Pease Doors
The Door Store

INSTALLATION GUIDE

Exterior Door Slab Replacement

A complete, step-by-step guide to swapping an exterior door slab while reusing your existing frame and hardware.

APPLIES TO
Steel · Fiberglass · Wood

SKILL LEVEL
Intermediate DIY

TIME
2–4 Hours

What’s Inside

This guide walks you through a slab-only replacement — reusing your existing frame, hinge locations, and often your existing lockset. It’s the fastest, lowest-cost way to refresh an entry door when the frame is still sound.

A NOTE ON YOUR WARRANTY

Pease exterior steel and fiberglass slabs carry a 20-year limited warranty; wood slabs are covered for 5 years. Failure to properly finish the door — especially wood — can void coverage. See **peasedoors.com/warranty** for full terms.

Before You Start

A slab swap only works if your existing frame, threshold, and weatherstripping are still in good shape. Take ten minutes to walk through the checklist below before you buy a new slab.

IS A SLAB SWAP RIGHT FOR YOU?

Slab replacement is the right call when:

- The frame is square, plumb, and free of rot or major damage
- The threshold is solid and the sill is intact
- You want to keep your existing trim and interior finish
- Your rough opening hasn't shifted (common in older homes)

> **WHEN TO CHOOSE A PREHUNG INSTEAD**
>
> If the jamb is rotted, the frame is out of square by more than 1/8", or the threshold leaks, a full prehung replacement will save you headaches and last longer. Call us at **1-513-871-8907** if you're not sure.

FRAME INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Before ordering your slab, confirm each of the following:

CHECK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Jamb condition	No soft spots, splits, or rot — especially near the threshold
Frame square	Measure both diagonals; they should match within 1/8"
Both jambs plumb	Level reads plumb top to bottom on each side. Matching diagonals alone won't catch jambs leaning the same way.
Threshold & sill	Flat, solid, no water damage underneath
Weatherstripping	Kerf-in strip intact, or plan to replace it
Strike side reveal	Existing gap is consistent top to bottom

APPLIES TO ALL THREE SLAB TYPES

STEEL **FIBERGLASS** **WOOD**

This guide works for all three, with type-specific notes called out where it matters — mostly around cutting, drilling, and finishing.

Tools & Materials

Gather everything before you pull the old slab. Swapping an exterior door is a door-open project, and the weather won't wait for a hardware-store run.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS

- ☐ Tape measure (25')
- ☐ 4-foot level
- ☐ Combination square
- ☐ Utility knife
- ☐ Hammer & nail set
- ☐ Cordless drill/driver
- ☐ 2-1/8" hole saw (lockset bore)
- ☐ 1" spade bit (latch bore)
- ☐ Phillips & flat screwdrivers
- ☐ Sharp wood chisel (3/4" or 1")
- ☐ Rubber mallet
- ☐ Safety glasses & gloves

ALSO HELPFUL TO HAVE ON HAND

- ☐ Sawhorses (2)
- ☐ Shop vacuum
- ☐ Painter's tape
- ☐ Sharp pencil

FOR CUTTING OR PLANING (IF NEEDED)

- ☐ Circular saw with sharp fine-tooth blade
- ☐ Straight edge / cutting guide
- ☐ Block plane (wood edges, fiberglass PVC edges)
- ☐ Random orbit sander (optional, for fine fitting)

FOR FIELD PREPPING A BLANK SLAB (SECTION 5)

- ☐ Hinge mortise template
- ☐ Lockset / latch boring template
- ☐ Plunge router with template guide bushing
- ☐ Or: drill with hinge / lockset routing bits
- ☐ Bar clamps (2) for stacking the old slab on the new

MATERIALS

- ☐ New door slab (steel, fiberglass, or wood)
- ☐ Replacement weatherstripping (if worn)
- ☐ Exterior-grade caulk
- ☐ Exterior primer & paint (or stain)
- ☐ Long screws (3") for top hinge
- ☐ Door sweep (if not transferring old one)
- ☐ Hinge shims (optional, for fit adjustment)
- ☐ Lipstick or marker (optional, for strike alignment check)

WOOD SLAB ONLY

You'll also need exterior-grade sealer. Sealing *all six sides* of a wood door — front, back, top, bottom, and both edges — before it's hung is the #1 thing you can do to prevent warping and protect your warranty.

Measure & Verify Your New Slab

Slab replacements fail most often at this step. Take the five minutes to measure carefully and confirm your new slab matches before anything comes off the frame.

TAKE THESE THREE MEASUREMENTS FROM THE OLD SLAB

1. **Width** — from edge to edge across the face, measured at top, middle, and bottom. Use the largest number.
2. **Height** — from top edge to bottom edge, measured at both sides and the middle.
3. **Thickness** — standard is 1-3/4" for exterior doors. Confirm with calipers or a tape.

CHECK YOUR FACTORY PREP

Pease ships slabs three ways. Which one you ordered determines how much work Section 5 involves:

Standard prep	Hinge mortises and 2-1/8" lockset bore machined to Pease's standard locations. Compare these to your old slab — if they line up, you can skip straight to **Section 6: Hang & Fit**.
Custom prep	Mortises and bore machined to dimensions you specified when ordering. Verify against the old slab, then skip to **Section 6**.
Blank	No hinge mortises, no lockset bore. You'll field-prep the slab using the old door as a template — follow Section 5 in full.

> **VERIFY HANDING AND PREP BEFORE CUTTING**
> Whichever prep you ordered, lay the new slab flat next to the old one and confirm the hinge side, lockset side, and any factory machining are on the correct edges to match your opening. A slab machined on the wrong side is a return, not a fix.

ACCEPTABLE REVEALS

The **reveal** is the gap between the slab and the frame when the door is closed. On the top and sides, the industry target is a consistent **1/8" gap** — hinge side plus lock side should add up to roughly 1/4" on a 1-3/4" slab. The bottom is different: you want about 1/2" clearance *before* the sweep is installed, so that once the sweep is attached it seals snugly against the threshold without binding when the door swings.

LOCATION	TARGET GAP	TOLERANCE
Top (head jamb)	1/8"	± 1/16"
Hinge side	1/8"	± 1/32"
Lock side	1/8"	± 1/32"
Bottom (before sweep)	1/2"	± 1/8"
Bottom (after sweep)	Snug seal, no daylight	—

Remove the Old Slab

Removal is the easy part — as long as you do it in the right order. Always work from the bottom hinge up, and have a helper or a wedge ready so the door doesn't fall.

PRO TIP: PHOTOGRAPH THE INSTALL BEFORE YOU TOUCH IT

Before you pull anything, snap a few photos of how the old door sits in the opening — hinge orientation, weatherstrip condition, sweep placement, and how the lockset and deadbolt line up with their strikes. When you're hanging the new slab hours later, those photos are a much faster reference than trying to remember what things looked like.

1 Remove the lock hardware

Take the lockset, deadbolt, and any latch plates off the door **before** you pull it off the hinges. The slab is much easier to handle without protruding hardware, and you avoid catching a knob on the jamb when you lift the door free. Bag the screws by group — lockset screws, deadbolt screws, and latch plate screws often differ. The hinges and the slab itself stay in place for now.

2 Open the door and wedge it

Swing the door open to roughly 90° and slide a shim or wood block under the bottom edge, near the side opposite the hinges. This keeps the weight off the hinges so the pins come out freely.

3 Drive out the hinge pins — bottom first

Set a nail set or long flathead screwdriver under the pin head and tap it upward with a hammer. Start with the bottom hinge, then the middle, then the top. Removing the top hinge first can cause the door to tip.

4 Lift the slab free

With all pins out, tilt the top of the door away from the jamb and lift it straight up to clear the hinge knuckles. Have a helper steady the slab as the last pin comes out — fiberglass and solid wood slabs are heavy.

5 Set the old slab on sawhorses and remove remaining hardware

Lay it hinge-edge up across two sawhorses. Unscrew the hinge leaves and any weatherstripping or sweep attached to the slab itself. You'll use the old slab as your template for hinge and lockset locations in the next section.

STUCK HINGE PINS? UNSCREW FROM THE DOOR SIDE

Decades of paint can freeze hinge pins in place. First try scoring around the pin head with a utility knife, adding a few drops of penetrating oil, and tapping upward harder. If the pins still won't budge, unscrew the hinge leaves from the **door side** instead — never the jamb side. Backing out the jamb screws chews up the screw holes in the frame, and you need those intact to reuse them when you hang the new slab.

Transfer Hinges & Bore Lockset

Only do this section if your slab came blank. If you ordered standard or custom prep and verified it matches your old door in Section 3, skip ahead to Section 6. Otherwise, your old slab is about to earn its keep — you'll use it as a template to mark every hinge mortise and bore point on the new slab so the layout matches your jamb exactly.

SEAL CUT EDGES ON WOOD SLABS

Any time you cut, drill, or plane a wood slab, seal the exposed edge with exterior sealer before hanging. Unsealed wood edges wick moisture and are the leading cause of warranty claims. Pease fiberglass slabs have PVC-edged stiles and composite top and bottom rails, so minor trimming or boring doesn't require additional sealing.

1

Dry-fit the new slab in the opening

Before any cutting, stand the new slab against the jamb in the opening to confirm width and height. Without hinges, the slab won't hang at its final position, so the easiest way to check height is to lay the new slab flat next to the old one — they should be identical edge to edge. If the new slab is taller or wider than the old one, trim now — you don't want to discover a sizing issue after you've chiseled mortises.

2

Stack the old slab on top of the new one

Lay the new slab on the sawhorses with the hinge edge facing up. Set the old slab directly on top, hinge edges flush, top edges flush. Clamp the pair together if you have clamps — it prevents slipping.

3

Mark hinge and lock locations

Trace around each old hinge mortise with a sharp pencil. Transfer the top and bottom edges of every mortise down onto the new slab's edge. Mark the lockset bore center too — top and bottom of the 2-1/8" hole.

4

Cut the hinge mortises

Set the mortise depth to match your hinge leaf thickness — the easiest way is to use the existing jamb mortise as your gauge. Set a combination square against the existing jamb mortise to read the depth, then transfer that to the slab edge between your top and bottom pencil marks. Score the perimeter of each mortise with a sharp chisel, make shallow relief cuts across the face, then pare the waste out flat to your depth line. Test-fit the hinge — the leaf should sit flush with the edge of the slab. On wood slabs, a router with a hinge template gives the cleanest result.

5

Bore the lockset

Drill the **edge bore first**, then the face bore — reversing the order causes the spade bit to wander when it breaks into the empty face bore. On the edge, drill the 1" latch bore straight through to the face bore depth. On the face, drill the 2-1/8" lockset hole halfway through from one side, then finish from the other to prevent blowout. **Backset** (slab edge to face bore center) is typically **2-3/8"** on residential doors. **2-3/4"** is more common on wide (36"+) residential and commercial doors. **2"** (short backset) is rare — sometimes used on narrow doors (30" or less). Match your lockset.

Hang & Fit the New Slab

Attach hinges to the new slab first, then lift it into the jamb and drop the pins. If the slab was cut to size correctly, this step should take ten minutes.

1

Attach hinge leaves to the slab

Screw the hinge leaves into each mortise using the original screws. Drill pilot holes first in wood slabs (approximately 1/8") so the screws don't split the edge. Fiberglass and steel slabs typically have factory pilot points already in place.

2

Lift the slab into the opening

Tilt the top of the slab toward the jamb and align the hinge knuckles with the jamb hinges — top hinge first. Slip a shim under the bottom edge to hold the weight while you mate the top knuckles.

3

Drop the pins — top first

Start the top pin first. With the top hinge engaged, the door hangs in place while you align the middle and bottom knuckles and drop their pins. Tap each pin home with a hammer until the head seats flush on the knuckle.

4

Add a long screw to the top hinge

Replace one of the top-hinge jamb screws with a 3" screw that reaches into the framing. This single screw is the difference between a door that sags in six months and one that stays true for a decade. Drive this screw **before** you check the reveals — it changes how the slab hangs.

5

Close the door and check operation

The door should swing freely and close without binding. Reveals should be roughly 1/8" at the top and on both sides (see the targets in Section 3). If anything is binding, sticking, or the gaps look uneven, head to **Section 9: Troubleshooting** — most reveal and binding problems can be fixed in minutes without removing the slab.

NON-REMOVABLE HINGE PINS (NRP)

Some exterior doors — especially outswing units and high-security installs — use non-removable pin hinges. NRP hinges have a set screw or peened pin that prevents the pin from being driven out, so Steps 1–3 above don't apply. Instead: leave the hinge leaves attached to the jamb, hold the slab in position against the open hinge leaves, and screw the slab directly to the leaves through the slab-side hinge holes. Start with the **top hole of the top hinge** and work your way down the edge of the slab — driving the top screw first lets the slab hang naturally as you secure the rest. Drill pilot holes first on wood slabs.

Install Hardware & Weatherstripping

Your slab hangs and swings cleanly. Now it’s time to lock it up and seal it out.

1

Install the latch and lockset

Drop the latch into the 1" edge bore — beveled side facing the jamb — and screw the faceplate flush with the slab’s edge. Assemble the lockset through the 2-1/8" face bore according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

2

Install the deadbolt (if applicable)

Drop the deadbolt latch into its 1" edge bore and assemble through the 2-1/8" face bore per the manufacturer’s instructions. The deadbolt face bore is typically located so its center is **5-1/2" above the center of the latch face bore** on residential doors. If your slab came pre-prepped or you prepared it in Section 5, the bores are already drilled — just install the deadbolt hardware.

3

Test strike plate alignment

Close the door and try the latch and deadbolt. Both should engage the existing strike plates smoothly. Small misalignments (1/32"–1/16") can often be corrected by loosening the strike screws and shifting the plate within the slop of its screw holes. Larger misalignments mean the slab is sitting slightly off — adjust hinge shims before re-cutting the strike mortise.

PRO TIP: LIPSTICK THE BOLTS TO FIND THE CONTACT POINT

If the deadbolt or latch isn’t engaging cleanly and you can’t tell exactly where it’s catching, dab a bit of lipstick (or a marker) on the leading edge of the bolt. Close the door and turn the bolt against the strike plate — the lipstick transfers to the jamb at the exact contact point, showing you whether the bolt is hitting high, low, or off-center. Adjust the strike plate or hinge shims based on what the mark tells you, wipe clean, and repeat until the bolt slides freely.

4

Replace weatherstripping if worn

If the kerf-in weatherstrip on the jamb is flat, torn, or brittle, pull it out and press a new strip into the kerf by hand. Cut corners at 45° for a clean seal.

5

Install the door sweep

Slide the sweep onto the bottom edge of the slab and adjust it so it touches the threshold without dragging. Tighten the set screws. You should be able to close the door without excessive force and see no daylight underneath.

SECURITY NOTE

For maximum security, replace **both screws** on the deadbolt strike plate with 3" screws, plus at least one in the top hinge. Each long screw should reach through the jamb and into the wall framing, not just the jamb. Short screws that only bite into the jamb can be kicked through.

Finishing Your New Slab

Finish is not optional on an exterior door. Pease's warranty requires proper finishing of **all six sides** — front, back, top, bottom, and both edges — on every product line. The specific primer, paint, or stain depends on which product you bought.

Smooth Fiberglass

Clean all surfaces to remove dust, oils, and handling residue, then let the surface fully dry. Apply a high-quality bonding primer such as **Sherwin-Williams Extreme Bond Primer**, followed by a premium exterior-grade acrylic latex paint. For doors in direct sun, choose lighter to medium shades — very dark colors raise surface temperatures and reduce long-term finish performance. Finish as soon as practical after receipt and before prolonged weather exposure.

Woodgrain Fiberglass

Woodgrain fiberglass has an embossed surface that replicates natural wood. Finish with a **gel stain** or an **opaque, heavily pigmented oil-based stain** suitable for fiberglass — these sit on the surface rather than soaking in, letting the grain texture show through. After staining, apply a **polyurethane topcoat with UV inhibitor** to protect against fading, moisture, and weather. Traditional penetrating wood stains are *not* recommended — they're designed to absorb into wood fibers, not bond to fiberglass. Woodgrain fiberglass can also be painted with a solid color if preferred; use a bonding primer (Sherwin-Williams Extreme Bond Primer) first for adhesion.

Steel

Steel doors ship with a factory-applied primer. Lightly clean the primed surface to remove dust and handling residue, then apply a high-quality exterior-grade paint suitable for metal surfaces per the paint manufacturer's instructions. **Steel doors are not intended to be stained.** For doors in direct sun, choose lighter to medium shades — dark colors raise surface temperatures and may affect finish performance. Finish as soon as practical after installation to protect against corrosion.

Wood

Exterior wood doors are natural hardwood and must be fully sealed. Clean, dry, and lightly sand before finishing. Either a high-quality exterior wood stain (to highlight the grain) or an exterior-grade paint system works — **if you stain, always topcoat with a clear exterior-grade polyurethane or spar varnish with UV protection.** Seal *all* surfaces including cutouts — lock bores, hinge mortises, and any hardware prep — to prevent swelling, warping, or checking. Inspect the finish periodically and reapply topcoats as needed.

OVERHANG REQUIRED FOR WOOD DOORS

Exterior wood doors require protective overhang coverage. The overhang depth must be equal to or greater than the distance from the bottom of the threshold to the underside of the overhang. Doors installed without adequate overhead protection may experience accelerated finish failure and may not be covered under warranty.

Troubleshooting

If your door is binding, sticking, or the reveals don’t look right, work through the steps below in order — each one is progressively more invasive than the last. Most reveal problems are fixed in steps 1 or 2. If yours isn’t covered here, or a fix doesn’t hold, call us.

FIXING BINDING OR UNEVEN REVEALS

1

Tighten hinge screws and try longer screws

A tight or binding lock side, or a tight reveal at the lower hinge corner, is most often caused by loose hinge screws letting the slab sag. Start by tightening every hinge screw on the jamb side. If the lock side is tight or binding at the **top**, the top hinge has loosened from gravity — this is the single most common reveal problem. Replace one of the top-hinge jamb screws with a 3" screw that reaches into the framing (you should already have done this in Section 6, but if you skipped it, do it now). Add a 3" screw to the middle and bottom hinges too if the issue persists.

2

Shim the hinges to kick the door over

If the hinge side is too tight, or the lock-side reveal is wide in some spots and narrow in others, shimming behind the hinge leaves can correct it. Adding a thin shim behind a hinge pushes the slab away from that side of the jamb — use this **after** trying Step 1. A shim behind the top hinge tightens the bottom of the lock-side reveal; a shim behind the bottom hinge tightens the top. Cardboard hinge shims are sold at any hardware store; in a pinch, cut up a credit card or thin plastic packaging. Start with one layer; add more if needed.

3

Last resort — trim, sand, or plane the slab edge

Only after Steps 1 and 2 have failed. **Wood slabs** are the most trimmable — plane or sand the binding edge with a block plane or random orbit sander. **Fiberglass slabs** have PVC caps on the hinge and lock edges that can be sanded or planed up to about 1/8" — never plane the fiberglass face or skin. **Steel-edge slabs cannot be trimmed**; if a steel slab is binding after Steps 1 and 2, go to Step 4. After any trimming, seal and finish the exposed edge appropriately for the material to maintain warranty coverage and prevent moisture damage.

4

If all else fails — check for a defective slab or out-of-square jamb

Lay the slab flat and measure both diagonals. If they match within 1/8", the slab is square. If they don’t match, the slab itself is defective — call us for a replacement. If the slab is square but still won’t sit straight in the jambs, the jambs are out of square. At that point, slab replacement isn’t the right fix — you’ll need to remove siding, re-shim or re-level the framing system (jambs and threshold), and possibly re-level the rough opening if the house has settled. This is a job for a prehung replacement, not a slab swap.

OTHER COMMON ISSUES

- **Door won’t latch — latch or deadbolt misses the strike**

  First, diagnose the misalignment: dab a bit of lipstick or marker on the leading edge of the bolt, close the door and turn the bolt against the strike plate, then open the door. The transferred mark shows exactly where the bolt is hitting the jamb. Small misalignments (1/32"–1/16") can be corrected by loosening the strike plate screws and

shifting the plate within the slop of its screw holes. For larger misalignments, you'll need to **relocate or enlarge the strike mortise** in the jamb. Mark the new bolt path on the strike plate, then use a sharp chisel, plunge router, or rotary tool (Dremel-style) to extend the mortise pocket in the direction the bolt needs to go. Re-seat the strike plate and test. If the misalignment is more than about 1/4" — or if it appeared over time rather than on initial install — the slab has dropped: follow Step 1 of the binding/reveal sequence above to pull the top hinge tight to the framing.

- **Door is hard to close — weatherstrip is over-compressing**

  If the door requires a hard push to latch right after installation — especially if you just replaced the weatherstrip — give it time. **New weatherstripping needs a couple weeks to break in**: the foam or bulb compresses and takes a set as the door is used, and a door that's tough to close on day one often latches perfectly within two to three weeks. If it's still hard to close after that, the weatherstrip is over-compressing. Try replacing the kerf-in strip with a thinner profile. If that doesn't solve it, check that hinge shims (Step 2 of the binding sequence above) haven't kicked the slab too far out from the hinge side.

- **Door swings open or closed by itself**

  The jamb is out of plumb, so gravity is pulling the slab to one side. Check both jambs with a 4-foot level. If they're leaning more than about 1/8" over the height of the door, the existing frame has shifted — a slab swap won't fix this, you need to address the framing. As a temporary workaround, you can bend one of the hinge pins very slightly with the door off the hinges to add friction, or install a door stop or hold-open hardware.

- **Daylight visible under the closed door**

  The sweep needs adjustment or the threshold needs to be raised. Most adjustable thresholds have screws along the top — turn them clockwise to raise the seal contact. Don't over-compress or the door will be hard to close.

- **Hinges squeak or bind**

  Common when reusing old hinges. Drive the hinge pins out one at a time, wipe each pin clean, and apply a light film of white lithium grease, silicone spray, or paraffin wax to the pin and the inside of the knuckle before reseating. Avoid WD-40 or other penetrating oils — they evaporate quickly and attract dust, making the squeak come back faster.

- **Wood slab is warping after installation**

  Almost always caused by unsealed edges or cutouts. Remove the slab, seal the top, bottom, both faces, both edges, and any lock bores or hinge mortises with exterior primer or sealer, and rehang. Slabs installed without all six sides sealed are not covered under warranty.

Need help? We're here.

Call us at 1-513-871-8907, Monday–Friday, 8am–5pm ET. Our team ships replacement slabs, hardware, and weatherstripping nationwide — and we'll happily walk you through any step of this install over the phone.

peasedoors.com