



Year-Round Energy Saving Tips

FACT SHEET

March 2026

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 hot weather hits, schedule an appointment with an expert to check your equipment's performance. A heating, ventilation and air conditioning (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 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.

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.

Replace the old thermostat with a programmable one to set the right temperature for your home. 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.)

Avoid hot tasks. Delay heat-producing tasks (dishwashing, baking, or laundry) until the cooler night or early morning hours. Grill out to keep the kitchen

from overheating and your AC from over-working. Other options include the microwave or multicooker.

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

Seal hot air out. Keep outdoor air from making its way into your home 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.

Clean the coils on the back of your refrigerator. Also, check the door seal. (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 for systems in which many devices plug into a central component, such as a computer or TV, so 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 cooling costs.

Install LED light bulbs. They use at least 75% less energy than incandescent bulbs.

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

Fall and Winter

Have your furnace inspected. Have a certified heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) contractor inspect your furnace. If your furnace is 15 years or older, consider upgrading to a more efficient system.

Replace 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, including 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.

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

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 set 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.)

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

Be safe. 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. The 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.

If you use a generators, keep it outdoors. To prevent possible carbon monoxide poisoning (**know 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.

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.

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.

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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.

Clean the coils on the back of your refrigerator. Also, check the door seal. (Close the door on a piece of paper. You should feel tension when you pull it out.)

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

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.

Turn off outdoor faucets. 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.

Be safe with your fireplace. Get your chimney inspected and cleaned regularly. Dirty chimneys account for 27 percent of home-heating fires. As with space heaters, keep objects away from fireplaces. And when you're done using the fireplace, close the damper so warm air doesn't escape up the chimney.