

# How To Save Money On Heating Bills

Contributed by Steve Gillman  
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A look at how to save money on heating bills without freezing.  
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The most common suggestion on how to save money on heating bills is to turn down the thermostat. That certainly works, and it is true that you can put on a sweater to keep warm. On the other hand, some people feel the cold more than others, and among all the ways we can save money, should giving up our physical comfort at home be one of them?

{bot\_wrgoogle}Then there are the expensive suggestions on how to save money on heating bills. You can add insulation to your home, for example. You can buy solar panels to reduce the use on your furnace. You can upgrade your heating system to a high-efficiency one. These can all work as well, but they have their problems too.

First of all, you may not have the money to invest right now. More than that though, the arguments for these as money-saving plans are often weak. Suppose you spend \$20,000 to put a solar heating system on your home, and it saves you half of your annual \$1,200 heating cost, or \$600 per year. If you have to finance the system, the interest alone could be more than the \$50 monthly savings, so you aren't likely to ever recoup your costs, let alone save anything.

The point is you have to do the math and consider the real costs (interest paid if financed, or lost interest if paid from money you have in savings). On a solar advocacy website I recently read that a solar hot water system costs "only" \$5,000 and could save 50% of the costs of heating my hot water. Since our hot water probably costs about \$240 annually, that means we would save just \$120 each year. I can make more than that leaving the money in the bank!

Things like insulation are more cost-effective (at least if you are deficient in insulation to start with). But what if you haven't got the money for the big fixes and you like your home to be a warm place? In that case, here are some ways to save money on heating bills without spending much.

- Adjust the registers. Most registers in forced-air systems can be opened or closed a bit. If there are rooms where you don't spend much time, close the vents off partly or completely. This costs nothing.
- Seal air leaks. If you have any drafty areas, find the air leaks and seal them up with caulk. Check around windows and other possible openings to the outside air. A two-dollar tube might be sufficient for any and all leaks. Weather stripping for around leaky doors is only a few dollars.
- Get an electronic thermostat with a timer. These can cost \$100 or more, but they are still one of the cheaper ways to cut your heating bill. Set the timer to turn the heat down at night when you are cozy in bed, to turn it up thirty minutes before you get up, and turn it down again during times when no one is in the house (work days, for example).
- Adjust the thermostat manually. You can accomplish the same thing as the automatic thermostat does if you remember to adjust the heat control manually when you go to sleep or leave the house. The disadvantage is that you'll have to put up with the cold for a few minutes when you wake up or get home. But at least this costs nothing to do.
- Open and close drapes. Open curtains when the sun is shining and you'll notice the heating effect. Close them once they are in the shade or each night.

Finally, though it wouldn't be my first choice, the quickest easiest way how to save money on heating bills is to turn down the heat at all times. If you do decide to go this route, putting on a sweater isn't the only thing you can do to stay comfortable. Cold floors often chill us more than the air, so try wearing warm slippers. Hot tea can warm you up for almost an hour. Sitting wherever the sun comes in is another way to stay comfortable. Or just find another way to save \$20 per month and turn that heat back up.

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