



Year-Round Energy Saving Tips

FACT SHEET**August 2023**

The greenest energy is the energy you don't use. To cut down on your utility bills and conserve energy, check out our tips below. No matter what the season, remember to explore your utility's energy efficiency programs and free home energy assessments. If it's time to buy a new appliance, find out if your utility offers special rebates for efficient appliances.

Spring and Summer

Schedule HVAC maintenance. Before the hot weather hits, schedule an appointment with an expert to check your equipment's performance. An HVAC technician can tell if it's time to replace your old cooling unit with a new energy-efficient model. (The Department of Energy recommends replacing your HVAC system **after 10 years** for maximum efficiency.) Newer ENERGY STAR units will result in at least a 15 percent gain in efficiency.

Clean filters. Whether your air conditioner is old or new, clean your unit's filter. Do it before turning it on and then monthly after that. It's an easy way to improve the unit's performance and to save energy.

Make sure your AC is sized properly for the space to be cooled. Contrary to popular belief, a larger unit will not cool a room better. **A properly-sized unit** will be more efficient, and it will keep the space at a constant temperature and a comfortable humidity level.

Replace the old thermostat. If you want more control of your energy bills this summer, replace your old thermostat with a programmable one. Even better, get a smart thermostat, which can cut your heating and cooling costs by up to 20 percent.

Use fans. Fans alone aren't adequate in a heat wave, but they can be used with an air conditioner—so you don't have to blast the AC. Run a ceiling fan counter-clockwise, from your position looking up at it, to create a downdraft, and make sure to turn off your fan when you leave the room. (Fans cool people, not rooms.)

Be safe. Raising your thermostat by only two degrees and using a ceiling fan can lower air conditioning costs by up to 14 percent over the summer. But be smart about it—don't raise the temperature to an unsafe level. Many utilities recommend setting your thermostat at 76-78 degrees when you're at home and awake.

Avoid hot tasks. Delay heat-producing tasks, such as dishwashing, baking, or laundry, until the cooler night or early morning hours.

Turn off your oven. Consider grilling out to keep the kitchen from overheating and your AC from over-working. If grilling isn't for you, make meals in the microwave or multicooker.

Close doors. If your air conditioner is running, make sure to close doors to rooms you don't use often. The smaller the space to cool, the less work it takes for your system to cool it down.

Seal hot air out. Just as you would in the winter, make sure to keep outdoor air from making its way in by caulking and weatherstripping your doors and windows.

Use a rain barrel. With a rain barrel, you can collect water to reuse for watering your lawn (which only requires about 2 inches of water per week).

Use a low-flow showerhead which can reduce your home's water consumption (and the energy used to heat that water) by nearly 50 percent.

Run the dishwasher only if it's fully loaded. Turn the heated drying selection off.

Clean the coils on the back of your refrigerator. Also, make sure the door seals are airtight. (Close the door on a piece of paper. You should feel tension when you pull it out.)

Unplug devices when not in use. Even when electronic devices are powered off, many are still using electricity if they are plugged in. This is called vampire power or phantom load, which can account for **25 percent of a product's electric usage on average**. And remember: Leaving your smartphone plugged in to a charger overnight not only wastes electricity, but it also strains the batteries over time.

Use an advanced power strip. Advanced power strips cut electricity when your devices are not in use. They are designed specifically for systems where many devices plug into a central component, like a computer or television, so that when the central component is powered off, so is the rest of the system. It's a myth that computers will wear out if turned on and off. Monitors also generate a lot of heat, which can drive up your air-conditioning bill.

Install LED light bulbs. They use at least 75% less energy than incandescent bulbs. Swap out your holiday lights for LED versions for extra savings.

Turn down your water heater. Lower the temperature to the warm setting (120 degrees). You can also have hot water pipe insulation installed, or cover your hot water heater with an insulating blanket.

Fall and Winter

Weatherstrip doors and windows. This will help keep your home warmer by keeping heated air from leaking out.

Furnace inspection. Have a certified heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) contractor inspect your furnace. If your furnace is 15 years or older, you may want to consider upgrading to a newer system.

New filters. A clean filter helps your HVAC system operate at its best and last longer. You should change your filter as often as every three weeks to as little as every six months. This depends on various factors, like how often you actually use your system to what kind of unit you have (room air conditioners, gas furnaces, etc.) If you have pets or allergies, you may need to clean and replace your filters more often.

Adjust your thermostat. According to Energy.gov, you should set your home to 68 degrees when you are home and awake. But when you're asleep or away, you can turn it lower. The Department of Energy says you can turn the thermostat down 10 degrees from what you had it during the day when you were at home. Setting your thermostat back about 10 degrees for at least eight hours a day can save you almost 10 percent on your bill over the course of a year. NEVER go below 55 degrees, because you could freeze your pipes. (Note: A programmable/smart thermostat is best. If your home is WiFi-enabled, a smart thermostat can help control your home's temperature and cut heating and cooling costs by up to 20 percent.)

Outdoor faucets off. Running or leaky outside faucets can cause pipes to freeze and explode. Flushing outside faucets before winter is a great way to remove any excess water that could freeze up later. You may even want to consider purchasing an insulated cover for each outdoor faucet. Read CUB's blog on properly draining faucets.

Only use generators outdoors and avoid warming up your car inside your closed garage. To prevent possible carbon monoxide poisoning (Knows the signs of poisoning.) install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas to provide early warning of problems. Make sure they're all in working order.

Dirty chimneys account for 27 percent of home-heating fires. Like space heaters, keep objects away from them. And when you're done using the fireplace, close the damper so warm air doesn't escape up the chimney.

Turn down your water heater. Lower the temperature to the warm setting (120 degrees). You can also have hot water pipe insulation installed, or cover your hot water heater with an insulating blanket.

Check your attic insulation. A quick way to see if you need more insulation is to look across your attic floor. If the insulation is even with or below the attic floor joists, it's time to add more.

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Turn your ceiling fans clockwise to circulate warm air throughout your room.

Cook using a crock-pot. The colder weather is a perfect time to cook some nice, warm meals. But you don't have to pop everything in the oven. Using a crock-pot allows you to use less energy while still making delicious meals.

Don't use an oven or grill to heat your home. If you use a space heater, keep children and pets away from it. Place it on a hard, level surface; keep it away from flammable objects; and don't leave it on overnight. Department of Energy recommends that such heaters should be plugged directly into the wall outlet. (If an extension cord is necessary, use the shortest possible heavy-duty cord of 14-gauge wire or larger. Check and follow any manufacturer's instructions.) It also recommends buying a unit with a safety switch that automatically shuts off the heater if the unit is tipped over.