

A renter's guide to saving energy and water

You don't have to be a home owner to benefit from energy and water saving actions. Nearly a third of Australians live in rented accommodation, and while there are limitations on what you can change in your rented home, there are ways to reduce your bills and environmental impact, even if solar panels and rainwater tanks aren't an option. In fact, some of the most effective steps you can take to save energy and water focus on making small changes to your daily habits with no financial cost to you at all.

Whether you're renting short term or long term, there are lots of simple, inexpensive things you can do to reduce energy and water use and save hundreds of dollars over the course of year without sacrificing comfort or lifestyle.

Energy saving ideas

Energy efficiency (sometimes called efficient energy use) is all about using less energy to provide the same level of performance, comfort and convenience.

Try these practical steps to reduce household energy use and bills.

- ✓ **Choose energy-efficient appliances.** Household appliances account for up to 30 per cent of your home energy use, so the type of appliances you choose and the way you use them makes a big difference to your energy consumption and bills. If you're shopping for a new appliance, consider purchasing an energy-efficient model. Look for the Energy Rating Label to determine how energy efficient it is—the more stars the more energy and money you can save.
- ✓ **Controlling your climate.** Around 40 per cent of home energy use goes to heating and cooling. In winter, consider setting your heating thermostats to 18–20 degrees Celsius. In summer, try setting your cooling thermostats to 25–27 degrees Celsius. Setting the thermostat to even one degree higher (or lower) can reduce the energy used to heat and cool your home by 5 to 10 per cent. When you've got the air conditioner or heater on, close off the rooms you're not using by shutting internal doors.
- ✓ **Sealing gaps and cracks.** By draught-proofing your home and stopping heated and cooled air leaking out through gaps and cracks, you could reduce your energy bill by up to 25 per cent. Try a sand-filled fabric draught stopper (like a long 'snake') to prevent air escaping under doors and use weather seals for windows, floorboards, skirting boards, skylights and cornices. Check with your landlord before fitting any weather seals.

Arabic
Bosnian
Chinese Simplified
Chinese Traditional
Croatian
Dari
Dinka
English
Farsi
Filipino
Greek
Hindi
Indonesian
Italian
Karen
Khmer
Kirundi
Korean
Kurmanji
Macedonian
Malay
Punjabi
Russian
Serbian
Shona
Sinhala
Somali
Spanish
Sudanese Arabic
Swahili
Thai
Turkish
Vietnamese

- ✓ **Improve window efficiency.** Prevent heat loss by snugly fitting curtains and blinds to trap a layer of still air next to the window. You can also open curtains in winter to let the sun in during the day and close them before it gets dark. Similarly, it's a good idea to close curtains during the hottest part of the day in summer.
- ✓ **Choosing the fan over the air-conditioner.** Ceiling and pedestal fans cost around one cent per hour of operation and produce far fewer greenhouse gases than air-conditioners. Fans help to circulate air and can be used to improve the effectiveness of air cooling systems as well as to circulate hot air and improve your heating efficiency in winter.
- ✓ **Switching to energy-efficient lighting.** Around 7 per cent of home energy use goes towards lighting. By switching to energy-efficient lighting and using lights efficiently you could halve your lighting costs. Replacing old-style incandescent globes with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) or light emitting diodes (LEDs) is an effective way to save on energy costs. CFLs use around 20 per cent of the energy of an incandescent light globe and can last between 4 and 10 times longer.
- ✓ **Standby power.** Many appliances and gadgets, such as phone chargers, game consoles, microwave ovens and stereos continue to draw power when not in use. This standby power can account for 10 per cent of your household electricity use. By switching appliances and gadgets off at the wall when you're finished with them you'll cut both your energy use and your bills. If it's got a little standby light or a clock—it's using power.
- ✓ **Fridges and freezers.** The optimal temperature for your fridge is between 3 and 5 degrees Celsius; or between minus 15 and minus 18 degrees Celsius for your freezer. Every degree lower requires 5 per cent more energy. Improve the efficiency of your fridge and freezer by removing any frost build-up in the freezer and leaving a gap of 5–8 centimetres around them for ventilation. If you have a second fridge for entertaining, only turn it on when you need it.
- ✓ **Washing and drying clothes.** When machine washing, save energy and water by using cold water, and the shortest cycle possible, adjusting your water level to suit the size of the load and waiting till you have enough clothes for a full load. Dry clothes on the clothesline instead of in an electric clothes dryer—it's cost free.

Water saving tips

Being water efficient helps make every drop and dollar count. There are many actions to take to use water wisely at home and in the garden to help secure water for our future.

- ✓ **Consider water-efficient appliances and fixtures.** When buying a new appliance or fixture, consider a water-efficient model. Look for the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) rating.
- ✓ **Using taps efficiently.** A tap leaking at the rate of one drip per second wastes more than 12,000 litres of water a year. Save water by fixing any leaking taps as soon as possible. You can reduce your water use by installing aerators. Aerators limit water flow and can be fitted to the inside or outside of taps. You may have to check with your landlord before going ahead.
- ✓ **Installing water-efficient showerheads.** If you have old inefficient showerheads, trying asking your landlord to replace them with water-efficient models as these use around one-third of the water and could save more than \$200 a year on energy and water bills.
- ✓ **Flushing toilets.** When using a dual-flush toilet, opt for the half-flush where appropriate. If your landlord is replacing a single-flush toilet, consider suggesting a water-efficient dual flush model as it could save 51 litres per person daily. If this isn't an option, you could buy a water displacement device or use a plastic bottle filled with water in the cistern to reduce its water capacity.
- ✓ **Reduce garden water use.** A traditional green lawn can use up to 90 per cent of your gardening water. You can reduce this by setting your mower to cut at 4 centimetres or higher. You can also reduce your garden water use by improving watering practices and choosing water-efficient products.

Renter's resources

Talking to your landlord or estate agent

Repairs, servicing or maintenance, including any sustainable improvements, will usually require permission (and finance) from your landlord. Every state and territory has different laws for tenants, so it's important to do your research and ask permission before going ahead with any property changes.

Some things to keep in mind when approaching your landlord or estate agent to request sustainable improvements include:

- ✓ **Rebates and assistance.** There is a range of government rebates and assistance available to property owners for making sustainable improvements. To assist your request you could do some of the research for your landlord and explore our rebates and assistance section to find what's relevant to your situation.
- ✓ **Tax deductions.** Many property improvements, as well as repairs and maintenance, are tax deductible. You might like to look at the Australian Tax Office's 'Guide for rental property owners' to see which items apply to your household and pass on any good news to your landlord.
- ✓ **Investment benefits.** By investing in property improvements that lead to household energy and water efficiency, your landlord can increase the property's value, making it more attractive to future buyers and renters.

Make sure you put any requests to your landlord or real-estate agent in writing. It's also a good idea to keep a record of all requests as well as any agreements from your landlord or real estate agent to make changes or improvements.

Want to know and save more?

A huge range of practical tips on energy, waste, water and travel efficiency as well as information on government assistance is available in English at the www.energy.gov.au website.

[Information for renters and landlords in every state and territory](#)

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