Installing New Dryer Screens

Anyone can install new SunWorks SunScreens into standard aluminum window screen frames. Here's how...

Materials

You will need to purchase a spline roller and enough screen spline to go around your frame(s). Both are very cheap ($2-$3) and available at any good hardware store.

The spline is a round, flexible rubber strip that holds the screen in the frame. You will need to get the right size spline for the frame. If this a replacement screen, take the old spline with you to the hardware store to match it. If you don't have any idea what size spline to use, bring the frame to the store and try to match it there. A common spline diameter is 3.5 mm (0.14 inches). The spline must fit snugly into the frame channel, or the screen could pop out under use. If this happens, you need to go up to the next larger size spline (3.9 mm or 0.155 inches, for example).

The spline tool is a simple tool with a handle that has a plastic roller at each end. Do not use spline tools with metal rollers, as these will tend to cut the screen material and can easily destroy your screen.

> *Tips*
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> - *Installing screens is easiest when the temperature is warm, because the plastic spline is softer and more flexible. If you're doing it during cold weather, take the project indoors.*
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> - *Do not try to over tighten screens or you will end up with warped frames. Some TV home shows and web sites recommend bending the frames to get screens tight. Don't do this! Getting the screens tight is easy. If they aren't tight enough on the first round, they can be adjusted easily.*

Step 1

Start by laying the screen frame on a hard, flat surface that is sturdy. A large work table, kitchen table, or floor area works well. Cut the screen material approximately one inch larger than the final screen size in all directions. This means that the initial screen size will be about two inches greater in each dimension than its final size. It's okay to start with a screen slightly larger than this, if that is easier and you have sufficient material.

Step 2

Install the first side carefully so that the screen is as straight as possible in the channel. Start by positioning the screen over the frame and aligning your first edge. Place the spline over the channel, starting with the end of the spline at the corner where you will begin. Use the concave roller on spline tool to push the screen in the channel. This takes a steady, even pressure and some patience. Be very careful not to damage the screen with the roller. Move all the way across the first edge until the spline is holding the screen in place. Now use the other end of the spline tool (the roller with rounded edges) to make sure the spline is fully pressed into the channel.

Step 3

Continue around the frame and install the second edge of the screen. This side should also be kept fairly straight. The remaining two edge should be installed so that the screen is stretched just enough so that it doesn't sag. Do not over tighten or you will warp the frame.

Once you are all the way around the frame, check to see that the tension is about right. If it's too tight or too loose, just pull out the screen on one side and re-install it. Use the rounded end of the spline roller one last time to make sure that the spline is firmly in place.

Step 4

When you are satisfied that your screen is properly installed in the frame, trim off the extra screen with scissors or a utility knife. Wash screens with a mild soap (like dish soap) to remove any manufacturing residues.

Happy solar drying!

> *Tips*
> - *For best results, wait a day before loading up your new screens with food. This allows time for the plastic to "mold" into place and helps prevent them from popping out in the future.*
>
> - *Do not overload screens with food. Distribute food evenly and leave space between pieces to allow for good air flow. A properly loaded screen can hold up to three pounds of food.*

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