



Canny tips to cut costs and energy in your home

by Chris Chappell of Energy Alton

Is there a box in your kitchen or utility room that is secretly stealing your electricity?

When appliance instructions describe their 'eco' cycle, we assume they mean the one that uses least power and water. But looking at my own and some friends' 'consumption' values, we find some do, and some don't!

So, if you want to get your home nearer to net zero, cut your electricity bill and save more oil/gas fields, check out my tips below.

They cost NOTHING to implement. It's not lowering your standards, it's avoiding extravagance!

1. Washing machines do an excellent wash in 30 or even 15 mins. Experiment: try different temperatures, with cold water, 20 or 30 degrees. The lower the temperature the less electricity needed. Use stain remover first rather than put a whole load on a high wash. Adjust to a higher spin (1400 or 1200 rpm) to save the tumble drier or if you can't dry washing outdoors. NB check your garment guide first. Keep the intense cycles for the weekly towels, really grubby stuff or if someone is infected. Keep the soap drawer and drum spotless- any gunge means the machine must work harder and that wastes energy. Empty the drain at the bottom regularly for the same reason. Do look at your appliance instructions for water and electric use per cycle; 'eco' is not necessarily the least! And children don't start to sweat till they hit puberty- you don't need to wash their complete outfit everyday; once a week for 'outer layers' like jumpers, shirts and trousers, unless really dirty. Many mud marks can be rubbed off when the mud has dried.

2. Dishwashers. They don't need a 2 or 3 hour wash to get dishes clean. Experiment: try a 30 min wash. Dunk the dishes in a bowl of cold water for a few minutes if they look dirty (not under a running tap). Never try to wash away grease with a hot wash - the plumbers will hate you! Use soft paper (kitchen roll or newspaper) to wipe away all the grease and pop the paper in the bin. Do look at your appliance instructions for water and electric use per cycle; 'eco' is not necessarily the least. My old Bosch uses least of both on the 'quick' cycle, not the 'eco' cycle.

3. Don't leave an immersion heater on 24/7. Just turn it on for two hours as needed. Once or twice a week may be enough.

4. Cooking - only use the oven when you can fill it with 3 or more dishes. Freeze portions. Keep lids on saucepans and only boil what you need in a kettle. Cook all veg together in a microwave, steamer or slow cooker.

5. Freezer. Defrost every 3 months / as needed; otherwise, it has to work harder.

6. Tumble driers - Clean the filter often, otherwise it clogs up the workings. Try to do without it or finish off indoors. Use a curtain, shower or bath pole near an open window to hang shirts etc - and shut the door.

7. Water meters are free and save you money if you have more bedrooms than people. Save where you can. Check your meter bill - aim for 50 litres pp or less per day.

8. Charge your mobile phone, iPad or tablet for 2-3 hours only; overnight charging wastes energy. Turn off all appliances, TV etc at the mains when not in use.

9. Shower - A daily shower is not essential. A good wash at the sink is fine. If you wake up hot and sweaty, reduce the bedroom temperature. Cool rooms help us sleep better.

10. Damp - keep it out! Open windows or use extractor fans and shut doors on wet rooms (ie laundry drying/ cooking/ showering). A damp home is a cold home. If you have an electric dehumidifier something is wrong. Trace the source of the problem and sort it.

For tailored advice for your own home contact our Home Energy Support Team Alton (HESTA)- our volunteers will be delighted to give you the benefit of their experience in insulation, solar panels, heat pumps etc.

<https://energyalton.org.uk/energy-advice/home-energy-support-team-alton-hesta/>

Let us know how you get on and how we can help you further. It's good to share tips!

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