

6 Ways To Lower Energy Bills

By Wayne Kalyn

WITH WINTER NOT FAR AWAY and temperatures already starting to dip, now is the time to guard your home—and checkbook—against rising energy costs. What's a home owner to do? For starters, test-run the heating system well before the cold hits, say experts. The first chilly day of the season isn't the best time to find out that the furnace doesn't work. Aside from the usual upkeep, a few simple changes can help lower bills. Here are six energy-saving tips that are inexpensive and easy on the environment.



1 Replace your light bulbs.

Cut down on your home's energy use (and brighten your rooms) by replacing traditional incandescent lights with energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs. "This really is a no-brainer," says

Danny Lipford, host of television's *Today's Homeowner*. "Fluorescent bulbs use 75 percent less electricity than incandescents and can last up to 10 times longer." Once available only in spiral shapes, compact fluorescents come in more aesthetically pleasing versions these days.

2 Add insulation.

Keep heat in the house—where it belongs—by adding insulation to your attic. "It's one of the smartest things a home owner can do," says Lipford. "And the good news is that



there are a number of environmentally friendly products you can use." Insulation made from recycled blue jeans, soybeans or newspapers is available at home-improvement stores or online. While these green products are all slightly more expensive than traditional fiberglass insulation, they are worth the money: You'll avoid breathing in stray fibers.

3 Install a programmable thermostat.

Never return to a chilly house or wake up to a cold bedroom in the morning again. A thermostat takes just 20 minutes to install and can be adjusted for several settings throughout the day to meet your heating needs. "I program the heat to go on before I step out of bed and head to the shower," says Heidi Baker of *BeJane.com*, a home-improvement site for women. "By the time



I'm leaving for work, the furnace has already cycled to a lower temperature."

Source: Parade magazine, September 16, 2007



4 Use a special paint.

If you plan to punch up a room with a fresh coat of paint, why not brush insulation onto the walls at the same time? Mix a nontoxic ceramic powder into your paint to reduce the amount of heat passing through your walls to the outside. "The ceramic particles in the additive create a radiant barrier that reflects heat back into the room," says Baker. "And once you put it on, the walls are insulated for good."

5 Protect your pipes. An insulating wrap acts as a safeguard. Place the pre-cut foam lengths over cold-water pipes in crawl spaces, the attic and overhead in the basement to prevent them from freezing. And don't forget about the hot-water pipes: "Hot water loses heat as it gets to its destination—your shower or sink," says Lipford. "Wrapping the pipes keeps more of the heat in, so you can start your shower a little sooner."



6 Redirect the heat.

You pay good money for heating oil and natural gas—but where does most of the heat wind up? Near the ceiling. Redirect it back into the room with a ceiling fan. "Move the fan's switch to reverse, so the blades run counterclockwise,"

says Baker. "This pushes the warmth away from the ceiling, down around the walls and into the living space." (Note: Always set the fan on low, or it will actually cool the heated air.) Don't have a ceiling fan? Take advantage of bright, sunny days by cleaning windows and removing outdoor screens to let in the maximum amount of sunshine and warm rooms naturally.