

Five Tips for a Green Home

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Eco-friendly. Carbon footprint. Global warming. Energy-efficient. These catch phrases have become part of our lexicon as we've become more aware of our impact on the environment and our role in protecting it. As a homeowner, there are some simple, inexpensive steps you can take to make your home energy-efficient. Get started on the road to being "green" with these five tips:

Change Your Light Bulbs

By replacing just five incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs, you can save \$100 per year on electric bills while using up to 75 percent less energy and removing greenhouse gases from the environment.

Buy ENERGY STAR® Appliances

ENERGY STAR-qualified appliances, such as refrigerators, washers and air conditioners, meet a higher level of energy efficiency set by the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy than standard models. According to ENERGY STAR, if just one in 10 homes used ENERGY STAR-qualified appliances, the impact could be compared to planting 1.7 million new acres of trees. And, switching to these appliances is not only good for the environment, but easy on your pocketbook.

Although these appliances may cost more, you can reduce your energy bill by \$80 per year.

Seal Up

Cracks and air leaks represent cash seeping from your doors and windows. Get rid of air leaks in doors, windows and other areas by caulking gaps and cracks. This will help decrease your heating and air conditioning bill. But make sure you use silicone sealants. Acrylic caulk tends to shrink, while silicone sealants are waterproof and won't shrink or crack, creating less waste.

Use Less Water

Did you know that roughly 60 percent of a home's water consumption takes place in the bathroom, according to the California Urban Water Conservation Council? The largest culprit is the toilet, which accounts for 27 percent of your household supply every year. By installing low-flow toilets, showerheads and faucets, you can save thousands of gallons of water each year. In addition, replace leaky fixtures. That slow-dripping faucet can waste as much as 2,400 gallons of water per year.

Adjust the Thermostat

When adjusting your home's thermostat, the rule of thumb should be: turn up the dial in the summer and down in the winter. Lowering the temperature by just one degree will reduce your electrical costs. And if you use a programmable thermostat, you can program your air-conditioning and heating systems to reduce output while no one is at home or at

night while you sleep. Ceiling fans are also helpful in circulating the air to keep the room cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Going green doesn't have to be overwhelming or costly. By making just a few small changes within your home, you can help decrease energy consumption and help make the world a "greener" place.

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