



## Energy Saving Tips for a Cold Winter

When winter weather appears, it's time to start thinking about how you'll keep your house warm, safe, and comfortable no matter what Mother Nature throws at you. Cooler temperatures and precipitation can affect everything from your roof to your foundation, so it's important to consider the details when you're ready to weatherproof your house — because that's the best way to save money. Lowering your energy consumption also can help reduce your carbon footprint, allowing you to do your part in slowing down the effects of global warming. Below are a few things you should consider.

### **Checking Out Your Furnace**

The furnace in your home is an extremely important part of your energy blueprint. If you find that your utility bills are rising steeply after cold weather hits, have your furnace checked to ensure it's in good working order. If it's an [older model](#), it may need to be replaced. And while you'll have to pay out a bit of money up front to have it installed, it may save you some in the long run if you can find an energy-efficient model. For a gas furnace, you'll be looking at [between \\$2,000 and \\$10,000](#), plus \$500 to \$2,000 for installation costs. Electric furnaces run between \$1,700 and \$7,000 plus installation fees.

### **Reversing Your Ceiling Fans**

The ceiling fans in your home do more than keep things cool; if you reverse the direction, they'll push warm air from the ceiling down to the floor, meaning you'll get the benefit of better

circulation from your furnace. If you can feel the warm air on the ground, you won't have to keep jacking up the thermostat, which is a [green](#) way to save quite a bit of money on your utility bill for the month. Make sure the heat is on when you change the direction of the fans so you can feel the warm air being pushed down. While you're up there, you might clean the blades so they'll perform better and won't throw dust and allergens into the air.

### **Seal Up Air Leaks**

One major cause of high energy bills in the winter is air leaks, which can occur around doors or windows that don't have tight seals. Go around the house to look for gaps; if you can feel cold air coming in, you have a few options: seal up cracks with caulk, use [weather stripping](#), or utilize a [draft stopper](#) around the bottom of doors that have large gaps. These are all fairly budget-friendly, but you can check out all your options at the local home improvement store and find one that works best for your needs.

### **Use Energy-Efficient Bulbs**

In winter, there's less daylight around the country, so most families use more electricity to light up their homes. Switching light bulbs to energy-efficient LED ones or [CFL](#) — which stands for Compact Fluorescent Lamp — can save you a ton on utility bills because they are relatively inexpensive and last for years. Make sure you shop at a store that has a large selection of colors since fluorescent lighting now comes in a wide variety for every room in the house.

Saving energy in winter is the best way to optimize your home's usage and reduce your carbon footprint, and it can save you quite a bit of money as well. Sometimes, even the smallest changes in lifestyle can make a big difference when the weather turns cold. Remember to make those changes in every room, and to talk to your family about how they can help from day to day.

--Natalie Jones

Natalie and her husband found the homebuying process to be incredibly overwhelming, but definitely a learning experience. Natalie hopes to help other first-time buyers by sharing her knowledge.