

Free Ways to Cut Your Energy Costs

No-Cost Ways to Save Energy

Lower your bill all year long without spending a dime!



Want to save big on energy? Sure, you could buy all new Energy Star appliances or replace your single-pane windows with double-pane, Low-E versions or add solar panels to your roof – but it won't be cheap. To save energy around the house, small changes can make a big difference. (Remember the butterfly effect?) Amazingly, you can do a lot without spending a dime.

Try these super-simple, absolutely free energy-saving tips to cut your bill this winter and all year long.

1. Turn off the lights. Your father probably repeated this a million times – and for good reason. Lighting accounts for about 12% of your home's energy use, so turning them off when you leave a room lowers your energy consumption – and your bill. Who says father doesn't know best?!



2. Turn off the tap. You can save up to 8 gallons of water a day by turning off the faucet when you brush your teeth (morning and night). That's a savings of more than 200 gallons a month – for just one person. Multiply that by the number of people in your family to figure how much cash you're otherwise sending down the drain.

3. Wash clothes (or dishes) at night. Many utilities offer discounts for using power during off-peak hours (often after 9 p.m. or all day on weekends). Doing the laundry or running the dishwasher when electricity is “on sale” could lower your bill about 40% to 50%. With savings like that you could really clean up!

4. Wash clothes in cold water. Did you know that nearly 90% of a washing machine's energy is used to heat water? Cold water gets clothes just as clean for a lot less energy. And to get the most out of that energy, wash only full loads; partial loads waste energy and money.

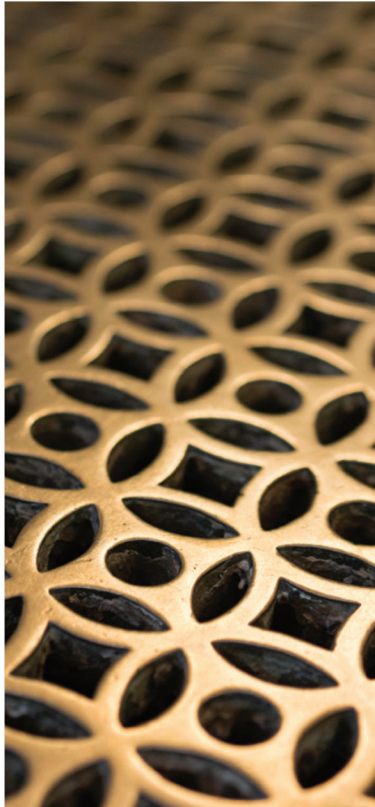
5. Air-dry your dishes. Skip the drying cycle and let your dishes air dry. Most dishwashers have a heated-dry setting that you can disable; do it and you'll cut your energy use. If your machine doesn't have an air-dry feature, just prop the door open when washing is complete.

6. Let the sun shine in. Tap the power of that great ball of fire to heat your home in the winter. During the day, open the curtains on your south-side windows to take full advantage of the sun's light; at night, close the curtains to keep warm air in.

7. Pull the plug. Many appliances, gadgets and electronic devices draw power even when they're not on; just being plugged to an outlet results in phantom energy use that can add up to about 10% of your home's total. Common offenders: chargers for cell phones, digital cameras, power tools, etc.; also, TVs, DVD players, video games, computers, toasters. Unplug appliances when you're done or use a power strip and flip the off switch to avoid using energy when you're not looking.

8. Turn down the bright. Some newer televisions are set for the brighter, energy-sapping "store" mode. A super-bright screen makes sense in a showroom but less so in your living room. Tune your TV to the "home" setting for a better picture, longer life and up to 30% in energy savings.





9. Go low. In winter, set your thermostat no higher than 68 degrees when you're at home and awake, and reset to 58 degrees (or below) when you're away. For every degree you lower the thermostat you trim about 2% off your heating costs. Plus, dropping the heat 10 degrees to 15 degrees for eight hours a day cuts your yearly bill up to 15%. Do this before going to bed and snoozing won't mean losing.

10. Go high. In summer, save on air conditioning costs by keeping your house warmer than normal while you're away and setting the thermostat no lower than 78 degrees when you're at home and need cooler air.

11. Go low II. Water heating accounts for 14% to 25% of your home's energy, so keep your tank's temperature at 120 degrees (the warm setting) to save energy and still enjoy a nice hot shower.

12. Move the furniture. If your sofa (or dresser or china cabinet) blocks your air vent, it reduces air flow and makes your furnace or air conditioner work harder. Rearrange the furniture to ensure even air flow to heat or cool your home faster; you'll save money and energy.

13. Let it flow. If you've heard that closing the vents in rooms you don't use saves money, forget about it! Closing vents actually increases energy costs because forced-air furnaces are designed to heat a specific square footage and they can't sense if vents aren't open. Closed vents force your furnace to work harder to reach and maintain its target temperature. Likewise, if you heat (or cool) with an electric heat pump, closing the vents could damage the heat pump compressor. So let heat flow freely throughout your house to maximize energy and save money.

14. Dress for the season. In winter, do your best Bill Cosby imitation and put on a sweater to keep warm. In summer, wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing (in natural fibers when possible) to beat the heat.

15. Get an energy audit. Many utilities offer free energy audits. This is a great way to learn how you're using – or wasting! – energy. Even if your power company charges for an audit or you need to rope in a contractor's help, do it; the money you save by fixing your energy issues will more than pay for the audit in the long run.





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