



Ten ways to prepare your home for an energy-saving winter

It may still feel a little warm outside, but you know winter is fast on its way. Here are 10 great ways to help get your home ready to keep the heat in, and the frost out:

1. **Eliminate drafts and leaks.** Inexpensive weather stripping will help seal your doors and windows against winter. To check for leaks, light a couple of incense sticks and walk around your home on a cold, windy day, close to outside windows and doors. If the incense sticks glow or the smoke from them moves, you may need to install new weather stripping in those areas.
2. **Simple Fix.** Electric wall plugs and switches on outside walls can let a lot of cold air in, too, but are even easier to fix. Go to your local hardware store for simple-to-install, pre-cut foam gaskets that fit behind the switch plate.
3. **Check your attic.** If your home is more than 10 years old, it may not be up to current standards of energy efficiency. If you have less than 150 mm (15 cm) of insulation in the attic, you should install more.
4. **Help your heater.** Replace your heater's air filter as recommended by the manufacturer. A clean filter will help your heater work better, use less energy and last longer.
5. **Replace your furnace.** If it's time to replace your heating and cooling system, look for an ENERGY STAR-certified model: it could help you save up to \$325 a year in heating and cooling costs.
6. **Light the way with LEDs.** Winter means more hours of darkness, but with ENERGY STAR-certified LED light fixtures and bulbs, you can keep your indoor and outdoor lights on without worrying about increased energy costs.
7. **Program your home.** Install a programmable thermostat and set it to 20°C (68°F) when you're home and 16 to 18°C (61°F to 64°F) while you're asleep or at work.
8. **Wrap your tank.** A blanket around your electric hot water tank can help save you anywhere from four to nine per cent on your water-heating costs.
9. **Get ready for the holidays.** A heavy-duty outdoor timer will automatically turn your holiday lights on and off. Less hassle; more energy savings.
10. **Close your curtains.** Simple but effective; closing your curtains at night helps keep warm air where you want it: inside. Opening them during the day allows the sun to heat up your house without costing you money.





Fall tips: Easy ways make sure your energy costs fall along with the leaves

Fall tips: Easy ways make sure your energy costs fall along with the leaves. The lazy days of summer are over too soon, giving way to falling leaves and getting kids off to school. Fall also brings falling temperatures. All of a sudden, your thoughts may turn to preparing yourself for the heating bills just around the corner.

There are a lot of quick and easy things you can do to get your home ready for the fall and hopefully reduce energy use and save on energy costs. Here are a few tips to cover the basics of preparing your home for the fall and help you save money by conserving energy:

Change your filter – The fall is the perfect time to change your filter so your furnace is operating as efficiently as possible. A dirty filter not only makes your furnace work harder and consume more energy, but it also allows more dust, bacteria and other nasty things in the air to circulate through your ventilation. There are a lot of filter options for all price ranges, including low-cost fiberglass filters, more effective electrostatic filters, and top-rated HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters often found in medical clinics and long-term care facilities.



Inspecting your furnace filter every 3 months can increase its operating efficiency.

Get your windows ready for the wind – Don't wait for the first frost. While the weather is still reasonably mild, make sure you install your storm windows to keep your home warm. You may need to clean dirt from the grooves and it could take a bit of more time and elbow grease than you might expect. If you have older windows and frames that get drafty, it may be a good time to install new, more energy efficient ones.

Keep out the cold with weather stripping – Go through your house to check for drafty spots near doors and windows and apply some weather stripping or caulking to keep the cold air out. Hardware and home-care stores will have a wide variety of easy-to-install stripping.

Light your way to savings with new bulbs – As the daylight hours shrink, your light use will increase. Take the opportunity to replace incandescent lighting with energy-saving LED or compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs. ENERGY STAR® qualified LED bulbs can last up to 30 times longer than incandescent bulbs.

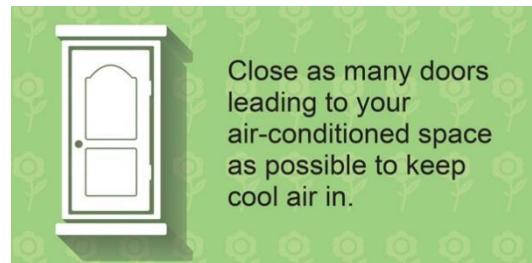


Ten simple ways to save energy around your home this summer

Did you know that during summer months home cooling can account for 30 per cent of the average homes energy bill?

But do not despair! There are a number of things you can do to stay cool even in the hottest weather and help conserve energy.

1. If you run a ceiling fan at the same time as your air conditioner, you can set your thermostat 2°C higher and feel just as cool – cutting your energy use by as much as 10 per cent. If you don't have a ceiling fan yet, now is a great time to get one.
2. Go energy-efficient with a new air conditioner. Higher efficiency means more savings.
3. Use a programmable thermostat to set the temperature to 25°C (77°F) when you're at home, and 28°C (82°F) when you're away.
4. Remember to check your air conditioner's air filter regularly and clean or replace it as needed. This simple effort can lower your air conditioner's energy consumption by five to 15 per cent.
5. Upgrade your indoor and outdoor lighting to energy-efficient LEDs. LEDs last up to 25 times longer, produce no excess heat and are 75 to 90 per cent more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs.
6. Draft-proofing your home doesn't just help keep the cold out: it helps keeps the cold in too. Adding weather-stripping to doors and windows can ensure that cool air stays where you want it to: inside your home.
7. Trees are not just for lounging under on a hot day. By planting deciduous trees on the south side of your home, you can screen your home from 70 to 90 per cent of the hot summer sun and reduce your air conditioning cost by as much as at least 15 per cent. Open your windows first thing in the morning to let cool air in, but close them and draw your blinds later, before the sun gets hot. Your home will retain much of the cool morning air.
8. Dry your clothes the old-fashioned way: on an outdoor clothesline! The sun is free and the fresh air will make your clothes smell great.
9. Do you have an outdoor pool? Good landscaping can help there, too. Trees, shrubs or fences around your pool help shelter it, which can substantially reduce how much heat your pool loses on cool days, and how much you have to pay to re-heat it.
10. Most air conditioners will cool your home at the same rate, no matter how low you set the temperature. Setting your unit at 18°C (64°F) won't cool your house faster, but will cost you more on your energy bill.



Close as many doors leading to your air-conditioned space as possible to keep cool air in.



Spring cleaning leads to Spring savings

We have almost made it through another winter. Now it's time to get your family and home ready for milder temperatures and more fresh air.

Some helpful tips for savings while spring cleaning:

Air it out – Install a clothesline or drying rack in your back yard and get that fresh spring breeze to dry your laundry. Hardware stores have a great selection that are easy to install. No outdoor space? Try an indoor drying rack.

Make your windows work – Insulated drapes come with thermal fabric and are available in many fashionable colours and patterns. Using them can keep your home cool.

Let the sun shine in – Clean your windows to help fill up your house with more sunlight and less power. Also, Daylight Savings Time starts in March, so you can keep the lights off well into the evening.

Filter out winter – Spring is the ideal time to change or clean your furnace and air conditioner filters, which have been collecting dust all winter. Cleaning the filters will help them run more efficiently.

Don't duck out of cleaning your ducts – If you haven't done it for a few years, getting your ducts cleaned can improve air quality and help your heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems operate efficiently.

Time to change the air conditioner? – Don't wait until the hottest day of the summer. Stay cool with a new air conditioner with a high energy efficiency rating.

Keep the refrigerator cool – If your fridge is coughing and wheezing, it's probably wasting energy and on its last legs. Getting a new ENERGY STAR-rated fridge or freezer will save you up to \$125 a year in electricity costs.

Fan out – Air conditioners will kick in and out when thermostat settings give them the signal that temperature is too high or low.

Fans are designed to circulate air to maintain room temperature at a consistent level at the hottest times of the day. You'll save energy, money and wear-and-tear on your air conditioner by using a fan more often.

