

Published on *SeniorNavigator* (<https://seniornavigator.org>)

10 Ways to Save on Winter Heating Bills

Keep your home comfortable and efficient, year-round

Whatever the weather, it's easy to make a few small changes at home to save energy and money. Whether you seal air leaks or replace furnace filters, you can see savings every month of the year.

Winter

Keep air ducts clear from obstructions. Move furniture, drapes, and anything else blocking air ducts and cold-air returns. Blocked vents reduce airflow and stress your furnace.

Seal air leaks. Seal all holes from pipes and wires that enter/exit the living space, including entrances, pull-downs and attic stair openings, light fixtures, pipes, and wires.

- **Lower your thermostat to 68 degrees.** Also, consider installing a smart thermostat; ThermWise® offers rebates for qualifying models. Learn more about your thermostat by visiting the U.S. Department of Energy website.
- **Seal duct work.** Make sure that all ductwork is sealed at joints and intersections with foil-backed tape or silicon caulking. If not properly sealed, supply ductwork can leak heated air into the attic or crawl space, and outside air can be drawn into the return duct work, increasing costs and reducing comfort dramatically.
- **Lower water heater to 120-125 degrees.** Many water heaters are automatically set at 140 degrees. Lowering the temperature on your water heater to between 120 and 125 degrees will reduce the amount of fuel needed

to heat the water.

- **Change furnace and HVAC filters every month.** This is the number one reason for furnace breakdowns. Inspect heating and cooling equipment annually, or as recommended by the manufacturer. Have a professional check and clean furnaces once a year.
- **Give your furnace some space.** It will perform best when it has room to breathe.
- **Weather-strip doors, windows, and attic entryways.** Inspect windows and doors for air leaks. If you can see daylight around a door or window frame, then the door or window needs to be sealed with caulking or weather-stripping. Insulate attic entryways.
- **Insulate water pipes.** Insulate the first three to six feet of cold and hot water pipes near the water heater. Insulating hot water pipes located in a crawlspace or attic is not necessary.
- **Add an insulation blanket to the water heater.** Wrapping the water heater with an insulation blanket can save heating costs by helping the hot water tank to retain heat when not in use. Inexpensive insulation kits are available at most home improvement stores.
- **Add insulation to the attic.** When adding insulation, start at the top and work down, but only after sealing against air infiltration.
- **Decorating your house for the holidays? Use light-emitting diode (LED) holiday lights** to cut down on the cost of energy usage. LED lights not only save energy but also last longer, and are more durable than other types of bulbs.

Summer

- **Raise your thermostat to 78 degrees**, and if you'll be away from home for more than eight hours, consider raising it a few degrees more to save for each degree of setback.
- **Keep window shades closed when the air conditioner is on.** Sunny windows add heat to your home and can make your air conditioner work two to three times harder.
- **Check and clean filters.** Cleaning and replacing air conditioning filters monthly allows the system to run more efficiently.
- **Clear attic vents.** If your home has an attic fan, make sure it is functioning properly.
- **Install ceiling fans and make sure they are blowing down.** Don't underestimate the importance of ceiling fans in providing a cooling effect. Most fans have a switch to change the fan direction, so make sure ceiling fans are blowing downward (in a counter-clockwise direction) to move air down towards your living space rather than up towards the ceiling.
- **Wash dishes and clothes in the early morning or late evening.** By doing these chores during cooler times of the day, you can decrease the heat and humidity in your home and reduce the need for air conditioning.
- **Unplug equipment when not in use.** Electric chargers, televisions, and audio/video equipment use electricity and produce heat even when they are not in use.

Article Source

Dominion Energy

Source URL

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Last Reviewed

Monday, July 25, 2022