How to cut your energy use to save money (and the planet)

*Did you know that you could cut your energy bills by up to* ***£480 per year*** *by making a few small changes?*

Here are some practical tips which will help you save money AND benefit the planet by reducing carbon emissions – ever more important with the latest [UN](https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129912) [and international warnings about global warming](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf).

# Heating:

* **Turn down your thermostat by 1 – 2 degrees.** Your thermostat should be set to between **18-21°C**. For each degree you reduce your thermostat by you are likely to cut your bills by around 4%, or about **£100** a year on average for a typical home. An air temperature of 21ºC is the equivalent of a warm summer’s day and is at 18ºC you can still wear short sleeves outside, so turning down by 2 – 3 degrees should not make a noticeable difference.
* **Set timers for your heating.** Turning your heating off when it’s not needed is an easy way to save so try and set your heating to come on 30 minutes before you need it and shut off 30 minutes early to make the most of residual heat.
* **Insulate your hot water tank.** To reduce heat loss and keep your hot water hotter for longer, fit a British Standard Jacket 80mm thick to your hot water cylinder and you could save as much as

**£35/**year.

* **Set your boiler’s flow temperature between 55 and 60 degrees.** Most of us waste gas heating the hot water for our taps to 60c, only to cool it down again by mixing it with cold water when we want to use it for showers or baths. Your boiler’s flow setting controls the temperature of the water when it leaves your boiler and usually the default setting is too high. Turn it down a bit and your home will feel just as warm, but you could cut your energy bills by 12% and save up to **£112**.
* **Close your curtains.** You’ll keep more heat in your home with less energy if you pull your curtains before it gets dark – you could reduce your heat loss by up to 15%.
* **Draught-proof your home.** Draughts can waste energy that you spend on heating your home, so finding them and plugging gaps around doors, windows and other gaps can help trap warmth in and make your gas spend go further. Decent draught-proofing can cut 2% off energy bills, equating to about **£50 a year** on average for a typical home. Find out how to draught-proof your home [here](https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/draught-proofing/).
* **Check your radiators and stop heating unused rooms.** Turn off radiators in unused rooms to save wasting energy where it is not needed. Using them with your main thermostat allows you to control the temperature room by room and could save you about **£150 a year**, on average, for a typical home. Also, don’t forget to also keep the doors of unused and unheated rooms closed.

For lots of practical ways to make your radiators more energy efficient, check out the Octopus website: <https://octopus.energy/blog/energy-saving-tips/#toptips>

* **Try other ways of keeping warm and save money.** Simple but effective (and free), adding an extra layer of clothing can make a big difference to how cold you feel. An energy-efficient electric blanket can keep someone warm for just **4p an hour** and a hot water bottle costs even less. This is a much more cost-effective way to stay warm, particularly for anyone with mobility issues or who spends a lot of time in one place (e.g. working at home). Portable electric heaters are very expensive so avoid using these if you want to save money.

# Lighting, appliances and water:

**Turn lights off (and choose LED lights).** LED bulbs use less energy than traditional halogen light bulbs and are brighter. Turn lights off if not using the room – advice from the Energy Saving Trust is that you should switch off when you leave the room, no matter how long for and by doing this you could save **£27** a year. If you have outdoor security/porch lights, switch to sensor lighting so they only come on when there is movement.

* **Avoid using the tumble dryer.** Tumble driers use a lot of energy so if you have one, avoid using it and air dry instead - you could save up to **£117** a year. Dry clothes outside or on an airer/balcony when it’s warm enough. When colder, hang clothes up on hangers on an airer (but leave a window open to prevent damp and condensation)
* **Use 'eco' mode on washing machines and dishwashers where possible.** For most appliances, 'eco' mode means operating at a lower speed, and often, heat. Using eco mode will use less energy (sometimes even less than if you use a short cycle) and therefore reduce energy bills. Up to 90% of the energy a washing machine uses is to heat the water (2).
* **Only run the dishwasher when full.** Running your dishwasher when it's only part full is extremely inefficient, even if there is a half load option. The Energy Saving Trust estimates that reducing your dishwasher use by one run a week could save **£27** a year.
* **Reduce your water usage.** Reducing the amount of water you use will not only help the environment but can also reduce energy costs - try:
	+ Shortening your shower time - cutting just a minute off your shower time could save **£207** a year in energy bills (and more in water bills if you have a meter). You can also reduce the amount of water you use by putting in a water-saving shower head (which some companies will provide free of charge).
	+ Washing clothes less often and try a cooler setting (3). By washing your clothes at 30 degrees instead of 40, you could save **£54** a year.
* **Heat your cooking water with electricity.** If you’ve got a gas hob, heat your water in a kettle or microwave - it’s quicker and uses less gas.
* **Use the microwave instead of the oven.** Use your microwave instead of the oven to cook where you can as it only heats the food itself, not the air around it, so uses much less energy.
* **Don’t overfill the kettle.** The more water you boil, the more energy you use. When filling the kettle, just boil the amount of water you need and you can make a saving of around **£16** a year.
* **Switch off standby/phone chargers if not in use.** Don't leave your devices on standby or phone chargers switched on if not charging – you could save another **£28** a year.

You don’t have to do all of these but even just making a few of the changes suggested above can make a difference to how much you spend (or save) on your bills, and your carbon footprint.

# The hourly cost of common appliances

Finally, it can help to be aware of how much electricity various appliances use. The Money Saving Expert website (6) has a table showing the approximate hourly cost of common appliances:

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| **Appliance** | **kWh \*** | **Cost per hour \*\*** |
| Tumble dryer (3,000 watts) | 3 | £1.02 |
| Oven (2,000W) | 2 | 68p |
| Kettle (1,800W) | 1.8 | 61p |
| Electric hob (1,700W) | 1.7 | 58p |
| Vacuum cleaner (1,400W) | 1.4 | 48p |
| Microwave/Toaster (1,200W) | 1.2 | 41p |
| Dishwasher (1,200W) | 1.2 | 41p |
| Iron (1,100W) | 1.1 | 37p |
| Air fryer (1.000W) | 1 | 34p |
| Washing machine (700W) | 0.7 | 24p |
| Electric clothes airer (250W) | 0.25 | 8.5p |
| Slow cooker (225W) | 0.225 | 8p |
| PlayStation 5 (201W) | 0.201 | 7p |
| Electric blanket (100W) | 0.1 | 3.4p |
| Sky Q box (45W) | 0.045 | 1.5p |
| TV (30W) | 0.03 | 1.02p |
| Fridge (28W) | 0.028 | 0.95p |
| BT Hub (12W) | 0.012 | 0.41p |
| Light bulb (10W) | 0.01 | 0.34p |
| Sky Q box (standby) (9W) | 0.009 | 0.31p |
| Microwave (standby) (7W) | 0.007 | 0.24p |
| Phone charger (5W) | 0.005 | 0.17p |
| PlayStation 5 (standby) (0.36W) | 0.00036 | 0.01p |

\* kWh (kilowatt hours) are the units used to measure how much power is used by an appliance. It works out as the watt power of an appliance divided by 1,000 (when used for one hour).

\*\* Prices based on 1 October 2022 price guarantee rate of 34p/kWh.

# References:

1. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129912>
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7. <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/hub/quick-tips-to-save-energy/>