Straightforward Energy Efficiency Tips for Your Home

Why small changes to how you use energy matter

Most households use more electricity and gas than they realize. The difference between a home that runs lean and one that wastes energy often comes down to a handful of habits and a few practical upgrades. You do not need a complete renovation or a big budget to see a real shift in your monthly consumption. What you need is a clear picture of where the energy goes and a willingness to adjust a few routines.

Heating and cooling account for the largest share of home energy use. After that come water heating, appliances, lighting, and electronics. Each area offers room for improvement. Some fixes cost nothing and take five minutes. Others require a modest investment but pay for themselves over time. The key is knowing which changes deliver the most benefit for your situation.

Start with the building envelope

Think of your home as a container. If that container has gaps, leaks, or thin insulation, the conditioned air you pay for escapes quickly. Sealing and insulating are the most cost-effective steps you can take. Check for drafts around windows, doors, and any place where two different materials meet. A simple test: on a windy day, hold a lit incense stick near a window frame. If the smoke wavers, you have a leak.

Weatherstripping and caulk are cheap and easy to apply. Door sweeps block air at the bottom of exterior doors. For outlets and switch plates on exterior walls, foam gaskets stop airflow through the wall cavity. Attics and basements often get overlooked. Insulating the attic hatch and sealing gaps around pipes and ducts in the basement can make a noticeable difference in how evenly your home holds temperature.

View the location on Google Maps

Windows themselves are a weak point. If your windows are old and single-pane, consider storm windows or insulating curtains. Even heavy drapes with a thermal lining cut heat loss on cold nights. During summer, reflective blinds or shades keep solar heat out. The goal is to create a barrier that slows the exchange of heat between your interior and the outdoors.

Heating and cooling smarter

Your thermostat is the brain of your heating and cooling system. Setting it back when you are asleep or away is one of the simplest energy efficiency tips that actually works. You do not need a smart thermostat to do this. A programmable model lets you set schedules, but a manual one works fine if you remember to adjust it. The idea is to avoid conditioning an empty house.

Fans help you feel cooler without lowering the thermostat. Ceiling fans in summer should run counterclockwise to push air downward. In winter, reverse the direction to pull air up and circulate warm air trapped near the ceiling. This trick alone can let you raise the thermostat by a degree or two in winter without losing comfort.

Furnace and air conditioner filters collect dust and debris over time. A clogged filter makes the system work harder, using more energy and wearing out components faster. Check filters monthly during peak usage seasons and replace or clean them as needed. This is a five-minute task that improves efficiency immediately.

If you have a forced-air system, check your ductwork. Leaky ducts in an unconditioned attic or crawlspace can waste a significant portion of the air your system moves. Sealing ducts with mastic or foil tape and insulating them where they pass through unheated spaces can improve system performance noticeably.

Water heating without the waste

Water heating is the second largest energy expense in most homes. Lowering the temperature on your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit reduces standby losses and the risk of scalding. For every ten degrees you lower the setpoint, you save roughly three to five percent on water heating costs.

Insulating the hot water pipes near the heater keeps heat in the water as it travels to your faucets. Pipe insulation is inexpensive and easy to cut and fit. For older water heaters, an insulating blanket can reduce standby heat loss. Check the manufacturer's instructions first, as some models require clearance around the combustion air intake.

Fix dripping hot water faucets promptly. A slow drip might seem minor, but over time it adds up to gallons of heated water that goes straight down the drain. The same principle applies to showerheads. An efficient showerhead uses less water per minute, so you use less hot water for the same shower duration.

Lighting and electronics

Switching to LED bulbs is one of the most straightforward upgrades you can make. LEDs use about 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs and last many times longer. They also

produce less heat, which helps keep cooling loads lower in summer. Replace the bulbs you use most often first, such as those in the kitchen and living areas.

Many electronics continue to draw power even when they appear to be off. This standby power, sometimes called vampire load, can account for a surprising portion of your electric bill. Unplug devices that are not in regular use, or plug them into a power strip and switch the strip off when you are done. This approach works well for home entertainment systems, computer setups, and chargers.

Set computers and monitors to sleep or hibernate when idle for more than a few minutes. Screen savers do not save energy. Enabling power management settings on your devices reduces consumption without affecting performance during active use.

Kitchen and laundry habits

The kitchen is full of energy-hungry appliances. Using them thoughtfully saves power without changing what you cook. Match pot size to burner size on a gas or electric stove. A small pot on a large burner wastes heat. Cover pots and pans to trap heat and reduce cooking time. Use the microwave or toaster oven for small meals instead of the full oven.

Your refrigerator runs constantly, so its efficiency matters. Keep the coils clean: dust on the condenser coils makes the compressor work harder. Check the door seals by closing a dollar bill in the door. If it slips out easily, the seal is weak and should be replaced. Set the refrigerator temperature between 37 and 40 degrees and the freezer at zero degrees. Colder settings waste energy without improving food preservation.

In the laundry room, wash clothes in cold water whenever possible. Modern detergents work well in cold water, and the energy saved by not heating the water is substantial. Dry full loads but do not overload the dryer. Clean the lint filter after every load to maintain airflow. If you have the space and climate, air drying clothes on a rack or line uses no electricity at all.

These practical energy efficiency tips cover the areas where most households have room to improve. The trick is to pick two or three changes and make them a habit before moving on to others. Small steps add up, and the cumulative effect on your energy use can be significant over a year.

For homeowners in Upper Chichester, Pennsylvania, American Energy Supply, Co. provides energy services and can be reached at 1704 Chichester Ave, Linwood, PA 19061, (610) 494-4874.