



THE EASY EIGHT: QUICK, EASY AND COST-EFFECTIVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY UPGRADES FOR YOUR HOME

Intimidated by all of the information about energy efficiency improvements? Whether you're a handy homeowner – or easily-overwhelmed by all things mechanical – there are some simple, affordable things you can do to right now to improve your home's energy efficiency.

- Cover your windows. Simply closing the curtains or blinds will help beat back the heat in summer and discourage icy winter drafts. Cost: nothing. Time: almost none.
- Drain sediment from your water heater. Over time, water heaters can accumulate sediment and mineral deposits, reducing the efficiency of the water heater. Time: 15 minutes. Cost: free.
- Insulate your hot water tank if it's located in an unheated area. Set both top and bottom elements of your electric water heater to 120° F, and insulate the first few feet of hot water pipe. Time: 15 minutes. Cost: \$25 for a water heater blanket from a home improvement center.
- Stop drafts with homemade or purchased chimney draft stoppers and door snakes. Time to make them depends on your crafting skills. Time to install: a minute for door snakes to 15 minutes for the chimney version. Cost: nothing for homemade door snakes made from felt, fabric or yarn scraps to \$55 for a ready-made chimney draft stopper.
- Switch to compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) or light emitting diodes (LEDs). Time: a few minutes per bulb. Cost: \$2 - \$15 per bulb for CFLs and about \$39 per bulb for LEDs. (And both last a lot longer than incandescent bulbs.)
- Replace the shower heads. If yours was made before 1994, a new, energy efficient shower head will save money by using much less hot water. Time: 15 minutes. Cost \$20-\$70.
- Install a programmable thermostat, which is available at hardware stores and home centers. Lowering the heat during the day in winter or raising the temperature a few degrees in summer can yield significant savings. Cost: \$25 – \$250. Time: 30 minutes to do it yourself.
- Switch to outdoor solar lighting. There's no reason to use electricity for outdoor lighting when solar lights will transform the sun's energy into nighttime lighting. Kits are widely available at home and garden centers. Cost: About \$60 a dozen for ground stake lights. Time: 30 minutes or less to install.

There also are many larger projects that can deliver significant energy savings and increased comfort over time. For example, sealing your ductwork is a big energy saver. Also, upgrading the insulation in your home can have a big impact on both heating and cooling bills, and adding insulation to accessible areas like attics and crawlspaces is a DIY-friendly project.

Finally, many appliance upgrades are backed by rebates. Be sure to check out your utility company's website for information on rebates. In the meantime, there's no reason not to get started with some of these easy, affordable energy efficiency upgrades while you're saving up for the bigger projects.