

# These 7 Easy Energy-Saving Hacks Can Save Consumers Hundreds of Dollars Every Year

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According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average American's monthly residential electric bill is [\\$114.03](#). That's almost \$1,400 a year. Consumers could easily reduce that expense—and their carbon footprint—with a few simple energy-saving hacks, but according to a recent [survey](#) conducted by SaveOnEnergy, the vast majority of Americans are doing no such thing.

The survey's authors ask, "If someone offered you \$100 for simply unplugging something when you weren't using it, would you do it?" Apparently, the answer is a resounding "no." They write:

Although appliances and lighting options are now held to more strict guidelines, many Americans are still using old, inefficient models in their home. This leads to wasted energy and money. Every year, the average American spends \$1,460 on electricity and \$421 on natural gas. And with prices for electricity predicted to rise about 2 percent each year through 2018, the energy changes we make within our homes [can make a big difference](#).

Perhaps part of the reason for all this wasted money is that people simply find it hard to change the status quo in their own households—and that includes daily routines that collectively can have a significant impact on the environment, from leaving computers on all night to letting leaky faucets drip for weeks at a time.

"Humans are [creatures of habit and routine](#)," says psychologist John Grohol. "I think it's fairly difficult for people at all ages to change their routines. People simply get comfortable and set in their ways because those ways are familiar to them."

Dr. Grohol, who founded the online mental health social network PsychCentral.com, asserts that most people generally can't make significant changes "without serious effort and time." Sure, replacing an old, energy-hogging refrigerator is a pretty major task, but there are several smaller, easier changes that can be done around the house that can have a outsized impact on both the environment and our wallets.

Here are seven ways to save hundreds of dollars every year with simple actions you really should have been doing all along.

## **1. Caulk the cracks in your windows and doors.**

Weatherstripping doors and windows is a relatively easy way to reduce your utility bill. According to the Department of Energy, air sealing a drafty house can save [more than 20 percent](#) on heating and cooling bills.

For non-movable components like windows that don't open, caulking is a quick and easy way to eliminate air leaks. For doors and openable windows, felt is inexpensive and easy to install.

Yet this simple energy hack is little used: The survey found that more than half of Americans haven't closed their home off to outside air. The result is a bigger carbon footprint—and literally throwing up to \$200 every year out the window.

[Check out](#) the Department of Energy's "Energy Lifhack" guide to weatherstripping your home.

## **2. Get energy efficient bulbs.**

According to the Department of Energy, energy efficient bulbs typically use about 25-80 percent less energy than traditional incandescent ones and can last up to 25 times longer. But only half of Americans have made the switch, according to the survey.

Perhaps one reason energy efficient bulbs face some resistance is the misconception that LED and CFL bulbs have special disposal requirements. In fact, these bulbs contain no harmful chemicals and don't need any special handling—and they can easily be [recycled](#).

When looking for energy efficient bulbs, look for ones that have received the Department of Energy's Energy Star certification. "Bulbs that earn the label are [independently certified](#) to ensure they deliver on brightness and color, and shine light where you want it," the agency says.

The survey authors offer a comparison between a traditional 60-watt bulb and the equivalent LED or CFL bulb:

- 1 60-watt bulb on for two hours each day = \$5 per year
- 45 60-watt bulbs on for two hours each day = \$225 per year
- 1 energy-saving bulb on for two hours each day = \$1 per year
- 45 energy-saving bulbs on for two hours each day = \$45 per year

The good news is that the younger generation is apparently more interested in this energy hack: More than 60 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds replaced their bulbs with energy savers—the only age group that replaced their bulbs more than those who did not.

### **3. Unplug your printer.**

Some electronic devices drain power when they're plugged in and turned off and on "standby power." One of the biggest so-called energy vampires is your printer. On average, a plugged-in, turned-off printer uses 131.07 watts of standby power.

Shockingly, almost 90 percent of Americans don't unplug their printers—and don't save about \$130 every year.

So unplug your printer when you're not using it. And while you're at it turn off the "test page mode," which wastes toner and paper.

### **4. Lower your water heater temperature.**

If you lower the temperature of your water heater from 140 to 120 degrees, you can save up to hundreds of dollars every year. There's little benefit to having that extra 20 degree difference.

### **5. Do cold water washes.**

Heating water accounts for about 90 percent of the energy needed to run a washing machine. So choose cold water washing, which doesn't change the cleanliness of your clothes and saves you around \$60 per year or more.

### **6. Fix that leaky faucet.**

Dripping taps are not just annoying, they're a huge waste of clean water. Just one leaky faucet dripping at 5 drops per minute wastes around 170 gallons of water per year. Also it can add a cost of \$35 annually to your water bill. Check this [calculator](#) to learn more about water waste from drips.

### **7. Turn off your computer.**

Some argue that leaving your computer on sleep mode when you're not using it, as opposed to shutting it down completely, is better for the life of the device. But according to LifeHacker.com, the idea that regularly shutting down your computer somehow harms it is a [myth](#).

In fact, leaving your computer in idle or sleep mode needlessly consumes electricity, though sleep mode is the better option of the two. Desktops use around 75 watts when idle, compared to 21 watts when asleep. Notebooks use about 15.77 watts when sleeping. If you have three computers, simply putting them in sleep mode rather than idle will save over \$150 in electric bills per year. But the best and easiest way to make your computer stop being an energy hog is to simply power it down completely when you go to bed.

According to the survey, the majority of Americans (60 percent), don't shut down their computers—and don't save up to \$168.28 every year because of it.

If letting your computer run 24/7 is a habit you're simply not going to break, you could at least donate its processing power when you're not using it to [SETI@home](#), a scientific experiment based at UC Berkeley that uses internet-connected computers in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. You can participate by running a free program that downloads and analyzes radio telescope data.

If you don't want to help save Earth's environment, maybe your computer can find an alien civilization that will welcome all the climate refugees your inaction helped to create.

*(h/t Vince Nero; graphics courtesy [SaveOnEnergy](#))*

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