

Top 10 Ways to make your home green

1. Use CFLs. Replace your incandescent light bulbs (the cheap ones you probably got at the grocery store) with ENERGY STAR® qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). By replacing even your five most frequently used light bulbs, you'll save \$100 per year. Find out exactly how much you can save. If every family in the U.S.A. did this, greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by one trillion pounds--there are 12 zeros in a trillion! More on energy-efficient lighting.

2. Program Your Thermostats. Save 10% on your heating and cooling costs just by setting your thermostat back when you're not home and while you're sleeping. Program your thermostat to 78 degrees F or higher in the summer and 62 degrees F or lower in the winter. If you tell it to return to your preferred temperature before you return home, you won't ever know the temperature changed, until you look at the reduction in your energy bills. Select ENERGY STAR qualified programmable thermostats.



3. Plug Air Leaks. Air leaks are the greatest energy waster in the home, but they can be simple to plug. Install weatherstripping and caulk to stop those expensive drafts and improve comfort. It's cheap and easy, and almost anyone can do it. Look for leaks around windows, doors, electrical outlets, plumbing penetrations, and in the attic floor.

4. Tune-Up Your HVAC. HVAC maintenance is key to healthy and efficient heating and cooling. Get a professional tune-up every two years. It will cost around \$100, but will save 5% to 10% on your heating and cooling bills. Also, clean or replace your filter every month. Dirty filters block normal airflow and significantly reduce the efficiency of the system, which wastes your money.

5. Go Low-Flow. Install low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators to save resources without sacrificing water pressure. An efficient showerhead will save a family of four up to \$285 per year. They can cost less than \$15, and installing them couldn't be easier: they just screw on.

6. Optimize Your Water Heater. If you don't have one installed already, put an insulative jacket around your hot water heater, and insulate the pipes around the water heater. Insulative jackets cost between \$10 and \$20, and you can get pipe insulation for less than \$1 for six feet. Also consider turning the temperature on the water heater down to 120 degrees. It will save you money and prevent scalding.



7. Plant a Tree. Shade trees can significantly lower your cooling costs by up to 25% . They also make your home more comfortable, and provide habitat for song birds. In addition, properly placed trees and shrubs act as wind-breaks, shielding your home from cold winds and reducing heating costs by 20%.

8. Buy ENERGY STAR. When replacing your appliances, select ENERGY STAR qualified products. When replacing your water heater, furnace, or air conditioner, you should also select ENERGY STAR qualified products. You will save 10-30% on the operating costs vs. non-ENERGY STAR equivalents. Find out exactly how much you save.

9. Request a Blower Door Test. A blower door test will uncover the hidden holes and cracks that are the main source of energy loss in your home. For example an open fireplace damper can let 8% of your heating costs slip out the chimney. Hiring a certified Home Energy Rater (HERS) costs \$200 to \$400 and is worth every penny. You should have the inspection cost paid for within two years, and your home should be significantly more comfortable, and green.

10. Use Low-VOC products. After painting, the volatile organic compound level can be 1,000 times the healthy normal level. Select low or no-VOC paints and finishes to combat this health hazard. When selecting paints, look for the Green Seal. When cleaning around the house, use non-toxic natural products or make your own green cleaning products.



11. And a Bonus...Check Insulation. Make sure that there are no areas in your attic floor with inadequate insulation. Insulation is your 'Great Wall of China' against heat loss. Imagine the effectiveness of the Great Wall in protecting against invaders if it had a 300 foot gap in it, or only stood a couple of feet high. Insulation works the same way. Even a small area with limited or no insulation, or insulation that has been damaged or compressed, can significantly decrease the effectiveness of the area's insulation. How much insulation do you need? Follow the Department of Energy's recommendations.

