

Top 10 Ways to Keep Your Home Warm, Comfy and Efficient

Cheap tips with big savings

Heating and cooling accounts for almost 50% of the energy use in a typical American home according to the U.S. Department of Energy. That makes it the largest single energy expense for most homes. Whether you rent or own, you can take steps to weatherize your home for little or no expense. Here are a few ways to get started:

Steps that don't cost a thing

1. Start by setting your thermostat to 68° Fahrenheit (F).

Your heating system will operate less and use less energy. Turn your thermostat down 5° F at night or when leaving your home for an hour or more to save up to \$70 on energy costs each year. For a small investment, consider purchasing a programmable thermostat to adjust your home's temperature settings automatically when you're sleeping or away.

2. Set your water heater to 120° F.

Simply consider turning down your water heater to a slightly cooler setting to reduce the amount of energy used to heat the water while still keeping the water warm enough for home use. In fact, each time you lower the temperature by 10° F you'll save 3%–5% on your water heating costs. That's a savings of approximately \$6–\$10 a year. For a small investment (about \$20), consider adding a water heater blanket to your water heater tank to insulate the tank and reduce the amount of energy used to maintain warm water in the water heater tank. Be sure to follow your manufacturer's recommendations.

3. In the winter, make the most of Mother Nature's sunlight by opening window coverings on south-facing windows to warm your home.

Also, consider closing window coverings in rooms that receive no direct sunlight to insulate from cold window drafts. At night, close window coverings to retain heat. Up to 15% of your heat can escape through unprotected windows, but the solar heat gain from the sun during the day can conserve valuable energy.

4. If you have a washing machine, use cold water.

According to ENERGY STAR[®], washing clothes in cold water will save you about \$40 a year with an electric water heater and about \$30 a year with a gas water heater.



Low-cost steps

1. Replace your furnace or heat pump filter regularly.

Dirty filters reduce airflow, making your equipment work harder and use more energy. Replace your furnace filter monthly (unless it is a high-efficiency filter designed to last several months) during the heating season to reduce heating costs by up to 5% or about \$35 a year.

2. Install low-flow showerheads and faucets.

1.8-gallon per minute showerheads can reduce your hot water consumption by as much as 10%. You could see savings up to \$6 per year for a sink faucet aerator and \$20 per year for a showerhead.

3. Reverse the direction of your ceiling fan in the winter.

Run your ceiling fan at low speed in the reverse direction (counter-clockwise) during the heating season so that the blades push air up toward the ceiling where hot air often gets trapped. The fan will drive the warm air back down around the edges of the room, resulting in more even heating and improved comfort.

4. Weatherize your home and save up to 10% of your heating and cooling costs.

A handy homeowner can seal up holes to the outside by weather-stripping doors and sealing windows and gaps along the home's foundation.



Go big and save big

1. Insulate your home.

The easiest and most cost-effective way to insulate your home is to add insulation in the attic. Other effective places to add insulation include unfinished basement walls and crawl spaces. Insulating walls can be more complex, so check with a contractor for advice. When insulation is correctly installed AND the home is totally weatherized, the average home can see a savings of up to 20% of your heating and cooling costs.

2. Purchase ENERGY STAR® appliances. A smart choice.

Appliances and electronics really contribute to your energy bill. When it is time to replace, remember items like refrigerators, washers, dryers, furnaces, TVs and computers have two price tags—purchase price and lifetime energy cost. According to ENERGY STAR, the average homeowner spends about \$2,000 on energy bills every year. Change to appliances that have earned the ENERGY STAR rating, and you could save \$75 a year in energy costs, while saving the environment.

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