、HOW TO CUT COOLING COSTS WITHOUT SACRIFICING COMFORT

　　If this summer’s going to be anything like last summer, you can expect warm, muggy weather and high electric bills. As summer temperatures continue to break records, so do our energy bills. While there are many solutions for cutting cooling costs, most options are quite expensive. Not everyone can invest in solar panels, new energy-efficient appliances, and other fancy equipment. Keep in mind, however, that these energy-saving devices usually pay for themselves over the course of their lifespan. Luckily, you can significantly cut cooling costs by simply changing some habits and becoming more efficient.

　　1.USE FANS

　　According to the U.S. Energy Department, you can raise the thermostat 4 degrees without feeling a difference in comfort if you are in a room with a ceiling fan. In the winter, you can flip the black switch at its base to reverse the blades and push down warm air from the ceiling. Ceiling fans only cost about 2 cents per hour to run, much lower than what it costs to use your air conditioner. You can also use floor fans, table fans, window fans, and fans mounted to walls. The wind-chill effect makes us feel cooler without actually cooling the room, so make sure you turn off fans before leaving the room. Use bathroom exhaust fans when bathing or showering to help remove unwanted heat and humidity.

　　2.COOK AND RUN LARGE APPLIANCES DURING COOLER HOURS

　　Run your ovens, washers, dryers, dishwashers, and other heat-producing appliances during the cooler hours of the day. Consider cooking your meals ahead of time so you aren’t cooking as much in the daytime. Here are 50 cold food recipes for hot weather days. When cooking, use the range hood to clear the kitchen of heat and humidity.

　　3.USE A PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT AND SET IT AS HIGH AS IS COMFORTABLE

　　If you don’t have a programmable thermostat, consider investing in one. There are several different makes and models to choose from, but they all add the advantage of being able to automatically set the temperature for different days and times of the week. Learn how to use your programmable thermostat properly for maximum energy savings. According to the Energy Department, you can save around 10% a year on heating and cooling costs by simply setting your thermostat back 7°–10°F for 8 hours a day from its normal setting. Just make sure that your thermostat isn’t near any heat sources, such as sunlight, lamps, and appliances. You may also be interested in smart thermostats and thermostats with Wi-Fi capabilities. These thermostats allow you to control the temperature of your home using a smartphone or other internet-connected device. Consider upgrading some other things in your home, including light bulbs, locks, and homeowners insurance.

　　4.SEAL AIR LEAKS

　　Learn how to find air leaks around your doors, window, and where utilities enter the home. The three most common ways to find air leaks are: Visual inspection – look for visible holes, gaps, and cracks. Physical inspection – use a lit incense stick/smoke pencil, thin piece of toilet paper, or your hand to feel for drafts and air movement around suspected leaks.Energy audit – A certified technician will conduct a thorough and comprehensive assessment of your home’s energy use, examining each and every room as well as your past utility bills. A blower door test will pressurize the inside of the building in order reveal even the smallest of leaks. Additionally, thermographic scans and infrared photography can show exactly where you are losing the most energy. Learn how to perform your own DIY home energy evaluation. When you find an air leak, you can most likely seal it with caulk or weatherstripping. The most common air leaks can be found in your attic, basement, garage, and ductwork.

　　5.KEEP WINDOWS AND DRAPES CLOSED ON HOT, SUNNY DAYS

　　Use light colored blinds and drapes to reflect the sun’s rays away from your home. You may also want to buy window solar screens, which block up to 90% of the sun’s heat-producing rays. Another option for blocking solar rays is with operable window coverings, such as shades, blinds, curtains or shutters. Learn more about window treatments for energy savings.

　　6.MAINTAIN YOUR AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM

　　Make sure you are checking your air conditioning filter every 30 days and waiting no longer than 3 months to replace it. If you have an outdoor heat pump, clear away any dirt or debris that may have gathered around it and make sure there is a minimum 24-inch clearance around the entire unit. Periodically spray the outside unit with a garden hose (make sure the unit is turned off first), being careful not to bend any of the sensitive condenser fins. And don’t forget to schedule annual AC maintenance from a qualified technician. In addition to these 6 easy ways to cut your cooling costs, consider signing up for a home maintenance plan for twice-yearly HVAC tune-ups, discounts on repairs, and much more.

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