

How do I lower my electric bill?



Saving energy in your home doesn't require a major investment of money or time. Follow these low-cost (or even no-cost!) efficiency tips and you'll see a difference in your electric bill.

Scroll down to find helpful energy-saving suggestions for each of the following categories:

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Cooling



During the summer months, costs associated with keeping your home comfortably cool can make up around 55% of your electric bill. Here's how to stay cool and save.

No-cost tips

- Leave drapes and blinds closed during the day to keep out heat—particularly on the south, east, and west sides of your home.

- Remove debris and obstructions from around outdoor air conditioning components.
- If you have a central air conditioning system, don't close off rooms or close vents; that puts additional strain on your system and increases the cost of operation.
- Don't place lamps, wall-mounted televisions, or other electronics close to your thermostat. Heat from these appliances can be detected by your thermostat and that will cause your air conditioning system to run longer than necessary.
- Set your thermostat at 78 during the summer season and even higher if you're going to be away for more than 24 hours. Every degree you raise your thermostat can save you approximately two to three percent on cooling costs.
- Switching your air conditioning fan from "on" to "auto" can save you up to \$20 each month on your electric bill.

Low-cost tips

- Run the exhaust fan while cooking to draw hot air out of the kitchen.
- Replace disposable air filters or clean permanent filters once a month to maximize efficiency and save on energy costs.
- Use the bathroom fan to remove heat and humidity from your home when you shower or take a bath—and turn it off when you're finished.
- Plant a tree ; it will beautify your landscape while keeping your home cooler during the summer.
- Maintain the effectiveness of your cooling system by have it serviced at least once a year.

Heating



When cold weather sets in, heating your home can account for up to 52% of your total energy bill. Here are some ideas for managing your electric use.

No-cost tips

- Open your drapes or blinds during the day to help capture heat from sunlight and close them at night to help retain the heat gain.

- Set your thermostat to 68 degrees when you're home. If you're going away for the weekend, lower the thermostat to 60 degrees. Put another blanket on the bed and turn the thermostat down a few degrees at night.
- Never use a stove, oven, or portable grill as an indoor heat source; doing so creates a safety hazard.
- Building a fire in your fireplace may look nice, but it's not the most efficient way to heat. Much of the warm inside air from throughout your house can go right up the chimney. If you do use your fireplace, make sure to remember to close the damper after the fire is out.

Low-cost tips

- Replace disposable air filters or clean permanent filters at least once a month. A dirty filter forces your equipment to work harder—and that results in higher electric bills.
- Running your ceiling fan on "low" can be useful in circulating warm air throughout a room.
- Reduce heat loss by installing weather stripping and seals around doors and windows. Install gaskets under switch plates for lights and electrical outlets, and caulk all potential air leaks.

Water Heating



Whether for cooking, bathing, laundry, dishwashing, or other uses, about 15 to 20% of your monthly energy use goes toward water heating. These ideas can save you money.

No-cost tips

- Save energy by taking short showers instead of baths. A five-minute shower typically uses less than 15 gallons of water while a bath can use 30 to 40 gallons.
- Around 80% of the energy used to wash clothes goes to heating water. Save on your electric bill by washing as many loads as possible in cold water.
- Turn your water heater's thermostat down to 120 degrees. This can save up to \$10 per month. If you have an electric water heater, be sure to turn off the power before changing the setting.

- Draining a bucketful of hot water from the faucet at the base of your water heater several times a year will reduce sediment buildup and make the heating elements last longer.

Low-cost tips

- Make sure your faucets are turned off completely and repair any leaks. A dripping hot water faucet can leak hundreds of gallons a year and drive up your water heating costs.
- Improve your water heater's efficiency by wrapping it in an insulated jacket made for this purpose.
- Install a low-flow showerhead to reduce water usage while still providing adequate supply and comfort.

Lighting



Lighting typically accounts for about eight to 10 percent of the average electric bill. Follow these tips to trim those costs.

No-cost tips

- Turn off lights when not in use. You can save more money by turning lights on and then off again than by just leaving them on.
- Take advantage of daylight hours whenever possible to illuminate your home without using electricity.

Low-cost tips

- New energy-efficient compact fluorescent and LED bulbs produce more light for less energy. They cost more initially than incandescent bulbs, but last much longer—and are therefore much less expensive in the long run.
- Prioritize bulb replacement according to how often the fixture is in use, in order to save the most energy and money. Focus on kitchen ceiling lights, family room table and floor lamps, and outdoor entryway/porch lights.

- Paint interior walls a lighter color. This will reflect light throughout your house and reduce the need for additional lighting.

Refrigerator/Freezer



Your refrigerator is typically one of the most expensive home appliances to operate. Here are some helpful ideas to reduce running costs.

No-cost tips

- Resist the urge to open the door and then decide what you want. Every time you open the door, 30% of the cool air (air that you've paid to cool!) escapes.
- It's not anybody's idea of a fun job, but cleaning the coils underneath or behind your refrigerator/freezer will keep it running efficiently.
- It may be convenient to have an extra place to stash cold drinks, but you can save on your energy bill by not placing an additional refrigerator in a garage or carport. During the summer months, operating an older model refrigerator in one of these spaces can cost you an extra \$15-20 per month.
- Keep your fridge and freezer full, but not overcrowded. Use jugs of water or bags of ice to fill empty space.
- Pay attention to temperatures. Keeping the refrigerator or freezer compartments too cold can cost you money. Manufacturer-recommended temperatures are 35 to 38 degrees for the fridge and zero to 5 degrees for the freezer section. Check the setting by placing an outdoor or refrigerator thermometer on the middle shelf overnight.
- Cover all liquids stored in your refrigerator. Moisture drawn into the air makes your fridge work harder.

- Check the condition of your door gaskets using a dollar bill. Close the refrigerator or freezer door on a dollar bill and attempt to remove it. If it slides out easily, with no resistance, you probably need to replace your gasket.

Washer/Dryer



Typical four-person households wash nearly 400 loads of laundry per year. Conventional washers use 40-50 gallons of water per load, while high-efficiency washers use as little as one-third that amount. Here are some easy ways to reduce the energy needed on laundry day.

No-cost tips

- Avoid running your washer or dryer until you have a full load. Dry consecutive loads to take advantage of the heat stored in your dryer from the previous load.
- On nice sunny days, you may want to skip the clothes dryer altogether: hang your clothes on a line and dry your clothes the old-school (and cost -free!) way.
- Be sure to clean the lint filter of your dryer after every load.
- Adjust your dryer's heat setting to "low" and take care not to over-dry your clothes.
- Every few months, inspect the outside dryer vent and clean when necessary.
- Wash in cold water and set water levels to medium settings.

Range/oven



There are ways to make cooking and baking easier on your electric bill. Here are a few of them.

No-cost tips

- Watch the time carefully to avoid preheating the oven longer than necessary.
- Turn the oven off 15 minutes prior to the specified baking time; the residual heat will finish the cooking process.
- Leave the oven door closed during baking. Each time you open the door, you lose about 25 to 50 degrees of heat.
- Using your oven and range to capacity can save energy; if possible, cook several dishes at the same time.
- Minimize heat loss on your stove-top by using flat-bottom pots or skillets with tight-fitting lids that match the size of the burner.
- During the summer, use your outdoor grill or microwave meals to keep your kitchen cooler and reduce energy costs.

Dishwasher



Roughly 70 - 80% of the energy required to wash dishes goes to heating water. Follow these suggestions to help your dishwasher run more efficiently.

No-cost tips

- Always run your dishwasher on a full load.
- Use the “energy-saving” button on your dishwasher or (even better!) air-dry your dishes and save up to 20% on energy by eliminating the heating function.
- During the summer, run your dishwasher during the cooler parts of the day—either early morning or late evening—when your air conditioner will have to work less to reduce the heat and humidity added by dishwashing.

Electronics



All the many devices we use to inform and entertain ourselves—and communicate with others—require electricity. These tips will help you manage this rapidly developing area of energy use.

No-cost tips

- Beware of energy “vampires.” Many electronic devices (computers, TVs, wall-chargers, etc.) use power even when you’re not actively using them. The rule is: if a device is displaying a “ready” light—even if it’s not turned “on”—then it’s using electricity. Unplug these devices when not in use and save energy.

Low-cost tips

- To make managing charging your devices easier (and more energy-efficient) create a “charging station” connected to a power strip that accepts all your power cords for laptops, cell phones, and digital cameras. Turn the power strip off when nothing is being charged.

General



These suggestions may not fall neatly within a particular category, but they can sure help you save on your monthly energy bill.

No-cost tips

- Keep all windows and doors located close to your thermostat closed tightly. Keep heat sources such as lamps and appliances away from your thermostat.
- Look for the ENERGY STAR® label when replacing appliances
- Keep your appliance manuals handy; many contain energy-saving tips for operation.
- Make sure your outside air unit clean and clear of leaves and debris.

Low-cost tips

- Caulk and install weather-stripping around windows and doors to stop air leaks.
- Seal gaps in floors and walls where there are penetrations for plumbing and electrical connections.
- Install aerating/low-flow faucets and showerheads.
- Have your ductwork inspected and repair any leaks.