



# No-cost energy tips

The more of these you do, the more you'll save. Heating is the largest energy cost in the home, so most of the info here is about using less energy to heat your home.

- 1. Temperature—How warm is it?** Every one degree that you heat a space over 68 degrees adds as much as 3% to the heating portion of your bill. To take control of heating costs, you need to know what the temperature actually is. If your home is equipped with a digital thermostat, it's probably accurate; if you don't have a digital thermostat, you can calibrate a thermostat by comparing it to a thermometer. Note: if you have a forced-air central heating system that has a programmable thermostat, set the thermostat to an energy efficient setting and leave it alone—do the same if you have a heat pump.
- 2. Time—How many hours of the day do you heat?** As much as possible, heat only when you're at home and awake. Turn your heat off or reduce it by 8-10 degrees when sleeping and when you're not at home. By heating your home for only 8-10 hours per day instead of 24 hours per day, you could reduce the heating portion of your bill by as much as 45%. With just an 8-10 degree reduction for at least 8-10 hours per day, you can save 15-25% on the heating portion of your bill.
- 3. Space—Can you reduce the size of the space that you heat?** If you have baseboard, ceiling, or wall heat, you can adjust the heat on a room-by-room basis. Try heating only the space where you spend the most time while awake. The smaller the space you heat, the smaller your heating bill will be. Note: If your home is equipped with a forced-air central heating system, do not close off multiple registers since this can cause damage to heating equipment by blocking proper air flow.
- 4. Drafts—Are you letting warm air out and cold air in?** Make sure to keep doors and windows closed during the heating season. Block all cracks, gaps, and openings to the outdoors. Keep woodstove and fireplace dampers closed when not in use. If your fireplace is equipped with glass doors, keeping the doors closed when having a fire will reduce the amount of cold outside air drawn into the home, and your wood will burn longer. Ensure that dampers in exhaust fans are not stuck open, and use bathroom and kitchen fans sparingly in cold weather because these fans can blow away a houseful of air in an hour.
- 5. Heat sources—Are your heat sources clean so they can run efficiently?** Turn off power, remove covers, and vacuum or dust the surfaces of baseboard and wall heaters. Dust and lint create a coating of insulation over the fins of a baseboard heater, and cause the heater to come on more often and stay on longer to deliver heat to a room. When fans in wall heaters become coated with dust and lint, they can't move air as well and must come on more often and run longer. Clean or change filters associated with forced-air central heating systems such as heat pumps and furnaces, since filters are the heart and lungs of these systems. By keeping these parts of your heating system clean, you will save energy, save money, and breathe better air in your home.
- 6. Air flow—Is your heated air reaching the places that you want it to go?** Air is the vehicle that moves heat around any home. Consider how air flows through your living space, and make sure that heat sources are not blocked. Increase the efficiency of ceiling and baseboard heat by running a small fan to get the air moving. If you blow the warmest layer of air off the ceiling (since warm air rises), a thermostat won't come on as often or run as long. You'll be more comfortable, and you'll save energy and money.

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# No-cost energy tips (continued)



- 7. Hot water—How hot is your water?** Heating hot water is the second largest use of energy in the average home. Try to reduce hot water use, and lower the temperature of your hot water if it is too hot. To reduce hot water cost and lower the risk of scalding, the temperature should not be over 120 degrees. Verify water temperature by measuring at a faucet with a kitchen thermometer. If adjusting is necessary, be sure to turn off power at the breaker box before adjusting both the upper and lower settings on your water heater. Showers generally use less water and cost less than baths, and try shortening showers by a few minutes. Use clothes washer and dishwasher only when full, and use the dishwasher's energy-saver mode and/or air dry setting. When possible, wash and rinse clothes in cold water, and a cold rinse is just as effective as a warm rinse. Repair any water leak promptly, as they can increase your electric, water, and sewer costs.
- 8. Refrigeration—Is your fridge running more often than necessary?** Refrigerators and freezers run more efficiently when they're full. Water jugs can be used to take up fridge space. Eliminate a second refrigerator or freezer, especially if they're an older model; older fridges can use three times the electricity of newer ones. Unplug units and vacuum the coils under or behind the cabinet twice yearly, since this allows the motor/compressor to run less often and for shorter periods of time to remove heat from inside the cabinet. Set fridge temperature at 35-40 degrees, and you can check this with a thermometer in a glass of water placed in the fridge. Set freezer at 0-10 degrees, and verify with a thermometer packed in frozen goods. Clean door gaskets occasionally to ensure a tight leak-proof seal.
- 9. Standby power and phantom energy—Are your electronic devices leaking electricity?** Turn off power to your electronic devices whenever you're not using them. Computers, TVs, DVD players, stereos, coffee-makers with a clock, and chargers of all kinds use energy even when not being used. This standby power or phantom energy can account for as much as 10% of home energy use. Plug multiple devices—such as those above—into a power strip, and then you can turn multiple devices completely off with the flip of one switch. If you use a power strip that's also a surge protector, you will save energy, save money, and save your valuable electronics from power surges that can cause serious equipment damage. When buying a surge protector, look for the UL 1449 rating, and select ones that are rated for your devices; surge protectors need three-pronged outlets to provide surge protection.
- 10. Lighting—Are you turning on lights only when necessary and turning off lights when you're done using them?** Turn off unnecessary lights, and use compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs that are energy efficient. If you're reading during daylight, try to do it near a window so you don't need to turn on a light. Use task lighting, so if you only need light in one corner of a room, only turn on a light in that corner instead of all the lights in the room. Check light bulbs for dust, and clean them occasionally so the light isn't blocked by a layer of dust.

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