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13 Winter Energy Saving Tips

Heating and cooling a home typically accounts for almost half of the household energy costs and bills can increase dramatically in the summer and winter months. Fortunately, there are a few simple ways to reduce your heating costs this winter while still staying toasty.

1. Let the Sun in: The sun is a great source of free heat. Open curtains and blinds to take advantage of the greenhouse effect and allow the sun to naturally heat your home.
2. Close the Curtains at Night: Unfortunately, windows can also be a source of heat loss at night or on cloudy days, as they are not well insulated. Close curtains and blinds when the sun isn't shining and consider purchasing insulated curtains to maximize the energy efficiency of your windows.
3. Eliminate Air Leaks and Drafts: Air sealing your home is simple, effective, and relatively inexpensive and will usually pay for itself energy savings within a year. Use caulk for cracks and openings around door and window frames and weatherstripping around anything that moves, like the door itself or window sashes.
 - * External Doors: Replace any damaged or missing weather stripping and apply new caulk to any broken seals.
 - * Windows: Windows, especially in older homes, can be insulated by sealing the frame with clear window film, which is cheap, easy to apply, easy to remove in spring, and can be found at any home improvement store or online.
 - * Attic and Basement: Check your attic and basement thoroughly when searching for air leaks, as they often hide the worst air leaks. Use foam or caulk to seal small cracks; for larger holes, install or replace insulation.
 - * Unexpected Heat Leaks: Doors and windows are obvious sources of drafts, but cold air can leak into your house through electrical outlets, light fixtures, AC units, and gaps in your insulation.
 - * Fireplace: A lit fireplace can be a great way to warm up in winter, but can allow cold air in when not in use. Keep your damper closed whenever you aren't using your fireplace. If you never use your fireplace, plug and seal the chimney flue. For safety, have your fireplace and chimney professionally inspected before the first use each winter.
4. Close Doors and Vents in Unused Rooms: Close off all vents and shut doors to rooms that are seldom used, or rarely entered, such as a guest or storage room. This will prevent you from paying to heat uninhabited space.

5. Stay Warm With Clothes and Blankets: Keep the thermostat low and compensate by wearing a sweater and warm socks around the house and use a thick blanket, comforter, or duvet at night.
6. Reset Your Water Heater Thermostat: Water heaters are the second highest source of energy usage in the home and most people have the thermostat on their water heater set way too high. Your water heater heats water to a set temperature, then maintains that temperature 24/7 by cycling on and off, continually reheating water to that temperature, whether you use it or not. Setting the temperature on your water heater a few degrees cooler can save you a couple of dollars and you likely won't even notice the difference.
7. Keep the Air Circulating: Everyone knows that ceiling fans are a great way to stay cool in the summer, but did you know that they can also help keep you warm in winter? Normally, ceiling fans rotate counterclockwise, pushing air down and producing a slight wind chill effect. However, most ceiling fans have a reverse switch that will enable them to turn clockwise, producing an updraft and moving the warm air that collects near your ceiling down into the rest of the room.
8. Use Space Heaters: If you only need to heat a small area, try using a space heater. Electric space heaters are a very energy efficient way to warm small spaces that are infrequently used, or only used for short periods because there is no heat loss through ducts or combustion. However, space heaters are not efficient for whole-house heating in the long-run.
9. Choose LED Lights for Your Home and Decorations: Choose LED lights for Holiday decorating; they use 75% less energy than standard incandescent lights and last 25 times longer. Though a bit more expensive up-front, LEDs are extremely durable and long-lasting. They use so little electricity that 25 strings of holiday LEDs can be connected end-to-end without overloading a standard wall socket.
10. After Using the Oven, Leave the Door Ajar: Though your oven is never to be used as a heat source, there's no sense in letting the heat from cooking go to waste. After taking dinner out of the oven, leave the door cracked open and allow that extra heat to escape and warm your kitchen.
11. Lower the Temperature in Your Home: Lowering the temperature in your home by just a couple degrees can result in significant long-term savings. Turn your thermostat down to the lowest temperature you find comfortable.
12. Turn the Thermostat Down When You Go to Sleep or When No One is Home: You can save on your energy bill just by turning your thermostat down 4 to 5 degrees while sleeping or when no one is home.
13. Get a Smart Thermostat: Even better, consider purchasing a smart thermostat, which is a Wi-Fi enabled device that automatically adjusts temperature settings in your home for peak energy efficiency. These devices learn your habits and preferences and establish a schedule that automatically adjusts to energy-saving temperatures when you are asleep or away.