

Ways To Save Energy (and Money)



Saving Energy is crucial at this time as we have a limited supply of most of the energy sources we rely on - and at some point we will run out of them. Our conservation efforts right now will extend this deadline into the future, giving us more time to learn how to cultivate renewable sources. Equally important is the fact that the less energy we currently consume, the less negative impact there will be to our environment and society - less air and water pollution, global climate change, oil spills, loss of wilderness areas, foreign energy dependence and risk of international conflict over energy supplies.

Here are some new thoughts about saving energy and money:

- Did you know that the time of day when you use your electrical appliances could save you money? Ask your energy provider if your charges are (or can be) based on peak and off-peak hours - a "time of day" plan. If you know when the peak hours are, you can avoid using extra energy during those hours. Just moving hot-water-dependent chores like laundry, showers and dish washing to off-peak hours can provide substantial savings.
- Some customers have energy monitors/meters provided by their energy company that allow them to constantly monitor their energy use and be continually informed about peak and off-peak times. Tracking daily use by reading the meter can give you feedback on what you could be doing to save electricity.
- There are online tools to help you track your energy use, analyze it year-to-year, and compare your use with others in your neighborhood. To have access to these tools, go to your energy provider's website and create an online account. The site creates reports, based on your own data, that you can use to see how you are doing and compare with your neighbors. The report also includes tips for you, based on your bills and practices.

Karen G. Kramer - Space to Breathe
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Actually, there are thousands of ways to save energy; the problem is often just about getting started. To motivate yourself, keep in mind the benefits to our current environmental conditions and quality of life, as well as those to future generations. Share your motivation with a friend and have a buddy for support. If you live in my city, Newton, MA, you could join a "Low Carbon Diet" EcoTeam, sponsored by Green Decade Newton, another way to find support and have fun with this process. And of course, keep in mind that many energy saving tactics also save you money!

Here are other tips about saving energy and money. Any small change makes a difference:

- Schedule a free energy audit through your electric company or www.MassSAVE.com.
- Use a programmable thermostat to save energy while you are sleeping or away from home.
- Turn off lights and electronics when not in use, and use a power strip when appropriate.
- Replace inefficient appliances and buy Energy Star qualified ones. Take advantage of rebates for these and other "green" purchases.
- Weather-strip drafty doors and windows, and attend to all air and water leaks.
- Use energy saving lighting - CFL or LED.
- Turn your water heater down to 120 degrees.
- Insulate, or increase the amount of insulation, in basement, attic and outside walls.
- Have your heating system serviced once a year and regularly replace furnace filters.
- Takes showers instead of baths, and take shorter showers! Install a water-saving shower head.
- Don't let the water run while tooth brushing, or while sudsing/lathering in the shower.
- Wash clothing in cold water in the washing machine. Wash full loads, or be sure to set the appropriate water level. Wash full loads of dishes - don't pre-rinse unnecessarily, and use air-drying instead of the heat-dry cycle.
- Lower the thermostat in cold weather, and wear an extra layer.
- Use smaller kitchen appliances when appropriate - such as microwaves, slow-cookers and toaster-ovens.
- Shop for durable, long-lasting products, not disposable ones. Re-use whenever possible.
- Buy second-hand and recycled products. Mend and repair, rather than discard and replace.
- Drive the speed limit and avoid abrupt starts and stops. Warm up car for only 10 - 30 seconds, even in winter. Keep your tires properly inflated and your car tuned up. Whenever you can help it, don't idle.
- Check into telecommuting, carpooling and public transit. Walk or bicycle whenever possible.
- Bleed radiators every season. Don't block radiators or heating vents with furniture or draperies.
- During the winter, close curtains and blinds at night to prevent heat loss; keep them open during the day to absorb energy from the sun.