



Monthly Tips

Don't Let High Fuel Costs Drive You Nuts

Whether you drive an economy car or an SUV, there are plenty of ways to improve your gas mileage. Avoid aggressive driving and observe the speed limit. Speeding, fast acceleration, and hard braking wastes gas. Lighten your load by clearing your car of extra weight, and remove roof racks or carriers if not used frequently. Keep current with car maintenance—clean air filters can improve gas mileage by as much as 10%. Properly inflated and aligned tires will improve gas mileage by 3%. Using the wrong grade of oil can reduce mileage by 1% to 2%. For longer-term savings, consider a high-mileage vehicle for your next purchase. Check out [Driving and Car Maintenance](#) for more tips.

Track Your Energy Costs with a Home Energy Audit

An energy audit will show you which areas of your home use the most energy and help you decide the most effective way to reduce energy costs. You can conduct a simple audit yourself, contact your local utility, or call an independent energy auditor for a more comprehensive examination. Check your home's insulation levels, and check for open fireplace dampers. Look for holes or cracks around doors, light and plumbing fixtures, and other places where air may leak into or out of your home. Make sure your appliances and heating and cooling systems are properly maintained, and study your family's lighting needs and use patterns, paying special attention to high-use areas. Check out [Your Home's Energy Use](#) for more tips.

This Winter, Save Money and Stay Warm

Keep your energy bill and your pollution output low this winter by taking a whole-house approach to heating. Start with setting your thermostat as low as is comfortable. A programmable thermostat can help by adjusting the temperature according to your schedule—it can cut back heating at night, for instance, and turn it up again before you rise in the morning. It's also important to weatherize your home—caulk and weatherstrip any doors and

windows that leak air. Make sure your equipment is properly maintained and cleaned, and that furnace filters are replaced regularly. Finally, insulation is inadequate in many homes. Check the insulation in your attic, ceilings, exterior and basement walls, floors, and crawl spaces to see if it meets the levels recommended for your area. Check out [Heating and Cooling](#) for more tips.

Keep Your Energy Bill Out of Hot Water

Water heating can be expensive, but there are a number of ways to lower your costs. One way is to use less water. Repair leaky faucets immediately and use low-flow shower heads. (A family of four, each showering for five minutes a day, uses 700 gallons of water a week; you can cut that amount in half by using low-flow aerating showerheads.) Insulate your hot-water storage tank and pipes, and drain a quart of water from your water tank every three months to remove sediment that impedes heat transfer and lowers the efficiency of your heater (follow the manufacturer's instructions). Lower the thermostat on your water heater to 120 degrees; water heaters sometimes come from the factory with higher temperature settings than are necessary. When buying a new water heater, compare EnergyGuide labels to find an energy-efficient model. Check out [Water Heating](#) for more tips.

Cut Loads of Energy While Doing the Laundry

It's easy to cut your energy costs for laundry. About 80%-85% of the energy used for washing clothes is used to heat the water. You can reduce this cost by using less water by washing full loads and using cooler water and cold-water detergents - switching the temperature setting from hot to warm cuts a load's energy use in half. . If you are in the market for a new washer, look for the ENERGY STAR and read EnergyGuide labels. You can reduce drying costs as well: clean the lint filter after every load to improve air circulation, and don't over-dry clothes. Use the cool-down cycle to allow clothes to finish drying with residual heat. Also, periodically inspect your dryer vent to ensure it's not blocked. Consider buying a natural gas dryer, the cost per load is less than an electric dryer. Check out [Laundry](#) for more tips.

Lower Your Lighting Costs

Increasing your lighting efficiency is one of the fastest ways to decrease your electricity bills. Turn off the lights in any room you're not using, or consider installing timers, photo cells, or occupancy sensors to reduce the amount of time your lights are on. Use task lighting; instead of brightly lighting an entire room, focus the light where you need it. For example, use fluorescent under-cabinet lighting for kitchen sinks and countertops under cabinets. Consider three-way lamps; they make it easier to keep lighting levels low when brighter light is not necessary. Finally, use compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs); they are much more efficient than incandescent bulbs and last 6 to 10 times longer. CFLs are more expensive than incandescent bulbs, but they pay for themselves by saving energy over their lifetime. Check out [Lighting](#) for more tips.

Close the Window on High Energy Bills

If your home has single-pane windows, consider replacing them. New double-pane windows with high-performance glass are available on the market. In colder climates, select windows that are gas filled with low-emissivity (low-e) coatings on the glass to reduce heat loss. In warmer climates, select windows with spectrally selective coatings to reduce heat gain. If you decide not to replace your windows, there are other ways to improve their performance. In cold climates, close your curtains and shades at night, and open them during the day. Installing storm windows can also reduce your heat loss, by up to 50%. In warm climates, install white window coverings to reflect heat away from the house, and close south- and west-facing curtains during the day. Check out [Windows](#) for more tips.

Save Energy Today!

You can take a few simple actions today to save energy. Set your thermostat low in the winter and high in the summer. Install a programmable thermostat to control your home's temperature automatically. Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs. Air dry dishes. Turn off your computer and monitor when not in use. Use power strips and turn them off when equipment is not being used. Lower the thermostat on your water heater to 120 degrees. Take short showers instead of baths. Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes. Drive sensibly and don't speed. Check out [Save Energy and Money](#)

[Today](#) for more tips.

Power Your Home, Naturally, with Renewable Energy

Today, there are more options than ever to use renewable energy at home. A new home provides the best opportunity for taking advantage of passive solar energy. Orient the home to avoid overhead summer sun and to benefit from winter sun in cooler climates. Solar pool heating systems are very efficient and can cut costs for heating swimming pools or hot tubs. The easiest way to take advantage of solar power is to buy electricity generated by renewable sources from your local utility. Under certain conditions, installing PV cells might be right for you. Check out [Renewable Energy](#) for more tips.

Insulate Your Home Against High Energy Bills

A good insulating system can help keep your home warm during winter and cool during summer. Check the insulation in your attic, ceilings, exterior and basement walls, floors, and crawl spaces to see if it meets the levels recommended for your area. (Insulation is measured in R-values — the higher the R-value, the better your walls and roof will resist the transfer of heat.) Consider factors such as your climate, building design, and budget when selecting insulation R-value. The easiest and most cost-effective way to insulate your home is to add insulation in the attic. Check out [Insulation and Air Sealing](#) for more tips.

Audit Your Home Office for Energy Savings

Working from home is becoming increasingly popular, but office equipment can run up the electricity bills. Look for ENERGY STAR computers, copiers, printers, and fax machines when purchasing new equipment. ENERGY STAR products use about half the electricity of standard equipment. Turn off machines when not in use and make sure power management features are activated. Consider buying a laptop for your next computer upgrade; they use much less energy than desktop computers. Check out [Home Office and Home Electronics](#) for more tips.

Stay Cool This Summer While Saving Energy

If you use air-conditioning, set your thermostat as high as comfortably possible in the summer. The less difference between the indoor and outdoor temperatures, the lower your overall cooling bill will be. Don't set your thermostat at a colder setting

than normal when you turn it on. It will not cool your home any faster and could result in excessive cooling and unnecessary expense. If you're shopping for an air conditioner, look for the Energy Star and EnergyGuide labels. Consider a whole-house fan or evaporative cooler if appropriate for your climate. Remember that insulation and sealing air leaks will improve energy performance and comfort in summer by keeping cool air inside. Check out [Air Conditioners](#) for more tips.