

# Winter

Our top tips on how to stay warm and save money and energy during the cooler months.

## About this guide

The chilly season can bring higher power bills and other expenses, but making a few energy-smart choices can reduce winter's impact on your wallet.

## 10 free things you can do now

There are many ways to reduce your home energy use that are free and will save you money.

While it may take a while to bed down new ways of doing things around the home, once you do, they become second nature. See how many of the top ten your household can adopt.

### 1. Dress for the season

One of the easiest ways to save money in winter is to turn down the heater and put on some warmer clothes. This doesn't mean dressing for the Antarctic—it means putting on a jumper before you crank up the temperature.

This can be a real money saver, given that each additional degree adds between 5 and 10 per cent to your energy use.

While you're at it, dress your bed for the season too by putting on an additional blanket.

### 2. Shut the door on wasted energy

Trying to heat the whole house can waste a lot of money. Shut the door to areas you aren't using (like bathrooms and the laundry) and only heat the rooms you're using.

### 3. Turn it off

Turn off your heaters before going to bed and when you're leaving the house—it's cheaper and it's safer too.

### 4. Let the sun shine in

Solar panels may not be suitable for every home and budget but you could still be using the free power from the sun. Open your curtains when the sun is shining and close the curtains when the sun moves away.

### 5. Don't use the shower to warm up

Hot water accounts for a large chunk of your power bill—about one quarter of the average bill—so try to avoid the temptation of using the shower to get warm.

Staying in the shower uses up to 20 times as much energy as getting out and standing under two heat lamps instead. Even a few extra minutes in the shower will add to your power bill.

### 6. Rug up

During winter's coldest months, many of us hibernate indoors watching TV, playing our gaming consoles or cooking a hearty meal. Staying in has an energy price tag—adding to our home energy bills.

There are heaps of ways to have fun 'unplugged'—you could break out the board games and don't forget to turn off your entertainment gadgets when you're not using them.

### 7. Be active and become a 'swapper'

Swapping car trips for walking or cycling is a great way to save money and keep fit during the winter months.

Whatever the season, it can make good sense to walk instead of using your car for short journeys: you'll save on petrol, maintenance and the upfront cost of buying a car (or a second car).

#### 8. Use a solar clothes dryer

Clothes dryers are very convenient—but remember you're paying for this convenience. Rather than automatically putting your clothes into the dryer, use free energy from the sun and the wind to dry your clothes whenever you can.

You can put clothes racks out in the sun and fresh air on verandahs or dry clothes indoors on a rack when the heater is already on.

#### 9. Turn off gadgets and appliances

Did you know that home entertainment systems and electronic gadgets are quietly adding to your power bills? Up to 10 per cent of the electricity used in your home is used on gadgets plugged in on standby. TVs, DVD and video players, game consoles, mobile phone chargers, microwave ovens, music docks and stereos are some of the biggest culprits. You may not realise that your phone charger is still using energy even when your phone isn't plugged in.

Check that you're using appliances efficiently and turn off unused appliances at the wall. Unplugging these gadgets can save you quite a bit of money on your energy bill all year round.

#### 10. Waste not, Want not

Worldwide, 30 per cent of our food goes to waste. In New South Wales that means the average family throws out more than \$1,000 in wasted food every year.

As well as costing you money, this food ends up in our garbage bins and in our tips where it produces methane—a harmful greenhouse gas that's 21 times stronger than the emissions from your car.

Much of the food waste in our kitchens comes from poor planning or from buying too much food so use shopping lists and check your pantry and fridge regularly to ensure you use up what's there.

## 5 cost-effective things you can do this winter

### 1. Keep the heat you've paid for inside your home

Draught-proofing is one of the cheapest and easiest ways to keep your home warm and comfy. Doing it well can save you up to a quarter of your heating bills.

Swing by the hardware store and pick up supplies like brush-strip seals for the bottom of the doors, draught-proofing strips and even some of grandma's old-fashioned door snakes (just remember to train others living with you to put the snake back in place after coming inside).

Don't forget to block the gaps around internal doors too. If you have rooms you're not heating, such as laundries and bathrooms, draught-proof these so that when you close off areas you don't need to heat, there's no warm air leakage.

### 2. Windows of opportunity

Windows can let as much as 40 per cent of your winter warmth leak out of your home but there're ways to improve window efficiency.

Investing in new warmth-saving curtains and blinds can make a surprising difference to your home's warmth. Look for fabrics that insulate well, or curtains with thermal lining or layers. Choose the best quality you can afford to give you the best thermal results.

Fitted pelmets (curtain boxes) above curtains are also important in reducing heat loss. If pelmets don't fit with your interior design, choose window fittings such as blinds that attach to the wall and trap air, or install curtains that reach from the ceiling to the floor. For a simple do-it-yourself and low cost option, try fitting a strip of light timber across the curtain rail above the curtain to stop warm air you've paid to heat from leaking away.

Installing an additional layer of glazing on windows and skylights is another option to increase energy efficiency. This traps a layer of air and helps keep the winter chills at bay. Glazing also helps reduce outside noise. Double-glazed windows can be very expensive to retrofit (see the 'Longer term investments' below) but there are cheaper commercial alternatives and secondary glazing products that have a thin plastic coating which you can put over windows yourself at a low cost. Check out what's available in your hardware store and on the internet.

### 3. Insulate your roof

If you haven't already insulated your roof, now is the time to think about having insulation installed. Not only will it make your home a lot more comfortable to live in, you can also make some dramatic savings on your heating costs. Up to 45 per cent of the energy we use to heat our homes in winter can simply leak out through our ceilings and roofs.

While there's been some recent controversy, insulating your ceiling remains a sensible decision. Start by doing some research about insulation and installation options; then talk to an expert to find out what's best for your home, climate and individual circumstances. It's important to have insulation installed safely according to Australian standards and by industry professionals with expert knowledge.

### 4. Set your thermostat

You can save money by having a programmable thermostat and keeping the internal temperature set to between 18 and 20 degrees Celsius.

It's nice to feel warm at home when it's cold outside, but remember that every degree lower you set your heating can save you up to 10 per cent on your energy use.

Make sure that the timer is set to warm your house for times you'll need it, turning it off overnight and when you are away from home.

### 5. Install a water-efficient showerhead

Hot water accounts for a large chunk of your power bill. It might not seem like much but installing a water-efficient showerhead is one of the most cost-effective ways you can save energy on heating water and water use. A water-efficient showerhead is simple to install and will pay for itself in a very short time. Best of all you can still enjoy a great shower.

## 5 longer term investments to consider

### 1. Insulate floors and walls, and rug up floors

Insulated floors and walls will save you on your winter heating bills and also make your home cooler in the hot months. You could be saving up to 20 per cent of your heating and cooling bills if you insulate your walls. Floor insulation can save you an additional 5 per cent.

Most cavity brick walls can be retrofitted with wall insulation, as can brick veneer, reverse brick veneer and timber framed walls,. Get expert advice when looking into wall and underfloor insulation because electrical and plumbing fixtures, as well as the best type of insulation, need to be considered.

Warm rugs and thick carpet underfoot will also make a difference to how soon your household members reach for the thermostat.

Put thick rugs where you spend time standing, especially if this is on a cold, hard surface. Placing rugs where you do the washing up and brush your teeth is a good start to keeping your toes warmer.

## 2. Double glaze windows

If you've got extra money to invest in making your home more efficient and more comfortable, then laminating or double glazing windows could be for you. Double glazing can be especially useful for windows that can't easily be covered with insulating blinds or curtains.

Lower cost options for windows include laminating products that you can attach to your existing windows. This option and the curtain ideas listed above will all make a noticeable difference to your comfort levels. Double glazing can even further reduce your heating and cooling: for some homes, it's never needed again!

If you're looking into double glazing, make sure you build up your knowledge of the ins and outs of double glazing. This will help you to choose a builder or window supplier who knows what they're selling.

## 3. Reconsider your second car

Are you thinking about buying a second car? Perhaps you've done the sums and are considering the benefits of getting rid of an unnecessary second car.

If you can do without a second car you're likely to save thousands of dollars each year on registration, insurance, loans and running costs. The money you save by not buying a second car can cover occasional trips by taxi when you needed a second vehicle.

Even if you have a car, you don't have to use it all the time—using people power (like walking and cycling) is good for your wallet, good for your health and good for the environment.

If you decide to buy a new car or a second car, choosing a fuel-efficient car is a good financial decision that can save you thousands of dollars in fuel costs. It will also reduce the pollution generated as you drive it.

All new light motor vehicles (cars, four-wheel drives and light commercial vehicles) sold in Australia have to display a Fuel Consumption Label. The label is designed to help you make better choices about the running costs and environmental impacts of your new car. Fuel consumption information is also available for many cars made before 2004.

## 4. Install solar power

Installing a solar (photovoltaic or PV) power system is a great way of capturing the sun's energy to generate electricity at home.

Once your system is installed, it will help reduce your electricity bills as well as your impact on the environment. Solar power systems are low-maintenance and can also increase the value of your home.

Solar power can be connected to the mains electricity grid or set up as a stand-alone system where the electricity is stored in batteries.

If you install a solar power system at home, you could be eligible to receive renewable power incentives in the form of Small-scale Technology Certificates (STCs). You may also be able to sell the electricity you generate to electricity suppliers under a feed-in tariff.

## 5. Be energy efficient when you buy, build or renovate

Finally, if you're buying a home or building or renovating consider increasing its energy efficiency.

Building and renovating is an exciting time but it can also be complicated and stressful with all sorts of decisions to make. These include decisions about the design of the home or extension, heating and cooling options, insulation, effective easy-living outdoor areas, and which appliances are the most energy

efficient. Your choices can improve your comfort levels and cut your heating, cooling and water costs for many years to come.

There are many experts who can give you advice on home energy efficiency and help with your planning which can save you money and bother over the longer term. Ask around and use the resources available to you through [energy.gov.au](http://energy.gov.au).

## Be bushfire ready

An outdoor tidy-up to maintain your home's exterior and the health of your garden is a good idea at any time of year. Keep in mind that the peak fire season varies depending on where you live in Australia. Check with the [Bureau of Meteorology](#) to find out when the fire risk is highest in your area.

Garden waste from seasonal pruning should be chipped, taken to green waste drop-off centres or located safely away from the house. Follow our pointers for tidying up gutters and removing storm and fire hazards and ensure you are bushfire ready no matter what the season.

## More information

[Green Vehicle Guide](#) Australian Government'

[Bureau of Meteorology](#) Australian Government