8 small energy measures to make a big difference

While there are lots of free ways to save energy and lower your bills, sometimes it takes a small investment to keep your house cosy while reducing your overall energy spend. The following 8 items all usually retail at below £20 and can make a substantial difference to your comfort levels and bills.

1) TV Powerdown plug

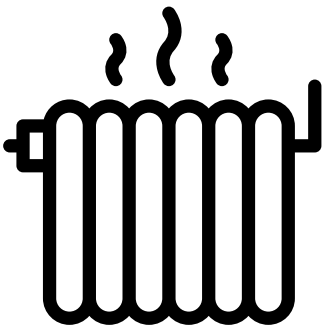
Let's be honest, one of the many constants in this world is your television's red light gleaming at you from the corner of your living room. Just being on standby means your TV is using electricity, not to mention the DVD player, speaker, and other peripheral items plugged in. Most power-down plugs also include a socket for recording devices to keep them on so you don't miss out on recording your favourite shows. As an additional incentive, research suggests that leaving electrical equipment on standby can reduce its lifespan by an average of 15% as well as increase the chances of an electrical fire.



Common retail price: £4-£12.
Typical payback period: 6 months

2) Radiator reflector foil

Radiator foil is placed behind your radiator and can reflect up to 95% of the energy radiated from the back of the radiator back into the room and can cut heat loss through the wall and into the outside world by 45%. This means that less energy is used to heat the room to the desired temperature, resulting in lower energy bills. There is no need for removal of radiators or professional installers– radiator foil can be cut to size with normal kitchen scissors and disappears from view once installed.

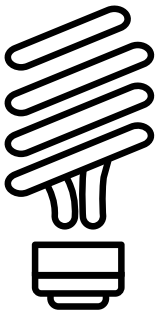


Common retail price: £10- £20 for rolls which cover up to 6 radiators.
Typical payback period: 1 year

DIY Bonus: If you're not willing to fork out for the proper foil, an even cheaper DIY option is sticking kitchen foil to a strong piece of card and sticking it behind your radiator.

3) LED lightbulbs

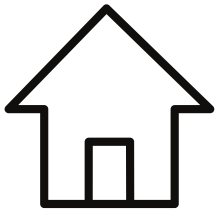
Unless you've been living under an unlit rock for the past 10 years, you will have at least been aware of the LED revolution. LED, which stands for Light Emitting Diode for those who are interested, is the most energy-efficient form of a lightbulb, and switching from the regular filament to LED is guaranteed to save you money on your electricity bills as they average at least 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and can last up to 25 times longer. Therefore, replacing all standard lightbulbs in your home could save up to £35 a year. If you're already using the more efficient Compact Fluorescent Lightbulbs (CFLs), change the ones which are used the most (kitchen and living room) to LED and leave the others as the low usage will mean little saving between the two.



Common retail price: £4-£8 each
Typical payback period: 2.5 years

4) Draught-proofing materials

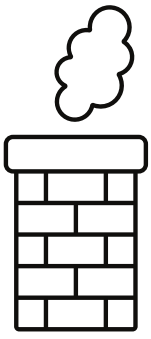
A draughty house means too much cold air is being let in and too much warm air is seeping out. Draught-proofing is one of the cheapest and most efficient ways to save energy and money in your home, with annual savings reaching up to £50 a year. If you can handle simple DIY jobs, a Sunday spent draught-proofing can greatly increase your comfort levels and can be a solid long-term investment, you might even learn a new skill or two along the way. Materials include self-adhesive foam strips for windows and doors, letterbox flaps or brushes, and silicon-based flexible fillers for floors and skirting boards.



Common retail price: DIY installation of a total House draught-proofing can cost £120—£240.
Typical payback period: 3 years

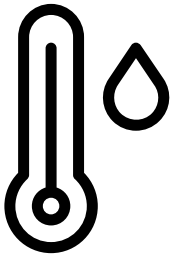
5) Chimney balloon

If you live in an older property with a chimney and do not use it on a regular basis, it can be losing you a lot of heat and therefore requiring you to use more energy to keep warm. Chimneys act like funnels that suck the warm air out of the room and pull down cold air which can cause that rushing feeling through any gaps in your floors and doors. Just put the chimney balloon into your chimney opening, inflate and it'll fill the gap but allow just a little ventilation.



Common retail price: £10-£20
Typical payback period: 3 months

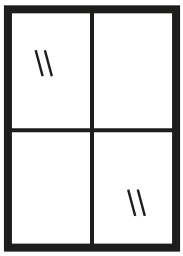
6) Hot water tank jacket



If you have a conventional boiler that has a hot water cylinder, adding some insulation is one of the easiest ways to save on your energy bills. If you already have an old one, check the thickness, which should be at least 75mm. If it isn't then we strongly recommend investing in a new one as wrapping a British Standard jacket around your tank will cut heat loss by more than 75%, which means your water stays hotter for longer and could save you around £25-£35 a year, that's more than the cost of the jacket!

Common retail price: £10-£20
Typical payback period: Less than a year

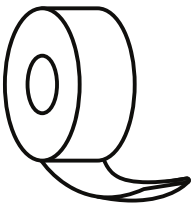
7) Secondary glazing film



While adding secondary glazing will not be as sealed as a new double glazing unit, it is much cheaper to fit and can easily be installed by a confident DIYer. Therefore, secondary glazing film can be a cheap, non-intrusive way of insulating your windows and is best combined with self-adhesive tape to stop the draughts around the frames. It can also easily be removed in the summer.

Common retail price: £5-£10
Typical payback period: 1 Year

8) Draught excluder roll



Although you may consider a draught excluder roll (commonly a shaped like a sausage dog) something your Gran would promote, blocking the gaps underneath doors and windows with a draught excluder roll is a cheap yet efficient way to make your home draught free, cosy, and hopefully costing a bit less to heat.

Common retail price: £10-£20
Typical payback period: Less than a year

Bonus:
Smart meters are similar to energy monitors in so far as they display your real-time energy use, they also go one step further by reporting your use back to your energy supplier. This will allow more accurate billing ensuring you're only paying for what you use. Smart meters are being rolled out by energy companies and every household in Britain will have one installed by 2020.

Common retail price: Free! Contact your energy supplier directly to see if they are installing them in your area yet
Typical payback period: No direct payback period, however smart meters mean you'll never again be overcharged for energy