

# Save money and energy by replacing, adjusting home appliances

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Want to save some money and help the planet at the same time? Then take a look at some of the gadgets and appliances in your house. By turning off, adjusting or swapping out some of the devices in your house, you can potentially save hundreds of dollars a year while reducing your carbon footprint.

I've been thinking a lot about conservation and [energy efficiency](#) lately. I've got a 60-year-old house with some fairly old [appliances](#) and equipment. One of our toilets is likely as old as the house. The water heater is more than 25 years old. At around eight years old, our clothes washer is new by comparison, but it's a top-loading model that guzzles up both water and electricity.

Unfortunately, I can't afford to replace everything, so I've been trying to figure out what changes might provide the most bang for the buck. Energy experts I spoke to offered some good suggestions that save lots of [money](#), often without big up-front costs.

In fact, you can save a good deal of money without spending a cent by adjusting the settings on some of your gadgets and other electronics equipment. Televisions, for example, are often set to look extra-bright so they stand out in showrooms. By turning down the brightness, you can save significant power and money.

The same is true with computers. Desktop computers in particular often use 60 watts or more. That may not sound like a lot, but it can add up if

the computer is left on and in active mode 24 hours a day. By allowing your computer to go to sleep when it's not being used, its power consumption can drop to as little as 2 watts or less.

Game consoles, like computers, are often left on, sometimes inadvertently. They tend to be even hungrier for power than desktops, but can be set to automatically shut down when not in use. Consumer Reports estimates that console owners can save more than \$100 a year by just turning off the devices when they're not being used.

In some cases, though, you'll need to buy new equipment to see savings in power and money. The best place to start, experts say, is with your light bulbs. Although power-sipping [compact fluorescent bulbs](#) have been on the market for decades and LEDs have become more popular recently, about 70 percent of U.S. light sockets still have power-hogging incandescent bulbs in them, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. That's a huge target for savings because lighting accounts for about 12 percent of the average consumer's electrical bill and the newer bulbs use less than 30 percent of the [energy](#) consumed by incandescents.

You can now find CFLs for as little as a dollar a bulb and LEDs for less than \$10 a bulb. Just by replacing your five most frequently used bulbs, you can save about \$75 a year, according to the EPA. That means that even if you use the more expensive LED bulbs for those sockets, you can make back your investment in saved energy cost within a year.

Another prime candidate for energy and money savings is your refrigerator. Compared with older models, newer ones use as little as half of the electricity, said Noah Horowitz, a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council. Depending on the size and age of your fridge, you could save well over \$1,000 within five years by swapping it out for a newer model, according to EPA estimates.

The U.S. government's Energy Star program has an online calculator that can help you estimate how much you could save. Users simply plug in the style and approximate size and age of their fridge and the service estimates how much less expensive a new model would cost to operate.

If you don't have the money to buy a new fridge, you can still potentially save money. About a quarter of American homes have a second refrigerator, according to the EPA.

Because those appliances are typically located in uninsulated garages or basements, they have to work that much harder to stay cool in hot summers and can cost hundreds of dollars a year to run. By only plugging in that second fridge when it's absolutely needed - say, right before your Thanksgiving feast or other big occasions - you can save \$250 a year, says the EPA.

One other big appliance to consider replacing is your washing machine. Older models, particularly top-loading ones that are seven or more years old, use two to three times as much energy and water as newer, front-loading ones, Horowitz said. Consumer Reports estimates that today's high-efficiency washers can cost \$1,400 less to run over 10 years than the least-efficient models.

Since our fridge is only three years old and I've already swapped out most of our [light bulbs](#), that's what I'm likely to target next. Looks like it's time to go shopping.

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## ENERGY SAVING RESOURCES:

You'll find some good guidelines and resources online for saving energy and money.

-Refrigerator comparison: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program has a tool that compares the cost of running your current fridge with a new model. [www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?f ... on=refrig.calculator](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?f...on=refrig.calculator)

-Other appliances: EnergyGuide.com offers calculators that allow users to figure out if they'll save money by swapping out things such as their clothes washer, water heater or heating and cooling system: [www.energyguide.com/audit/haintro.asp](http://www.energyguide.com/audit/haintro.asp)

-Light bulb lineup: The Natural Resources Defense Council provides a side-by-side comparison of using incandescent, CFL and LED bulbs: [www.nrdc.org/energy/lightbulbs ... s/lightbulbguide.pdf](http://www.nrdc.org/energy/lightbulbs...s/lightbulbguide.pdf)

-Rebates: Utilities often offer rebates to consumers who buy Energy Star-certified appliances. PG&E in particular provides a list of its rebate programs and applications: [www.pge.com/myhome/saveenergymoney/rebates/](http://www.pge.com/myhome/saveenergymoney/rebates/)

-Savings checklist: Utility company PG&E has also put together a list of energy-saving tips: [www.pge.com/myhome/saveenergym ... /anytime/index.shtml](http://www.pge.com/myhome/saveenergym.../anytime/index.shtml)

-Helpful tips: The NRDC's Noah Horowitz frequently writes on his blog about how consumers can conserve energy and save money: [switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/nhorowitz/](http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/nhorowitz/)

-Room by room: The Energy Star website allows users to walk through a virtual house, offering efficiency tips for particular devices in each room: [www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?f ... ion=popuptool.atHome](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?f...ion=popuptool.atHome)

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