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10 Ways to Lower Heating Bills

by Shelly Duell

Reduce the amount you spend for heat this winter

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), heating accounts for around 30 percent of energy usage in the average American home. A properly maintained energy-efficient heating system <<http://www.robertbpayne.com/>> combined with a few savvy household strategies can significantly reduce your home's energy consumption.

Here are 10 tips that can help lower your heating bill without compromising home comfort.

- 1) **Weather-Strip.** Weather-stripping drafty windows and doors can knock up to 15 percent off your fuel and energy bills. A window that rattles in windy weather is a sure sign that warm air is leaking outside your home.
- 2) **Seal Leaks.** Any conduit that passes through your ceiling or an exterior wall, such as plumbing pipes and ventilation flues, can also be a source of leaks. Seal leaks to reduce your heating costs up to 10 percent.
- 3) **Take Advantage of Solar Heat Gain.** Leaving shades, curtains, and blinds open on south- and west-facing windows during the day allows solar radiation in. Sunlight helps raise the indoor temperatures of your home. Be sure to close them once the sun has set to retain interior heat.
- 4) **Change or Clean Air Filters.** A clogged heater filter impairs air flow, forcing your heating system to run longer to achieve a comfortable indoor temperature. The EPA recommends that homeowners replace or clean their air filters once each month during the heating season or more often as needed.
- 5) **Install a Programmable Thermostat.** These smart devices let you schedule your heater to lower household temperatures automatically when you're asleep or away from home, reducing your heating bills by 10 percent or more. Most models have multiple settings for every day of the week.
- 6) **Plant Deciduous Trees.** Trees that retain their leaves all year long shade your home during the cold season. Swap them out for deciduous trees, and your home will still get shade during the summer while allowing sunlight to filter through in the winter.
- 7) **Change Ceiling Fan Operation.** Ceiling fans are engineered to blow air either up or down at different speeds. In the winter, set the fan to spin clockwise at a slow speed. Keep in mind that ceiling fans consume energy as well. Installing an affordable motion detector switch will ensure that the fan only operates when someone is in the room.
- 8) **Space Heaters.** If only heating one room, a space heater can be a more energy-efficient option than running your whole-home heating system. They're also helpful in boosting the temperature for people who are sensitive to cold. For protection against fire, remember to follow all safety recommendations when operating space heaters.
- 9) **Seal and Insulate Ductwork.** Over time, even well-designed and installed air duct systems are subject to developing leaks that substantially reduce the system's energy efficiency. According

to the EPA, having the ductwork of your forced-air heating system sealed and insulated can reduce your heating expenses by as much as 30 percent. Because proper performance depends upon maintaining a careful balance between air delivery and air removal, however, experts recommend that sealing and insulation work be performed by qualified professionals.

- 10) Heating System Maintenance. Nothing drives up energy bills more than a neglected heater. The EPA urges homeowners to have their heating systems serviced by a professional contractor at least once each year. Enrolling in an HVAC inspection and maintenance program is the most economical and effective way to ensure safe and energy-efficient heating system operation.