

## Should I Leave the Lights On? And Other Home Energy Questions



Source: [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)

There is no single answer to making your home energy efficient, but there are plenty of questions. As you look for ways to save energy, you might wonder what other homeowners are asking. The following are some answers to commonly asked questions about home energy use that may help clear up some issues in your quest for a lower utility bill.

### Lighting

Should I leave the lights on when leaving a room for a short period? The cost effectiveness of turning lights on and off depends on the type of bulb. Incandescent bulbs are very inefficient and should be turned off whenever they are not needed. Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) are highly efficient and their operating life is affected by the number of times they are switched on and off. Leave CFLs on if you will be out of a room for 15 minutes or less.

For light bulbs, are lumens the same as watts? Lumens measure light, while watts represent the power used. Energy-efficient lights, such as CFLs and LEDs, provide more lumens per watt than conventional bulbs. While this saves energy, it makes shopping for bulbs more complicated. Lumens are now what matter most. "Watt equivalent" comparisons on lighting packages can help you choose the right product.

### Heating and cooling

What is the best thermostat setting for saving energy and remaining comfortable? In winter, the U.S. Department of Energy recommends a temperature setting of 68°F when you are at home and a lower setting at night or when you are away. In summer, set the thermostat at 78°F to stay comfortable when you are at home, and raise it to 85°F to save energy when your home is unoccupied.



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Will closing off vents help lower my heating and cooling costs? Typically, closing or covering up vents is not a good way to save on energy costs. Heating and cooling systems are balanced through the duct system; closing vents throws the system off balance. Pressure can build up in the ductwork, causing leakage and reducing the amount of air circulating in your home. This reduces system efficiency and comfort.

### Around the house

How much insulation does my home need? Insulation is one of the most effective ways to reduce energy costs and improve home comfort. The U.S. Department of Energy's [Zip Code Insulation Calculator](#) will give you insulation recommendations based on your local

climate. An [energy auditor](#) or insulation contractor can evaluate your home and determine your insulation needs.

Is running a dishwasher more expensive than hand washing? Using a dishwasher can help you save energy and water. Cleaning a typical load of dishes in a dishwasher uses 37 percent less water than cleaning them by hand, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, saving the average household 5,000 gallons of water per year and up to \$40 per year in water heating costs.

Have more questions about how to reduce your energy use? The [Energy Library](#) can help you find the answers.

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