

WITH WARMER WEATHER ON ITS WAY - HOW YOU CAN KEEP YOUR HOME COOLING COSTS DOWN

Air conditioner may be the most costly appliance in your house. Save a little bit on the monthly energy cost by applying a few of the following ideas:

Turn up the thermostat a little bit. If you usually have it set to seventy-two degrees during the summertime, switch to seventy-eight degrees. When it is ninety-five degrees in the shade outdoor, seventy-eight degrees still feels cool and comfortable.

Utilize fans to distribute air. Circulating air feels a few degrees colder than stagnant air. Overhead ceiling fan works effectively for cooling the entire house, but even a little box fan or oscillating fan makes the air moving.

At the end of the daytime, when the temperature outdoor cools off, turn off the air conditioner, open the windowpanes, and put an outward facing fan in a windowpane to throw out the warm air from the room. A ventilation fan in an upstairs windowpane works better. Opening up a downstairs windowpane simultaneously permits a full cross breeze to build up throughout your house. The fan cools down your house a lot faster than the time it needs to only spread open the windowpanes and let the warm air stay in the room. Open the windowpanes only when humidity is at low level, however. Otherwise, the air conditioning will have to work a good deal harder to cool the wet air when you turn it on.

The basic line of defense in cutting down your home cooling bills is to hold back the heat outdoor, but defeating the heat build up inside your house is also a good thing to do:

Utilize your exterior grill more frequently, to keep from warming up the kitchen.

Use smaller appliances rather than the oven and stove for cooking. The slow cooker, electric skillet, microwave oven and toaster oven give out lower heat and are more efficient. Urge everybody to put on shorts and go sleeveless in the home. This will aid in keeping body temperatures lower and the atmosphere cool. Before you leave home, put on white or lighter colors, which aids to keep your body from drawing in and confining heat from the sun. When you return inside, you'll be less warm than if you had put on darker clothing.

Dry clothing in the dryer on the no-heat mode; put a clean, dry towel to the dryer to absorb excess moisture from the clothing.

Hang your rinsed clothes under the sun. You can get retractable clotheslines that can be placed in almost any cramped space. Or just lay your clothing on hangers and put them on a line in the washing room.

Activate no-heat drying setting on the dishwasher. Do not open the door right after the rinsing cycle; you will just let out steam and more heat to the room.

Take quick showers to prevent accumulation of steam. Use the ventilation fans in the bathroom in the summertime.

Dark colors take in more heat, so if the external walls of your home are painted dark, consider painting the home with a lighter paint color.

1. If your home is equipped with a central cooling system, and it gets hot enough to turn on the system, try setting the thermostat during the summer between 78 and 80 degrees F

during the day. (Use a room thermometer to check the temperature in your home if your particular cooling unit--such as a window air-conditioner--doesn't give the temperature in degrees.) Experiment. You may be able to turn the thermostat up a few more degrees and still be comfortable during the day. You probably will be able to turn the temperature up even a little more when you go to bed at night. You may even be able to turn the unit off on some nights and still be comfortable. Perhaps you could run a portable fan and/or open the windows on other nights. Experiment to find the ways in which you can stay comfortable and use the least amount of energy.

2. Consider a heat pump for cooling and heating your home. A heat pump can cut your use of electricity for heating by 30 to 40 percent and also might provide some savings in cooling costs. Check with experts about the possible benefits of using a heat pump in your geographical area.
3. Make sure that draperies, furniture, and other items are not obstructing the flow of cool air coming from the cooling vents. If the cool air is obstructed, then you are not getting the full benefit of the cool air for which you are paying. For example, if a floor vent is positioned so that most of the cool air is going behind the draperies, then you are definitely wasting money. Inexpensive plastic air directors can be purchased which will direct the flow of air out into the room.
4. Use the kitchen and bathroom ventilating fans sparingly if the air-conditioner is on. In just one hour, these fans can blow away a houseful of cooled air. Turn off the fans just as soon as they have done their jobs.
5. Close off unused rooms, and close the heating/cooling vents going into these rooms. It is a waste of money to cool unused rooms. (This does not apply if you have a heat pump system. Closing vents could harm your heat pump.) Caution: Before you close any vents, get the advice of an expert on whether it is advisable to close vents in your home, and, if so, which vents.
6. If you are going to be away from home, turn up the thermostat on your cooling unit. (If your particular type of unit, such as a window air-conditioner, doesn't display a degree reading, then merely turn the setting on the unit so that it will cool less.) Turn the cooling unit off if you will be away for an extended period of time and if there isn't a crucial need to keep the house "cool" while you are away. Unnecessary cooling is a waste of money.
7. If you are using a window air-conditioner to cool a room, then turn off the air-conditioner if you are going to leave the room for several hours. Less energy will be required to recool the room than the unit will use if you leave it running.
8. Use ceiling or portable fans to enhance your air conditioning unit. The fans help circulate the air and make the higher temperatures feel cooler. As a result, you should be able to raise your thermostat setting some and still feel as comfortable as you would at a lower setting without using fans. Each degree you raise the thermostat setting makes a difference in your cooling expenses.
9. Use ceiling, portable, and/or window fans instead of your air-conditioner whenever possible. In general, fans use less electricity than air-conditioners.
10. Turn off your air-conditioner and open the windows (if it is safe to do so) whenever the weather permits. Outside air is free. Therefore, make sure some of the windows in your home can be opened.
11. Install an attic fan to cool the house and use it whenever possible. Open the windows in the house, and the fan will pull air from the outside into the house and exhaust it through the attic. Using the attic fan when possible rather than the air-conditioner will help keep your cooling costs down. (Determine whether it is safe to leave the windows open where you live.)
12. When the air-conditioner is not on, use the exhaust fans in the kitchen, bathroom, and other areas to expel hot air from the house. In general, fans use less electricity than air conditioners.
13. Don't use covering when

sleeping at night in warm or hot weather. It is a waste of energy (money) to cover up with a sheet, a blanket, and maybe even a bedspread, and then lower the thermostat setting so you won't be too warm under all of that covering. The less covering you use, the less cooling you will need. 14. Close the doors of cabinets, pantries, closets, the laundry room, and storage rooms located inside the house (unless there is a valid reason for leaving them open) when the air conditioner is on. It is a waste of money to cool such places without a good reason. 15. During warm and hot weather, wear lightweight shoes and lightweight and light-colored clothing in the home to minimize the need to use fans and the air-conditioner. 16. Have your air-conditioner checked periodically by a professional service person to make sure it is operating at peak energy efficiency. 17. Clean or replace the filters regularly (every month or so depending on how frequently you use the units) in your central heating/cooling unit and window air-conditioners. When the filters are dirty, the energy efficiency of the units is decreased. 18. In warm and hot weather, keep the sunshine out of your home by using awnings on the outside of windows and/or by closing draperies, blinds, shades, or other inside window coverings in sunny windows. Keeping the sunshine out will decrease the need for mechanical cooling. 19. In warm and hot weather, keep the incandescent lights off whenever possible and as low as possible when they must be on. Incandescent lights give off heat. (Fluorescent lights give off almost no heat.) 20. Turn off the furnace pilot light during the summer. A pilot light gives off heat. 21. Use vents and exhaust fans to expel heat from the attic to the outside. Otherwise, excessive heat in the attic could escape into your house. 22. Insulate accessible cooling ducts in uncooled areas, particularly those ducts that pass through the attic. In warm or hot weather, the temperature of the cool air will rise while it is passing through un-insulated ducts. Insulation will minimize this unwanted heat gain inside the ducts. 23. A light-colored roof can help keep your house cooler than a dark roof.