

## Energy-Saving Tips - 7 Home Conservation Ideas - Heating and Cooling

There are so many home energy-saving tips and conservation ideas offered these days and all with good intention. However, in order to know where to start and to ensure the best possible results, you must first identify the areas of greatest concern.

Addressing your home's heating and cooling costs is the ideal place to start. Why? You ask. Because heating and cooling alone can account for nearly half of your total monthly utility bills and if you live in a temperate climate region with both long summer and winter seasons (such as the Midwest and Northeast) these costs can exceed half of your total annual utility bills. Here are 7 energy-saving tips and conservation ideas that if adopted can significantly reduce your home's heating and cooling costs.

### 7 Home Energy Tips to Lower Heating and Cooling Costs

1. If your home has a central heating and cooling system, then periodically check all of the vents (especially floor vents) for possible obstructions such as furniture or rugs.
2. If your home doesn't have central heating, then make a habit of letting out or "bleeding" any possible air pockets from all of your hot water radiators. The U.S Department of Energy recommends doing this at least once every heating season.
3. Also, all hot water radiators, baseboard heaters as well as floor and ceiling vents should be cleaned on a seasonal basis. In homes with central HVAC systems, cleaning of floor and ceiling vents should also be performed every season.
4. In homes with central HVAC systems, it's incredibly important to change the air filter every 4 to 6 weeks, not months. Many homeowners often overlook this simple and inexpensive maintenance procedure. In the summer a dirty filter will force your AC unit to work harder to push cool air through your ducts and likewise during the winter months. Many homeowners overlook their A/C and furnace filter simply because they (like me) are prone to forgetting. Setting reminders in your calendar or datebook is great idea, and in many email programs, you can set automatic reminders.
5. Consider purchasing a ventilated outdoor cover for your A/C unit. These covers are inexpensive and will provide your unit some much needed shade during the summer months. An A/C unit operating in the shade consumes 10% to 15% less electricity than a unit that's exposed to the scorching sun.
6. Within your comfort level, manually turn down or "set back" your thermostat during the winter and manually turn up or "set up" during the cooling season. Every degree that a thermostat is set back or up translates into energy savings. However, keep your family's comfort well in mind.
7. Consider purchasing a programmable thermostat. They're relatively inexpensive, easy to install and more importantly allow for automatic and prescheduled temperature setbacks and setups. This allows homeowners to effortlessly take advantage of the scheduled or habitual time periods that they're often not home.