

Heating tips

Increase your home's heating efficiency

Your furnace is responsible for about 29% of the energy used in your home. There are ways to make yours run more efficiently and minimize energy costs.

Heating tips	Skill level
Change your filter. Clean air filters keep your furnace running efficiently, and can lower energy use by up to 15%.	Basic
Get preseason tuneups. Schedule yearly tuneups for your HVAC system to improve its efficiency and life span.	Professional
Install a programmable thermostat. Save on your energy bills with a properly programmed thermostat.	Advanced
Seal and insulate ducts. Keep your HVAC ductwork sealed and insulated to improve your system's energy efficiency.	Advanced to professional
Install energy-efficient windows. Install ENERGY STAR® windows to increase your home's energy efficiency.	Professional
Properly seal leaks by weatherstripping. Weatherstripping is a cost-effective way to save money on energy costs and improve your household's comfort by reducing drafts.	Basic to advanced

Holiday energy-saving tips

Can you be festive and frugal?

Absolutely, especially with these holiday energy-saving tips.

Lighting tips

- Replace your old holiday lights with Light-Emitting Diode (LED) light strings. Although they cost more initially, LEDs use a fraction of the energy of traditional holiday lights. Plus, they last up to 20 years.
- Plug your indoor and outdoor lighting displays into a timer set to run during the earlier evening hours.

- If you don't use timers, unplug your lights when you go to sleep or leave home.
- Rather than adding more lights to your tree, try enhancing the existing lighting with tinsel, mirrored ornaments and other reflective items.
- Try floodlights on the outside of your home. Models are available for incandescent and halogen bulbs. Halogen bulbs give more intense light and use less energy. Buy different colors for a festive look!
- Use our [holiday lighting calculator](#) to estimate the energy costs of your holiday lights.

Entertaining tips

- Cook as many dishes as possible in your microwave over the holidays. Because microwaves cook food so quickly, the typical model uses as much as 75 percent less energy than a conventional oven.
- Use your slow cooker. For about 17 cents worth of electricity, you can prepare an entire meal.
- When using your oven, check cooking progress by looking through the window. Opening the oven door for even a few seconds lowers the temperature inside by as much as 25°F.
- If your stove doesn't have a window, try not to open the door to check your food until it's as close to the expected finish time as possible.
- Turn off your oven several minutes before your food is fully cooked. As long as the door remains closed, enough heat will be stored inside to finish cooking your meal.
- If you use glass or ceramic pans, try turning your oven temperature down 25°F. Your dish may cook just as quickly.
- When cooking on your stove top, match the size of the pan to the heating element. More heat will get to the pan and less will be lost.
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer well stocked. A full refrigerator or freezer saves energy by reducing the recovery time when the door is opened.

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- Set your thermostat between 66°F and 68°F, a comfortable range for most people. For every 1°F you lower your thermostat, you may reduce your energy use by 1-3 percent.
- Start the heating season with a new furnace filter, and clean or replace it monthly to keep your furnace running efficiently.
- Setting your hot water heater to 120°F can cut your water heating costs by 10 percent.

- Open-hearth fireplaces draw heated air from your home, sending it and possibly your energy budget up the chimney. If you use your fireplace, install a snug-fitting set of glass doors and crack open a nearby window. Doing so reduces the amount of heated interior air drawn into the fireplace and improves efficiency by up to 20 percent.

Safety tips

- Before hanging holiday lights, check for damaged sockets, plugs and cords. Replace anything that looks defective.
- If you plan to string lights outdoors, be absolutely certain they are marked for outdoor use.
- If you use a ladder when decorating outside, stay well away from power lines. The same can be said for lights; do not place them near power lines.
- Fasten outdoor lighting securely to your home's exterior to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples or plastic attachments to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks.
- To avoid overloading electrical circuits, never plug in more than three sets of lights to one extension cord.
- Don't use light-duty flat extension cords, often brown or white, to power your lights. Instead, use heavy-gauge UL or FM labeled round extension cords.
- Never run electrical cords under rugs or carpeting.
- Turn off electrical decorations before leaving home or going to bed.
- Don't let small children play with light strings.