



Guides and Information

Paddock Wood
Maidstone Road, Paddock Wood, TN12 6QJ
Telephone: 01892 838 834
Email: info@thekentstovecompany.co.uk

Tenterden
10 Bridewell Lane, Tenterden, TN30 6EY
Telephone: 01580 766 661
Email: tenterden@thekentstovecompany.co.uk

Your new stove. Getting started

Here are a few tips and generic guide notes to get you started with your new stove.
For individual stoves always follow the manufacturer's instructions and user manuals.
Further information can be found on our website: www.thekentstovecompany.co.uk

Really dry, seasoned wood is essential

There is a myth that you can put any old rubbish on a wood burner and it will be fine. It won't! Really dry, seasoned wood is essential for the stove to work well. Wood should contain less than 20% moisture. Any more and you are just boiling water! It won't burn, it won't draw and it won't heat. Use a moisture meter to test the *inside* of your logs. Damp, unseasoned wood is the biggest cause of poor stove performance.

For multi-fuel stoves check your stove handbook for what can be burned. It is generally recommended *not* to burn standard "house coal" as this contains too much sulphur and will damage the stove and liner.

General lighting guide

Stove controls vary. Most have a top and bottom control, some just the one "multi" control. The general rule is to have everything fully open (max) for lighting. Possibly have the door cracked open too. The aim is to get the stove and chimney flue up to a good temperature before closing things down. This will ensure a good, continuous draw. Once the fire is fully established close the door and then:

Wood burning stove: Progressively close the bottom air control and then control the stove with the top control only. Note: wood burns best on a bed of ash and likes to draw air from above and sides. Always leave an inch or so of ash in the stove base.

Multi fuel stove: Exactly the same as a wood stove except your multi fuel stove will have a grate, as coal likes to draw its air from beneath. So when burning coal, also have the bottom control cracked open. Still primarily control with the top control as this provides the Airwash, keeping the glass clean and soot-free.

Note: If you have a multi-fuel stove (with a grate) but only burn wood (no coal) then the advice is to let ash build up through the grate (don't empty the ash pan) so that the fire sits on a bed of ash like a wood burning stove. Then operate the controls like a wood burning stove.

See over page for Troubleshooting

Don't close the stove down too soon

On lighting get the stove and the chimney flue up to temperature before closing it down for normal operation. Use a stove top or stovepipe thermometer* to check the correct temperature for normal running. Lighting a stove is like pushing a car: it takes a lot of effort (temperature) to get it moving and if you back off too soon it stops. Once up to speed (temperature) though it's easier to keep it moving.

It will smell as the paint heats and cures

Stoves are painted with high temperature paint that will give off an acrid smell and a smoky haze for the first few hours of operation. It may even set off smoke / carbon monoxide alarms. If it doesn't smell, then you are probably not running it hot enough. Open room doors and windows to clear the air.

At the end of the day

When you've finished with the stove for the day allow the fuel to burn down to a safe level and then open the air control(s) fully to cleanly burn off the remaining fuel. This is preferable to closing the controls down for the night which will leave the fire "smouldering", sooting up the glass and chimney and, on cold nights, can allow a draught to push fumes back into the room setting off the carbon monoxide detector alarm.

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**

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.

It's the wood!

Not always the case but it very often is the wood. Even the best and most expensive stove on the market will not work with damp or unseasoned wood. Have you checked the moisture content?

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. It may be more expensive but it's a good investment and can be cheaper in the long run.
- ☐ Have the chimney swept at least once a year. Most good chimney sweeps will also give your stove a check over and make sure all is as it should be.
- ☐ Use a stove thermometer* to monitor the stove temperature. This will ensure that you neither run the stove too cold which can tar up your chimney nor too hot which can damage the stove.

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