

HOME ENERGY QUIZ



CHANGE FOR THE
BETTER WITH
ENERGY STAR

Cooler temperatures are well on their way. So too, are higher energy costs associated with keeping warm during the cold winter months. With electricity and energy costs at record highs, this quiz will help you identify ways to save on energy bills. Take our quiz and find out if you're ready for winter!

1 The average household spends \$1,500 a year on energy bills. Choose the one group of products that cost the most on your monthly energy bills.

- a. Heating and cooling equipment, appliances and water heater
- b. Heating and cooling equipment, water heater and lighting
- c. Water heater, appliances and lighting

2 Does your home suffer from any of the following?

- a. Comfortable—no drafts
- b. Minor drafts—mostly around doors
- c. Major drafts around windows, drafty rooms and/or cold floors
- d. Moisture on windows, mildew and damp basement
- e. Two to three of the above

3 What initial step should you take to help reduce energy costs around the house?

- a. Locate and seal up drafts around doors, windows, baseboards with caulk or weather stripping
- b. Add insulation to the attic and basement, such as open wall tops and ducts
- c. Turn off heating and air conditioning system when you're away

4 Heating and cooling systems should be checked by a licensed contractor...

- a. Seasonally
- b. Annually
- c. When equipment is inefficient or no longer works properly

5 Do you have a thermostat and, if so, is it...

- a. Programmable—and I use it with the proper settings so that it automatically adjusts my home's temperature setting when I'm asleep or not at home
- b. Programmable—but I override the settings when I get home, or wake up to change my home's temperature quickly
- c. I have a manual thermostat. When I remember, I set it back before I leave the house for a long period of time



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6 The energy used in your home can be responsible for how much more pollution than your car?

- a. Twice as much
- b. Only half as much
- c. My house causes pollution, too?

7 Just as a tune-up for your car can improve gas mileage, your home heating and cooling systems also require regular maintenance to perform efficiently and safely. What is the most important thing you can do yourself to maintain your system?

- a. Replace or clean air filters and vents in the heating and cooling equipment
- b. Make sure heating vents, baseboard heaters and radiators are not blocked by furniture
- c. Turn the thermostat way up to heat my home quickly in the winter; lower the thermostat drastically to cool off quickly in the summer
- d. None of the above

8 When is the best time to use a ceiling fan?

- a. Ceiling fans help save energy and keep you comfortable in both winter and summer
- b. Ceiling fans work best in summer, when it's hot outside
- c. In winter, when warm air needs to circulate in the house

9 Do you use energy-efficient lights (e.g. compact fluorescent lamps or CFLs) in your home, and if so, how many?

- a. 5 or more
- b. 1 to 5
- c. none
- d. I thought fluorescents were for only for office buildings!

10 Are you planning any home improvement projects this winter or spring?

- a. Yes, I'm planning steps to save energy this winter, and other projects for spring
- b. I've thought about projects, but may not have the time or money to follow through
- c. No, my home is already perfect



Totals: a. _____ b. _____ c. _____ d. _____ e. _____

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HOW DID YOU DO?

If you scored mostly “a”s, you are ENERGY SAVVY

Great job! You know that keeping up your home means more than making sure the trash is taken out or the dishes get done. You are taking steps to save energy, protect the environment and natural resources, and maintain lower utility bills.

If you scored mostly “a”s and “b”s, you are ON THE RIGHT TRACK

You know some ways to help your home be more energy-efficient but may be unsure of other steps to take, or what is the best investment. Or your home may be newer with many efficient appliances and products—you just need a little help to look for other simple ways to maximize your home’s energy performance.

If you scored mostly “c”s, “d”s, and “e”s, HELP IS ON THE WAY

You have probably noticed some real “energy drains” in your home, but don’t know how easy it can be to improve your home’s overall energy performance and save money on utility bills. Carefully review the quiz’s answer key for ways to get started...even small steps can make a big difference in energy savings and comfort.

SOURCE: EPA ENERGY STAR® Program. For more information on keeping your home comfortable year-round, get the ENERGY STAR Guide to Energy-Efficient Cooling and Heating at www.energystar.gov/hvacguide or 1.888.STAR.YES (1.888.782.7937).

ANSWER KEY

1. The average family spends \$1,500 a year on energy bills, with nearly half of that spent on heating and cooling. Basic home improvement recommendations outlined in this quiz, as well as more efficient equipment, can definitely help you save on energy costs. Also, don’t underestimate the simple things. For example, shades and drapes around your home can help you conserve energy and reduce costs. During winter, open window shades or drapes to let in the natural warmth of the sun, and close them at night to insulate windows against heat loss. In hot climates, closed shades or blinds help keep rooms cool. Finally, many local utilities and contractors offer home energy audit and home improvement services, which help you identify and fix areas in your home where you may be wasting energy. Many utilities also offer low-income assistance for winter heating bills. Check your utility bill stuffers for services they may offer.





ANSWER KEY continued

2. Common household problems such as hot, cold, or drafty rooms, and the growth of mold and mildew are often the result of inefficient heating/cooling systems and inadequate insulation. Addressing this issue can be as simple as sealing air leaks, adding insulation and replacing windows. For cost-effective solutions, visit ENERGY STAR's Home Improvement site at www.energystar.gov/homeimprovement.
3. Sealing up your home is one of the most cost effective ways to improve your home's comfort and reduce energy costs. Hidden gaps and cracks in a home can add up to as much airflow as an open window and cause your heating and cooling system to work harder, use more energy, and cost more. Seal these leaks with caulk, spray foam, and weather stripping. Next, inspect your attic, to be sure it's properly insulated — it's the easiest place to add insulation and make a big impact on energy bills. Together, sealing air leaks and adding insulation can reduce your annual energy bill by 10 percent and improve comfort. Many of these steps are easy to do yourself, or you can hire a professional contractor to help. For details on how to do it yourself, get the ENERGY STAR Home Sealing DIY Guide. Finally, keep your fireplace damper closed, unless a fire is going.
4. To keep your home's heating and/or cooling system running at peak performance, have a licensed and insured contractor check your equipment seasonally. Have your heating system checked in the Fall, and your cooling system checked in the Spring. If your cooling or heating system is more than 10 – 15 years old, it could be considerably less efficient than newer models. Changing out old equipment with ENERGY STAR qualified models can cut your annual energy costs by 20 percent. To find a qualified contractor to have new equipment installed, or to perform any home improvements such as home sealing or duct work, plan ahead. Schedule home energy audits during the spring or fall, since contractors tend to get busy around summer and winter months.
5. ENERGY STAR qualified programmable thermostats automatically adjust your home's temperature setting to help save energy when you're asleep or not at home. When used properly, a programmable thermostat with 4 temperature settings can save you up to \$100 on annual energy costs.
6. Making your home more energy-efficient helps to reduce air pollution and prevent global warming. The average house is responsible for twice the greenhouse gas emissions as the average car, annually (22,000 lbs. vs. 11,500 lbs.). That's because every time you flip on a light switch, run your dishwasher or turn on your air conditioner or furnace, you use energy, which means more pollution from power plants. The more energy we save at home, the more we can help protect the environment.
7. There are many different actions you can take on your own. Regardless of what kind of heating or air conditioning system you own, routine maintenance will improve your comfort and save energy around the home. By regularly changing and cleaning air filters in your home's heating and cooling system, you will help them perform more efficiently.
8. Ceiling fans improve comfort in both winter and summer. During winter, run them clockwise (upward motion) at a low speed, to circulate heat that gathers near the ceiling. In summer, or in hot climates, run them counterclockwise (or downward) to cool. Most fans have a switch to reverse the spin. When cooling, always turn off your ceiling fan when you leave the room, just as you do your lights (a fan only cools you, not a room, by creating a "wind-chill effect").
9. Lighting can account for as much as 20 percent of your household energy use. Don't sit in the dark, but whenever possible, keep lights off if they're not in use, and replace high-use, standard incandescent bulbs with efficient compact fluorescent bulbs (look for the ENERGY STAR label). These bulbs use 2/3 less energy and last up to 10 times longer. Replacing 5 of your home's most frequently used lights will save \$60 each year on energy costs.
10. Almost all home improvement projects can incorporate energy savings. In winter, sealing and insulation can make a big difference. For kitchen, bathroom, home office and other remodeling projects, don't forget to incorporate energy-saving appliances, lighting, window or skylights, ventilation fans, and other products. Look for the government's ENERGY STAR to save energy, money, and help the environment. Other recommendations are available at www.energystar.gov/homeimprovement.