

Don't Break the Bank!

There is no need to spend a lot of money to save a little energy. The Alliance to Save Energy has identified the best low- and no-cost ways to lower your energy bill and keep your piggy bank full:

- When you leave a room, turn off lights, TVs and music systems. Shut down computers if you will be away for a long period, or activate the unit's sleep mode for a short-term break.

- Dress in layers in the winter and throw an extra blanket on the bed so you can turn the thermostat down a few more degrees.

- About 15 percent of your energy bill is for heating water. Lower the temperature on the water heater to 120 degrees and wash clothes in cold water. Help your water heater work more efficiently by wrapping it in an insulation blanket.

- Do not heat unused spaces like guest rooms. Close doors and vents until you need the room.

- Weather-strip your windows and doors. It's inexpensive and easy to do, and it's one of the best ways to trap warm air indoors.

- Seal joints in exposed ductwork

in the basement and attic.

- If you can afford it, replace your windows with more efficient ones.

If that is too expensive, install storm windows or smooth plastic sheeting over the panes.

Both can reduce heat loss 25 to 50 percent.

- Install low-flow showerheads and sink aerators to pump out less hot water. ■

For more energy conservation tips that won't bust your budget, go to www.powerisinyourhands.org.

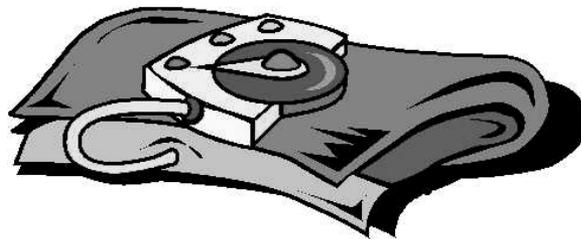
Keep Cozy With Electric Bedding

If you hesitate before turning your thermostat down at night, your bed might need a boost.

Throw an electric blanket or mattress pad on your bed so you can reap the savings—about 3 percent on your bill for each degree you lower the thermostat—without feeling cold.

First, dig your grandmother's heated blanket out from the back of the closet—and throw it away!

Newer models have better warming technology and built-in safety features, and they come in hip fabrics, textures and colors.



Most new electric blankets come with temperature sensors that automatically warm the coldest parts of your body, and they prevent the blanket from overheating. Electric blankets and mattress pads are less bulky than they were in the past, and their wires are hidden.

When buying electric bedding,

look for a label from a trusted product safety testing organization. Do not leave the bedding on overnight unless it is specifically designed for it. Instead, turn your blanket or pad on about 20 minutes before bedtime and turn it off

when you get in.

Never leave the devices unattended with the heat on.

Buy a product with an auto-off feature, and check it for defects or damage before plugging it in. Electric blankets more than 10 years old should not be used, because they are a fire hazard. ■

Use Your Space Heater Safely!

If the cooler temperatures at night chill you in the morning, be sure to keep safety in mind as you attempt to “warm up.”

If you decide to use a space heater, plug it directly into the wall outlet.

Avoid using extension cords or power strips. They can lead to fire hazards.

Keep papers and flammable items away from all heat-generating sources.

Turn off space heaters before you leave the area.

Keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Install smoke detectors on every floor of the house, and change the batteries at least once a year. ■

