

# Low-Cost No-Cost Energy Saving Tips



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Albany County

## I. Keeping Warm

- ❑ **Thermostat Advice.** Set your thermostat at the recommended 68° F and leave it alone during the day. Overnight, lower the setting by 5 to 10°. Use your judgment if someone is elderly or ill. Check your thermostat location – make sure your thermostat is not affected by drafts that will give you an incorrect reading.
- ❑ **Seal the Hatches.** Use weather-stripping around all attic stairwells and access openings for a tight insulation.
- ❑ **Electric Outlets.** Stop cold air infiltration from electric switch and plug outlets by using draft blockers.
- ❑ **Seal the Outside.** Caulk around foundation walls, pipe outlets, clothes dryer vents, and any other gaps on the outside of your house. Weather-strip your garage door to reduce drafts. Tape or cover unused keyholes.
- ❑ **Install door sweeps** to inside doors adjacent to the garage and doors adjacent to the outside.
- ❑ **Ventilation.** Attic and crawl space vents should be left open all year to prevent moisture problems. If your home lacks attic vents, consult a contractor.
- ❑ **Window Habits.** Open curtains and/or shades of east, south, and west-facing windows on sunny days to let the sun heat your home. Close them at night. Keep draperies closed all day on north facing windows. Repair cracked or missing windowpanes. Keep storm windows and doors tightly closed.
- ❑ **Unused Rooms.** Close all hot air vents or radiators in unused rooms. Then close the door to those rooms securely, using draft guards at the door bottoms if necessary. CAUTION: If you do have a radiator hot water system, be sure that the temperature of the unused room does not get so cold that it falls below freezing.
- ❑ **Unblocking Heat.** Check all the places where heat enters the room. Make sure drapes and furniture do not interfere with the flow of heat.
- ❑ **Add Humidity.** Humidity usually makes you feel more comfortable at the same temperature. Use a room or furnace humidifier or keep shallow pans of water on radiator tops or near hot air vents.
- ❑ **Clean Burners.** Your heating system should be cleaned and inspected at least once a year. In addition, if you have an oil-fired system, ask your heating contractor about the possibility of reducing the nozzle size of your oil burner.
- ❑ **Radiator Recommendation.** Make or buy reflectors to place behind radiators to increase heat reflection into the room. During the heating season, **remove radiator covers** that interfere with heating efficiency.
- ❑ **Furnace Filters.** During the heating season, check the filters on your forced-air furnace every month. Replace as necessary.
- ❑ **Duct Tape.** Use duct tape to cover any gaps or cracks on the ducts of your forced air heating system.
- ❑ **Fireplace Use.** The best way to conserve energy with fireplaces is not to use them. When used, they draw warm air from adjacent rooms and send it up the chimney. If you do not want to block off your fireplace permanently, keep the damper tightly closed when not in use. Use thermo-glass doors to cover the face of the fireplace to reduce heat loss.
- ❑ **Air Conditioner Insulation.** Seal all air gaps between your air conditioner and window. During winter months, thoroughly cover the unit outdoors with sturdy plastic and tape. Use an inside cover to further eliminate drafts and cold surfaces.

# Energy Saving Tips (Cont'd)

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## II. Keeping Cool

- ☐ **Window Fans.** If it cools off outside at night, use a window fan to bring in cooler air instead of running the air conditioner. Fans use as little as one-tenth the electricity needed by an air conditioner. If your air-conditioner has an “outside air” control, use it without turning the cooling section on.
- ☐ **Air Conditioner Control.** Set the temperature control no lower than 78° F. A 75° setting costs 18 percent more; a 72° setting costs 39 percent more.
- ☐ **Air Conditioner Cleaning.** Check the filter at least once a month, and, if necessary, replace it. IF you can do so safely, check and clean the condenser coils and fins on the outside of the unit.

## III. Water Heating

- ☐ The amount of energy you use to heat water for washing dishes and clothing, and bathing, typically is second only to house heating in total energy consumption.
- ☐ **Hot Water.** Some water heaters are set at 150° F or higher. This doesn't make the hot water come to your sink any faster. And when it does, it's too hot and you have to dilute it with cold water. If you don't have an automatic dishwasher, you can set your tank thermostat between **110 and 120° F.**
- ☐ Drain a few gallons from your tank every six months. This removes the sludge on the bottom that reduces heating efficiency.
- ☐ If your house will be vacant for two or more days, turn the water heater off.
- ☐ Install flow restrictors in showerheads and lavatory faucets.
- ☐ Repair all leaking water faucets, especially the hot water faucets.

## IV. Refrigerator-Freezer

Refrigerators are usually the **biggest** energy consumers in the kitchen.

- ☐ **Clean Coils.** Clean the condenser coils at the back or bottom of your unit at least once a year. If your refrigerator has a fan to circulate air, make sure its vent is unobstructed. Be sure to unplug the unit before working on it.
- ☐ **Worn Gasket.** If the door gasket is loose or torn, you may be able to repair it. If it can't be fixed, it should be replaced.

## V. Lighting

- ☐ Check your kitchen and bathroom for fluorescent possibilities. Newer compact fluorescents can replace incandescent bulbs in single socket lamps.
- ☐ **Energy-Saving Bulbs.** These are bulbs with lower wattage than the customary 40, 60, 75, 100, and 150-watt bulbs. Often you won't notice the difference in lighting levels. The bulbs are available in most watt sizes at prices starting at a little over a dollar.
- ☐ **Timers.** Consider putting timers on key light locations.