

## **FREE YOUR MIND**

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### **Summerizing Your Home**

Well, it's getting close to summertime. Summer officially starts June 21st, but of course we all know that it will be hot way before then. As a matter of fact, in some places, it is already scorching hot! And of course, with extreme temperatures comes extreme energy costs to keep us comfortable. So what I would like to do today is go over some things that can be done to cut down on cooling costs this summer. Some of these things are common sense (but not often thought about), and some are a little tricky so to speak.

#### **A/C Unit**

The first thing you do when it gets hot outside is to turn on your air conditioner. But, if weather permits, and you don't live in bug town... you may consider just opening your windows. This will often work during the early months of spring when it is not THAT hot, and there is a cool breeze from outside. But at some point you will have to let it rip.

You will want to have your air conditioner checked every once in a while to make sure it is operating at it's peak, and you also want to make sure that you replace filters regularly in your unit. Dirty filters mean less energy efficiency. I don't really have a specific number of times that you should do this every year, but... if you can't remember the last time that you had your A/C checked and/or maintained... then it's probably time that you do so.

You can use ceiling, window and/or portable fans instead of the A/C early on and afterwards to enhance your A/C and circulate the air better and more efficiently through your house or room. Fans will make temperatures feel cooler than they are and you can turn the thermostat up a little. You can also turn your Air Conditioning off at night, once again if weather permits and it is cool enough outside.

Since fans normally use less electricity than air conditioners, use the exhaust fans in the kitchen, bathroom and other areas to throw out heat from your home.

Close the doors of pantries, closets and cabinets located in the house. As a matter of fact, close off storage rooms, laundry rooms and ANY unused rooms and close the vents going into these rooms (this doesn't apply if you have a heat pump system). There is no reason (unless something in the room is going to melt) to cool these rooms as they are very seldom used. Warning: Before you close any vents, get the advice of an expert on whether it is safe to do so (I had to throw the disclaimer in there).

Purchase a portable air conditioning unit. This allows you to stay cool by taking the unit with you wherever you go. If you live in a three bedroom home, with a basement... do you really need to keep the WHOLE HOUSE cool, if you are only in one room? The operating cost of a portable A/C unit is very low, and in most cases can be used as a heater during the winter also.

## Cooking

Cooking (while this is overlooked) also produces a lot of heat in a home. Here are a few ideas to cut costs while cooking.

What's the best way to cook during summer? How about... DON'T. Grill out instead. You can cook WAY more than you normally do and you don't heat up your house. This saves money.

Eat less food that requires cooking. I'm not telling you to become a vegetarian, but cold soups, salads, sandwiches etc, etc can keep the heat low.

If you do cook, try cooking your afternoon and evening meals in the morning, before the heat of the day. That hot stove can be a BEAST at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. And when you do cook, cook as much as you can at one time, and eat the rest as leftovers.

You can also use a slow cooker and prepare meals without adding a lot of heat to the house.

## Do You Have An Attic?

If you do, these are some ideas that can help.

Install an attic fan to cool the house. If it's not too hot, you can open the windows in the house and let the attic fan pull air from the outside into your home and expel it through the attic.

Even if you are not opening the windows, you can and should use exhaust fans to push out excessive heat from your attic and keep that extra heat from escaping into your home.

Insulate the cooling ducts that pass through the attic to minimize unwanted heat gain inside of un-insulated ducts.

## Other Ideas.

These are some miscellaneous ideas that can be used to save money.

Keep your water heater efficient. Most water heaters have thermostats that are set to about 140 degrees. Turn the thermostat down to about 120 degrees. You won't notice that much difference in the temperature, but you will save money. Insulate your water heater tank as well as the pipes to increase efficiency. Don't cover the thermostat. Drain water from your water heater every three months to remove sediment that slows down heat transfer and therefore lowers the heaters efficiency. If you have an owner's manual it should show you how.

When washing clothes, and dishes... only wash full loads. And don't use the drying function. Let your dishes air dry, and dry your clothes on hangers outside (if reasonable).

The pilot light on your furnace gives off heat. You can turn it off during the summer.

How about this one? Don't sleep with covering at night. Does it make sense to cover up with sheets, blankets and bedspreads and then lower the temperature in the house so that you won't be too hot while underneath them?

Drink a lot of water. Not only is this healthy, but it keeps you cooler.

Wear lightweight shoes (as a matter of fact, go barefoot when possible) and light colored clothes to minimize the absorption of heat during the times when the sun is out.

If possible, keep the sunshine out of your home by closing draperies, blinds, shades in ALL sunny windows not needed. The less sunshine, the less cooling needed.

Keep the incandescent lights off whenever possible. Incandescent lights give off heat and use a lot of energy. Switch light bulbs in lamps to fluorescent or better yet full spectrum (they are healthier), as they use a lot less energy and give off less heat.

Use a solar camping blanket

[http://www.bankrate.com/brm/news/pf/20080625\\_frugal\\_window\\_solar\\_a1.asp](http://www.bankrate.com/brm/news/pf/20080625_frugal_window_solar_a1.asp).

You can get these blankets at a Wal-Mart for under \$2. The only drawback is that from the outside looking in, it looks like tin foil. But on all of the windows that you don't mind this scenario, using the solar blankets can cut down on cooling costs.

Here are a couple of other resources to help save money.

<http://freemindonline.net/resources/solar-water-heater.html>

<http://freemindonline.net/resources/small-steps-save-electricity.html>

Well... I hope this has helped.

So Until Next Time,

Free Your Mind... Online

Matt Mason

For more resources, visit the Resource Center

<http://freemindonline.net/resources.html>