# Tips for Home Heating and Cooling Efficiency

**As energy pri­ces rise, most homeowners are concerned about keeping heating and cooling costs down. Here are some tips to help keep those energy bills under­ control, starting with the thermostat:**

* Protect the thermostat for your heating or cooling system from anything that would cause it to give a false reading. If the thermostat is in a draft, misplaced on a cold outside wall, or too close to a heat-producing register, its accuracy will be compromised.
* If you won't be home for a few days, turn the thermostat to its lowest setting. If there's no danger of pipes freezing or other household items being damaged, turn the heating system off completely.
* Install a thermostat timer to save fuel and money. The timer can be set to automatically raise and lower the temperature during peak and off-hours.
* Avoid constant thermostat adjustments, as they can waste fuel. When coming into the house after the thermostat has been turned down, don't set it higher than the desired temperature. Setting the thermostat up very high generally will not cause the temperature to reach the desired level any faster.
* One heating adjustment you should make, however, is a reduction in the thermostat setting before you go to bed every night. Cutting back for several hours can make a big difference in fuel consumption.
* Reduce the thermostat setting when you have a large group of people in your home. People generate heat, and a party can quickly raise the temperature.

**Next, we'll look at adjustments you can make to windows, vents and other parts of the house to save money on heating and cooling.**

* Close the draperies over large windows and glass doors to form a barrier against heat loss during the winter and heat gain during the summer.
* If you have room air conditioners, close all heating system vents so the cool air isn't wasted.
* If your home has rooms that are seldom or never used, close the vents in these rooms and shut the doors most of the time. Make sure the rooms get enough heat to prevent mildew from growing or contents being damaged.
* Aim the vents of room air conditioners upward for better air circulation; cold air naturally settles downward. On central air conditioning systems, adjust the registers so the air is blowing up.
* Make sure the outside portion of an air conditioning system is not in direct sunlight or blocked from free airflow.
* Keep the fireplace damper closed except when you have a fire going. Otherwise, updrafts will suck heated air out through the chimney.
* Maintain proper humidity. A house that's too dry can feel uncomfortably cold even when the temperature setting is correct.

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