

ELECTRICITY SAVINGS

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Electricity accounts for a large portion of most of our monthly bills. It was one of those "modern conveniences" that quickly became necessity, to the point that most of us have never lived without it and even insist that we couldn't - with good reason because of how most homes are designed.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, one third of our energy dollars goes to lighting and appliances, not including heating water and using refrigeration.

Here are some ways how to decrease that big percentage and the overall electricity cost

1. Start changing out regular incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents. Although fluorescents cost more to buy, their life times are longer and they use far less electricity for the same amount of light.

2. Maybe this should be number one, but turn off anything you're not using. That includes lights, TVs, radios, stereos and computers. Most computers use the equivalent of around three 100 watt light bulbs, so turning them off at night will save plenty.

3. Flip the switch off on power strips, or unplug "instant on" anything, including TVs and computers. These use electricity all the time unless electricity is cut off to them.

4. Keep a freezer full - it operates on a different principle than a refrigerator. A frozen mass tends to keep things around it frozen, too. If you don't have enough food to fill it, save plastic containers and fill them two thirds of the way with water. Water-filled plastic bags that can be sealed make an excellent choice for odd shaped vacant areas.

5. Switch to using as many manual appliances as you can. Plain old hand operated can openers, knives and toothbrushes save a lot of electricity!

6. If you use an electric stove, use all the heat. Turn off the burners and oven a few minutes before food is through cooking. Or, if you're heating other foods there's plenty left to do the job after you turn off the burner. Remember, it's not the stove that cooks your food. It's the heat.

7. If you drink tea or coffee throughout the day, use a thermos. You can save electricity if you make several cups at one time and keep it hot in a thermos than if you make individual cups.

It takes some effort, yes, but the rewards will be worth it when you get your cost in next bill and you've knocked off 20 percent, or even more.

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