

## TOP TEN HOME ENERGY SAVING TIPS

### 1. Control Your Gas/Forced Air Thermostat.

You can save on your heating bill by keeping your thermostat at an energy efficient and comfortable setting during the day and turning the heat down at night and when you're not home. Try 68 degrees F or less during the day and 60 degrees F when you're away or sleeping. You'll save approximately 1% for every degree of night setback. When you're chilly, put on a sweater rather than click on the heat. Night set-back is also worth while with boilers (hot water heat). However, because of slower recovery times you may not be able to set your thermostat back as much as with a forced air furnace.

### 2. Lower Your Water Temperature.

Your hot water is probably hotter than necessary. Most heaters are set at 140 degrees F, and this high a setting is only needed if you have a dishwasher without a booster heater. Turn the temperature down to 120 degrees F (medium setting on a gas heater dial), and you'll cut your water-heating costs by 6 to 10 percent. Most electric heaters have both an upper and a lower thermostat to adjust. Be sure to first turn the electricity off at the circuit breaker.

### 3. Insulate Your Water Heater.

To keep your coffee hot, you put it in a thermos or an insulated cup. That same common-sense approach works for your water heater, too. Wrapping the tank in a blanket of fiberglass insulation will reduce heat loss by 25 to 45 percent. This means a savings of 4 to 9 percent on your water-heating bill. Water heater jacket kits are available for \$10 to \$20 at your local hardware store or through your utility. Be sure to follow the installation directions. It's especially important not to block exhaust vents and air intakes on gas models, and thermostat access panels on electric heaters with insulation. Insulation wraps and jackets are appropriate for older water heaters and those located in unheated areas. The manufacturer may not recommend an insulation wrap for newer water heaters.

### 4. Replace Your Showerhead.

A standard showerhead sprays you with up to 8 gallons per minute of hot, steaming water. Replacing it with a quality low-flow showerhead will allow you to use only 1 to 2 gallons of water—and you'll hardly notice a difference—except on your utility bill! Low-flow showerheads cost between \$10 and \$20 and pay for themselves in about four months by reducing water consumption and energy used to heat the water.

### 5. Discover the Cold Water Wash.

Water heating accounts for 90 percent of the energy used by washing machines. Washing in hot water costs 20 to 40 cents per load. That adds up, and it's not necessary, except for special loads such as diapers or stained work clothes. Try washing in cold water using cold water detergents, and wash full loads whenever possible. And on sunny days, use the clothesline instead of the dryer.

### 6. Plug those Leaks!

On a cold, windy day, do you feel the breezes blowing through your house—especially near trouble spots such as wall outlets, windows, doors and fireplaces? As the cold comes in, your heat (and your money) flies away. You can stop this heat loss quickly and easily with low-cost materials. On windows, use clear weatherstrip tape along the gap where the glass meets the frame and to seal any cracks. On double-hung windows, tape over the pulley hole and use rope caulk

between the upper and lower windows. To stop leakage under exterior doors, roll up towels to block the breeze or buy an inexpensive door sweep. If the door leaks around the entire frame, install foam weatherstripping with adhesive backing between the door and the frame. If you don't use your fireplace much and it doesn't have a door, make sure the damper is closed and the opening is sealed. Cardboard and tape are low-cost and effective materials to do the job. Another low-cost option is to plug the chimney with a plastic bag full of crumpled newspaper or insulation. Be sure to post a highly visible reminder to remove the bag before building a fire. Use caulk to seal along the basement sill plate and around door and window frames. Also seal little holes around water pipes and stuff insulation into big holes around plumbing fixtures. Heat leaks out of light switches and electrical outlets, too. Inexpensive foam gaskets that fit behind the cover plates easily solve this problem. Remember, every hole you plug means fewer drafts, a cozier home and lower heating bills.

#### 7. Install Storm Windows.

Once you have sealed air leaks around your windows, you can double their insulating value by installing storm windows. Adding another layer of glass or plastic creates a dead air space, and trapped air is an excellent insulator. Plastic film window kits are the lowest-cost option and can be easily installed on the inside or outside of your existing windows. Be sure the air space is at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch and not more than 4 inches.

#### 8. Regularly Clean or Replace Your Furnace Filter.

All forced air furnaces have filters that keep dust and dirt from blowing into your house. If not periodically cleaned or replaced, dirty filters can greatly affect the heating ability of the furnace and waste valuable fuel. Some filters are disposable; some can be washed and reused. Do not reuse disposable filters. New ones can often be purchased for less than a dollar. Each month of the heating season, clean or replace your furnace filter(s).

#### 9. Watch Your Refrigerator.

Refrigerators cost \$5 to \$8 per month to operate and consume 3 to 5 percent of your home's total energy use. To keep out warm room air, keep the door closed as much as possible. It also helps to regularly clean dust out of the coils and to minimize freezer ice build-up. Keep the refrigerator at 36 to 38 degrees F and the freezer at 0 to 5 degrees F. If you have more than one refrigerator or freezer and one doesn't get much use, unplug it and save.

#### 10. Devise an Energy Action Plan!

The most important energy saving step of all takes place inside your head. Once you make the decision to "do it," you'll discover that reducing your home energy consumption is easy and the rewards, great.

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