

Wise Up and Power Down

Ten Low- to No-Cost Energy Saving Tips for the Home

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Energy conservation is again on everyone's mind. As energy costs go up, attention to lowering energy usage rises correspondingly. While there are numerous things that can be done to lower utility bills, here's a list of 10 low- to no-cost solutions.

1) Adjust the thermostat. Keep the thermostat at an energy efficient and comfortable setting during the day and readjust at night and while you are away. Wear appropriate clothing to keep comfortable. Better yet, buy a programmable thermostat so you don't have to remember! Try 68 F in the winter and 78 F in the summer when you are awake. Adjust the temperature down in the winter and up in the summer when you are asleep or away from home.



2) **Replace conventional light bulbs with new energy**efficient bulbs. New light bulb technologies are flooding the market. Depending on the bulb you choose, you can save 75 to 80 percent of the energy needed. And for maximum conservation, turn off lights when you leave a room and turn outside lights off during the day. Use natural daylight whenever possible. 3) **Unplug unused appliances and electronics.** Many small appliances and electronics still use power, even when turned off. This is especially true if they have a light or clock that stays on. Unplug them when they are not being used, or plug several (like TVs, DVD players, cable boxes, etc.) into power strips, and turn power off at the power strip. This also includes phone chargers when not in use.

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- 4) **Lower the hot water temperature.** Most hot water heaters are set at 140 F. Turn the temperature down to 120 F. Not only is this recommended for safety in preventing scalding, but it also cuts water heating cost by 6 to 10 percent.
- 5) Wash clothes in cold water. Clothing today is made from a variety of fibers that do well with cold water washing. Water heating accounts for 90 percent of the energy used by washing machines. Unless the laundry load contains diapers or stained work clothes, cold water should work well. To save even more, use a clothesline instead of the dryer on a sunny day.
- 6) Replace your shower head. Standard shower heads use up to 8 gallons of hot, steaming water per minute. With a new, low-flow shower head, you will only use 1 to 2 gallons of water per minute. Faucet aerators cost about \$5 and work much the same way. You probably won't notice a difference, but you will on your utility bill.
- 7) **Seal air leaks.** Reducing the amount of air that leaks in and out of your home is one of the most cost-effective things you can do to cut heating and cooling costs. Caulking and weather stripping are two simple and effective air-sealing techniques that will pay back their cost, usually within a year or less.



- 8) **Replace or clean your heating-cooling system's filter.** All forced air systems have filters that keep dust and dirt from blowing throughout the house. Once the filter becomes full of dust and dirt, air movement is restricted. This restriction makes the heating-cooling system less efficient and can eventually damage the entire system. Check filters monthly. Replace disposable filters, clean reusable filters, or do both as needed.
- 9) **Manage appliance usage.** Keep appliances clean and use appropriately.
 - a. Clean refrigerator coils regularly to keep the compressor running efficiently the dirtier the coils, the more energy is being used.
 - b. Set refrigerator temperature at 36 F to 39 F and freezer temperature at 0 F to 5 F.
 - c. Use the microwave when possible. It cooks faster and doesn't create as much heat as the range, which is especially important in the summer when running the air conditioner.
 - d. Replace worn-out seals on the refrigerator, freezer and oven.
 - e. Air-dry dishes instead of using the dishwasher's heat drying option.



Sources of Air Leaks

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Seal Air Leaks

- Caulking Use in gaps that are 1/4 inch or smaller.
- Spray foam Use in gaps that are 1/4 inch to 3 inches.
- Foam board, fiberglass, etc. Use in larger openings.
- Weather stripping tape Use around doors and windows.
- Weatherizing plastic Install on windows.
- Foam gaskets Use in light switches and electrical outlets on exterior walls.
- Fireplace flues Keep closed when no fire.
- Towels or door-sweeps Use under doors.

- f. Run your dishwasher and clothes washer only when full.
- g. Match the size of your pot or pan to the size of the burner. Using a burner that is too big for your cooking utensil is a fire hazard as well as a waste of energy.
- h. Make sure your dryer's outside vent is clear, and clean the lint filter after every load.
- i. Consider replacing older model appliances with Energy Star appliances (and moving the old refrigerator into the garage or basement isn't going to save you any money!).
- j. Use the oven light to check on food when cooking or baking, which is more energy efficient than opening the oven door.
- k. Dry one load of clothes immediately after another to minimize heat loss.
- I. Defrost frozen food in the refrigerator before cooking.

10) **Conduct an energy audit.**

A home energy audit helps you determine where your house is losing energy and money — and how to correct these problems in order to make your home more energy efficient. Some audits are available online, but the best audit is conducted by a professional technician, often called an energy auditor. Contact your local utility to find out how to get an energy audit where you live.







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