



Keeping Warm This Winter

Feel warmer at home with these simple, free or low cost tips



1. Reduce heat loss

➤ The easiest way to stop cold air coming in and keep heat in your home is to get rid of draughts

Check by feeling where cold air is coming in and warm air is escaping.

Doors and windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Block gaps at the bottom of doors and around windows using rolled-up towels or fill tights with dry rice or clothes. - Use a keyhole cover, a letterbox cover and use 'brush' draft-excluders behind your letterbox and under front and back doors. - You can use rubber draught seals from DIY stores around the sides of your external doors and foam strips around windows to reduce air leaks. - Sealant around windows goes over time and may need replacing - reseal with silicone gel sealant.
Chimneys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you're not using a chimney, plug the hole with an inflatable chimney balloon or make a DIY one with balls of newspaper, old pillows or plastic bags - this could save £65* year. <i>Remember to take it out in summer so the air can circulate</i>
Loft hatches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't forget to insulate the hatch itself, e.g. using modern polystyrene with fire retardant - Use strips of foam or rubber draught excluder around the edges of the frame
Floorboards and skirting boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fill gaps with flexible fillers such as clear or brown silicone mastic, decorators' caulk or similar products. - Using a rug on top of floorboards will make your home feel warmer and use thermal underlay under carpet.

- If you have an extractor fan in your kitchen or bathroom to take damp, smelly air out - check it has a cover on the outside to stop draughts coming in.
- Fill in any cracks in walls, around windows and gaps around fittings - you can use foam, putty, even tissue and cement or a hard-setting decorators' wall-filler on external walls.

➤ Use curtains to stop warm air escaping

- Close curtains when it's getting dark and tuck them behind radiators.
- Use thicker blinds and curtains, such as lined or thermal curtains if you can - ready-made thermal curtains cost from £15 new. You could sew thermal linings to your existing curtains or attach them using Velcro.

➤ Secondary glazing can reduce heat being lost through your windows

If you have single-glazed windows in your bedroom or living room, putting a second layer of cling-film traps air which helps stop heat escaping - shrink it to fit your window frame using a hairdryer or buy specialist secondary glazing from £8 which will last longer.

2. Increase warmth

If you are mainly in one room during the day you could use a room heater instead of having the central heating on. To heat a room for a few hours or more use a convector heater, for a quick blast of directional heat use a radiant heater.

This table shows how much different heaters cost to run on the highest setting - heaters with a thermostat will turn off when they reach the set temperature, so they cost less over several hours.

From the Centre for Sustainable Energy's 'Room Heater' Fact Sheet

Electric room heaters						
Pic.	Heater	Heat source	Typical power rating	Running cost per hour*		
				Single-rate meter	Economy 7	
					Night	Day
(1)	Bar fire	radiant	2 kW	68p	35p	79p
(2)	Convector heater	convector	2 kW	68p	35p	79p
(3)	Oil-filled radiator	convector	1.5 kW	51p	26p	61p
(4)	Fan heater	radiant	2 kW	86p	42p	£1.00
(5)	Halogen heater	radiant	1.2 kW	42p	21p	47p

*Running costs assumptions: Single-rate meter, 34p/kWh; Economy 7 (night), 17p/kWh; Economy 7 (day), 40p/kWh. To calculate this yourself times the heat output of your electric heater by your electric kWh unit cost.

➤ Radiators

- Furniture such as sofas or beds right in front of radiators absorb the heat and stop the warm air from circulating - move them!
- Don't cover radiators or dry clothes on them.
- If your radiators take more time to heat up, you can feel cold patches at the top or they gurgle, 'bleed' them to get rid of air trapped inside. It's straightforward but you need a 'radiator valve key' which costs about £1, an old towel to soak up water and a small bowl - see this guide www.britishgas.co.uk/the-source/fix-it-yourself/how-to-bleed-a-radiator.html

➤ Reducing damp and condensation

Damp air is created at home, especially in kitchens and bathrooms. You need ways for it to escape so it doesn't cause problems such as mould in a cold home. Use extractor fans if you have them (costing about 1p an hour to run), keep doors closed when you're cooking or having a shower and don't block up working vents. Keep lids on saucepans and you can turn down the gas / electricity and save money. Leave a gap between furniture and the walls to let air circulate. Wipe down windows with condensation using a wiper blade or towel.

3. Keep costs down

➤ Heating - understanding your heating controls will help you use your heating system more efficiently

What kind of heating do you have? Central heating? Night storage heaters? Electric convector heaters? Know how to use your type of heating effectively. The Centre for Sustainable Energy has help sheets for using heating controls on different systems including electric storage heaters which work best with a cheap night rate tariff, e.g. Economy 7 - www.cse.org.uk/my-home/

Rooms:

- Many people are using the heating less. For central heating, set it to come on for 30 mins to warm up your home before you get up and turn it off 30 minutes before you leave the house or go to bed as the house will stay warm for a while. Most central heating systems are cheaper to set, or put the heating on when you need it, and not leave it on at a low temperature all day.
- If you can, turn your thermostat down by 1°C and put a warmer jumper on to cut your bill by £100 on average - 18°C in living areas should be enough for healthy adults, 21°C to 23°C for people who are very young, old or ill.
- Your boiler will save energy and you'll cut costs, if you have thermostat dials on your radiators. Set ones in rooms you don't use much or at certain times of day, to low but on or above the frost setting so the temperature doesn't drop below freezing.
- If you have a gas, 'combi' boiler - one that does your heating and hot water so you don't have a separate tank to heat your hot water - the temperature for the water to the radiators is often set too high by default. You should have an option to turn it down on the front of your boiler to 60°C to save 6% or more energy (you could even try 55°C) - check your boiler manual or see this online tool for how to do this: www.moneysavingboilerchallenge.com.
- You could also turn off the pre-heat function (which pre-heats the water in your pipes to a certain temperature) especially if you're out all day - check your boiler manual.

Water:

- If you have a separate tank to heat up and store your hot water, use the controls or timer to heat it up once or twice a day (make sure it's heating up at night if you're on a cheap night rate tariff) - leaving it on all day will cost much more.
- Modern tanks are insulated on the inside but if yours is uninsulated, use a British Standard Kitemark 'jacket' that's at least 80mm thick.
- Keep the warm in and use foam tubes to insulate pipes from the tank to reduce heat and energy loss by up to 75%, cheaply.

➤ In the Kitchen

Cooking in a microwave is cheaper than in an oven, for example cooking a jacket potato in a microwave uses 25% energy compared to in an oven. A slow cooker is an energy efficient way to cook as it runs on low power, but may take several hours to cook - try batch cooking to make the most of the energy you're using.

Microwave	1000 W	34p hour
Grill/Oven	2,000 - 2,400 W	68 - 81.6p hour
Slow cooker	150 - 300 W	5.1 - 10.2p hour
Hob (per ring)	1,000 - 2,000 W	34 - 68p hour

- Simmer rather than boil food when you're cooking it to save money.
- Use a bowl in the sink for washing up to use less hot water.
- Don't overfill the kettle when you're boiling water - or you could boil more and use a thermos flask to keep it warmer for later?
- Put your fridge freezer where air can circulate and not near a radiator or a cooker or it'll have to work harder and cost more to run.

➤ Try changing how you do your clothes washing

Wash more clothes in a load and try a cooler setting at 30°C to not waste energy and you could save £54 year - your clothes will last longer too. It's a full load if you can still get your hand into the machine drum sideways, not flat. Could you do one less load a week?

➤ Lights

Replace old light bulbs with LED ones which use about half the energy of the spiral 'energy-saving' lightbulbs and up to 90% less than old style bulbs and give the same level of light (and don't need replacing as often).

It's better to turn lights off, no matter for how long - you could save £27 year doing this.

Avoid leaving devices on standby and unplug gadgets such as set-top boxes or games consoles so they don't add to your bill when off.

➤ In the Bathroom

- Towel dry your hair to reduce how long you need to use a hairdryer.
- If you can take a shower instead of a bath it could save around £100 a year on water heating
- Electric showers guzzle energy - set a timer to try for a 3 minute shower! Cutting a minute off your shower could save £207 on energy bills for an average 4 person household (and £105 more a year off water bills if you're on a meter).
- Using a water-saving shower head could save £50 year on average for a typical home and cut water use by about 40%.
- See this handy guide for an idea of how much electricity different appliances at home use - a 10-minute shower will cost you 51p and an hour of tumble drying 85p - https://centreforsustainableenergy.ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/18215612/advice_leaflet_what_uses_watt.pdf

➤ Contact your energy supplier

- Take readings from your electricity or gas meter every 3 months and give them to your supplier so you get charged for what you're using - not what they estimate you're using. Make sure you're on the cheapest rate or tariff.
- If you are in debt, you can make a plan with them.
- If you have a health condition or have children under 5 at home, ask if you should be on their **Priority Services Register** - so that you get extra help if there's a power cut.

Increase your income and get help with debt

You can find a list of other ways you might save money on your energy bills at www.nea.org.uk/energyhelp, this includes information on the Warm Home Discount Rebate, Cost of living support and energy efficiency grants. If you do not have access to the internet, please call: Citizens Advice Consumer Advice Line on 0808 223 1133 or Warm and Safe Wiltshire on 0800 038 5722 - they have help sheets on specific energy topics - also on their website www.warmandsafewiltshire.org.uk

National Debtline - www.nationaldebtline.org/ or call Freephone 0808 808 4000 Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm and Saturday 9:30am to 1pm.

Step Change - online debt advice service www.stepchange.org/setting-expectations.aspx or speak to an advisor Tel: 0800 138 1111 Monday to Friday between 8am and 8pm and Saturday 9am and 2pm.

Which of these tips can you pledge to do at home to save money?

Tips to go further

Foil radiator panels - these go behind your radiators and reflect heat into the room especially if the radiator's on an outside or solid wall. A pack of 3 sheets from Radflek www.radflek.com will fit 3 to 6 radiators and cost £24.49, or make some using kitchen foil and card.

If your radiators don't have thermostatic valves so you can set them higher or lower, getting them installed could save 6% on your bills - about £150 year in average home.

Complete any maintenance which affects your home's energy loss such as a missing roof tile or broken door.

Insulation - 25% of heat is lost through the roof. Don't lose out - have loft insulation between 220mm and 270mm thick to save as much as £355 per year. If your loft is easy to access, you could do it yourself using rolls of mineral wool that lie between the joists. Loft insulation for a terraced house costs about £455.

35% heat is lost through uninsulated walls. If your home was built after the 1920s, it probably has cavity walls. An installer can drill holes and inject insulating material into the cavity to keep the heat in. This can cost £395 to £1,800, depending on the size of your home. Homes built since the 1990s are usually already insulated.

If you receive certain benefits or your household income meets set criteria, you may qualify for free or grant-funded loft and cavity wall insulation or replacement boiler if yours is old or broken. Ask your energy supplier about the ECO (Energy Company Obligation) scheme or contact Warm and Safe Wiltshire who can check eligibility and refer you for a survey.

You can insulate the ground floor which involves laying insulation on top of concrete floors, or mineral wool between the joists under suspended timber floors and can cost approx. £1,400 for an average floor - this depends on the floor type and size of your home.

Boiler check - Your boiler needs servicing ideally every 12 months, at a cost of between £60 and £120, to make sure it's running efficiently and safely. If your boiler isn't working well, it will work harder and cost more to heat your home.