

# QUICK GUIDE TO *Green Living*



Source: <http://yourenergysavings.gov.au/guides>

You don't have to be a home owner to make your household more energy and water efficient. Nearly a third of Australians live in rented accommodation and while there are limitations on what you can change in your rented home, there are ways to reduce your bills and improve efficiency, even if solar panels and rainwater tanks aren't an option. In fact, some of the most effective steps you can take to save energy, water and waste focus on making small changes to your daily habits with no financial cost to you at all.

There are lots of simple, inexpensive things you can do to save money without sacrificing comfort. Packed with practical tips, this guide will show you where you're using water and energy, and offer a range of suggestions on ways you can reduce these and save money.

## **How small steps can add up to big savings:**

The following simple actions could save a household of four more than \$870 over the course of a year.

- Washing clothes in cold water rather than hot could save around **\$124** a year.
- If you've got a second fridge, getting rid of it could save around **\$155** a year.
- Switching off the game console after use could save up to **\$175** a year.
- Using the clothesline instead of the dryer once a week could save **\$70** a year.
- Installing a water-efficient showerhead could save you up to **\$350** a year on energy and water.

*These amounts are a guide only. Exact savings will vary depending on the age of your appliances, the size of your home, the climatic zone you live in and the energy prices you pay.*

## **Energy saving ideas for the whole house**

### **Choose energy-efficient appliances**

Appliances account for up to 30% of your home energy use, so the type of appliances you choose and the way you use them makes a big difference to your energy consumption and bills. If you're in the market for a new appliance, consider purchasing an energy-efficient model. Look for the Energy Rating Label to determine how energy efficient it is—the more stars the more energy and money you can save. You can also estimate the running costs of appliances which is particularly useful for products that don't carry the Energy Rating Label to see how much they will cost you each year and over the life of the product. A high star-rated model can cost a little more, but choosing a cheaper less efficient product could end up costing more in the long run.

Landlords may be eligible for a rebate if they need to replace an appliance in your home. Items that may be covered include showerheads, toilets, hot water systems and fridges, so it's worth doing your research to ensure both parties can benefit from the potential savings on purchase price and energy costs.

## **Heating and Cooling**

When you consider that around 40 per cent of home energy use goes to heating and cooling, it's not hard to see how making small changes to your air conditioning and heating habits can have a major impact on your energy bills.

## Controlling your climate:

In winter, set your heating thermostat between 18 to 20 degrees Celsius. In summer, set your cooling thermostat between 25 to 27 degrees Celsius. For every degree you increase your heating and cooling you increase your energy use by around 5 to 10 per cent. When you've got the air conditioner or heater on, close off the rooms you're not using by shutting internal doors. Once you've found the temperature that you're comfortable with, dress for the season. Perhaps grabbing a warmer jumper or using a throw rug is all you need to avoid turning the thermostat up a degree or two.

- **Sealing gaps and cracks.** By draught-proofing your home and stopping heated and cooled air leaking out through gaps and cracks, you could cut your energy bill by up to 25 per cent. Try a draught 'snake' to stop air escaping under doors and use weather seals for windows, floorboards, skirting boards, skylights and cornices. You can also stop heat rising into your ceiling by fitting covers over downlights and vents. Check with your landlord before fitting any weather seals or covers.
- **Being window wise.** Improve window efficiency and prevent heat loss with snug-fitting curtains and blinds that trap a layer of still air next to the window. You can also open curtains in winter to let the sun in during the day and close them before it gets dark. Similarly, it's a good idea to close curtains during the hottest part of the day in summer.
- **Installing temporary glazing.** You can insulate your windows cheaply with a transparent glazing film. The film helps reduce heat gain and loss. Take a look online for providers and check with your landlord before going ahead.
- **Harnessing the breeze.** In summer, open up your home in the cooler times of the morning or evening to let the breeze in. Make the most of natural airflow by opening low-positioned windows to bring in the breeze and opening high windows to let the hot air out.
- **Choosing the fan over the air conditioner.** Ceiling and pedestal fans cost around two cents per hour of operation and produce far fewer greenhouse gases than air conditioners. Fans help to circulate air and can be used to improve the effectiveness of air cooling systems as well as to circulate hot air and improve your heating efficiency in winter.

## Lighting

- Lighting in homes consumes between 8 and 15 per cent of the average household electricity budget. By switching to energy-efficient lighting and using lights efficiently you could halve your lighting costs.
- Minimising artificial lighting. Think about how much artificial lighting you need—a desk or standard lamp will provide more focused reading light and be cheaper to run than lighting the whole room. If it's light outside, you can open the curtains or blinds to let natural light in rather than switching on an artificial light. Switching lights off when you leave the room will also save energy.
- Switching to energy-efficient lighting. Replacing old-style incandescent globes with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) or light emitting diodes (LEDs) is an effective way to save on energy costs. CFLs use around 20 per cent of the energy of an incandescent light globe and can last between 4 and 10 times longer.
- Using light furnishings and reflective surfaces. You can reduce your need for artificial lighting by decorating with light-coloured furnishings and by placing mirrors across from windows.

## Hot Water

Hot water accounts for about a quarter of household energy use. Try these ideas to ensure you're only paying for the energy you need.

### Getting the temperature right:

The recommended setting for thermostats is above 60 degrees Celsius on storage hot water systems; or 50 degrees Celsius on instantaneous systems. If you're away for more than a few days, turn off your storage hot water system. When you return, allow plenty of time for the water to heat back up to above 60 degrees Celsius and remain at that temperature for a minimum of 35 minutes to kill any bacteria that may have grown. It could take several hours for the water to heat before you can safely use it. Don't overheat the water as this wastes energy.

### Choosing energy-efficient systems:

Landlords considering the replacement of a hot water system may be eligible for a rebate by opting for an energy-efficient system.

## Standby Power

Many appliances and gadgets, such as phone chargers, game consoles, microwave ovens and stereos continue to draw power when not in use. This standby power can account for 10 per cent of your household electricity use. By switching appliances and gadgets off at the wall when you're finished with them will cut both your energy use and your bills. If it's got a little light or clock, it's using power. Learn more about standby power modes in our Home entertainment and technology guide.

## Save Energy in the Kitchen

It's not just you, your family or your flatmates eating in the kitchen: appliances are big energy guzzlers, but by using appliances wisely you could make some real savings.

- **Fridges and freezers.** The optimal temperature for your fridge is between 3 and 5 degrees Celsius; or between minus 15 and minus 18 degrees Celsius for your freezer. Every degree lower requires 5 per cent more energy. Improve the efficiency of your fridge and freezer by removing any frost build-up in the freezer and leaving a gap of 5–8 centimetres around them for ventilation. If you have a second fridge for entertaining, only turn it on when you need it.
- **Cook and clean with less energy.** Where possible, cook with gas. If you have an electric stove, opt for microwave cooking when suitable. You can also save energy on your kettle and toaster by boiling only as much water as you need and choosing the toaster over the grill when making toast. Wait till you have a full load before running your dishwasher and try scraping your dishes rather than rinsing before loading.

## Save Energy in the Living Room

The living room is a hub of electronic gadgetry. Home entertainment products are responsible for at least 5 per cent of household energy use.

- **Switching off after use.** When you're not using your TV, stereo or game console, switch it off at the wall. Home entertainment products generally have four power modes and can draw power even when not in use. Read our home entertainment and technology guide to learn more.
- **Charging up.** Once you've charged your phone, tablet or computer, unplug it so it's not drawing unnecessary power and driving up your power bills.

## Save Energy in the Laundry

The way you use your laundry appliances can have a big impact on your bills and the environment.

- **Washing.** Save energy and water by using the shortest cycle possible, adjusting your water level to suit the size of the load and waiting till you have enough clothes for a full load. By selecting a cold wash over hot, you could save up to \$124 each year.
- **Drying.** For every load you dry in an electric dryer uses energy and drives up your bills. By using the clothesline instead just one day a week you'll save around \$69 a year.

## Save Energy in the Bedroom

Sleep soundly and save money with these ideas:

- **Staying warm naturally.** On cold nights sleep with a hot water bottle or extra blanket rather than the heater or an electric blanket. Keep the warm air in by shutting your blinds or curtains.
- **Switching off while you sleep.** Avoid wasting energy and money on standby power by switching gadgets off at the wall and charging your phone or computer during the day.

## Consider Green Power

'Green power' is electricity generated by renewable sources such as wind, sun or hydro. By switching to GreenPower you elect to get some or all of your energy from accredited renewable sources and pay a slightly higher price per unit. All you need to do is contact your electricity supplier and ask about GreenPower. You can choose the percentage of your electricity sourced from green power: up to 100 per cent. The GreenPower Program sets the rules and ensures your energy comes from government-accredited sources. Visit GreenPower to learn more about the renewable energy options where you live.

## Water Smart Tips

Being water efficient helps make every drop and dollar count.

- **Consider water-efficient appliances and fixtures.** When buying a new appliance or fixture, consider a water-efficient model. Look for the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) rating. There is also a range of rebates available to you or your landlord for installing or purchasing water-efficient products.
- **Using taps efficiently.** A tap leaking at the rate of one drip per second wastes more than 12,000 litres of water a year. Save water by fixing any leaking taps as soon as possible. You can reduce your water use by installing aerators. Aerators limit water flow and can be fitted to the inside or outside of taps. You may have to check with your landlord before going ahead.

## Save Water in the Bathroom

- **Showering.** By installing a water-efficient showerhead you could save up to \$350 a year on energy and water bills. If you have old inefficient showerheads, try asking your landlord to replace these with water-efficient models as these use around one-third of the water and there are a number of rebates available.

- **Flushing toilets.** When using a dual-flush toilet, opt for the half-flush where appropriate. If your landlord is replacing a single-flush toilet, consider suggesting a water-efficient dual flush model as it could save 51 litres per person daily. If this isn't an option, you could buy a water displacement device or use a plastic bottle filled with water in the cistern to reduce its water capacity.

## Save Water in the Backyard

In Australia we use up to 60 per cent of household water outdoors, but there are things you can do to significantly reduce this.

- **Water smart gardening.** A traditional green lawn can use up to 90 per cent of your gardening water. You can reduce this by setting your mower to cut at 4 centimetres or higher. You can also reduce your garden water use by improving watering practices and choosing water-efficient products.
- **Using greywater.** Use your greywater to use on your non-edible plants by placing a bucket in the shower or by catching rainwater where it falls outside.

## Waste Not, Want Not

On average, Australians throw away around 21 million tonnes of waste per year. By making smarter purchasing decisions and disposing of waste wisely you can reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and the amount of money leaving your wallet for items you don't end up using.

Think before you buy and throw

- **Re-use and recycle.** If you have unwanted goods destined for the bin, consider giving them to friends, hosting a garage sale, donating to op-shops or listing them online. Similarly, before buying new things, check op-shops and online for goods you can give a second life to and save money at the same time. Find nearby recycling facilities with Planet Ark's Recycling Near You.
- **Upcycling.** Reduce landfill and breathe new life into your old items by 'upcycling' them. Upcycling means creating new things from stuff you already own. If you don't know where to start, look online for tips and creative ideas.
- **Collective consumption.** Before splashing out and buying a new lawnmower or ladder, it might be worthwhile checking to see if neighbours and friends are willing to share theirs in exchange for borrowing items you might have. Collective consumption means sharing, swapping, trading or renting goods and is a great way to share resources and save money. There may be collective consumption initiatives in your area—a number of these are springing up online.

## Reduce Chemical, Hazardous and Electronic Waste

- **Changing how you clean.** Avoid exposing yourself to potentially toxic or hazardous elements by making your own cleaning products, or by purchasing lower impact options. You can create cheap and highly effective surface cleaners from bicarbonate of soda, white vinegar, lemon, salt and borax. To learn more check out these spring cleaning tips and these ideas for minimising bathroom toilet and laundry waste.
- **Managing hazardous waste.** Hazardous waste includes things like pesticides, oven cleaners, batteries and compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs). Follow the rules for these and dispose of them correctly. Check out our guide to hazardous waste to learn more.

- **Managing e-waste.** Many electronic items contain harmful substances such as lead and mercury. When items such as your mobile, computer, tablet, or TV come to the end of their useful life, it's important to dispose of them thoughtfully to ensure these substances aren't released into the environment. If they still work well, consider donating them for reuse. If not, drop them off for recycling.

## Minimise Kitchen Waste

In NSW alone, the average household throws away over \$1,000 worth of food a year. By making small changes to the way you buy and use food you can make a big difference to not only your kitchen waste but also your food bills and energy use.

- **Planning.** Minimise food waste by planning your weekly meals and checking in the fridge and pantry before going to the shops. If you live in a share house, think about shopping collectively or getting a box of locally-produced fruit and veggies delivered each week. It's generally cheaper to buy in bulk, and you'll reduce your household's food miles.
- **Creating a feast from leftovers.** Rather than throwing food out, try getting creative with what's already in your fridge and pantry. Jump online to find recipes for inspiration.
- **Packing prudently.** When shopping, you can reduce waste by taking re-usable bags with you and looking for recyclable packaging options.
- **Try composting.** By composting your food scraps you'll not only reduce the amount of organic waste that goes to landfill and produces methane—a harmful greenhouse gas—you'll also create great fertiliser for pot plants or the garden.
- **Starting a worm farm.** You don't need a lot of space to start a worm farm. They can be kept under the sink or in a shady spot on a balcony or in the shed and are a great way to turn your organic kitchen waste into nutrient-rich fertiliser for your plants.
- **Keeping backyard chickens.** Chooks don't just eat your scraps, they also make great pets and of course eggs! Be sure to check with your landlord and local council before going ahead.

## Working with your Household- Family and Flatmates

If you live with your family and want to reduce your household's costs and impacts, get together to consider how to manage tasks and responsibilities. As a renter, you may live in a share house with people who have different household habits and priorities. Consider consulting with your flatmates when you move in to agree on household habits and discuss ways to save energy, water and money.

Repairs, servicing or maintenance, including many energy efficiency improvements, will usually require permission (and finance) from your landlord. Every state and territory has different laws for tenants, so it's important to do your research and ask permission before going ahead with any property changes.

**Some things to keep in mind when approaching your landlord or estate agent to request sustainable improvements include:**

- **Rebates and assistance.** There is a range of government rebates and assistance available to property owners for making sustainable improvements. To assist your request you could do some of the research for your landlord and explore our rebates and assistance section to find what's relevant to your situation.

- **Tax deductions.** Many green property improvements, as well as repairs and maintenance, are tax deductible. You might like to look at the Australian Tax Office's Guide for rental property owners to see which items apply to your household and pass on any good news to your landlord.
- **Investment benefits.** By investing in sustainable improvements, your landlord is increasing the property's value and making it more attractive to future buyers and renters.
- **Make sure you put any requests to your landlord or real-estate agent in writing.** If you need help, take a look online for sample letters or check out the Alternative Technology Association's sample letter at the back of their Renters guide to sustainable living (PDF 2.13MB). It's also a good idea to keep a record of all requests as well as any agreements from your landlord or real estate agent to make changes or improvements.

An outdoor tidy-up to maintain your home's exterior and the health of your garden is a good idea at any time of year. Keep in mind that the peak fire season varies depending on where you live in Australia. Check with the Bureau of Meteorology to find out when the fire risk is highest in your area so you can be well prepared.

Garden waste from seasonal pruning should be chipped, taken to green waste drop-off centres or located safely away from the house. Follow our pointers for tidying up gutters and removing storm and fire hazards and ensure you are bushfire ready no matter what the season.

# For more energy saving tips and resources:

## [www.yourenergysavings.gov.au](http://www.yourenergysavings.gov.au)

Your Energy Savings provides information about saving energy, saving money, reducing your impact and available government assistance. It includes information on programs and financial support available from the Australian Government as well as state and territory governments.

## [www.yourhome.gov.au](http://www.yourhome.gov.au)

Your Home is your guide to building, buying or renovating a home. It shows how to create a comfortable home with low impact on the environment – economical to run, healthier to live in and adaptable to your changing needs.

## [www.geelongsustainability.org.au](http://www.geelongsustainability.org.au)

A dynamic and creative community group focused on sharing information, facilitating education and supporting action. Geelong Sustainability Group's mission is to inform, inspire and connect communities to create a sustainable future and to protect our natural environment.

## [www.twoandfive.org.au](http://www.twoandfive.org.au)

A social enterprise set up to address food insecurity in the Northern Suburbs of Geelong by improving access to affordable, sustainable, fresh and healthy food. This is achieved by providing high-quality fresh produce through production and retail.

## Food Swaps around Geelong

**Turn lettuce into tomatoes! Bring along some of your home grown food, pop it on the swap table, then take whatever you think is a fair exchange.**

### How do they work?

They operate on an honour system, so there's no need to haggle. Most swaps are free to attend. A few request a gold coin donation to cover their opening costs. Depending on location, a few also require/encourage membership of the local neighbourhood house at \$5-10/year.

### What to bring?

Your home grown fruit, vegetables, herbs, seeds, plants, eggs, homemade preserves, seedlings etc. Nothing to swap? Excess produce is usually offered for sale after 10.00 am.

### Benefits:

- Connect with people in your community
- Expand your diet by discovering new foods
- Reduce your food bills
- Play your part in reducing food miles
- Expand your food knowledge
- Get advice on your gardening queries.

## Geelong Food Swap Locations:

1st Saturday	<b>Drysdale</b>	Springdale Neighbourhood Centre 17-21 High Street, Drysdale, 3222	Time:	9:00 - 11:00 am
	<b>Manifold Heights</b>	Manifold Heights Primary School Strachan Ave, Manifold Heights, 3218	Time:	9:30 - 10:30 am
	<b>Eastern Geelong Community Centre</b>	285A McKillop (cnr Humble St). East Geelong, 3219	Time:	9:00 - 11:00 am
2nd Saturday	<b>Belmont</b>	South Barwon Community Centre 33 Mt Pleasant Rd, Belmont, 3216	Time:	9:30 - 11:00 am
	<b>2 &amp; 5</b>	2 & 5 Fresh Food Shop & Cafe Labuan Square, Norlane, 3214	Time:	9:30 - 10:30 am
3rd Saturday	<b>Cloverdale</b>	Cloverdale Community Centre 167-169 Purnell Rd, Corio.	Time:	9:30 - 11:00 am
	<b>Grovedale</b>	Grovedale Community Centre 45 Heyers Rd, Grovedale, 3216	Time:	9:30 - 11:00 am
	<b>Queenscliffe</b>	Queenscliff Neighbourhood Centre Tobin Drive, Queenscliff, 3225	Time:	10:00 - Noon
4th Saturday	<b>Highton</b>	Vitality Cafe, 229 Roslyn Rd, Highton (opp Safeway), 3216	Time:	9.30 - 11.00 am
	<b>St Leonards</b>	Progress Association Hall Murradoc Rd, St Leonards, 3223	Time:	9.00 - 11.00 am