

Troubleshooting

Successfully operating your wood stove can take a little practice and experience. These are some of the things you may encounter and tips and advice on dealing with them.

Smoke spills out when I open the door to reload the stove

The new generation Eco stoves can often be prone to this due extra baffles in the roof of the stove to make them more efficient. It's likely that your stove instruction manual will tell you to reload the stove only when the current fuel load has reduced to embers and is no longer producing smoke.

The stove just won't go!

Have you checked the wood!? If the wood is good with *less than 20% (internal) moisture* then:

Check the draw?: Half fill the stove with *lightly crumpled dry newspaper*. Crack the door open, open all the controls and light the newspaper. If this roars up the chimney it indicates the chimney is clear and the draw is good. With a very cold chimney you may need to do this more than once to "prime" the chimney.

Are you closing the stove down too soon after lighting? Before the stove and chimney have got fully up to temperature? See over.

Sufficient inward air? A stove needs air into it to operate. Is your room tightly sealed up, with double glazing, solid floors and tightly fitting doors? Try opening a window a little. If this works it indicates that the air supply is the problem. Extractor fans in the same room can cause a low pressure in the room, effectively starving the stove of air. You may need to fit an inward air vent even if the stove is 5Kw or less.

Chimney length and temperature?: The longer and warmer the chimney the better the draw and performance. If your chimney is on the outside of the building, perhaps north facing, and fairly short it will be harder to get the stove to perform well. Getting the stove and chimney fully up to temperature before turning it down will be more critical. The chimney may need additional insulation or a draught inducing cowl fitted.

The stove glass goes black and sooty

There are generally three reasons for this:

- 1) The wood is unseasoned, damp or has high sap content (like pine). All will cause the glass to blacken
- 2) You are running the stove too slowly so the airwash system can't work properly. Not enough air flow.
- 3) The air controls are set incorrectly. Most commonly using the bottom control as the main control when the top should be used, as this controls the airwash system which keeps the glass clear.

The room fills with smoke on lighting the stove (Smoke comes out of the air intakes)

This is not wholly uncommon and most stove owners have experienced it at some point. The issue is that while hot air is light and rises (think hot air balloon), the reverse is true of cold air. If it has been particularly cold and your stove has not been alight for some hours, your chimney may be full of this cold, dense, heavy air, particularly if the chimney is on the cold outside of the building.

If you now try to light the stove with perhaps a firelighter and a little bit of kindling, the rising hot air has to lift a whole chimney full of cold, heavy air. Sometimes the cold heavy air wins and pushes all the smoke back down the chimney into the stove and room. It seems like the chimney is blocked, which it is, with a "plug" of cold air.

The trick is to clear or "prime" the chimney. One good way to do this is to lay and set your fire as normal, with kindling and firelighter, but now add a good amount of *loosely crumpled newspaper* on top. Light the firelighter and the newspaper together. The newspaper should blaze, sending a rush of hot air up the chimney, lifting the cold air out and clearing the way for the fire to follow. In extreme conditions you may need to blaze the newspaper more than once to clear the cold air out.

In cases where the chimney is habitually cold or the "newspaper trick" doesn't work, the chimney may need additional insulation or a draught inducing cowl fitted.

Prevention better than cure

Stove operation is mostly common sense but the important things you can do for best operation are:

- ☐ Only burn good quality dry and seasoned timber. Check for dryness with a moisture meter
- ☐ Have the chimney swept at least once a year. Most good chimney sweeps will also service the stove
- ☐ Use a stove top thermometer* to monitor the stove temperature.
- ☐ Carefully read your stove operating instructions, especially the new generation Eco stoves

For more information look on the website: thekentstovecompany.co.uk

***Caution: Stove top and stove pipe thermometers will not work on some encased stoves and insulated stove pipes**