Tips for Using a Water Heater to Save Energy and Cost

Even if you're not ready to replace your water heater with a new energy efficient model, you can still do things to save water, energy, and cost.

Water heaters come in all types and sizes. There are natural gas, propane, oil, electric, [tankless](https://www.thespruce.com/tankless-water-heaters-1824903) and [solar models](http://www.seia.org/). They all vary in terms of first cost and operating costs. Tankless models provide on-demand [hot water](https://www.thespruce.com/water-heater-problem-no-hot-water-4103882) but cost 2 to 3 times as much as a standard gas model water heater.

No matter what type you have, some things will remain pretty typical in terms of how you can reduce your expenses in operating the water heater. Let's take a look at some money and energy saving tips.

Water Heater Blanket - Insulate Your Water Heater

When your water heater is not being used it is still storing hot water. And that's when it can lose heat through the walls of the tank if they are not well insulated. This loss is called standby loss since it is heat lost while the heater is standing by for use. It's the same concept as why you use an insulated travel coffee mug.

You can save 4% to 9% of your water heating bill and reduce stand by heat loss by 25% to 50% if you have an older water heater just by putting a sweater on it.

Older water heaters may not have come with an efficient amount of tank insulation. To see if your tank is a good candidate for a jacket, just touch it. It should not feel warm. If it does then the tank is not well insulated and a good candidate for this easy project. Look for a blanket with an R-5 to R-10 rating.

When installing, make sure to cut out areas so you can see safety markings and manufacturer data, thermostats and access covers. Leave a 2" clear cutout around the gas valve and access door to the burner.

Reduce Your Water Usage and Hot Water Demand

The easiest way to reduce your hot water expense is to use less hot water. There are some pretty easy ways to do this without sacrificing the civilized convenience of hot water which is good as I'm not an advocate of cold showers. Sometimes a leaky faucet can waste water, other times an old showerhead is the culprit. Let's take a quick look at some easy ways to reduce hot water usage in your home:

Leaking Water Heater

Let's start with the obvious; if your water heater is leaking it [needs to be replaced](https://www.thespruce.com/replacing-a-water-heater-1824920). You're not going to fix it.

Leaking Faucet

Leaky faucets can waste many gallons of water a month. How you repair them depends on the type you have. These tutorials will show you how to repair a [cartridge type](https://www.thespruce.com/repair-a-two-handle-cartridge-faucet-1824887), a [compression washer](https://www.thespruce.com/repairing-a-compression-washer-faucet-1824888),​ and a ball type faucet.

Low Flow Shower Heads

Pre-1992 showers heads can use a wasteful 6 to 10 gallons per minute (GPM). Current models provide a comfortable shower with only 2.2 GPM. Changing to a [low flow shower head](https://www.thespruce.com/tankless-water-heaters-1824903) is a great and easy way to save hot water.

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