

Take a Vacation from Your Energy Bill

Energy Savers Blog

We are always talking about preparing our homes for energy efficiency and taking the right steps to decrease our carbon footprints as homeowners and renters. I realized today that it's already the middle of November, meaning it's time to begin preparing for holiday vacations. I can't think of a better time than now to [revisit the ways we can save money on our energy bills](#) [1] this holiday season. In my household, there will be about seven consecutive days in December when no one will be home, not even the dog. Aside from the usual preparations, such as clothing and gift shopping, packing and meal planning, it's necessary (and wise) to think about giving yourself the ultimate gift this year: a lower energy bill. There are many ways to maximize energy savings while your home is vacant.

Knowing [when to turn off your lights](#) [2] is something to think about before traveling. Though most of us are conscious about our interior lights being turned off during the day and while we sleep, many still believe in leaving a light on while vacationing to dissuade burglars. A simple way to assure security is with the use of exterior lighting, specifically automatic lights or [timer](#) [3] settings. I recently purchased an automatic timer from a local hardware store for under \$20. If you have a neighbor or friend you can summon to water the plants, ask that person turn on an interior light at night and turn it off in the morning as an alternative.

As an east coast resident, I understand the inability to shut off the thermostat or water heater completely during winter vacations as the pipes are likely to freeze in those conditions. One significant way to reduce energy consumption while you're away is to simply [lower the water heater](#) [4]. If you'll be gone for three or more consecutive days, set the water heater to the lowest or 'vacation' setting if it has one. My house has a gas water heater with the thermostat dial near the bottom of the tank on the gas valve. If you have an electric storage tank, be sure to shut off the electricity to the water heater before removing/opening the panels.

Similar to the water heater, it makes sense to [turn off your thermostat](#) [5] when leaving for a prolonged period of time. One thing my roommates and I are researching is a [programmable thermostat](#) [5]. To keep pipes (and animals) from freezing while you're away, the thermostat should be set to around 50 degrees in the winter. A programmable thermostat that goes by date allows you to set the temperature for a comfortable degree for the day you arrive back from vacation.

Another tip that was completely new to me is that common kitchen appliances, VCRs, televisions, stereos and computers are known energy hogs even when they are turned off! [Unplug electronics and appliances](#) [6] when leaving home for a while or use a power strip so that you can achieve this with one flip of a switch.

[Lowering your blinds and curtains](#) [7] is another useful way to conserve energy while on vacation. If your furnace is on and set to a low temperature, keep the

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curtains closed to slow the rising or lowering of the temperature in the house.

Taking these simple, extra steps before going on your holiday vacation will ensure a carefree experience while knowing that you are contributing to energy savings and cost savings on that next utility bill.

Kristin Swineford supports DOE's Weatherization & Intergovernmental Program in Communications & Outreach.

[SOURCE](#) [8]

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[1] <http://feedproxy.google.com/energysavers/post/Saving-Energy-and-Money-at-Home-while-on-Vacation.aspx>

[2] http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/lighting_daylighting/index.cfm/mytopic=12280

[3] http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/lighting_daylighting/index.cfm/mytopic=12230

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[5] http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/space_heating_cooling/index.cfm/mytopic=12720

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