

Top Tips for Saving Energy in Your Home

Here's a checklist of energy-saving measures that cost little or nothing, but can return real savings on your energy bills. These measures are easy to take, whether you own or rent your home.

1 Turn lights, appliances, and electronics off when they are not in use. Today's larger homes have a lot of rooms where operating TVs, radios, computers, and lights may be forgotten. Unplug idle power adapters and cell-phone chargers, too, or use a power strip with a switch for convenience. For outdoor lights, install motion sensors or a combination of photo sensors to turn lights on and timers to turn them off.

2 Replace at least five incandescent light bulbs with high-efficiency, compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs). Energy Star labeled CFLs use 75 percent less energy and last six to ten times longer than standard incandescent bulbs do. A CFL that uses 13 to 17 watts will give as much light as a 60-watt incandescent bulb. Today's CFLs come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and tints.

3 Install a programmable thermostat. In winter, lower the temperature when you are typically at work or asleep. You can save about 5 percent on your heating bill if your setback averages out to two degrees around the clock. The reverse is true in summer: a higher thermostat setting will save you money. As you program your thermostat, remember to give it a little time to warm or cool the whole house to your comfort level.

4 Regularly change or clean filters in heating and cooling equipment. During peak heating or cooling season, change or clean filters monthly. A new filter may cost about \$3, but can save you \$5 or more per month. You will also enjoy the cleaner air.

5 Use fans. According to Energy Star, you can raise summer air-conditioner settings by 3 to 5 degrees with no loss of comfort if you add ceiling

fans. Switch reversible fans in winter, to pull cool air upward and force warm air back down.

6 Control direct sunlight through windows. In the summer, block it using blinds, screens, film, outdoor awnings, vines, and trees. In cold weather, reverse your thinking. As long as you control glare, the sun can bring welcome warmth in winter.

7 Perform basic weatherization. This includes repairing holes and cracks that let in drafts and weather-stripping or caulking around doors and windows. It also includes plugging leaks and fixing gaps in insulation on ducts and pipes.

8 Try washing most clothes in cold water, and always rinse in cold. Clothes washed in cold water fade less, have fewer wrinkles, and may save up to a hundred dollars annually on water heating.

9 Don't overdry your clothes. Today, many clothes driers have energy-saving moisture sensors that shut off the heat when the clothes are dry. If you don't have this feature, test a few loads, and remember how long they take to dry. Running a typical drier for 15 minutes less per load can save you up to \$35 per year. Also, remember to clean the lint trap after every load.

10 If you have an old refrigerator or freezer that you barely use, unplug it. These old appliances can add up to 15 percent to your electric bill. You can save energy in your regular fridge by keeping the condenser coils clean, placing it in a well-ventilated, relatively cool spot, and keeping it full but not overloaded. If your freezer is usually empty, you can improve cold airflow by storing some extra ice.