



# 101

**Tips for an energy  
efficient lifestyle**

2022 edition

---

## Energy 101

### Tips for an energy efficient lifestyle

Severn Wye's expert energy savers have put together this bumper list of energy efficiency 'life hacks' to help you make small changes that make a big difference to how you use energy at home.

We've split the tips into three sections, to give you a path to follow on your energy efficiency journey: Getting Started, Going Further, and Pro Tips to bring out the keen green in you!

#### ! Handle with care

Along the way you'll find some tips that you should 'handle with care,' marked with an exclamation mark. These come with a little extra advice. Some of these tips might need a bit of practice to get right, or you'll need to weigh up the pros and cons to ensure you stay healthy and safe while following them.

# Getting started

If you're new to energy efficiency, these tips are a great place to start. Most of these tips are either free or inexpensive to put into action, with little preparation or prior knowledge required.

## Heating

- 1 Move furniture away from radiators to let heat circulate around the room.
- 2 Clothes or towels on radiators will reduce the heat output. If you have to dry them this way, remove them as soon as they're dry.
- 3 If you have a radiator underneath a window, you can push long curtains behind the radiator to prevent heat escaping through the glass.
- 4 Pull curtains at dusk to avoid losing heat through your windows.
- 5 Not all rooms need to be set at the same temperature or need to be heated at the same time. For example, bedrooms and hallways can be cooler than your main living area.
- 6 Set your heating to turn off a short time before you go to bed or leave the house. Once you've mastered this, you can experiment with increasing the 'off' time.
- 7 If your radiators feel cold at the top, they might need bleeding.
- 8 Ensure thermostatic radiator valves are not covered, or they won't be able to respond to the room temperature.
- ! 9 Put on more layers or your favourite cosy sweater or an extra pair of socks rather than the heating, especially for short periods.
- ! 10 Try reducing temperature settings in each room by half a degree or more (in less frequently used rooms).
- ! 11 Use hot water bottles to preheat a bed or a chair, but don't sleep with them!

## Insulation and ventilation

- 12 A thick curtain behind the front door will stop heat escaping
- 13 Keyhole covers are a simple way to reduce unnecessary draughts.
- 14 Covers and brushes for letterboxes help reduce draughts and heat loss.
- 15 If you have bare floors consider rugs, especially by seating, where your feet will be stationary for longer.
- ! 16 On very hot, sunny days, consider closing the curtains during the day on the side of the building that the sun is heating.
- ! 17 Closing the windows on the sunny side of the house and opening the windows on the shaded side reduces the hot air coming in and helps you avoid using electric fans.
- ! 18 Night cooling can help reduce overheating in the summer. Open windows (if secure) and loft hatches to help heat escape.
- 19 Insulate your hot water cylinder with a couple of 80mm jackets.

## Lighting

- 20 Daylight is free! Open the curtains and use as much natural light as possible instead of paying for it.
- 21 Make sure all the lights throughout your home are LED - start with bulbs that are on more frequently first.
- 22 Low energy bulbs don't cost extra to warm up so even if you're out of the room for a few minutes, get into the habit of turning them off.

- 23 Timer plugs are a great way of making sure lamps aren't on during the day or overnight, and save standby energy by switching off at the plug.

## Bathroom

- 24 Apply for a free water saving pack at [savewatersavemoney.co.uk](http://savewatersavemoney.co.uk) – the contents will help you save water and energy.
- 25 Try to reduce your shower time by 30-60 seconds. It's easy to zone out in the shower, but long showers use a lot of energy.
- 26 Replace your baths with short showers as they use a lot less water.
- 27 When you brush your teeth or shave, don't leave the tap running.
- 28 Towel-dry your hair to reduce hair drier use.
- 29 Watch out for dripping taps and toilets and make sure they are repaired.

## Kitchen

- 30 Only boil as much water as you need.
- 31 Always keep the heat in your saucepans by putting lids on them.
- 32 Swap your electric mixer or whisk for a manual utensil wherever possible.
- 33 Choose the right gas ring/hob for your pan; flames shouldn't come around the side of your saucepan.
- 34 Cut food into smaller pieces so it cooks more quickly.
- 35 Opening the oven loses heat, so try to check your food through the glass door of the oven where possible.
- ! 36 Turn the oven off a few minutes early and use the residual heat to finish cooking.
- ! 37 Turn stove tops off a few minutes before the end of cooking, especially if using electric hobs which retain their heat.
- 38 Don't put hot or warm food straight into the fridge or freezer.
- 39 For each minute open, it can take up to three minutes for fridges and freezers to regain their lower temperature, so act fast!
- 40 Defrost food in the fridge. Your fridge will use less energy keeping cool while your food is defrosting, although it can take longer than you think to thaw completely.
- 41 Dishwashers are normally more efficient than washing up by hand as they cycle a small amount of hot water. Set to wash overnight if you are on an Economy 7 tariff.
- 42 Wait until you have a full load before putting the dishwasher on.
- 43 Put the plug in the sink when washing hands or dishes to save water.

## Laundry and Appliances

- 44 Try shorter wash programmes on your washing machine for standard loads.
- 45 Wash at the lowest temperature that gets your clothes clean.
- 46 Hang clothes on hangers when drying to reduce ironing time.
- 47 If you have an outside space, dry clothes on a line instead of using a tumble dryer.
- 48 Using rechargeable batteries instead of disposable ones reduces the money you spend on over-the-counter energy!
- 49 Shut down your computer or laptop when you will be away for more than a short while.

## Transport

- 50 Correct tyre pressures improve fuel efficiency and reduce tyre wear.
- 51 Declutter your vehicle (less weight equals increased fuel efficiency).
- 52 Cycle or walk where you can – for short, local, solo journeys you will often find that cycling is as quick as driving.

# Going further

These tips are aimed at households that want to do a bit extra to become as energy efficient as possible. They might include a bit more investment or research to find out what's best for your home.

## Heating

- 53 Experiment with setting your heating to turn on a few minutes later than usual, then try a few minutes more. Try 3 minutes - do you notice the difference?
- 54 It's generally better to keep the heating off when you don't need it. To keep an eye on whether it's running overnight or when you're out, you could try using a smart meter app.
- 55 If you have storage heaters check the next day forecast and set the input appropriately. Make sure units in unused rooms stay off.
- 56 Install reflective panels behind radiators on external walls, to reflect heat back into the room.
- 57 Consider a radiator shelf to help push the warm air into the room.
- 58 Insulate hot water and heating pipes to prevent heat loss.
- 59 If you have storage heaters, you could turn the output right down before going out to reduce energy waste.
- 60 Are all your radiators getting warm? Correctly balancing the radiators can improve the heating system efficiency. Search online for 'how to' guides.

## Insulation and Ventilation

- 61 Fill in gaps around old or ageing windows with draught-proofing material.
- 62 Insulate your loft. It is recommended that you have 400mm of loft insulation installed, but anything over 150mm is adequate. Check out our Insulation guide to find out more.
- 63 Insulate and draught proof your loft hatch.
- 64 If you have exposed floorboards, consider draught-proofing between the boards and any gaps between the floor and the skirting boards to help reduce cold draughts.
- 65 A chimney balloon is an effective way to reduce heat loss through draughty chimneys.

## Lighting

- 66 Pick a lighter colour of lampshade to let more light travel around the room – you may need less lamps.
- 67 Lamps with transformers may have standby energy consumption, so it's more efficient to turn them off at the wall.
- 68 Make sure outdoor security lights only come on when you want them to and adjust any timers throughout the year to match daylight hours.
- 69 You can get 'smart' timer plugs that you can set to switch off and on at sunrise and sunset, to automatically save more energy as the days get longer.

## Bathroom

- 70 Water efficient, 'aerated' shower heads can be fitted to most mains showers and give the same experience while using less water and energy.
- ! 71 Are you brave enough to get under the shower as soon as you turn it on, to save water and enjoy the health benefits of a brief cold shower?
- 72 If you have a hot water cylinder, set the hot water thermostat to no higher than 55°C.
- 73 If you have a combi boiler you won't have standing water, so the temperature of your water can be reduced further than if you had a hot water cylinder. Try 40-45°C.
- 74 Flow restrictors on taps could reduce the flow rates down to as low as 4.5 litres per minute.
- 75 Reduce the water flow a bit at the stop tap or water meter. Experiment with what level works for your home.
- 76 Install water displacement devices in toilet cisterns. Less space in your tank means less space for water to fill, reducing your water usage. Examples include flush savers and Hippo or Buffalo bags.

## Kitchen

- 77 Re-use water from washing veggies to water your houseplants.
- 78 If you don't use clocks on microwaves and ovens, you can turn these appliances off at the wall altogether when not in use.
- 79 Try batch cooking and meal planning to make the most of the cooking energy (freezing extra portions reduces the energy your freezer uses, too).
- ! 80 When you've finished using the oven, open the door to let the heat out and heat the room a little.
- 81 Try using a slow cooker, instead of a conventional oven as they can be used for stewing up leftovers or cheaper cuts of meat. They are especially useful if you have a 'cheaper time of day' tariff or solar panels that provide daytime electricity.
- ! 82 Adjust your fridge temperature to suit your needs. A higher temperature setting reduces energy use, but food won't last as long.
- 83 Dust condenser coils on your fridge or freezer to improve efficiency.
- 84 Defrost fridges and freezers regularly to remove any ice build-up so they run more efficiently.
- 85 Try not to place your fridge or freezer in direct sunlight or near ovens or radiators, as it will have to work harder to keep cool.

## Laundry and Appliances

- 86 Try putting the washing machine on an extra spin to help remove water before drying.
- 87 Eco balls in tumble dryers create air gaps and allow heat to move freely, drying clothes more quickly.
- 88 If you don't have eco balls, try throwing in a dry towel to increase the surface area in the drum.
- 89 Fully charged devices will still use energy, so it's best to unplug them as soon as your device is charged (and not to charge overnight).

## Transport

- 90 If you're not making a lot of journeys, only half fill your tank. This way you are carrying less weight and your car can be more fuel efficient.



# Pro tips

These are the tips for the real experts, the people who want to do everything they can to make their home as energy efficient as possible and in some cases don't mind spending a bit of time or money to make this happen.

## Heating

- 91 If your property takes a long time to heat up (or you have a heat pump), use 'setback' temperatures over night or when you are away, instead of switching the heating off. If the setback temperature is right for your home, the heating will be off whilst you're away for a normal length of time, but prevented from dropping too low. To start with, try setting the heating at 16 degrees.
- 92 Consider programmable thermostatic radiator valves for rooms used less frequently.
- 93 Ensure your condensing boiler is running in 'condensing mode' by reducing the flow temperature. Review the boiler manual for advice on setting your condensing boiler correctly.

## Insulation and Ventilation

- 94 Ventilation and internal air quality is important even in winter. For a few minutes, turn off heating, open all the windows and let the cold air flow in. Then close the windows and turn all the heating on. This flushes out humid air and replaces it with fresh air. Try this just before you are about to leave the house and avoid the chill!
- 95 Got a draughty cat flap? Consider plastic insulation strips or an insulated cat flap when it next needs to be replaced.

## Kitchen

- 96 Aim to keep the fridge 75% full. Consider reusing a plastic bottle filled with water to fill the fridge if you don't use all the space.
- 97 A full freezer is more efficient and loses less cold air when opened. Consider reusing plastic drinks bottles in a partly filled freezer, to reduce the amount of empty space.

## Laundry

- 98 If you have an Economy 7 tariff, wash your clothes overnight (if possible), while your electricity is cheaper.
- 99 Hang really creased clothes in the bathroom while showering to help reduce ironing time.

## Transport

- 100 If you have an electric car, consider the different EV and time of day tariffs from different energy suppliers.
- 101 If you have an electric car, use the preheat or precool function using the mains instead of the battery.



Got any other life hacks or tips on reducing what you use? Tweet us @Severn\_Wye and we can add it to our list!



01452 835060



info@severnwyenergy.org.uk



severnwyenergy.org.uk



**severn wye**

Severn Wye Energy Agency is a not-for-profit company (no. 03830608) and charity (no. 1083812). We help households reduce their energy costs and make their homes more energy efficient.

Copyright © 2022 Severn Wye Energy Agency