

# In-Home Energy Audit Tips To Save You Money



<sup>LW</sup>  
**Extension**  
Cooperative Extension

# Top 5 Ways To Save Energy

1. When needing to purchase any electronics or appliances always look for an ENERGY STAR model.
2. Clean all appliances and electronics as often as necessary to keep them more energy efficient.
3. If there is a filter...clean it or change it often to keep appliances and electronics running more efficiently.
4. Turn off and unplug electronics/appliances when not in use. Many appliances especially computers, televisions and VCR's draw power even when they are turned off or in sleep mode.
5. Replace incandescent bulbs with new compact fluorescent light bulbs.



## Did you know...

A typical compact fluorescent light uses only 25% of the electricity of an incandescent bulb to produce the same amount of light. So...if every incandescent light bulb in our country were replaced with a CFL, our total electricity need would drop by a whopping 15%-and close to 5% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions would be eliminated.

Even replacing just one bulb with a CFL makes a big difference:

Where electricity is produced from coal, each CFL will cut CO<sub>2</sub> pollution by about 1,300 pounds over its lifetime.

If every household in the U.S. replaced only one incandescent light bulb with a CFL, the carbon dioxide pollution equivalent of one million cars would disappear.

Environmental Law & Policy Center

[www.elpc.org](http://www.elpc.org)

# Let's Start with the Kitchen

- Check the seal on your refrigerator door by closing a dollar bill in it. If you can pull the bill out easily then it is time to replace the gaskets or unit. (Dollar Bill Method)
- If you have a second refrigerator or a freezer, consider getting rid of it. Each can add more than \$100 to your energy bill every year. If you need the space run them only for the special occasion and holidays as needed.
- Older refrigerators and freezers can use 2 to 3 times more electricity than ones that are 10 years old or less.
- Set the refrigerator temperature between 36 and 42 degrees F and set the freezer between -5 and 0 degrees F. Don't overload the refrigerator or freezer, cold air needs to circulate.
- Don't stand in front of an open refrigerator! With each opening 30% of cooler air escapes.
- Don't peak inside the oven! Each time you open the oven door the temperature drops 25-50 degrees. Avoid lifting pot lids for the same reason.
- If you have a self-cleaning oven, use this feature immediately after cooking while the oven is hot.
- Once again try the dollar bill method to check the oven seals too.
- Try to use the oven during cooler times of the day if possible.
- Use copper bottom pots and pans. Copper bottom pans heat up faster than regular pans.
- When cooking, use smaller appliances because they will use less energy than the oven.
- Use the microwave as much as possible because it is a shorter cooking time.
- When running the garbage disposal use cold water instead of hot water, which takes energy to warm the water. Cold water also solidifies the grease to keep it easily moving through the garbage disposal and the pipes.
- Only run the dishwasher when it's full and air-dry the dishes instead of using your dishwasher's cycle.
- Skip rinsing the dishes before loading them in the dishwasher unless you use cold water to rinse them.
- Use the shortest cycle that will properly clean your dishes; shorter cycles use less hot water and less energy.

# Laundry Room

- Use the warm or cold water setting on your washer for your clothes. Use only hot water for when the greatest cleaning is needed. There are soaps made for cold setting.
- Rinse your clothes in cold water; the temperature has no effect on cleaning.
- Always run full loads in both the washer and the dryer.
- Adjust the water level for the size of your load.
- Drying laundry excessively uses more energy than is needed and is hard on fabrics.
- Clean the lint filter after each load! Also periodically check the air vent and exhaust hose for clogging. Keeping them lint free also prevents a fire hazard.
- Use the power of the sun to dry clothes as weather permits.

## Lighting

- Use ENERGY STAR CFL bulbs. These light bulbs will last longer and use up to 75% less energy than standard light bulbs. You can save up to \$60 per year on your electric bill if you replace the 5 most frequently used light fixtures with CFL's.
- Make sure to properly dispose of CFL's at participating hardware stores or the county Solid Waste office (832-5277).
- What if a CFL breaks? Pick it up right away, scoop contents and put in a zip-loc bag, place in garbage, and wash hands. CFL's contain a very small amount of mercury.
- Use as much natural lighting as possible such as curtains, shades, skylights, or solar panels.
- Plan and position your lighting in each room.
- Turn off lights when not in use.
- Adjust light level with fixtures having different settings, such as dimmer controls, high/low switches, or three way bulbs.
- Keep bulbs and fixtures clean, but do not clean them when they are hot or plugged in.
- Keep lamps away from thermostat, since this can cause furnace to run less or air conditioning to run more than needed.
- To control outdoor lighting, use motion sensor lighting, fixtures with photocell, or use a timer for dusk-till-dawn operation.



# Water Heaters and Water Usage

- Set the temperature to 120 degrees F. **For safety reasons, turn off the water heater at the circuit breaker/fuse before changing the temperature.**
- If your water heater is more than 15 yrs old, purchase an insulating wrap.
- Insulate hot water pipes with half-inch foam or pipe tape.
- Repair dripping faucets promptly. (One drop a second wastes up to 48 gallons a week.)
- Install a water softener to prevent mineral deposits from coating the elements and reducing heater efficiency.
- Install water saving devices such as low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators.

## Cooling, Central Air, and Air Conditioners

- Change your thermostat settings to 76 degrees F when at home and then higher when you go away. Can save you 10% or more!
- Get your cooling unit tuned up every other year by a qualified heating contractor.
- Keep the condenser and filter clean. Also clean the filter monthly and replace as needed. (Your central AC uses the same filter as your furnace.)
- Keep the sun out by closing the blinds/shades to keep home cooler.
- Cool only the rooms in daily use, close unused rooms to keep cool air where it is needed.
- Keep air vents clear to allow air movement into the room.
- Ventilate your attic with the help of a qualified heating/cooling contractor to keep the house cool during the summer months.
- Keep the air conditioner unit in a central location that is central to the space being cooled. Reposition the unit out of the sun.
  - Seal the unit to prevent warm air from coming in.
  - Close the fresh-air vent when room is being cooled. Open when the outside air is cooler to let in fresh air.
  - When first turning it on, set the thermostat to normal or medium.
  - Remove the unit at the end of the summer months and if you must leave it in cover the outside of the unit with a weatherproof cover. Caulk any cracks around the unit.
- Use fans, ceiling fans, and oscillating fans with your air conditioner to help circulate the cool air, this allows you to raise the temperature and still be comfortable.

# Heating

- Clean your furnace filters monthly and replace as necessary.
- Insulate your attic and walls properly to keep your house warm see blue resource sheet.
- Weather-strip and/or caulk all areas of noticeable leaks around windows and doors.
- Set your thermostat at 60 degrees F when you are sleeping or not home and 68 degrees when you are home. If you are going away for an extended period of time turn down thermostat but never lower than 50 degrees.
- Let the sun's rays in to help heat the home.
- Use a portable space heater to heat one room. Always follow the manufacture's safety instructions when operating space heaters.
- Use the fireplace sparingly, since it can draw out more heat than it produces. Close the flu to eliminate drafts when not in use.

## Humidifiers and Dehumidifiers

- Use a humidifier in the colder months to make you feel warmer, about 20-40% relative humidity is recommended.
- Remove moisture from the air with a dehumidifier in the warm/humid months. Less humidity makes you feel cooler. Place away from walls and bulky furniture.
- Check for frost buildup on dehumidifier coils if temperatures are less than 70 degrees F. If so turn the unit off until the frost melts and the room is warmer.
- Make sure to clean the unit by dusting or vacuuming the dehumidifier at least once a year. Do so before plugging it in for first use of the season.

**Now think of what you can do Today, this  
Week, this Month, and this Year!**

Information from: Focus on Energy, WE Energies, American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, and PowerHouse presented by Alliant Energy.