

Go Green: Home Energy and Water Efficiency

Reducing the amount of home energy you use saves utility costs and improves the environment. You can also cut home utility costs by using less water. We often waste water without thinking about it.



Lighting

- **Fluorescent Lights** – Replace standard incandescent bulbs with fluorescent tubes or compact bulbs. Fluorescent lights use 50 to 75 percent less electricity and last about 4 to 10 times longer than regular bulbs.
- **Daylight** – Take advantage of daylight. When using natural light, you may be able to turn off some of your electric lights. Open the curtains or use sheer or light curtains. Decorate with light colors that help reflect daylight in the room. On hot summer days, you'll conserve more energy by drawing the shades to help keep heat out.
- **Turn Off Lights** – Turn off lights when not in use. If you leave a room, turn the lights off behind you. You may have heard that you should leave lights on if you're only gone a short while because turning them back on uses a lot of energy. That's not true with today's lights. Always turn them off when they're not being used. If you have several lights in a room, you may not need all of them. Experiment to find the best lighting for the room and for the task you are doing.

Heating and Cooling

- **Check Filters and Replace as Needed** – usually once a month. Have a professional check and clean equipment every year.
- **Set Your Thermostat** – Set your thermostat comfortably low in the winter and comfortably high in the summer. Dress appropriately.
 - **Summer** – Set the thermostat to 76 degrees F or above. Close the curtains – especially on east and west facing windows which get more direct sunlight.
 - **Winter** – Set the thermostat to 68 degrees or lower. Open the curtains. In winter sunshine helps warm a room so that the central heating runs less.
- **While You're Away** – Turn your thermostat back 10 to 15 degrees while you are away. If you turn the thermostat back for at least eight hours a day, you can save approximately 10 percent on your heating and cooling bills. A common misconception is that a system works harder than normal to return the space to a comfortable temperature after the thermostat has been set back. This misconception has been dispelled by years of research and numerous studies (U.S. Department of Energy).
- **Programmable Thermostat** – A programmable thermostat can return a comfortable temperature to the room before you arrive. You select the times the heating or air conditioning comes on, according to your preset schedule. Most programmable thermostats can store and repeat six or more temperature settings a day. You can manually override the temperature setting without interfering with the rest of the daily or weekly schedule. When shopping for a programmable thermostat, look for the ENERGY STAR label indicating the most energy-efficient products. The price is approximately \$29 to \$75.

Equipment

- **Turn Off Equipment** – Turn off equipment when it's not in use. Common misconceptions sometimes account for the failure to turn off computer equipment. Many people believe that a computer will last longer if it is never turned off. This incorrect perception carries over from the days of older, mainframe computers.
- **Turn Off Computer Monitors** – Another common misconception is that screen savers reduce energy use. They do not. Automatic switching to sleep mode or manually turning monitors off is always the better energy-saving strategy.
- **Use a Power Strip** – Many appliances continue to draw a small amount of power when they are switched off. These “phantom” loads occur in most appliances that use electricity, such as VCRs, televisions, stereos, computers and kitchen appliances. In the average home, 75 percent of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off. This can be avoided by unplugging the appliance or using a power strip and using the switch on the power strip to cut all power to the appliance.
- **Unplug Chargers and Adapters** – Unplug battery chargers when the batteries are fully charged or when the chargers are not in use. If you have a laptop computer, unplug the AC adapter or put it on a power strip. The transformer in the AC adapter draws power continuously, even when the laptop is not plugged into the adapter.

Water

- **Don't Let the Water Run** – Don't let the water run when you're not using it. For example, you don't need running water while you are brushing your teeth or scrubbing your hands. Wet your hands, turn off the water while you scrub and turn the water on for rinsing your hands. Turning off the tap while brushing your teeth in the morning and at bedtime can save up to 8 gallons of water per day, which equals 240 gallons a month!
- **Repair Leaks Immediately** – A leaky faucet wastes gallons of water in a short period of time. Leaky faucets that drip at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water each year.
- **Install Aerators** – Aerators go inside faucets. They reduce the water flow and add air, which keeps the pressure feeling strong. Installing a simple aerator is one of the most cost-effective ways to save water – you can double the faucet's efficiency without sacrificing performance. For best results, purchase an aerator with the WaterSense label.
- **Run Full Loads** – Only run full loads in the dishwasher or washing machine.
- **Water Heating** – Lower the thermostat on the water heater. Insulate the hot-water storage tank. (Covers are available from most hardware stores. Don't cover the thermostat.)

References

- U.S. Department of Energy. <http://www.fueleconomy.gov/FEG/drive.shtml>.
- *Energy Savers: Tips on Saving Energy and Money at Home*. U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. January 2006.

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