Save Money on Home Energy This Winter

As we head into the winter months, you may notice one thing: an increase in your energy bill. The reduced amount of daylight drives us to turn on our lights sooner, while the cooler temperatures cause us to crank up the heat inside. The winter and summer months tend to be the most energy-intensive times of the year, as we try to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature, despite what the thermometer says.

8 Tips to Save Money and Stay Warm this Winter

1. **Set the thermostat to 68 degrees when you're home.** Studies show you use **3-5%** more energy for each degree the thermostat is set above 68 degrees.[1] Instead of increasing the heat, put on a sweater to stay warm.

2. **When you leave the house, lower the thermostat.** Why heat your house if no one is home? Lowering your thermostat 10 -15 degrees can save **5-15%** a year on your energy bill.[1]

> A programmable thermostat will save up to **10%** a year on heating and cooling costs.[2]

3. **Close your curtains or blinds at night and when you're not home to keep warm air from escaping.** Go the extra mile and invest in thermal blackout curtains, which can help keep warm air where it belongs—in your home.

4. **Check for drafts around windows and doors.** Caulk gaps and cracks when you see them to prevent heat from escaping.

5. **Close the damper of your fireplace when you're not using it.** Being mindful of this small action can keep your house noticeably warmer.

> Space heating is the largest energy expense in a home, accounting for **45%** of energy bills.[2]

6. **Insulate.** Up to **25%** of heat is lost through the small cracks and holes around the house.[2] Properly insulating your walls, floors and attic can save you up to **10%** on your total energy costs.[1]

7. **Replace old windows.** Depending on the climate, windows can account for **25-50%** of a home's heating and cooling needs.[2] Make sure you're not losing precious heat in the winter by replacing your old windows with high performance, energy-efficient windows. The added bonus? These windows not only regulate the amount of heat that is absorbed, they also help block outside noise.[3]

8. **Maintain your heating and cooling duct system.** By keeping your HVAC system in great shape, you can avoid costly and sudden repairs that might leave your home without heat, plus save money on your energy bills.

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Extend the Life of Your Heating System

A well-maintained heating system will not only last a long time, it'll also help minimize efficiency loss. Here are a few things you can do to extend the life of your heating system.[2]

1. Clean your filters every month and replace them on a regular basis.
2. Make sure the air ducts and heating pipes are properly sealed.
3. Check for and remove dirt or corrosion if you see it.
4. Keep the heat exchanger clean to maintain heating levels.
5. Keep your air vents clear. If you have curtains or furniture in front of your air vents, move them away to ensure that heat is able to enter the room.

How Efficient is Your Furnace?

The more efficient your combustion heating appliance (e.g., furnace or boiler) is at converting fuel to heat, the more heat you'll retain in your home. Efficiency is measured by its AFUE—Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency. The AFUE is found when you divide the annual fossil fuel energy your appliance consumes by how efficient it is at converting energy from its fuel to heat.[2]

When you know your heater's AFUE, you can assess whether or not it's time to upgrade your system. Typically, you can search the manufacturer's website by model or serial number to find your furnace or boiler's efficiency rating.

56-70% AFUE: Older, low-efficiency heating systems fall within this range. If this sounds like your system, consider upgrading.

80-83% AFUE: This is a mid-efficiency heating system.

90-98.5% AFUE: This is a high-efficiency heating system.

Sources: 1. PG&E
2. Energy.gov
3. EnergyStar

Keep Energy Costs Down All Year

Did you know many of the things you can do to keep your home warm in the winter also keep your home comfortable all year, even in the summer? Tasks such as cleaning your system's filters, using a programmable thermostat and fixing drafts are all ways to ensure your home remains comfortable in any season. Here are some more tips:

Install a high-efficiency heating and cooling system to reduce your energy usage by **20-50%**.[2]

Clean or replace your unit's filters once a month to lower consumption by **5-15%**.[2]

Turn your thermostat switch to "auto." This will help you save energy and prevent your system from running constantly.