

Energy Tips

Energy Efficiency Winter:

1. Make your programmable thermostat work for you: in winter, set it to “sweater temperature” - 65°-68° - when you are home, “blanket temperature” – 55°-58° - when you are sleeping, and even lower when you are gone or out of town. ("Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 Pounds", David Gershon)
2. Heat your home with the sun! Open your shades during the day in winter to let in the heat from the sun – don't forget to close them at night to keep out the cold.
3. Insulate your hot water pipes! Un-insulated hot water pipes are like a coffee cup with hot coffee in the morning and that same coffee would be cold in just an hour. If you have your coffee in an insulated thermos, your coffee will stay warm longer. You can purchase pipe insulation at a hardware store & ask about how to properly install.
4. Check your furnace filter monthly and change as necessary (at least every 3 months).
5. Use area rugs and cozy socks to keep your feet warmer & your thermostat lower during winter months.

Energy Efficiency Summer:

6. Keep your home at the energy efficient temperature in summer: 78-80°. Wear less clothing & use ceiling and room fans to keep you cool, while using your air conditioner less. ("Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 Pounds", David Gershon)
7. Use heat-producing appliances such as dishwashers, ovens, and clothes dryers in the cooler evening hours.
8. Don't place lamps, computers or TVs near your air conditioning thermostat. The heat from these appliances will cause the air conditioner to run longer.
9. Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs which produce less heat.
10. Reduce heat in the kitchen. Grill out and minimize baking during the hot part of the day.
11. Use a solar-powered clothes dryer—also known as a clothes line. This saves energy by not running your dryer and by not producing extra heat in your home in summer months. Plus your clothes will smell great!

Energy Efficiency Anytime:

12. Unplug unused electronics! An average home produces 600 lbs of CO₂ a year just to leave electronics (TV, stereo, chargers, game players, etc.) plugged in. 75% of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off. This can be avoided by unplugging the appliance or using a power strip and using the switch on the power strip to cut all power to the appliance. (Dept. of Energy <http://www.energy.gov/applianceselectronics.htm>)
13. Efficient use of your dishwasher: wash only full loads; don't rinse, scrape food from dishes before loading; air dry instead of using drying cycle; check the filter for food particles; use the shortest cycle possible. ("The Home Energy Diet" - Paul Scheckel)
14. Efficient use of your fridge: keep it clean and well stocked, but don't stuff it so full that airflow is constricted; check door seals to make sure they are tight; clean condenser coils at least once a year; move away from heat-sources like stoves and dishwashers; use a fridge thermometer to check temp. which should be 36°-38° (Consumer Guide to Home Energy Savings (9th Ed.) by Jennifer Thorne Amann, Alex Wilson, & Katie Ackerly)
15. Efficient use of your freezer: keep it clean & fill it FULL – the more that's in there the less the freezer has to work, check door seals to make sure they are tight, keep in a cool location, label food items for quick identification, check temp. with a freezer thermometer – should be between 0°-5° (Consumer Guide to Home Energy Savings (9th Ed.) by Jennifer Thorne Amann, Alex Wilson, & Katie Ackerly)

16. In the market for a new appliance? Make sure you buy Energy Star and the savings you get from using less energy will far outweigh the cost of the slightly higher ticket price. Full-sized, Energy Star refrigerators, for example, use 15-30% less energy than conventional units. (Consumer Guide to Home Energy Savings (9th Ed.) by Jennifer Thorne Amann, Alex Wilson, & Katie Ackerly)
17. Set your water heater to 120° - this is not only more energy efficient, it will prevent scalding and extend the life of your water heater.

Transportation:

18-33 from Dept. of Energy <http://www.energy.gov/4308.htm>

18. Drive sensibly. Aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration and braking) wastes gasoline.
19. Consider buying a highly fuel-efficient vehicle. A fuel-efficient vehicle, hybrid, or an alternatively fueled vehicle could save you a lot at the gas pump and help the environment.
20. Combine errands into one trip. Several short trips, each one taken from a cold start, can use twice as much fuel as one trip covering the same distance when the engine is warm.
21. Replace clogged air filters to improve gas mileage by as much as 10% and protect your engine.
22. Get regular engine tune-ups and car maintenance checks to avoid fuel economy problems due to worn spark plugs, dragging brakes, low transmission fluid, or transmission problems.
23. Keep tires properly inflated and aligned to improve your gasoline mileage by around 3.3%.
24. Make one day a week car-free. This doesn't mean you can't go anywhere, but if you do, use your walking shoes, ride a bike, or hop on the bus.
25. Participate in the Bicycle Commuter Challenge sponsored by Activate Omaha. (www.activateomaha.org)
26. Use the grade of motor oil recommended by your car's manufacturer. Using a different motor oil can lower your gasoline mileage by 1%-2%.
27. Check into carpooling and public transit to cut mileage and car maintenance costs. Rather than driving across town or to Lincoln, consider a videoconference or teleconference instead.
28. Reduce drag by placing items inside the car or trunk rather than on roof racks. A roof rack or carrier provides additional cargo space and may allow you to buy a smaller car. However, a loaded roof rack can decrease your fuel economy by 5%.
29. Clear out your car; extra weight decreases gas mileage.
30. Use air conditioning only when necessary.
31. Using cruise control on the highway helps you maintain a constant speed and, in most cases, will save gas.
32. When you use overdrive gearing, your car's engine speed goes down. This saves gas and reduces wear.
33. Avoid high speeds. Above 60 mph, gas mileage drops rapidly.
34. Aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration, and hard braking) wastes gas. It can lower your highway gas mileage 33% and city mileage 5%.
35. Idling gets you 0 miles per gallon. The best way to warm up a vehicle is to drive it. No more than 30 seconds of idling on winter days is needed. Anything more simply wastes fuel and increases emissions.
36. Want more simple solutions to increase gas mileage and reduce your carbon footprint? Check out the Eco-Driving Manual at www.ecodrivingusa.com

Green Living:

37. Don't have a yard or time to keep your own garden? Volunteer at a community garden and share in the bounty of community and food!

38. A week of four ten-hour days cuts commuters' fuel consumption by 20 percent. Not everyone can tweak their work schedules, but if this is a possibility at your job, you can also tell your boss that Los Angeles experienced an 18 percent improvement in productivity when city workers selected their own work schedules. (Page-A-Day Calendar 2008)
39. Trash-free lunch. If you carry your lunch to work, use a lunch bag, pack your goodies in re-sealable containers and take everything home with you at the end of the day. (Page-A-Day Calendar 2008)

Energy Efficient Cooking:

40-52 from Tennessee Valley Authority Energy Right Program

(<http://www.energyright.com//index.htm>)

40. Think before you cook! Select the right pan or appliance. The pan you use should match the burner size; oversized pans waste energy.
41. Using a separate appliance like a Crockpot can save energy when preparing foods requiring long cooking times.
42. Pressure cookers reduce energy use 50 to 75 percent because cooking times are reduced when food is cooked at the higher temperatures created inside a pressure cooker.
43. When you bake, use glass or ceramic pans and you can lower the oven temperature by 25 degrees.
44. If you're baking or roasting something for less than a half hour, use a toaster oven. They often use 1/3 to 1/2 the power needed for a conventional oven.
45. With flat-surface electric burners, make sure the bottom of your pans are flat-bottomed and can make good contact with the element. And with electric burners, you can turn them off toward the end of the cooking time since they'll radiate heat for awhile as they cool.
46. With gas cooktops, a well-shaped blue flame indicates efficient burning. A yellow flame means the burner is operating inefficiently.
47. Keep lids on pans as you cook; cooking without them can require three times as much energy as cooking with them on. Look for pans with glass lids if you like to keep an eye on what you are preparing.
48. When boiling foods, keep the amount of water used to a minimum. Using excess water that must be heated wastes the energy required to raise its temperature.
49. Use microwave ovens when possible since they use less energy and require shorter cooking times than conventional ovens. And in the summer, they have the additional advantage of producing less heat in the kitchen.
50. Cook for the whole house at once - a full oven is more efficient. You can also cook enough to freeze and reheat later.
51. Defrosting frozen foods in the refrigerator will reduce cooking time. But allow enough time for defrosting to take place. It can take several days for a frozen turkey to defrost in a refrigerator.
52. Self-cleaning ovens are a great convenience, but they accomplish their tasks by heating to very high temperatures and burn off spilled or accumulated food. So use them only when the oven really needs the cleaning, once a month or so. And do it right after use so it's preheated for the cleaning cycle.