

## Make a Plan to Save 30% or More on Your Heating Bills

October is Financial Planning Month – and there's nothing better than making a plan to save money. If your utility bills in winter put a crunch on your budget, these tips to reduce energy usage can help.

### #1: Turn down the thermostat

You can save as much as **10 percent** a year on heating and cooling by simply turning your thermostat back seven to 10 degrees for eight hours a day from its normal setting. Those eight hours could be while you are away at work or school, when sunlight is warming your house, or when you're asleep under a pile of cozy blankets. For every two degrees, you can save an average of three percent on your energy bill.

### #2: Seal up your house to keep cold air out, and warm air in

Caulking and weatherstripping help seal your house up, keeping the warm air in. These are affordable DIY ways to improve energy efficiency and can save you about **7.5 percent** on your energy bill! About \$240 can cover weather stripping all your windows and doors.

Additionally, minimize the air that escapes by closing the damper on your fireplace when it's not in use, and use bath and kitchen fans sparingly. This can save **another 10 percent** on your energy bill.

### #3: Change your furnace filters regularly

Your furnace or heating system is responsible for about half your energy bill. Changing the filters every three months means your furnace doesn't have to work as hard, saving you energy and money in the long run. A clean filter costs about \$20 and can lower energy use by as much as 15 percent according to the U.S. Department of Energy. That means of another **7.5 percent** savings on your monthly bills.

### #4 Get a pro to test your energy efficiency

Many utility companies offer free energy audits, which can help you figure out how much energy your home uses and take steps to increase efficiency. Start by contacting your utility company or find an auditor near you. According to **Energy.gov**, an energy audit can show you ways to save **five to 30 percent** on your utility bills.

### #5: Get free heat from the sun

Warm sunshine can heat your home, for free! Open curtains on south- and west-facing windows during the day to warm your interior rooms and surfaces. Then close your curtains at night to help keep the heat from escaping. This could help save another **one or two percent** on your energy bill in colder months.

If you are having trouble keeping up with higher winter utility bills, ask your utility company about a payment plan. Many companies offer a year-round plan that spreads costs out over all 12 months.



