Recently, my front door began dragging across the threshold every time I opened it and would barely catch with one firm push to close. Although my home had settled slightly over time, an expensive repair seemed daunting at best; instead of calling in a handyman or hiring one of his services for help immediately after learning of this problem. Instead, I spent one afternoon fixing it myself using basic tools – now the door swings smoothly and latches perfectly every time!

Sagging doors are an all-too-common problem across homes across North America and Europe, due to daily use or weather and foundation movement. In most cases, simple solutions exist that can be done within an hour – interior or exterior doors alike!

At the core of many guides lies an unspoken truth: not every sagging door requires the same solution. Tightening screws may solve most issues, but in certain instances shims, longer screws, or frame adjustments may also be required to address their cause. Ignoring its root cause means the problem quickly returns again.

In this comprehensive guide you will discover exactly what causes doors to sag, step-by-step fixes from simple repairs to more involved fixes, when to use shims or longer screws, how to handle exterior doors properly, as well as prevention tips. I share my personal experiences, common mistakes, and real examples from everyday homes as part of this conversation.

By the time you’re finished, you will have gained the confidence necessary to repair and keep every door in your home operating smoothly for years.

What Causes a Door to Sag?

Understanding why an issue exists will enable you to select an appropriate remedy.

The most frequent cause is loose hinge screws. As the top hinge bears most of the door’s weight, its screws gradually loosen from their anchor points in wood or jamb over time and need tightening up again.

Other frequent causes include:

- Stripped screw holes that no longer hold tightly.
- House settling or foundation movement that shifts the door frame.

- Warped door or frame from moisture (especially exterior doors).
- Worn or bent hinges.
- Paint or debris buildup under hinges.
- Heavy doors with only two hinges instead of three.

Older homes tend to experience foundation settling issues. Meanwhile, newer builds sometimes experience issues due to improper installation or heavy use.

My front door had become loose over time due to loose top hinge screws. Although tightening them temporarily helped, longer screws solved my issue permanently.

Quick Diagnosis: Is Your Door Sagging?

Close the door and look out for these signs:

- Uneven gaps — larger gap at the top on the hinge side and bottom on the latch side.
- The door drags on the floor or threshold.
- It won't latch properly without lifting or pushing.
- Visible light around the edges when closed.
- The door feels heavy or sticks when opening/closing.

Stand back and observe the top edge. If it slopes downward toward the latch side, that indicates an obvious sag in your frame.

Step-by-Step Guide: How to Fix a Sagging Door

Begin with the easiest fixes and only expand if necessary.

1. Tighten the Hinge Screws (5 minutes, often solves it)

Unstrap the door if needed and use a manual screwdriver (not a drill) to tighten each of its top and middle hinge screws on both door and jamb sides.

Take it slowly; overtightening may widen holes further.

Test the door. Many sagging issues will resolve themselves quickly when this step is completed.

2. Replace Short Screws with Longer Ones (10 minutes)

If tightening doesn’t solve the problem, chances are your screws aren’t reaching solid wood or the stud behind your jamb.

Remove one screw from the top hinge on the jamb side, replacing it with a 3-inch long one that reaches into the framing. Repeat steps 4-7 if needed on middle hinge.

By anchoring it firmly, this helps bring the door back into alignment.

I utilized this solution on my own door and experienced immediate relief as soon as the 3-inch screws caught onto a stud and lifted up any sagging.

3. Fill Stripped Holes and Reinstall (15 minutes)

When screws spin freely, holes may have become stripped.

Remove the hinge, filling holes with wooden toothpicks or golf tees coated in wood glue, or using a dowel. Allow to dry, drill pilot holes, and reinstall screws when they have set completely.

Ultimately, this creates enhanced gripping power.

4. Use Hinge Shims for Precise Adjustment (15–20 minutes)

For doors that still sag even after tightening with longer screws and tightening them further, add thin shims behind their hinges to lift them back up.

Cardboard can work, but plastic or metal hinge shims provide better longevity.

- If the door sags on the latch side (top corner drops), shim behind the bottom hinge or top hinge on the jamb side to push it up.
- Loosen screws, insert shim, retighten, and test.

This is a highly efficient method to fine-tune alignment without having to remove the door from its frame.

5. Sand or Plane the Door Edge (if it still rubs)

If the door droops after having its hinges repaired, mark its rubbing spot with a

pencil before closing it. Take steps to remove and sand or plane any high spots before repainting or refinishing its edge.

Check weatherstripping and threshold adjustments when it comes to exterior doors.

6. Fix a Sagging or Out-of-Plumb Door Frame (more advanced)

In severe cases of settlement, you may need to adjust or reshim the entire frame – often this involves taking apart trim pieces – requiring professional assistance if the frame has become severely warped or bent.

Tools and Materials You Will Need

- Phillips screwdriver
- 3-inch wood screws
- Wooden toothpicks, golf tees, or dowels + wood glue
- Hinge shims (or cardboard)
- Pencil and level
- Sandpaper or plane (if needed)
- Drill with pilot bit (optional but helpful)

All are inexpensive and available at any hardware store.

Interior vs Exterior Doors: Special Considerations

Interior door repairs usually involve only minor hinge fixes.

External doors must withstand harsh elements, so be mindful to inspect for warped wood, weatherstripping failure or threshold issues before using exterior-rated screws and sealants to secure them. Sagging exterior doors could signal larger frame or foundation movements so be wary if yours sag.

Reinforce storm and heavy entry doors from the start with three hinges to increase stability and strength.

Prevention Tips to Stop Doors from Sagging

Again

- Use three hinges on heavy doors.
- Tighten hinge screws annually.
- Avoid slamming doors.
- Keep moisture away from exterior frames.
- Choose quality hinges and screws during installation.
- In new construction or remodels, ensure proper shimming of frames.

A few minutes of maintenance each year keeps doors working smoothly.

Comparison Table: Common Sagging Door Fixes

Fix Method	Time Required	Difficulty	Cost	Best For	Success Rate
Tighten Existing Screws	5 minutes	Very Easy	Free	Most common loose hinge cases	High
Longer 3″ Anchor Screws	10 minutes	Easy	Low	Screws not reaching framing	Very High
Fill Stripped Holes	15–30 minutes	Easy	Low	Spinning screws	High
Add Hinge Shims	15–20 minutes	Medium	Low	Persistent misalignment	High
Sand/Plane Door	20–40 minutes	Medium	Low	Door rubbing after hinge fix	High
Frame Adjustment	1+ hours	Advanced	Medium	Severe settling	Varies

Start at the top and move down only if needed.

Troubleshooting When Basic Fixes Do Not Work

Does your door still sag? Measure whether the frame itself is out of whack using a level; foundation settlement issues may require professional assessment.

Heavy solid-core doors benefit from an extra hinge or reinforced jambs.

For doors that still refuse to close properly after fixes have been attempted, adjust

the strike plate by moving or filing its opening slightly.

FAQ About Fixing Sagging Doors

How do you fix a sagging door without removing it?

Tighten hinge screws, add longer screws into the framing, or slip thin shims behind hinges. Most fixes work with the door in place.

How to fix a sagging door that won’t latch?

Usually loose top hinge. Tighten screws or replace with longer ones to lift the latch side back into position.

What does it mean when a door is sagging?

The door drops out of alignment, typically because the top hinge loosens under weight, causing uneven gaps and rubbing.

How to raise a door that’s dragging?

Tighten or shim the bottom hinge, or use longer screws in the top hinge to pull the door upward.

How to fix a sagging door frame?

Check for loose shims or settling. Re-shim the jamb or consult a professional for structural issues.

How to fix a sagging exterior door?

Follow hinge fixes first, then check weatherstripping, threshold, and frame for moisture damage or settling.

How to fix uneven door gaps?

Diagnose which side sags and adjust with shims or longer screws. Sand if the door itself is warped.

How to fix a sagging door with shims?

Loosen hinge screws, insert thin shims behind the leaf on the jamb side, and retighten. Test and adjust thickness as needed.

Final Thoughts: Keep Your Doors Working Smoothly

Fixing a sagging door is one of the most satisfying quick home repairs. In most cases you can solve it in under 30 minutes with basic tools and no special skills. The longer-screw and shim techniques fix the majority of problems permanently.

Take a few minutes this weekend to check your doors. A smooth-swinging, properly latching door makes daily life noticeably better and prevents bigger issues down the road.

What is happening with your sagging door — does it drag, refuse to latch, or have uneven gaps? Share details in the comments and I will help point you to the best fix for your situation.

For more practical home maintenance and repair guides, explore our **home-improvement category**.

A small fix today saves frustration and money tomorrow. Your doors (and you) will thank you.