

Mass Energy's Green Home Guide

Energy—how it's made and how it's used—has a tremendous impact on the environment. There are a number of actions you can take to make your home greener and more energy efficient.

Get a no-cost home energy assessment:

In Massachusetts, MassSave® offers no-cost home energy assessments to help you identify opportunities in your home where you can save energy. This assessment will generate a report to let you know where and how you can improve your home's energy efficiency, saving you money immediately. MassSave incentives, like an instant rebate of up to \$2000 toward insulating your home and free energy-saving devices, such as LED lightbulbs, smart power-strips, low-flow showerheads, and programmable thermostats, are available to qualifying homes that have an energy assessment. Visit <http://www.masssave.com/en/residential/home-energy-assessments> today to sign up for your no-cost energy assessment. If you are served by a municipal utility, please contact them directly for details on energy efficiency services that may be available to you.

Seal the Building:

Proper **insulation** is essential to regulating indoor temperature and making your home more energy efficient. Armed with the information from your home energy assessment, insulate the areas of your home through which you are losing the most energy, like your attic, walls, ducts, and pipes. Your Energy Advisor will help you find the most cost-effective way to insulate and take advantage of available rebates. You can also scan your home with a thermal radiometer or infrared scanner, available at most major hardware stores, to identify which areas are leaking the most.

Go solar if you can:

If your house has an unshaded south-facing roof, you might be a good candidate for solar electricity because the cost has come down dramatically in recent years and incentives from the federal and state governments make solar power a good investment. Solar can help you save you money and it's getting easier to finance. To get started, [visit this page](#) on the Mass. Clean Energy Center website.

Drying smart:

Purchase an **ENERGY STAR®** dryer, and consider **line-drying** your laundry in your backyard or basement. A **drying rack** is also a more compact way of drying laundry! Most are collapsible and easy to move, and don't take up too much space to dry an average load of laundry! By skipping the dryer cycle, you will use less energy, your electric bill will be lower, and your clothes will last longer. When washing your clothes, be sure to use an energy-preferred setting and wash with cold water to avoid unnecessary energy use.

Capitalize on windows:

You may already know that in order to maximize insulation, you must make sure that your windows are **air sealed** all the way around (you can use caulk to fill any gaps around the edges of the window, and some air sealing can be supplied at no-cost if you get an energy assessment (see above)). However, there are other ways you can use your windows to regulate the temperature indoors. In the winter, leave the **blinds or curtains** on your south-facing windows open in order to allow the sun to heat the interior of the home, and then close them at night to hold the heat in. During the summer, leave the blinds closed during the day to keep your home cool and shady. (For a similar effect, plant a tree outside of the window. In the summer, its leaves will provide sun-shielding shade for your indoor space, while in the winter the sun will be able to shine through.)

And no, replacing your windows is not always the best investment—it has a long payback period. First, look into insulation, air sealing, and quality curtains or blinds!

Hot water use:

Low flow shower heads and faucet aerators are accessories that can make your bathroom more water efficient. These devices are inexpensive and easy to install, and will start working for you immediately—not only to reduce your water usage, **but to minimize your energy demands for water heating too**. Another simple trick is to keep your water heater at **120 degrees**. It will provide nice warm water and save even more energy on water heating.

Rethink your lighting:

Replace your old incandescent bulbs with **LEDs**, which start faster, last longer, and use less energy even than compact florescent bulbs. LEDs are becoming more and more cost effective, and rebates are available. Additionally, be tactical with your window treatments to maximize natural light.

Install smart gadgets:

Programmable thermostats allow you to set the temperature of different rooms in your home in advance, so the heat or air conditioning automatically turn on and off according to your specifications. This system avoids accidentally leaving your heating or cooling on for too long, and can amount to big savings. **Your TV system is a vampire.** Though you may think they are completely powered off, many of the boxes and consoles that are connected to your TV are actually in standby mode, meaning they are ready to power up at a moment's notice. Surprisingly, **devices in standby actually use more energy** than they do when they are in active use. Avoid this common mistake by plugging into a **smart power-strip**, which will completely power down all your devices every time you turn off the TV. If you don't have a smart strip, consider using a regular power strip for all of your TV-related gadgets and turning it off when you are not using them.

In the kitchen:

When shopping for new appliances, especially, refrigerators, look for the **ENERGY STAR®** logo, which indicates that the product is energy efficient. Check out the most efficient appliances at aceee.org/consumer. Don't underestimate the power of **unplugging appliances** when not in use. Your microwave uses more power displaying the time in one year than it does heating your food!

Make your green space greener:

Rather than attempting to grow exotic plants in your yard, plant **native flora**. These plants are already adapted to the climate you live in, and will require less specialized care (like excess watering) that exotic species might need. **Grow your own produce at home!** In the warmer months, you'll be able to harvest fresh vegetables from your own yard, reducing your dependence on the energy-intensive food industry. And the most energy used by the food industry, it has been recently shown, is the energy you use to travel back and forth to the grocery store for a few items.

Make the switch to renewable energy:

Purchasing renewable energy adds more green power to the grid, which displaces energy from fossil fuels and thereby reduces greenhouse gas emissions from these sources. **Make the switch today!**

