

10 energy saving strategies

There are many different ways to save energy at home and increase energy savings, ranging from simple behavioral adjustments to extensive home improvements. The two major motives for conserving energy are to **save on utility bills** and **protect the environment**. Here are the ten most common ways to conserve and save energy at home.



What is energy conservation?

At its core, **energy conservation is the practice of using less energy in order to lower costs and reduce environmental impact**. This can mean using less electricity, gas, or any other form of energy that you get from your utility and pay for. With finite energy resources available on our planet, actively conserving energy when possible is beneficial individually and to our larger energy systems.

10 ways to save energy and electricity

Here are 10 ways to start conserving energy yourself:

1. Replace your light bulbs
2. Use smart power strips
3. Install a programmable thermostat
4. Use energy efficient appliances
5. Reduce water heating expenses
6. Install energy efficient windows
7. Weatherize your home
8. Insulate your home
9. Wash your clothes in cold water
10. Use natural light

 Below, we'll explore each of these options for energy conservation in detail.

1. Replace your light bulbs

Traditional incandescent light bulbs consume an excessive amount of electricity and must be replaced more often than their energy efficient alternatives. Halogen incandescent bulbs, compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), and light-emitting diode bulbs (LEDs) use anywhere from 25-80 percent less electricity and last 3 to 25 times longer than traditional bulbs.

Although energy efficient bulbs are more expensive off the shelf, their efficient energy use and longer lifetimes mean that they cost less in the long run.

2. Use smart power strips

"Phantom loads," or the electricity used by electronics when they are turned off or in standby mode, are a major source of energy waste. In fact, it is estimated that 75% of the energy used to power household electronics is consumed when they are switched off, which can cost you up to \$200 per year. Smart power strips, also known as advanced power strips, eliminate the problem of phantom loads by shutting off the power to electronics when they are not in use. Smart power strips can be set to turn off at an assigned time, during a period of inactivity, through remote switches, or based on the status of a "master" device.

3. Install a programmable or smart thermostat

A programmable thermostat can be set to automatically turn off or reduce heating and cooling during the times when you are asleep or away. When you install a programmable thermostat, you eliminate wasteful energy use from heating and cooling without upgrading your HVAC system.

On average, a programmable thermostat can save you \$180 per year. Programmable thermostats come in different models that can be set to fit your weekly schedule. Additional features of programmable thermostats can include indicators for when to replace air filters or HVAC system problems, which also improve the efficiency of your heating and cooling system.



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4. Purchase energy efficient appliances

On average, appliances are responsible for roughly 13% of total household energy use. When purchasing an appliance, you should pay attention to two numbers: the initial purchase price and the annual operating cost. Although energy efficient appliances might have higher upfront purchase prices, their operating costs are often 9-25% lower than conventional models.

When purchasing an energy efficient appliance, you should look for appliances with the ENERGY STAR label, which is a federal guarantee that the appliance will consume less energy during use and when on standby than standard models. Energy savings differ based on the specific appliance. For example, ENERGY STAR certified clothes washers consume 25% less energy and 45% less water than conventional ones, whereas ENERGY STAR refrigerators use only 9% less energy.

5. Reduce your water heating expenses

Water heating is a major contributor to your total energy consumption. Other than purchasing an energy efficient water heater, there are three methods of reducing your water heating expenses: you can simply use less hot water, turn down the thermostat on your water heater, or insulate your water heater and the first six feet of hot and cold water pipes.

If you are considering replacing your water heater with an efficient model, you should keep in mind two factors: the type of water heater that meets your needs and the type of fuel it will use. For example, tankless water heaters are energy efficient, but they are also a poor choice for large families as they cannot handle multiple and simultaneous uses of hot water. Efficient water heaters can be anywhere between 8% and 300% more energy efficient than a conventional storage water heater.

6. Install energy efficient windows

Windows are significant source of energy waste - they can add up to 10-25% of your total heating bill. To prevent heat loss through your windows, you can replace single-pane windows with double-pane products instead.

For homes in colder regions, gas-filled windows with “low-e” coatings can significantly reduce your heating expenses. In addition, interior or exterior storm windows can reduce unnecessary heat loss by 10 to 20 percent. You should especially consider storm windows if your region experiences frequent extreme weather events.

In warmer climates, heat gain through windows may be a problem. In addition to minimizing heat loss, low-e coatings on windows can reduce heat gain by reflecting more light and lowering the amount of thermal energy that enters your home. Depending on where you live, ENERGY STAR windows can save you \$20-\$95 each year on your utility bills. Window shades, shutters, screens, and awnings can also provide an extra layer of insulation between your home and outside temperatures, leading to even more energy conservation.

7. Weatherize your home

Weatherizing, or sealing air leaks around your home, is a great way to reduce your heating and cooling expenses. The most common sources of air leaks into your home are vents, windows, and doors. To prevent these leaks, you should ensure that there are no cracks or openings between the wall and vent, window, or doorframe.

To seal air leaks between stationary objects, such as the wall and window frame, you can apply caulk. For cracks between moving objects, such as operable windows and doors, you can apply weather stripping. Weather stripping and caulking are simple air sealing techniques that typically offer a return on investment in less than a year. Air leaks can also occur through openings in the wall, floor, and ceiling from plumbing, ducting, or electrical wiring.

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8. Insulate your home

Insulation plays a key role in lowering your utility bills through retaining heat during the winter and keeping heat out of your home during the summer. The recommended level of heat resistance, or “R-value,” for your insulation depends on where you live. In warmer climates, the recommended R-value is much lower than for buildings located in colder regions like the Northeast.

The level of insulation you should install depends on the area of your house. Your attic, walls, floors, basement, and crawlspace are the five main areas where you should consider adding insulation.



9. Wash your clothes in cold water

Washing clothes is a necessary chore and part of the weekly routine of most Americans. It is also an energy-intensive one, especially if you use warm water. In fact, the majority of energy used during the clothes washing process goes towards warming water. There are many possible economic benefits to using cold water as well, with consumers potentially able to save more than \$50 a year by reducing the temperature of their washing water by 15 degrees. There are even reports that washing in cold water can increase the lifespan of your clothes without damaging heat.



10. Use natural light

Lighting accounts for a significant amount of energy costs and using light from the sun is an intuitive way to reduce your energy consumption. If you can, it is better to have north and south-facing windows instead of east and west. This allows for more glancing light that produces heat and limits harsh light in the winter. While east and west-facing windows allow for more direct sunlight, they aren't as effective at letting heat in.

How to save energy at home during the winter

- Adjust your behavior to turn down the heat during the winter
- Install a programmable thermostat to eliminate wasteful heating
- Reduce the energy you use heating water
- Install windows that keep heat in.
- Upgrade your HVAC system to meet proper ENERGY STAR certifications
- Weatherize and properly insulate your home to reduce wasteful heating
- Dress warmly inside of your home to reduce heating costs

How to save energy at home during the summer

- Adjust your behavior to use air conditioning less
- Install a programmable thermostat that will cool your home properly
- Install windows to retain conditioned air
- Insulate your home properly to not let cooler air escape
- Replace your air filters regularly to reduce energy consumption in warmer months.



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