

## 10 Surefire Tips to Save Money on Energy NOW!

Tired of spending money on energy hand over fist without an end in sight? It doesn't have to be that way. For sure, a green energy upgrade to solar or wind power will cut your electricity bill by HUGE amounts, but if you don't have the money to invest in solar panels just yet or you simply want to get a better handle on your usage, there are alternative ways to save money.

To get you started, I've compiled 10 of my favorite money saving tips for cutting down on your energy bill **IMMEDIATELY**. These strategies are designed to get your bills down now and not later. Here is what you'll need to do.

### Energy Audit

It all starts with knowing what you spend money on. If you don't know what your electric bill covers, you can't cut back. So, sit down for a month and keep track of everything you use electricity for. From the lights in your basement that never really need to be on to the printer you keep



turning off after your spouse or children turn it on, there are hundreds of ways to cut back on electricity use without sacrificing the lifestyle you enjoy.

It all starts with an audit. Generating power for your home is only HALF the battle in cutting costs and going green. Even if you plan on installing solar panels, consider the cost of installation. If you can reduce your needs by 40%, that's 40% less panels you'll need to power your house – that could be \$5,000 or more in savings when you have those panels installed.

**10 Surefire Tips to Save Money on Energy NOW! By Jerry Maxwell**

## Strategy 1 – Use the Great Outdoors to Your Advantage

Have you ever considered taking advantage of the world's oldest cooling system? They're inexpensive, attractive, and fun for children and pets alike.

Guessed what I'm talking about yet? It's a tree.



A simple tree can severely reduce your energy consumption in the summer simply by blocking sunlight. Direct sunlight on your house can drastically increase the cost of cooling it. Of course, you don't want to cut out the light entirely, so look for leafy trees that provide just enough shade to cut the heat. In the winter, when you'd like that sun to be there, the leaves will be gone and you'll have your sun back. Simple as that.

## Strategy 2 – Too Hot? Too Cold? Just a Little Tweak

Some people like to overcompensate when the weather turns outside. That's all fine and good if the cost of heating and cooling are low, but we both know they

aren't. You could be paying anywhere between \$500 and \$2,000 more than necessary EVERY year just because you turn that thermostat a little bit too far.

Consider the alternative. Instead of cranking the heat up to 80 degrees in the winter or the AC down to 69 in the summer, keep things at nice, comfortable temperatures in the middle. The air conditioning should be around 77 degrees to save a tremendous amount of money on cooling (though 75 is still a great spot to save at).



In the winter, you can crank your heat up, but it doesn't need to be 80 degrees. Keep it at around 72 degrees instead of 76 and you'll save big.

The thing to remember is that you're paying for heating and cooling beyond what you need. Why pay more than you

need. Your system is perfectly capable of keeping you comfortable in the middle - so aim for a nice middle grade and you'll be set.

### **Strategy 3 – Unplug EVERYTHING!**

Do you know that a single plug in the wall can waste as much electricity every year as television? That's a lot of power going down the drain for an electronic device or machine you're not even using.

So, what's the solution? Easy – just unplug the device when you're not using it. By simply pulling the plug on inactive electronics, appliances and machines you can save anywhere from 5% to 15% on your energy bill each and every month.



And the best part is that it doesn't cost you anything. Supplement this by turning off lights during the day and setting rules to turn those lights off at night whenever someone leaves a room. It may be darker, but it's a HUGE savings.

## Strategy 4 – Energy Free Cooling

Ever wonder why it costs so much money to cool your house? It's because of all the electricity you're devouring day after day, trying to keep the home comfortable. But, there are alternatives that require little or no energy. We already talked about deciduous trees planted along the eastern and western walls of your home to block the direct sunlight, but what about other, creative, inexpensive options?

- **Shades and Blinds** – Simple and only require a onetime expense, but they work incredibly well to block out the sun and keep the temperature in the house down.

- **Awnings** – You can go one step further and stop direct light from ever hitting the windows with awnings. These allow you to keep the shades open in summer months without heating up every room in your house.
- **Attic Fans** – A small fan installed in the roof of your attic costs almost nothing to run, but will reduce the energy use there substantially for years to come. It equalizes indoor and outdoor temperatures (which can cut attic temps by as much as 30 or 40 degrees in the summer) and reduces cooling needs.

There are a lot of easy ways to keep your home comfortable through the hottest hours of the day in the hottest months of the year that don't require big electric bills.

## Strategy 5 – Pack Your Home Up TIGHT

Insulation saves a tremendous amount of energy. Whether you have gas, oil or electric heating in your home, insulation will keep it from escaping in the winter months and driving up your bills. This is a huge way to save money year round, especially in the summer months when cooling costs spike.

The type of insulation you use matters just as much as the fact that it exists.



Make sure you talk to a contractor about this, because you want to avoid any unnatural, chemically packaged insulation. They work better, but that doesn't matter if you're exposing your family to carcinogens in every room of your house.

Packed denim, cotton based, and plywood are all basic, simple insulation methods, but they work quite well. Remember that windows and doors need to be sealed up well – this is an important first step.

## Strategy 6 – Maintenance is Key

Replacing a heating or cooling system is not cheap. Nor is it cheap to run those systems when they are in bad shape and lose their efficiency. So, you need to invest carefully in a system that will allow you to reduce the cost of heating and



cooling through careful annual maintenance. Most local contractors will provide this service at a reduced cost if you pay in advance. Some will even give you a nice discount on your next repair visit and cut out emergency service fees.

Whatever you have available, a maintenance plan is well worth the investment. Your system will never need to be replaced early and if something goes wrong,

you can get it back on track fast instead of paying a tremendous amount of extra money month after month until you can afford to replace the device.

## Strategy 7 – Free Solar?

There are a lot of ways to take advantage of solar energy, both in the winter and summer months. Solar panels and heating panels are great, but not necessary year round. Consider what you can do with the right building materials in the winter. Stone or brick walls and floors can actually absorb heat during the sunny winter months and release it at night, reducing your heating needs. If you have carefully placed seasonal trees, you don't have to worry about them doing the same in the summer either.

Another option is to install larger glass panes on your walls. Yes, you can turn your home into a greenhouse and the heat this creates will keep you comfortable in the worst of winter. The key of course is to make sure the same doesn't occur in the summer.

## Strategy 8 – Bright Lights, Big Savings

One of the coolest (and easiest) ways to save money is to pull all of your old incandescent bulbs out and replace them with newer, high efficiency LED lights. Compact Fluorescent





(CFL) lights work well too, but LEDs are easier to recycle when they die so they are the preferred option. In most states, it's impossible to find the old incandescent bulbs anymore, but if you have them around the house, make sure to get rid of them as quickly as possible to cut down on all that excessive energy use.

Heck, you don't even need to turn those lights on most of the time. Consider going by candlelight one or two nights per week. It can be romantic, or if you have children, it can be a fun way to spend the evening.

## Strategy 9 – Changing Temps on Appliances

Every single one of your temperature control appliances can be adjusted to save you energy. The refrigerator, freezer, washing machine, dryer, air conditioner, furnace, and water heater – all of them have settings that allow you to cut back on how much energy you



actually consume and therefore reduce your carbon footprint.

Here's a quick look at how much exactly to cut back on your energy use:

- **Refrigerator** – 36–38 degrees. Colder isn't necessary or things will actually freeze. Too high and the refrigerator will cycle on and off more often to maintain the temperature and avoid food getting too warm.
- **Freezer** – About 0–5 degrees will get the job done. Subzero temperatures create frost and can destroy food, plus it's just not necessary.
- **Water Heater** – Most water heaters are set to 140 degrees, but 120 degrees is perfectly acceptable and it saves a TON of energy, so make the switch to start saving.
- **Heating and Cooling** – I already laid out easy ways to cut back on these costs. Up the AC in the summer and lower the furnace in the winter.

## Strategy 10 – Programmable Thermostats

These will cost you a bit of money but they take 4 minutes to install and they work extremely well to cut down on your energy use without cutting into your comfort. We all like to feel comfortable when we get home from a long day of work, regardless of the season. But, to do that, we have to keep the thermostat running all day, or worse yet, we have to trust our spouses and children to set them properly.

Instead of trusting human's not to error or simply wasting energy, you can install a programmable thermostat which will flip on when you tell it and get your home nice and comfortable. Have the heat or AC turn on five minutes

before you get home and never worry about how much money you're spending because you will only be cooling or heating while you're there.

Talk to an HVAC contractor about these thermostats as well as options for zone control systems so you can turn off the heat and AC in rooms or areas of the house that aren't being used for most of the day. You'll be surprised how well these low cost upgrades can severely reduce your energy consumption.

## Conclusion

Staying comfortable in the absolute worst of the summer and winter extremes is a must for any modern homeowner, but paying through the nose to do it? Not so much fun.

That's why these tips are so important to keeping you comfortable. Of course, there are hundreds more ways to cut down on your energy consumption and stay comfortable all year, so make sure to keep a keen eye on what you're using and how you're using it. If you do things right, it will be incredibly easy to stay comfortable, cut your bills and feel good about your limited impact on the environment.