

Washington Gas Summer Energy Tips

While many of our energy-saving tips are geared toward the winter months, staying energy conscious is just as important during the summer. We hope you can use these easy suggestions when the mercury is rising!

Unplug electronic devices when not in use. These so-called “energy vampires” can account for up to 20% of your monthly electric bill. (Duke Energy)

Close interior curtains and blinds during the hottest part of the day and consider installing window films. Up to 76% of light entering through glass windows generates extra heat, but most people leave window shades or curtains in the open position all of the time. Depending on the type of window covering, unwanted solar heat can be reduced up to 60%. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Consider a programmable thermostat. Setting the temperature slightly warmer when you aren't home can trim up to 20% from your monthly bill (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).

Consider energy-efficient appliances. By choosing ENERGY STAR, a typical household can save about \$450 on their energy bills each year. It is estimated that ENERGY STAR and its partners have helped American families and businesses save more than \$500 billion in energy costs since 1992. Washington Gas is proud to be a [four-time recipient](#) of the ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year award. (ENERGY STAR)

Use ceiling and free-standing fans instead of air conditioning. Setting ceiling fans to run counter-clockwise in the summer forces air downward and makes you feel up to four degrees cooler. This translates to savings because you can potentially save 3-5% on air conditioning costs for each degree you raise your thermostat. Fans that have earned the ENERGY STAR rating circulate air 20% more efficiently!

p.s. Not sure how to change the direction of your ceiling fan? Turn off your fan and wait until it comes to a complete stop. Look for a small switch next to the motor to change the blade direction. And if you are about to replace or add ceiling fans, remember that fans with fewer blades circulate more air. (U.S. Department of Energy, ENERGY STAR, Consumer Reports)

Clean or replace air filters regularly to ensure efficient airflow. Replacing a dirty air filter can shave up to 15% from your energy bill. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Plant shade trees, plants or vines. Trees and plants do more than provide shade: landscaping to the south and west can deflect hot winds, while planting to the north and east can tunnel cooler winds toward your home. Carefully positioned greenery can save up to 25% of the energy a typical household uses, and fast-growing vines on a trellis can provide quick shade while slower-growing trees establish their roots. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Install window awnings to provide natural shade. Window awnings can reduce summer solar heat gains by up to 65% on south-facing windows and 77% on west-facing windows. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Use energy-efficient LED bulbs instead of traditional incandescent lights. LED bulbs use up to 90% less energy and last up to 25 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs. They can also save up to \$300 per year on energy bills. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Seal air leaks around doors and windows. Caulking is an easy project that can recoup up to 20% in energy savings in only a couple of hours. Many caulking projects can be completed for less than \$25. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Turn off lights when leaving a room and maximize natural daylight. Operating the lights in your home accounts for about 11% of your total energy consumption. As a bonus, natural daylight has been shown to increase energy and productivity while reducing depression. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Lower water heater temperatures. While many water heaters are automatically set to 140 degrees Fahrenheit per factory specifications, lowering the temperature by 20 degree can still provide hot showers and effective dishwashing. It can also lead to energy savings of up to \$400 per year. (U.S. Department of Energy).

Use a microwave, slow cooker or toaster oven instead of a conventional oven. Cooking a small- or medium-sized meal in a toaster oven can cut the energy needed to prepare the same meal in a regular oven by 50%. Along these lines, an average slow cooker is about 91% more energy-efficient than an average full-size electric oven. (ENERGY STAR, CNET)

Use cold water for showering and laundry. Not only is a cool shower refreshing on a sweltering day, but many fabrics last longer when washed at lower temperatures. It's also a smart energy choice, since about 90% of the energy that a washing machine uses goes toward heating the water. (American Cleaning Institute)

Insulate your attic. While at the more expensive end of the energy-saving tips, insulating an attic can also lower utility expenses by as much as 30%. As a long-term benefit, it can also contribute to the resale value of your home. (Realtor.com)

Air-dry laundry instead of using a dryer. Depending on how many loads of laundry you do each week and other factors, air-drying your clothes could pare up to 20% from your utility bills. Your clothes will also last longer: that overflowing lint trap is testimony to how much of your laundry is lost one fiber at a time. You can also use an inexpensive rack to dry clothes indoors on rainy days. (Project Laundry List)

Pay attention to your pool. If you have a pool, use a cover to reduce evaporation and heat loss and install a timer to reduce filtration and pump running time. Pool covers minimize evaporation and are the single most effective means of reducing pool heating costs with savings up to 70%. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Clean those coils. By spending a few minutes two times a year to clean your refrigerator's condenser coils, you could save up to 11% on running costs while extending its useful life. This is especially important if you live in a high-pollen area or have pets that shed. When it comes to HVAC coils, efficiency can drop by 5% with a mere 1/100th of an inch of dirt or dust build-up and continue dropping as grime builds. Cleaning the coils can improve their thermal efficiency by up to 25%. (Angi, Dynamic Air Corporation)

Timing is everything. Limit the use of energy-intensive appliances, such as dishwashers, washing machines and clothes dryers, during peak hours. In addition to reducing strain on power grids, it may also reduce your energy bill by taking advantage of non-peak energy prices. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Fix leaky air ducts with mastic or tape. About 20% of the air that moves through your home's air system is lost due to leaks, holes and poorly connected ducts. Simply by patching these spots, an average household can potentially recoup hundreds of dollars each year. (ENERGY STAR)

Use power strips. Smart power strips can save up to 48% in energy consumption while reducing how much standby or vampire power your home consumes. Some strips are also app-compatible, allowing you to configure them when you're away from home. (Attainable Home)

Use power-saving mode on computers. This tip was much more complex than it seemed at first glance! ENERGY STAR has prepared an in-depth article on the [myths and realities of computer power management](#) that we highly recommend.

Install solar-powered outdoor lighting. An average home can expect to save between \$100-\$200 per year using off-grid solar-powered lights. (LinkedIn Pulse)

Fine-tune your flushes and flows. Replacing old, inefficient toilets with new models can reduce average household water flush usage up to 60%, or around 13,000 gallons saved per year. Upgrading to low-flow faucets can save up to 700 gallons of water per year for most households. (U.S. Department of Energy)

Fix water leaks promptly. Household leaks waste nearly a trillion gallons of water each year in the United States. One leaky faucet dripping one drop per second can add up to more than 3,000 gallons per year...enough for 180 average showers! Check out this excellent list of [easy ways to fix water leaks in your home](#). And while not exactly a leak, leaving the faucet running while brushing your teeth wastes water. Turning off the tap while brushing can save an average of four gallons of water per brushing. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

Be clever about outdoor cleaning. Because the average flow of a standard garden hose is 17.4 gallons per minute, even a 15-minute outdoor cleaning session can use more than 250 gallons of water. Use a broom or air blower whenever possible and consider spray cleaning in the early morning hours when evaporation rates are lower. This is also why 4-8 a.m. is recommended as the best time to water your lawn and garden. (Better Homes and Gardens)