10 tips to stay warm & spend less

Kansas Corporation Commission

1. Adjust the temperature

Don't waste money heating an empty home. Install a programmable thermostat and schedule your home's heat to lower when you are away or asleep, and increase when you are returning home or waking-up. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting your thermostat at 68 degrees in the winter.

2. Lower water heating costs

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, water heating accounts for about 18% of the energy consumed in your home. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends setting your water heater at no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit to prevent scalding. The lower setting will also conserve energy and save money.

3. Seal those leaks

On average, heating and cooling account for almost half of a home's energy consumption. In fact, all the little leaks can be equivalent to leaving open a 3-foot-by-3-foot window. Take simple steps like caulking windows, sealing leaks around chimneys and recessed lighting, and sliding draft guards under your doors to save up to 20% on heating costs.

4. Maintain your HVAC system

Make sure to clean or change HVAC filters regularly. A dirty filter will slow down air flow, making the system work harder to keep you warm and cost you more money. Getting a seasonal tune-up by a professional can save you money over time.

5. Harness your windows for heating

In the winter, keep your window treatments open during the day to let in natural sunlight, which can help warm up your home.

6. Reverse your ceiling fans

In the winter, reverse the direction of your ceiling fans to clockwise in order to move warm air from the ceiling to the living levels of the space. When warmer weather returns switch the direction to counterclockwise for the summer.

7. Clean clothes and dishes efficiently

A washing machine spends 90% of its energy to heat water. Consider using cold water instead. In addition, try to run full loads as much as possible, because the machine uses roughly the same amount of energy regardless of the load size. Avoid the "rinse hold" cycle when using the dishwasher and skip heated drying – simply open the door at the end of the washing cycle and let the dishes air dry.

8. Check air registers and vents

Make sure all air registers are clear of furniture so that the air can circulate freely. If your home has radiators, place heat-resistant reflectors between the radiators and walls. In the winter, this will help heat the room instead of the wall.

9. Turn electronics off

That sounds easy, but too often we forget and leave electronics plugged in that are not in use. Turn off unnecessary/idle lights, appliances and electronics. A power strip can help turn off multiple items at once.

10. Reduce heat loss from the fireplace

Keep the fireplace damper closed unless a fire is burning. Keeping the damper open is like keeping a window wide open during the winter; it allows warm air to go right up the chimney.