

# Energy-Saving Tips

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It is hard to imagine life without electricity. In our homes, we rely on it to power our lights, appliances, and electronics. Many of us also use electricity to provide our homes with hot water, heat, and air conditioning. As valuable and convenient as electricity is, it is important to be aware of and control our energy usage whenever possible.

There are a number of ways to conserve electricity without reducing your comfort or convenience. Paying attention to the following areas can help you incorporate energy efficiency into your daily life while helping you cut costs.

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## Reduce Your Heating and Cooling Costs

No matter what season it is, your home is competing with the weather outside to make sure the inside temperature remains comfortable. As outside temperatures cool off in the winter and heat up in the summer, your heating and cooling equipment requires more energy to keep your home at the desired comfort level.

Heating and cooling account for just over half of the energy used in a typical U.S. home, making them the largest energy expenses for most homes. Here are some tips to lower your heating and cooling costs by:

### Replacing your air filter

Replacing a dirty air filter is one of the simplest and most inexpensive ways to improve the energy efficiency of your heating and cooling system. Replacing an air filter saves you money by improving the system's performance and making it work easier. It can also prolong the life of your heating and cooling equipment. You should replace your air filter once a month. If your air filter is not disposable, get in the habit of cleaning it once a month.

### Adjusting your thermostat

Keeping your thermostat set at a constant temperature will save energy. If you adjust the temperature often, you are more likely to waste energy.

During summer months, the higher you set the thermostat, the more energy you will conserve. Try setting the thermostat at 78° or above. Using ceiling fans may even allow you to raise the thermostat temperature to 80°, thus saving more energy.

In the winter, try setting the thermostat at 68° or below.

### Keeping your equipment properly maintained

Have your equipment checked by a specialist annually before the heating or cooling season begins. If your equipment should need major repairs, consider the costs. If your equipment is more than 15 years old, you may be better off replacing it with energy-efficient equipment, such as a heat pump. The savings in operating costs can quickly make up for the initial cost.

Increasing attic insulation and sealing air leaks around doors and windows will also increase your home's energy efficiency.

## Use Hot Water Wisely

Next to home heating and cooling, your hot water heater is the largest energy user. Using hot water wisely will save energy and money. Here are some tips to reduce hot water consumption:

- Lower the thermostat on your water heater to 120°.
- Close the sink drain when shaving.
- When rinsing dishes, use the sink stopper or a dishpan instead of turning the faucet on and off.
- Equip your shower with a flow regulator (found at your local hardware store).
- Repair leaking faucets.
- Save hot water by taking short showers instead of baths.

Adding an insulated blanket to your water heater can also help to save energy and money. Insulated blankets can be found at your local building supply store. The thicker insulation you use, the more energy you will conserve.

## Save Energy in the Kitchen

A kitchen consists of many appliances that are used daily – dishwasher, refrigerator/freezer, stove/oven, etc. Avoid wasting energy by following these tips:

### Dishwasher

- Make sure you load the dishwasher properly. Avoid blocking dispensers or spray arms.
- Only run the dishwasher when it is filled to capacity, but do not overload. A dishwasher uses an average of 15 gallons of hot water per load plus electricity.
- Always choose the shortest washing cycle possible to clean your dishes.
- Use the “power-saver switch” (if available) to eliminate the drying cycle.
- On hot days, wait and run your dishwasher at night to keep from adding extra heat in the house.

### Refrigerator/Freezer

- Keep your refrigerator temperature between 37° and 40° and your freezer setting at 0°.
- Position your refrigerator/freezer away from heat vents and direct sunlight.
- Keep your refrigerator coils and vents clean and free of obstruction.
- Do not overload your refrigerator or freezer.
- Do not keep the door open for extended periods of time.

### Stove/Oven

Oven cooking is more economical than surface cooking because surface cooking uses energy continuously.

- When using the oven, if you are baking more than one dish, bake them both at the same time to conserve energy.
- Warming foods with the oven’s stored heat afterwards uses no energy. However, if food needs to be kept warm for an extended period of time, set the oven temperature to no more than 140° to 200°.
- Small appliances such as a microwave oven, small electric frying pan, grill or toaster use less energy than the oven broiler.

When using the cooking surface, choose pots and pans that cover the heating elements evenly.

You may also want to try using a crock-pot or slow-cooker to save time and energy.

## Save Energy in the Laundry Room

### Washing Machine

- Wash full loads when possible.
- Wash with cold water as much as possible. Cold water cleans most fabrics just as well as warm water.
- Don't use too much soap, which could result in an extra rinse cycle.
- If fabric is heavily soiled, pre-soak it to eliminate the need for a second wash cycle.

### Clothes Dryer

- Clean the lint filter after each use.
- Keep dryer vents free of lint.
- Dry loads one after the other while dryer is already warm.
- Remove clothing promptly to avoid ironing - a real energy and time consumer.

## Conserve Lighting

- Turn lights off when not in use.
- Replace light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs. The light a CFL produces is as bright as a regular bulb but does not generate the same heat.
- Install dimmers.
- Use dusk to dawn outdoor and security lights instead of lights that stay on longer.

All of this information together may seem overwhelming, but every small step you can take and make into a “habit” will add up to a big advantage when it comes to saving resources and helping to protect our environment. It will also add up to smaller bills.