

Energy-Saving Tips



*I'm a customer service account manager.
I advise customers one-on-one and help
them get the most out of their energy
dollar. I am Paul Hampton. I am SCE&G.*

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In the Winter...

1 If you don't have a heat pump, set your thermostat to 68 degrees. Also set your thermostat five to 10 degrees lower during sleeping hours or if you'll be gone for more than four hours. With each degree you lower your thermostat, you may reduce your heating cost by up to five percent.

If you do have a heat pump and want to "set your thermostat back," it's best to install a programmable thermostat, preferably one having intelligent recovery to maximize savings and comfort.

2 On sunny winter days, let the sun help warm your house by opening your shades and drapes. At night or on cloudy days, keep all curtains and shades closed. This will help reduce heat escaping.

3 Use your range exhaust fan as little as possible during the winter if it is vented to the outdoors. The fan not only removes cooking odors, but a lot of your home's heat as well.

4 Remember that when you build a fire it needs lots of air to burn. In fact, it can draw much of the heated air in your home right up the chimney. To counteract this, turn your central heat down and slightly open the window closest to the fireplace to provide air for the fire.

5 Ceiling fans generate air movement (wind chill factor) which makes people naturally feel cooler in the summer. In the winter, this chill factor usually negates the effect of any warm air redistribution. In rooms with particularly hot spots (such as rooms with a wood stove), reversible ceiling fans can help circulate the warmer air.

6 Adjust your heating registers so that the hot air flows down across the floor. Remember: warm air rises.

7 To help insulate a particularly cold wall, cover it with an old blanket or wallhanging made from fabric scraps.

And Summer...

1 Block exterior heat. Plant trees and shrubs to shade outside windows and walls.

2 Turn your thermostat up in the summer. For every degree you turn your thermostat higher, you can reduce your cooling costs by up to eight percent. *(A 78-degree setting typically uses 35 percent less energy than a 70-degree setting.)*

3 Keep doors and windows closed to protect the cooled, comfortable air in your home. Before you open doors and windows to take advantage of free comfort, be sure the temperature and humidity outside have dropped.

4 Don't remove storm windows or doors in the summer if air conditioning is used often. These windows and doors help insulate the home and keep the air inside cooler longer.

5 If you have central air conditioning, direct the registers up in summer because cold air does not rise. Also make sure that your furniture and drapes are not blocking air conditioning registers or window units.

6 Try to cook early in the day or late in the evening when it is cooler, and cook outdoors when possible. Use the exhaust fan sparingly to get rid of unwanted heat in the kitchen.

7 Fans use only about ten percent of the energy that air conditioning does, so use fans to make people feel cooler. In reality, fans make it feel cooler, but do not lower the room temperature. Be sure to turn fans off when no one is using them.

And All Year Long...

Water Heaters

- 1** Lower the thermostat setting on your water heater to 120 degrees. (Note: Some dishwashers require a setting of 140 degrees. We suggest you check your owner's manual before you take this step.)
- 2** If you have a gas water heater, remember to set it on "pilot" when you go on vacation, or whenever you're gone for two days or more. If you have an electric water heater, turn it off.
- 3** Insulate your electric water heater. Kits with easy-to-install jackets are available for under \$10. Or, you can use regular roll insulation with duct tape. (Note: Do not insulate gas water heaters; it's a hazard.)
- 4** Insulate the pipe leading from your water heater.

Adding Insulation

- 5** Insulate ducts and hot water pipes that pass through unheated areas such as the garage, basement and attic. Use duct wrap insulation or batts and duct tape.
- 6** Stuff insulation into any gaps where pipes and ducts enter the living space from unheated portions of your home.
- 7** Add insulation whenever possible, perhaps just a little bit at a time. Eventually, you will have improved the energy efficiency of the whole house.
- 8** Keep your furnace filters clean. When they're dirty or clogged, your heating and air conditioning systems must work harder, and that requires more energy.

- 9** The area around your gas furnace is properly ventilated so that the gas burns efficiently and safely.
- 10** Move furniture away from your heating and cooling registers. Blocked registers make furnaces and air conditioners work harder. When proper air circulation is inhibited, it can result in a higher energy bill.
- 11** If you have a hot water or steam system, bleed the radiator to remove air which reduces the radiator's efficiency. This can be done with a simple radiator key available at your local hardware store.
- 12** Place aluminum foil reflectors behind radiators to reflect heat back into the room.
- 13** Don't heat or cool unused space in your home. Close registers in extra rooms or cover them (be sure to use non-flammable material) if they are not adjustable. Do not close more than 20 percent of the registers in your home. This might interfere with the operation of the central heating and cooling system. Do not block return air vents.
- 14** Try to keep closet doors shut. Clothes and other stored items don't need to be heated or cooled.
- 15** Make sure your thermostat is located on an interior wall. Keep sources of heat, such as lamps, stereos and televisions, away from the thermostat. They will interfere with its ability to measure the room temperature accurately.
- 16** Clean your thermostat yearly to keep it accurate. Just remove its cover and blow away accumulated dust.

17 To more closely monitor your thermostat, place an inexpensive thermometer next to it. Use the thermometer to gauge the accuracy of your thermostat.

18 Replace your old thermostat with one of the newer models that can be set to automatically lower the temperature at bedtime and raise it in the morning. Some can be programmed to raise the setting several times a day.

19 Install insulating gaskets in electrical outlets or switches on outside walls. Kits are available at hardware and home improvement stores. Generally, you can do five receptacles and seven switches for under \$5.

All Around the House

1 Turn off all lights, televisions, radios, computers and other appliances not in use.

2 Use low-wattage light bulbs and replace incandescent bulbs with fluorescent ones whenever possible.

3 Dust or vacuum ducts, registers, radiators and refrigerator coils regularly and bleed air from hot water radiators periodically. Also keep your appliances free of dirt and grease, which can reduce operating efficiency.

From the Inside Out

1 Keep windows and doors closed to prevent heated or cooled air from escaping.

2 Make storm windows out of sheets of plastic. For maximum effectiveness, we recommend a thickness of at least 6-mil. Stretch the plastic as tightly as possible to minimize air movement between the plastic and the window glass.

3 Caulk around windows, outside doors, baseboards, exhaust fans, dryer vents, places where pipes and wires enter the house and where the walls meet the foundation. Doing this may seem insignificant, but a crack just 1/16" wide around the circumference of an average-sized window lets about as much heated air escape as would a three-inch square hole in the wall. Also, in places where your old caulk has deteriorated, recaulk to make an airtight seal.

4 In addition to plastic storm windows, use insulated or heavy curtains, especially on windows facing north.

5 Cover window air conditioners tightly on the inside with plastic or special air conditioner covers. Also weatherstrip around the air conditioner to seal between it and the window frame.

6 Replace broken window panes immediately. Cover the open pane temporarily with a tight-fitting piece of cardboard. If you have a cracked pane, tape the crack with weather stripping or freezer tape until you are able to fix it.

7 Weatherstrip doors and windows, even the doors of rooms you're not using, as well as closet doors. Felt strips or plastic V-strips with adhesive backing are available at hardware and home improvement stores. You can generally do two windows or a door for less than \$4.

8 Put up thermal shades or shutters. They close very tightly and are one of the most effective ways to stop heat loss through windows.

9 If there is a gap at the bottom of a door, attach a simple door sweep to seal it off. Door-shoes or insulating thresholds last longer, but may be difficult to install.

- 10** Weatherstrip any of your interior doors which lead to the garage, basement or attic. For added efficiency, insulate them on the unconditioned cold side with fiberglass batts.
- 11** Put a vapor barrier, such as polyethylene, on top of the bare ground underneath your home to prevent your home from absorbing a lot of moisture. Since between 25 and 33 percent of the energy used by an air conditioner goes into moisture removal, this can have a nice impact on your energy bill. Also, exhaust fans can help you remove the moisture that accumulates from cooking, bathing and washing clothes.
- 12** Install attic ventilators, such as End gable louvers, continuous ridge vents, roof louvers, soffit vents or roof turbines. These are relatively inexpensive, and prevent summer heat buildup, as well as control moisture.
- 13** Keep your fireplace dampers closed when there is no fire in the fireplace.

In the Bathroom

- 1** Consider taking more showers than baths. A shower saves four to five gallons of water.
- 2** Be aware of your hot water use habits. Don't let hot water run constantly while you're shaving.
- 3** Be sure your faucets are shut off tightly, especially the hot water.
- 4** Install a flow restrictor on your shower. This device can cut the cost of taking a hot shower in half. It generally costs less than a dollar, is easily inserted into the shower head and cuts the flow of water virtually in half.
- 5** Repair leaking hot water faucets. A leak of one drop per second wastes more than 250 gallons of hot water a month. It's a simple and low-cost repair.

In the Kitchen

- 1** Run your garbage disposal with cold water only.
- 2** Use the dishwasher with full loads only.
- 3** When shopping for a new gas range, consider buying one with a pilotless ignition system, which uses about 30 percent less gas than the models with continuously burning pilots.
- 4** Partially thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator before cooking them. In many cases, thawing foods allows you to reduce the recommended cooking time by 30 percent.
- 5** Preheat your oven as little as possible. Most foods don't require it. For foods that require immediate heat, such as cakes, pies and soufflés, preheat for 10 minutes only.
- 6** Don't turn your stove's burner on until all the food in the pan is ready to be cooked.
- 7** To reduce the amount of energy it takes to boil water, start with water that's already hot from the tap. Also, use less water in cooking to save both energy and food nutrients.
- 8** Turn your stove and range down to a simmer as soon as food or water begins to boil. This lower setting maintains cooking temperature, cooks food more evenly and saves energy.
- 9** Resist the temptation to open the oven door to check on food while it's cooking. Each time you open it, 25 percent of the oven's heat is wasted.
- 10** Plan your meals carefully. "Oven meals," where everything can be cooked in the oven at approximately the same time and temperature, can help you avoid using several appliances.

- 11** Preparing individual servings when possible enables you to reduce oven cooking time. For instance, cooking a meatloaf in a full sized pan takes 90 minutes, while cooking individually sized meatloaf portions in a muffin tin requires only 30 minutes of cooking time.
- 12** When possible, cook in oven-safe glass or ceramic pans. These usually allow you to set your oven temperature 25 degrees lower than a recipe requires.
- 13** Turn off the oven about 15 to 20 minutes before the end of cooking time. The leftover heat in the oven will finish the job, if you don't open the oven door.
- 14** Cover your pots and pans with properly fitting lids. Lids hold heat in and food cooks faster.
- 15** Use the right size pot or pan for the range element size. Exposed elements or burners radiate their heat into the air, not into the pan.

In the Laundry

- 1** Run your washing machine for full loads only.
- 2** Use warm or cold water for clothes washing when possible and always rinse with cold water.
- 3** Clean the lint filter before drying each load. A clogged filter makes the dryer work harder and uses more energy to get clothes dry. Also, clean the dryer drum periodically to remove lint.
- 4** If the dryer has an automatic cycle, use it. Over-drying wastes energy and increases wear and tear on clothes.
- 5** A vented dryer blows excess moisture and lint outdoors and cuts drying time. Be sure the flap on the outside of the vent closes completely when the dryer is not in use.

Quick Energy Checklist

Here's a list of seven ways to make the most impact on your energy efficiency.

- **Check heating and air conditioning system.**
Have a licensed heating and air conditioning contractor inspect and tune up your air conditioning system. If your system is not operating at peak efficiency, it could cause your energy usage to skyrocket during the hottest and coldest months.
- **Check air ducts.**
Air duct leakage is very common (even on newer systems) and can cause your energy usage to increase considerably. Have a licensed heating and air conditioning contractor inspect your ducts for any leaks.
- **Check attic insulation.**
If your home was built prior to 1980, you probably need to add attic insulation. Call a licensed insulation contractor to inspect your attic. We recommend a minimum of 10 to 12 inches of insulation throughout the attic.
- **Check windows.**
If your home has older, single-pane windows, you may want to consider adding storm windows.
- **Check heating and air conditioning filters.**
Dirty filters not only increase your energy usage, they can also damage your heating and air conditioning system. Use only filters approved for your specific system.
- **Check caulking around windows and doors.**
Most homes leak large amounts of air through cracks around windows and doors. Be sure to caulk and weatherstrip all exterior doors and windows. It's also a good idea to seal around all pipe and wire penetrations in walls, floors and ceilings.
- **Check water heater thermostat.**
For electric models, make sure the thermostat is not set above 120 degrees (140 degrees if required by your dishwasher). Make sure gas models are set to the "medium" setting. Heating water to a higher temperature than is needed not only increases your energy usage, but also creates a safety concern.