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# Saving Energy: A Floor-To-Ceiling Guide

**Saving energy really doesn't require a lot of your energy. There are some easy things you can do to make a difference in your monthly energy usage and still be comfortable. This fact sheet shows ways you can reduce energy usage, save money and help conserve natural resources.**

## Your water heater

One drop of hot water per second can waste 2500 gallons per year. If just 1% of us repaired a leaky hot water faucet, the savings would add up to 58 million gallons of water and enough natural gas savings to heat 2,500 homes all winter long.

### Use cold water

When you can, use cold water to wash clothes or rinse dishes.

### Running your dishwasher

Wash full loads and use the energy-saver setting for an additional savings. Use your dishwasher's booster heater; it heats the water used in the dishwasher to 140°F, allowing you to set your water heater at an energy-efficient 120°F.

### Keep it warm

If your older water heater feels warm to the touch, buy a water heater blanket and save up to 9% on your water-heating costs. Check the caution label on your water heater. Newer models come with proper insulation and some even prohibit installing a blanket. Finally, don't cover the inspection plate with the blanket, it could be a fire hazard.

### Install low-flow devices

Low-flow devices on your faucets and showers can cut up to 11% of your water use, which will help reduce your energy and water bills.

### Set the thermostat properly

To work most efficiently, your water heater should be set between 120°F and 130°F, 140°F for some dishwasher models. Refer to your owner's manual for proper dishwasher operating temperatures.



## Your lights

Lighting can account for about 12% of your monthly bill (9% for all-electric homes). If each household in San Diego replaced four 100-watt incandescent lights with equivalent 27-watt compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), 292,000 kilowatt-hours would be saved each year. Enough to power over 60,000 homes for a year.

### Dim the lights

Consider buying solid-state dimmer switches. They can increase incandescent bulb life while reducing electric consumption and cost.

### Motion sensors make sense

Replace light switches with motion or occupancy sensors, which make the lights go on or off when someone enters or leaves a room. Motion sensors are perfect for the garage, exterior or security lighting.

### Let timers take on the task

If you sometimes forget to turn off the lights, think about buying a timer to turn lights off and on automatically.

### Try photocells

Photocells automatically turn on your lights when the sun goes down. Then, when the sun rises, the photocell turns the lights off. They're great for outdoor or security lighting.

### Consider low-voltage lighting for the outdoors

If you're planning to light your landscaping, install low-voltage lighting wherever possible. A string of six low-voltage lights uses about 108 watts, compared to a single 150-watt flood light.

Saving energy in lighting costs can be as easy as replacing incandescent light bulbs with CFLs, which use 75% less energy and last up to ten times longer. Each year, the United States throws away 1.741 billion incandescent bulbs—enough to fill two Qualcomm Stadiums. With each CFL, you'll throw away nine fewer bulbs.

### Your heating system

In the winter, your heating system is probably your biggest energy user, accounting for 13 to 16% of your monthly bill. If we all turned down our thermostats just two degrees, we'd save enough energy to heat 16,000 San Diego homes for a day.

### Choose the correct temperature setting

For every two degrees you lower your thermostat you can save approximately 5% percent on your heating costs. You can save even more by using a programmable thermostat to adjust the temperature to energy-saving settings throughout the day.

If you have a heat pump, raising and lowering the thermostat could cause the electric heating strips to come on, significantly increasing your heating costs.

Finally, thermostats should never be turned up high to heat a home in a hurry. It won't heat your home any faster.

### Beware of portable space heaters

Space heaters are best when you're trying to heat one room. If you use more than one, you can use more energy and spend more money than if you had just used your gas furnace to heat your entire home.

### Don't let heat escape

Keep doors and windows closed on chilly nights. Weather-stripping and caulking your doors and windows can save as much as 6% of your heating costs.

### Don't block heating vents

Check to see that heating vents are unobstructed so your system isn't overworked getting heat into your home.

### Keep it clean

Check filters at least twice during the heating season and either vacuum or replace them. Plus, it's a good idea to have your entire system checked yearly by a qualified heating contractor.

### Insulate your home properly

Up to 20% of your heating can be lost through your ceiling. Proper insulation will keep your home warm in the winter and cool in the summer. "R" stands for resistance to heat flow. The higher the "R value," the greater the insulating power.

### Your air conditioner

By using fans instead of central air-conditioning, you can save 80 to 90% on cooling costs. In fact, if every residence with air conditioning in San Diego used fans for just three hours on one warm summer day, the energy saved could power over 3,000 homes for a full month.

### Shade your house

Use landscaping, awnings and overhangs to provide shade around the outside of your home. A shaded house is easier to cool than one in direct sunlight.

### Maintain it

Proper maintenance helps your air conditioner run more efficiently. In addition to regular do-it-yourself maintenance, it's a good idea to have your entire system checked yearly by a qualified air-conditioning contractor.

### Keep the vents clear

An obstructed vent, inside or outside your home, wastes both energy and money. Move furniture away from vents and window air conditioners. And trim shrubbery that might block outside vents.

### Do your homework

Important factors to consider when shopping for a new air conditioner are: size of area to be cooled, climate, your home's construction, sun exposure, wiring, insulation and the number and location of windows. Once you have this information, determine which unit will cool your home for the lowest cost.

### Set it and leave it

The best temperature for your air conditioner's thermostat is 78°F or higher. A setting of 78°F instead of 72°F can save up to 12% of your cooling costs.

### Watch those windows

Consider installing reflective films or solar shade screens on windows with the greatest exposure to the summer sun.

### Keep cool air in

First, keep your doors and windows closed when you have the air conditioner on. Second, weatherstrip and caulk your doors and windows to seal in cooled air.

## Your refrigerator & freezer

Chances are your refrigerator/freezer is one of the largest energy users in your home, gobbling up about 20% of your household's annual energy costs. If everyone in the U.S. used high-efficiency refrigerators, the electricity saved would eliminate the need for about 10 large power plants.

### Keep it in good shape

A refrigerator works best when it's kept in good condition. Check the door seals. If they're cracked or you feel cold air leaking out, they should be replaced.

### Keep it cool

Keep it in a well-ventilated, dry and cool space. Refrigerators and freezers near ovens, stoves, water heaters, clothes dryers or other crowded or warm places have to work harder.

### Unplug it

If you have an extra refrigerator or freezer and don't keep it full, you could save up to 15% by unplugging it.

### Use the right settings

Check your thermostat controls. To work most efficiently, your refrigerator should be set between 38°F and 40°F. The freezer temperature should be set at 0°F.

### Defrost regularly

If you have a manual defrost freezer, don't forget to defrost regularly. More than 1/4 inch of frost makes your freezer work harder to keep your food frozen.

### Keep it clean

Dirty condenser coils could lead to higher operating costs. Coils, found on the back or bottom front of your refrigerator, should be checked and cleaned at least twice a year.

### Keep it closed

A refrigerator works more efficiently when you open its door as little as possible. So make your decisions before opening the door and get everything you need quickly and at one time.

### Keep the heat out of your refrigerator

Before you store leftovers in the refrigerator or freezer, allow them to cool slightly. That way, your refrigerator or freezer won't have to work to cool them off.

### Keep it full

Refrigerators operate most efficiently when they are full, but not overloaded. While it's true that frozen foods help to keep the air cool, over-packing food in either compartment can prevent cold air from circulating properly. Refer to your owner's manual for the correct capacity.

## Your washer & dryer

If you wash two loads of laundry per week and switch from hot to cold water, you can save more than 3,300 gallons of hot water per year. If just 10% of San Diego County households did this, we could reduce our collective natural gas usage by more than 2 million therms each year. Enough to provide all the natural gas needs to over 4,700 homes each year.

### Wash and dry full loads

More than 70% of the cost of washing a load of laundry is in heating the water. So get the most for your money, and make every effort to wash full loads.

### Use cold water as often as possible

Save washing in warm water for whites or hard-to-clean items. Clothes washed in cold water fade less and have fewer wrinkles. Always rinse in cold.

### Get the lint out

Clean your dryer's lint screen after every use. A lint-free dryer works much more efficiently.

### Check your connections

Check for hose cracks and leaky faucet connections. Either one can cause you to lose hot water every time you wash.

## Your oven & range

### Don't pre-heat if you don't have to

If you're baking breads and cakes, pre-heating your oven may be necessary. But for most foods, like casseroles and broiled items, pre-heating simply isn't necessary.

### Keep your oven & range clean

An oven or range that's free of grease and baked-on residue will work more efficiently.

### Buy gas appliances

If you're in the market for a new range or oven, consider buying gas. They cost less to operate than electric appliances and are usually on for a shorter period of time.

### Use your microwave oven

Your microwave requires about the same amount of energy per hour to operate as your electric oven. But, since it cooks food much more quickly, it saves you time, energy and money. In contrast, a gas oven costs about 11% less to operate than a microwave. So your decision whether to use your microwave or your gas oven should be based on the length of time you need to cook in either one to get the same results.

### Cover it up

Covers and lids on your pots and pans trap steam to help cook food faster.

### Cook smaller meals in smaller appliances

For smaller meals that can't be cooked in a microwave, consider using an electric skillet, broiler oven or toaster oven. They use half the energy of their full-size electric counterparts, and won't heat up your kitchen in the warmer months.

### Boil until boiling and not a minute longer

Once water or other liquids reach a state of boiling, they won't get any hotter. So if you need to bring something to a boil, turn the burner down or off when it starts to boil.

### Give your home an energy check-up

Call us at **1-800-411-SDGE (7343)** for a free, mail-in Home Energy Efficiency Survey. It takes only a few minutes to complete and return. We'll analyze the energy usage in your home and mail you the results.

Or visit our "Residential" section at [www.sdge.com](http://www.sdge.com) and complete an online Energy Profile and get your results on-screen within a few minutes.

Visit us at [www.sdge.com](http://www.sdge.com) for energy-saving tips, updates and information on energy-efficient rebates and services.



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