

Fridge & Freezer Troubleshooting

Quick checks to try before you call an engineer

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When your fridge or freezer goes warm, it might seem like it's broken, but it often isn't. Especially in hot weather, most problems come down to something on this list. Work through it before you pay for an engineer call-out. A few checks take less than a minute, and you might just fix it yourself.

Run these checks first

- ☐ **Check the power and the thermostat.** Plug in, switch on, and check the fuse board for a tripped breaker. Make sure the thermostat dial hasn't been knocked off its setting during a busy shift.
- ☐ **Give it room to breathe.** A fridge jammed against a wall or sat next to the oven can't get rid of its heat. Pull it out, leave a gap around it, and move anything hot away from it. Aim for at least 20cm of breathing space.
- ☐ **Test the door seal (banknote test).** Shut the door on a banknote, half in and half out, then pull. If it slides out with no grip, the seal isn't sealing. Wipe it with warm soapy water first to get rid of crumbs. If it's split or torn, replace it.
- ☐ **Look for ice building up at the back.** Frost on the inside back wall means the defrost system isn't keeping up, and it blocks the airflow. Switch off, empty, and let the ice melt fully before turning it back on.
- ☐ **Try a reset.** If the display shows an error code, turn the unit off at the wall, leave it ten minutes, then switch it back on. Give it a few hours to get cold again before you judge it.
- ☐ **Clean the condenser coils.** Dusty, greasy coils are one of the most common reasons a fridge can't shift heat, and it's worse in summer. A soft brush and a couple of minutes can make a big difference.

Set it to the right temperature

Unit	The legal limit	What we'd set it to
Fridge (chilled food)	8°C or below	Aim for 5°C or under. Most caterers run 2°C to 4°C for a safe buffer.
Freezer	-18°C or below	Keep it at -18°C or colder to stop bacteria growth.

Tip: keep a separate probe or thermometer inside. The built-in display doesn't always match where your food actually sits.

Know your climate class

Every fridge has a climate class, which is the top room temperature it's built to cope with. If you push past it in a heatwave it'll struggle, even if nothing is broken.

Class 3: rooms up to 25°C

Class 4: rooms up to 30°C (most UK kitchens)

Class 5: hot, busy kitchens up to 40°C

If your kitchen runs hotter than your fridge's class, that's often why it fails on the hottest days. Worth knowing next time you buy.

Stop and call an engineer if...

- It keeps tripping the electrics.
- It runs non-stop but never gets cold, and the coils and seals are fine.
- The compressor keeps clicking on and off, or has gone silent.
- The same fault code comes back after a reset.
- You think there might be a refrigerant leak. That's never a DIY job.

Simple habits that prevent breakdowns

- Check and log your temperatures at least twice a day, so you spot a problem early.
- Keep the coils and vents clean, and never let grease build up around them.
- Don't overfill. Air needs to circulate for the unit to cool evenly.
- Leave a gap for airflow, and keep units away from ovens, fryers and direct sun.
- Listen out for a louder hum or a door that won't sit shut. They're early warning signs.

If you're still stuck, or thinking it might be time to replace rather than repair your units, give us a call. We're always happy to talk it through and help you find equipment that can handle a hot kitchen.

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