

50 WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY (AND MONEY) AROUND YOUR HOME

Recent power outages in North America are a reminder of how extensively we depend on electricity to function. Among other things, it provides light and heat, keeps our food cool and brings the world into our homes through our televisions and computers. As the demand for power has increased, so has the incidence of blackouts and price increases in some parts of the country. Homeowners have a strong incentive to save energy and money but often don't know where to start. The following are some simple ways to plug the 'money drains' around your home.

Hot Water

1. Keep your hot water thermostat set at 110-120 C (most are set at 140 C).
2. Install an automatic timer so that water is heated only during the hours needed.
3. Wash clothing in cold or warm water rather than hot water.
4. Insulate your water heater with a fire resistant water heater blanket.
5. Install an aerator on your kitchen sink faucet to save on hot water.
6. Reduce water usage by installing a low-flow showerhead.
7. "Suds savers" on washers allow you to reuse hot water for multiple loads.
8. Consider heating your pool (and your home) with solar heat.
9. Close off the attic, garage, basement, spare bedrooms, storage areas, etc.
10. Insulate floors over unheated spaces such as crawl spaces and the garage.
11. Install storm doors before cold weather arrives.
12. Repair cracks and gaps in window seals (the putty around the glass).
13. Seal gaps around water pipes where cold air may enter the room.
14. If you have single pane windows, upgrade to energy efficient double panes.
15. Don't forget to weather-strip your attic door to prevent heat from escaping.
16. Remind your children to close the door immediately upon entering or exiting.
17. Repair cracks and gaps in your fireplace.
18. Remove awnings from south-facing windows during winter months.

19. Open draperies and shades in winter to let in sunshine then close them at night.
20. Use insulating window film to keep heat from escaping to the outdoors.
21. Plant leafy deciduous trees on the sunny side of your house - the leaves will provide shade in the summer and drop to allow sun through in the winter.
22. Plant coniferous trees (e.g. fir, pine) on the north and west side of your home to block cold winds.
23. Choose pots and pans that match the element size so that heat is not wasted.
24. Cook with lids on your pots - food will heat more evenly and you will be able to lower the heat setting.
25. Plan ahead so that an entire meal can be prepared in the oven at same time.
26. Cook desserts and baked goods in the oven along with meals.
27. Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator before cooking.
28. Turn off the oven 5 minutes early - it will remain hot long enough to complete the job if the door is left closed.
29. Don't peek in the oven during cooking - approximately 25% of the heat escapes.
30. Use a toaster oven rather than your regular oven to cook small items.
31. Run the dishwasher only when it is full.
32. Don't overfill the refrigerator, as this blocks air circulation. Conversely, a full freezer will perform better than an empty one.
33. Don't place your refrigerator or freezer in direct sunlight.
34. Leave a gap of at least 6cm between the refrigerator coils and the wall.
35. Defrost your freezer regularly for maximum efficiency.
36. Clean the refrigerator's air intake grill (below the doors) and coils every 6 months.
37. Allow hot foods to cool for up to 20 minutes before putting them in the refrigerator.
38. Choose a temperature setting for your freezer that is adequate and not overly cold.
39. Use task lighting where you need it rather than illuminating an entire room.

40. Compact fluorescent bulbs use approximately 75% less energy than incandescent bulbs and last longer.*
41. Turn off lights whenever you leave a room or don't need them.
42. Use a motion sensor light rather than leaving an outdoor light on all night.
43. Open up the curtains for light. If privacy is an issue, try sheers or reflective film.
44. Wash your clothes in cold or warm water rather than hot water.
45. Rinsing in cold water saves energy and reduces wrinkles.
46. Wait until you have a full load to do a wash.
47. Dry consecutive loads to utilize otherwise wasted heat from the dryer.
48. Clean the lint filter after every load - a clogged filter can increase energy consumption and can be a fire hazard.
49. Check the EnerGuide labels when you shop for appliances - the lower the kilowatt/hour number shown, the more efficient the appliance.
50. Front-loading washers use roughly half the water per load and are more effective at squeezing the water out of the clothes - which lowers the electricity costs for drying them.

Saving energy and money doesn't require a drastic change in lifestyle. Even small changes around our homes can make a difference.

- *Compact fluorescent bulbs last up to eight times longer than incandescent bulbs and use up to 75% less energy. If every household in British Columbia replaced just two regular incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, enough energy would be saved to provide the electricity needs of 21,000 homes each year. (Source: BC Hydro)*

THE "HOME HUNTERS"

Grant & Steve Hunter

HOW TO CHOOSE A NATURAL GAS BARBECUE

Gone are the days when no self-respecting dedicated barbequer would be caught grilling dinner over a gas flame instead of charcoal or wood embers. Today, many people are switching over for the convenience and lower cost of cooking with gas. Getting that distinctive wood flavour, can easily be achieved by using a smoke box filled with wood chips.

Gas barbeques tend to be easier to clean and less smoky than traditional charcoal grills. Smoked and charred meats are known to contain carcinogens so a gas barbeque can be a healthier choice.

Compared to propane, natural gas is safer. Gas is lighter than air and will rise into the atmosphere in the event of a leak. Natural gas barbecues are connected directly to your home gas system, making them easy to install, relocate, or disconnect for storage, according to the Saskatchewan Energy Company. Not to mention, you won't need to worry about refilling tanks in the middle of your cookout.

When it comes to choosing a new barbeque, a few pointers on products and safety may help you may an informed decision.

Check Consumer Reports for overall ratings based on performance, convenience and features. You may find consumers reports at your local library or you may use an online source such as [Consumer Reports.org](https://www.consumerreports.org) which charges less than \$5 for a one-month subscription. In general, Weber, Ducane, Vermont Castings, PGS, Holland and Aero rank as quality grills.

Top of the line

Weber Summit 650 – Suggested retail price \$3,600

This premium gas barbeque features 6 burners, a total of 742 inches of cooking space (some downtown apartments don't have that much!), a smoker box, and stainless steel rods and flavour bars. The price may be prohibitive to many back yard cooks but serious chefs may enjoy the space and accessories.

Big Green Egg (Large model) – Suggest Retail Price \$1,150

This is not you typical egg. The Big Green Egg is promoted as one of the best smokers on the market. The design is energy efficient and retains moisture in foods. The ceramic egg rests in a "nest" comprised of a stand with wheels.

Cost

The cost of natural gas barbeques spans a wide range – anywhere from \$250 to \$3,600, with \$500 to \$1,000 a popular price range for a quality grill with popular features. Take extra care to extend the life of lower priced gas grills – keep them protected from the elements and clean the cooking area thoroughly after each use.

Signs of Quality

Heavy gauge metals (die-cast aluminum or stainless steel) are very rust resistant.

Porcelain cooking surfaces add durability and are easy to clean, as are stainless steel and chrome. Food doesn't slip through the wide flat porcelain bars and they sear better than thin round rods.

Skip the window. Unless you constantly clean it, you'll never see the food.

Most gas grills come with an igniter that lights the gas with a spark. Rotary igniters (which involve turning a knob) are easier to use than push-button types and are more likely to light on the first try.

Shopping Tips

- Look for wide, large (6 to 10 inches) wheels and locking casters built to move comfortably and to last.
- Be sure to lift lids to be certain they raise easily and close tightly.
- Carts and cabinets should be welded steel, so don't settle for a wobbly frame.
- Look for shelves made of stainless steel or high density plastic.

Check the options

- A side burner lets you cook a pot of baked beans, heat water for cooking pasta or keep sauces warm while you barbecue.
- Rotisseries are ideal for barbecuing whole chickens or turkeys or large roasts.
- Round baskets fit on the spit to slowly roast chicken wings or shrimp.
- Smoker boxes made of cast iron or other metal hold wood chips, fresh herbs, garlic cloves or citrus peel and add wonderful flavour to foods. Some double as a pan to hold water for steaming foods inside the grill.

Why Switch (or Convert) to Natural Gas?

Benefits

- Natural gas is the lowest cost fuel (about 50% the price of propane in tanks, and much less than charcoal).
- There are no tanks to transport or refill.
- Easy installation. A flexible hose (usually 10 ft. long) extends from the barbecue to a 'quick-connect' hook-up that taps into your household gas supply. No hook-up in place? A gas contractor can extend gas piping to your backyard or patio.

Converting Propane

Some propane barbecues can be converted to operate on natural gas (check with your barbecue dealer regarding cost and suitability).

Safety Tips

- Check the connection tubes regularly. Dirt and insect nests can create a dangerous blockage, which can create enormous pressure in the line.
- Never lean over the barbecue when lighting it.
- Clean your barbecue regularly to remove build-up of grease. These deposits can lead to an unexpected fire.
- Keep children away from the barbecue.
- Always ignite natural gas grills with the lid fully open.
- If the burners fail to light within five seconds, shut off the gas and wait five minutes before starting again.
- Move barbecue away from open windows, combustible walls and doors.
- Check grill's hoses for cracking, brittleness, holes, and leaks. Make sure there aren't sharp bends in the hose or tubing.

Now you're ready to started enjoying planked salmon, hamburgers or other succulent items fresh from your grill.

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INSULATION TIPS

A home without adequate insulation can be drafty, cold and expensive to heat. If your walls feel cold in the winter or your indoor air feels warmer than outside temperatures in summer, you likely need to upgrade your insulation. The investment can be very worthwhile especially if a few important preparations are made first.

Before ripping out the existing insulation, take a close look at it for hints as to where you may have moisture, mould or air leakage problems. Dark spots can be dust or mould indicating that either air or moisture has penetrated the wall. Insulation is part of a system and if any parts of that system are not in good repair, insulation no matter how state of the art, will not function as it should. Generally, walls have this structure: on the outside, a layer of brick or siding, then an air barrier followed by insulation then a vapour barrier next to the inner wall covering.

A common problem with this structure and also one of the easiest to rectify is air leakage. A great deal of air can flow in and out of small openings such as spaces around doors and window frames as well as out chimneys. The flow of air to the outdoors may not be the only factor increasing heating costs.

Air is in a constant state of motion; warm air flows towards cold air. In winter, the warmth in your home can move through walls, floors and the air to colder spots like the attic, basement and any unheated rooms. Many people think of leaks in terms of openings to the outdoors. However, the movement of heated air into parts of the house that don't need to be at typical room temperatures can be costly. Tight seals on the following problem areas can reduce heat loss: false ceilings, recessed cabinets, doorways into the attic, basement or garage, as well as gaps around electrical outlets, switch boxes and plumbing connections.

Repairing these problems doesn't have to cost a fortune. In most cases all that's needed is come caulking, weather-stripping, plastic or pieces of insulation. For example, look under your sinks and behind your toilets for any gaps between the plumbing and floor or wall opening. You can seal those openings with a strip of insulation, caulking or by spraying in polyurethane foam. If you have an attached garage, the doorway into your home should have weather-stripping along the edges. Attic trap doors can also be sealed with weather-stripping or if the attic is rarely used, consider sealing it completely with a sheet of plastic.

The joint between a porch roof and a side wall can also be a source of heat loss. You can reduce the loss by spraying high-density insulation or polyurethane foam insulation into the joint.

Another benefit of inspecting your home before installing new insulation is that you have an opportunity to look for signs of damage to the moisture barrier. This barrier serves some very important functions. The air inside your home contains water vapour. If this vapour passes into the insulation and condenses, it can cause damage and reduce the

insulation's ability to function. Moisture build-up over the years can also lead to mould growth and it may potentially rot the wood. To guard against these problems, ensure your home is adequately ventilated, as with an air exchanger system, and use vapour barriers.

Vapour barriers include treated papers, plastic sheets, and metallic foils that reduce the passage of moisture. Batts and blankets can be purchased with a barrier attached. If new material is being added to insulation already in place, use batts or blankets that do not have an attached vapour barrier. If this type is not available, be sure to remove the vapour barrier facing between layers of insulation to allow any moisture that does get into the insulation to pass through.

A good tip for homeowners who are not sure if the vapour barrier in kitchens or bathrooms is adequate, apply wallpaper with a plastic layer or paint on a coat of oil paint specifically designed for high moisture rooms.

By taking these steps to check for and repair air and moisture leaks and ensure the vapour barrier is functioning properly, you're all set to install your insulation. A warm and cozy home is soon to be yours.

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