

Energy saving tips for spending more time at home

The global pandemic means that millions of people in Britain and abroad are spending a lot more time at home than we were pre-Covid. We understand that for many of us this means we save on the costs of commuting, but that some of these savings are countered by the costs arising from spending more time at home.

The following are some energy saving tips based on advice from the Energy Saving Trust to help you reduce energy use at home, save money and help reduce carbon emissions whilst working from home. All the savings mentioned are based on the average according to the Energy Saving Trust.

It's important to remember that, whilst taken in isolation, many of the tips contained here may seem insignificant, but taken as a whole, and done consistently over time, all these small changes really can add up to make a real difference.

These are all good habits to get into, along with the other good habits like recycling, and avoiding single-use plastic where you can.

Plus it's well worth remembering that where any of the following involves initial extra cost at the beginning, you don't have to do it all at once – for example if upgrading your lightbulbs to LEDs this could be a process you do a room at a time – starting with the room you use the most.

The advice below is all aimed at the average household, but if you wish to estimate your own household's actual carbon footprint, using this online calculator tool can be a good first step to help you identify your environmental impact and tailor the opportunities for reducing it that best fit your circumstances: <http://www.greensuffolk.org/at-home/carbon-footprint>

Heating

If you're now at home all day you've probably adjusted your programmer so that the heating comes on during the day now. However, it's important not to have it running all day if you don't need it. We're more active during the day and so you may find you're still comfortable without the heating on all the time or as high as in the evenings.

To reduce your energy use further, only heat the rooms you use. If there's only one of you at home, a portable electric heater pointed at your chair for a few hours through the day while you're working might be enough, as opposed to heating the whole house.

You could also try turning the thermostat down degree by degree to find a comfortable temperature – each degree can typically save around £80 a year.



Unplug those chargers



This is a big potential energy saver that you could do straightaway, and could save up to £30 a year.

- Unplug all chargers when not in use, especially any that have display lights, this includes laptop chargers;
- Turn off tablets and consoles as soon as you stop using them, and unplug them too;
- Unplug smaller electronic items such as smartphones as soon as they reach 100%, and don't leave them charging overnight; check the instructions for any appliances you aren't sure about. Some satellite and digital TV recorders may need to be left plugged in so they can keep track of any programmes you want to record.

Find out [which appliances are the biggest energy users in your home](#)

Maximise use of natural light

Lighting our homes makes up about 10-15 per cent of our annual energy bills, according to the Energy Saving Trust.

If you work from home and are able to position your desk near a window or in a room that gets plenty of natural light, this can enable you to keep the lights switched off at least some of the time.

(Natural light can also boost your mood and fight workday blues - perfect during days on lockdown.)

Would the last one to leave the room please turn off the lights?

However, if your desk or living space doesn't benefit from natural light, you will probably find that you have the light switched on much more now that you're at home most of the day – and this will increasingly be the case as we head into the darker winter months.

So if you do need the lights on when working from home, make sure the lights are just switched on when a room is occupied and always switched off when leaving the room and you could save up to £15 a year.

Read the Energy Saving Trust's guide for more [tips on energy efficient lighting](#).

Upgrade to LED lighting

Now might be a good time to consider replacing any inefficient bulbs you still have around the house and investing in upgrades to LEDs instead. You can save up to £3 per year for every traditional halogen bulb you switch to a similarly bright LED bulb, equivalent to around 5kg of CO₂ emissions.

If the average UK household replaced all of their bulbs with LEDs, it would cost about £100 to do, and thereafter save about £35 a year on bills.

Read the Energy Saving Trust's guide for more [tips on energy efficient lighting](#).

Boil just what you need

You may be drinking more hot drinks at home than usual. Don't overfill your kettle – boil the amount of water you need for the number of drinks you are making at the time.

Even if you drink lots of hot drinks during the day, it's still more energy efficient to boil just what you need each time you make a drink rather than fill the kettle at the start of the day and boil too much water. This avoids re-boiling the same water repeatedly and unnecessarily.

This small trick can save around £6 a year.

Make your meals “oven ready”

If you are planning on using the cooker, see if you can batch cook or bake several things at the same time, to take advantage of the energy used to heat it.

Similarly, if you batch cook, freezing the excess and reheating each portion in a microwave when you require it would use less energy than cooking the same meal from scratch every time. And it can help avoid throwing away surplus food that you can't get through – many leftovers can be used in soups and stews.

For more advice about techniques for portioning and storing food to cut waste and cut costs check out our Food Savvy campaign <https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/reduce-your-waste/food-waste>

If it isn't dirty, wash at thirty

You may not be using your washing machine much more than usual, but you can save energy and money by only running it when full, using the eco mode, and washing at 30 degrees whenever possible.

Reduce your washing machine use by just one cycle per week and save £5 a year on energy.



Your dishwasher may be working more at the moment, so it's a good time to make sure you're getting the most out of it by only running it once full, and by using the eco setting.

See this guide from the Energy Saving Trust on [how to save energy when using your washing machine](#).

Solar- and wind-powered, zero-cost, clothes drying technology



Remember when you were going to your place of work every day, and being faced with a choice of taking a gamble on hanging the washing out to dry, or stuffing it all in the tumble dryer? If you're working from home, it can be easier to rescue the laundry in time if a day that promised to be bright and breezy at breakfast starts to look a bit grey and ominous by lunchtime.

Dress warmly

If you're working from home, you can probably dress in warm and comfortable clothing at home without worrying about dress code. It might help you get away with turning the thermostat down one more notch.

Plus if you're rarely wearing your smartest office outfits and suits, you might not need to take them to the dry cleaners quite as often.

Remember to switch off

If you're working from home on IT equipment, switch off when you can to reduce the extra energy consumption resulting from using your IT equipment at home instead of the office.

Make sure you turn off your laptop, and unplug its charger from the mains, when you take each lunchbreak and when you finish work each evening. If you have a separate screen, turn that off at lunch and at the end of your working day too.

Turn off distractions

Make sure that devices such as games consoles that you don't use during the working day are switched off and unplugged. As well as saving energy this can also reduce distractions.

Consider switching energy suppliers

It may be a good time to have a look at your energy bills and match those with how you use energy at home. Perhaps another service provider offers a better deal. See guidance from the Energy Saving Trust on [guidance on switching utility suppliers here](#).

In addition you can find out how the cost of switching your home heating to renewable energy is supported by the [Renewable Heat Incentive RHI](#) scheme. This [Domestic RHI Calculator](#) can help to find out what payments you could make from installing a renewable heating system. If you need to look up your home Energy Performance Certificate, there's a good chance a historic one will already exist [here](#).

Need a grant or loan, or just some further advice?

Suffolk Energy Action (SEA) is a county-wide scheme from Suffolk's councils to help residents save money on energy bills and reduce carbon emissions through home energy efficiency advice and signposting of funding and grants such as the national Energy Companies Obligation (ECO). SEA can be contacted via the helpline number 03456 037686 or the website at <http://www.greensuffolk.org/sea>

The Greener Homes Loan Scheme offers loans of up to £5,000 at 0% APR to help homes cut their energy use through measures such as insulation, boiler upgrades and renewable energy. Call Eastern Savings & Loan Credit Union on 01473 690690.

To find out more about generating your own energy, and reducing your dependency on paying for energy from the Grid, visit <http://www.greensuffolk.org/renewables>

The Government's Green Home Grants provides grants of up to £5,000 towards the cost of installing energy efficient and low-carbon heating improvements in the home, such as added loft insulation, air- and ground-source heat pumps, and solar electric and solar thermal systems:

<https://greenhomesgrant.campaign.gov.uk/>

Worried about a relative or neighbour?



The Warm Homes Healthy People fund is designed to support those most in need of additional help through the winter months. Anyone who has a vulnerable relative or neighbour is urged to help them find out more about what support and assistance might be available to them. Call the helpline number **03456 037686**.

Need more help?

More information about grants and schemes to support those in need of additional help to keep warm is available here:

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency-and-warm-homes/energy-efficiency-help-and-advice/>