

Seventeen ways to save energy

1. Ask your power company if they provide home energy audits. If they do, having one done every other year can determine updated methods for saving energy.
2. Install or upgrade the weather-stripping around all doors to the exterior, including that leading to the garage.
3. Tired of the drip-drip-drip from your faucet? Have it fixed. One drip every second can use 20 kilowatts of energy each month.
4. Get rid of those incandescent light bulbs! Not only do they use more electricity, but they put out more heat, resulting in higher cooling costs for your home. Switch to the compact fluorescent bulbs. In spite of their higher initial cost, they are more energy-efficient, last for years instead of months, consume little power, and generate little heat.
5. Add insulation or replace outdated insulation in your attic so that you have at least an insulation rating of R-21. The higher the R value, the better, so get the best you can afford at the time.
6. Have a programmable thermostat installed for your heating and cooling system, especially if your home is vacant most of the day. Set it to turn off a half hour before everyone leaves and to come on a half hour before anyone arrives home.
7. Adjust your heating and cooling thermostat to run two degrees warmer in the cooling mode and two degrees cooler in the heating mode.
8. Keep your thermostat at a comfortable temperature and wait rather than turning it up and down constantly. Constantly adjusting the thermostat can dramatically waste energy and increase your heating and cooling costs.
9. Make sure your water heater thermostat is set at the manufacturer's recommended setting. Setting it hotter wastes energy by keeping the water hot when no one is using it.
10. When personal computers first hit the market, many computer experts advised leaving the computer on in order to save wear and tear on the hard disk. That's not necessary with today's computer. You can either turn it off when you're not using it or use the energy-saving "sleep," "hibernate," or "standby" mode.
11. Seal energy leaks (this is where the energy audit in Item 1 can really help). Caulk over cracks and small holes around windows and exterior walls. Look carefully around plumbing pipes, telephone wires, dryer vents, sink and bathtub drains, and under countertops for holes and gaps and have them sealed as well.
12. Buy major appliances that wear the "Energy Star" sticker. Energy Star appliances meet or exceed standards set by the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency.
13. Buy a front-loading washing machine. They use 50 percent less energy and one-third less water, and they remove far more water in the rinse and spin cycles, translating into big savings in dryer time.
14. Check for rebates whenever you install energy-saving equipment such as dishwashers and washing machines.
15. Ask your power company if they have any special energy-saving programs. Some programs shut down electric appliances for short periods of time during peak usage hours, hardly noticeable at the time but definitely noticeable when you get your utility bill.
16. Select roofing materials based on energy efficiency rather than simply on how the roof will look. Light-colored roofs and galvanized metal or cement tile roofs do the best job of reflecting the sun and cool more quickly at night.
17. Landscape wisely to take advantage of winter sun for heating and summer shade for cooling.

