

Cutting Your Home Energy Costs

The cost of heating, cooling and running appliances in the home has risen sharply in the few last years. While the emphasis in the past has been on maximizing comfort and convenience, the smart consumer is now focusing on ways to offset the increase in utility bills. Here are some steps you can take to reduce energy consumption in your home.

Major Appliances

- › Make sure your refrigerator and freezer are not set at too low of a temperature. Use a thermometer rather than the numbers on your refrigerator's temperature control to determine how cold your food really is. Your refrigerator should be about 37 degrees Fahrenheit and your freezer about three degrees Fahrenheit.
- › Wash your clothes in warm or cold water.
- › Run your dishwasher only when it is full.
- › Most hot water heaters are set at a default temperature of 140 degrees Fahrenheit. A setting of 120 degrees Fahrenheit will save significantly on your hot water.
- › Replace showerheads with low flow or aerated ones.
- › When it is time to buy a new major appliance, look for the Energy Star Rating.

Heating and Cooling Your Home

- › Buy a programmable thermostat and learn how to set it. In the winter, set your thermostat at 68 degrees Fahrenheit for times when you are home and 62 or lower for times when you are not home.
- › Clean and replace filters as directed by the manufacturer.
- › In summertime, keep your home at 78 degrees Fahrenheit. Close the drapes to block the sun, run ceiling and attic fans and open windows to create a cross draft.
- › Weatherproof your home. Most heating and cooling loss occurs around doors and windows.
- › Replace your windows with energy-efficient ones or use the storm windows on your existing windows.

If the initial investment for some of these suggestions is more than you can afford, concentrate on the less expensive ones. The money you save will motivate you to take more steps to reduce your home's energy consumption and costs.

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