

How to be cool when its HOT,HOT, HOT



It's blazing hot, but after opening your last utility bill, you're even hotter. You don't dare turn down the thermostat, so you're beginning to dream of a summer place at the South Pole. But don't pack your moving van just yet. A few relatively simple measures can help you drop your thermostat's mercury without raising your utility bill.

Here are 10 tips to help you keep cool without blowing your budget:

- Arrange furniture and drapes so they don't restrict air flow from registers. When cooled air is delivered to your rooms, it should move freely.
- Keep room air moving by using a whole-house fan or ceiling fans. Another option is to circulate air using the "Fan Only" setting on your heating/cooling system's thermostat. By keeping the air moving, you'll feel comfortable in a room that is 2 or 3 degrees warmer than a still room. And remember - every degree you raise your thermostat's set point will save about two percent on your energy bill.
- Reduce your home's heat gain by pulling drapes or shades - or installing awnings - over sun-facing windows. Also explore the possibility of installing inexpensive heat-reflecting film on your windows.
- Increase your air conditioner's efficiency by cleaning or replacing your furnace or air handler filters according to the manufacturers recommendations.
- Install a programmable thermostat if your system doesn't have one - and learn to use it properly. This will give you precise control over when exactly the cooling will be delivered. Raise the thermostat's set point a few degrees for when you'll be at work, and if you'll be gone for two days or more, turn off the air conditioner until you return.
- Because an air conditioner must work hard to remove moisture from the air, reduce humidity inside your home. Minimize mid-day washing and drying clothes, showering and cooking.
- Weatherize your home to reduce the loss of conditioned air. Employ caulk, weather stripping and insulation to cut back on the movement of air from inside out - and vice versa.
- Talk with an air conditioning contractor about installing dampers to restrict the flow of cooled air to rooms you rarely use. You can also close doors or registers in those rooms, but ask a professional to make sure it won't affect your system's efficiency.
- Update your air conditioner if it's old. Though it's not a low-cost solution, over-the-hill equipment may be using far more energy than necessary to cool your home.
- Make sure to have a home warranty that covers unexpected HVAC repair costs

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