

Billy

Got a question for Billy?
E-mail him at Bill.Longo@us.henkel.com.

Bill Longo is

Henkel's go-to guy for

caulks, sealants and

adhesives. He's been

on the quest for the

perfect bead for most

of his adult life.