



# Save More Money at Home

**Aspire**  
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

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Whether you take simple steps or make larger investments to make your home more efficient, you'll see lower energy bills. Over time, those savings will typically pay for the cost of improvements and put money back in your pocket. Your home may also be more attractive to buyers if you decide to sell.

**The residences in America today collectively use an estimated 22% of the country's energy.** Unfortunately, a lot of energy is wasted through leaky windows or ducts, old appliances, or inefficient heating and cooling systems. When we waste energy in our homes, we are throwing away money that could be used for other things. The typical U.S. family spends at least \$2,000 a year on home utility bills.

The key to these savings is to take a whole-house approach—by viewing your home as an energy system with interdependent parts. Taking a whole-house approach to saving energy ensures that dollars you invest to save energy are spent wisely.

## Tips to Save Energy Today

Here are some easy low-cost and no-cost ways to save energy:

- Install a programmable thermostat to lower utility bills and manage your heating and cooling systems efficiently.
- Air dry dishes instead of using your dishwasher's drying cycle.
- Turn things off when you are not in the room such as lights, TVs, entertainment systems, and your computer and monitor.
- Plug home electronics, such as TVs and DVD players, into power strips; turn the power strips off when the equipment is not in use—TVs and DVDs in standby mode still use several watts of power.
- Lower the thermostat on your water heater to 120°F.
- Take short showers instead of baths and use low-flow showerheads for additional energy savings.
- Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes.
- Air dry clothes.
- Check to see that windows and doors are closed when heating or cooling your home.
- Look for the ENERGY STAR® label on light bulbs, home appliances, electronics, and other products. ENERGY STAR products meet strict efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy.

# Seasonal Tips

When it's warm, we tend to rely on our hard working air conditioning units. Did you know that by simply regulating the temperature while you sleep, you could be saving a substantial amount of money in energy costs?

Summer is also a season in which we like to enjoy as many activities as possible. The good news is that there are plenty of attractions you can enjoy for little or no cost to you. You can likely find a local festival nearby, offering entertainment and activities at no cost to you.

Here are a few tips to help you save money in both hot and cold weather:

**If no one is in the room, close the blinds or curtains!** For summer, you don't need to enjoy the sunlight if you're not in the room. Closed blinds will stop the sun from heating the room, and therefore you'll have to cool it down less. For winter, thick draperies or curtains will keep cold air from entering through cracks around the windows and will help hold heat inside. If there's a sunny day, open your draperies to allow sunlight in, but then close them at night for better insulation.

**Check your ceiling fans.** Did you know that ceiling fans should run in different directions in the summer and winter? Check with your manufacturer (or online) to see what the proper position for the blades should be for summer. You might not be cooling your home effectively otherwise.

**Apply weather-stripping to doors and windows.** Air that seeps in around doorways can cause your heating/cooling units to work harder.

**Close the fireplace damper or close off the fireplace if you are not going to use the fireplace to heat your home during the winter.** Hot air can escape through the fireplace flue, causing your furnace to work overtime.

**Use the bathroom fan only when needed during winter months.** Running the bathroom fan for long periods of time can pull warm air from the inside, up and out of the house.

## Do Space Heaters Save Money?

The biggest factor in determining whether a space heater saves money is how many watts it draws. A 1500-watt space heater – as the name implies – draws 1500 watts. An electric space heater is 100 percent efficient, meaning that all of the watts it draws are expended in heat energy.

But while you might save in gas, home heating oil or even pellets, you'll spend money in electricity while using an electric space heater. The formula for understanding the cost of operating a space heater is this:

**Watts x Hours of Use/1000 x Cost per Kilowatt Hour = Cost of Operation**

For example, if you run a 1,500-watt space heater every day for 24 hours, at a rate of 7.57 cents per kilowatt hour, your total cost to run the heater for a day would be \$2.73. For a month, you'd add \$81.76 to your energy cost.

Space heaters do an excellent job heating a very small area for a short period of time. **If your intention is to provide a little bit of added comfort while you're watching television for a few hours in your finished basement, while the central heating system is set at a cool 62 degrees, an electric space heater is a completely efficient source of heat.**

But if you're planning on running three or four space heaters while your thermostat is set at 72, you'd probably be much better off spending the money on adding insulation and fixing drafts.

### **Safer Heating Options**

The other thing to consider is that a space heater is dangerous. In fact, space heaters are the second leading cause of fire injury or death. In 2009, fire departments across the nation responded to more than 55,000 residential fires involving some sort of supplemental heating equipment, resulting in nearly 500 deaths and more than \$1 billion in property damage.

Fireplaces and chimney fires still cause more home-related heating fires, **but space heaters account for more than 80 percent of heating-related deaths, because so many of them are operated when occupants are asleep.**

The two most common situations in which space heaters cause fires were failure to clean the heating equipment properly, and placing it too close to a combustible material.

Central heating systems and plain old blankets and sweaters are a much safer alternative to space heaters. **If you really must add a space heater, always keep it at least three feet from curtains, bedding, or any other combustible material, and always select a heater that will automatically shut off if it's tipped over or overheated. Also, never use a space heater when you're asleep.**

The use of a space heater in your home can provide significant energy and cost savings if used in the right way. The area where you live, the severity of the winter weather, and your adherence to basic safety rules will help determine whether a space heater is the safest, most cost-efficient option for you and your family.

# How to Pare Down Your Food Budget

Part of your home is the food you bring in to feed you and your family. Follow these tips to pare down your grocery list in terms of both size and cost.

## Use Your Fridge

Do you find yourself purchasing entirely new ingredients every time you head to the store? At the end of the month, you may find that you end up with five containers of mayo, four bottles of barbecue sauce and way too much salad dressing.

Don't purchase doubles and triples of items. Build the recipes from what is already in the fridge and in the pantry. The only exception to the rule is if you see a great deal on something you know you'll definitely need.

## Eliminate Fancy Extras

Sure, it can be nice to drink a bottle of iced coffee each morning, but this little habit is probably costing you an awful lot of money. Purchasing a coffee machine and making your own each day is going to cost you a lot less in the long run. Figure out what extras you don't need. You might consume them on a regular basis, but they're likely unnecessary for your long-term health or happiness.

## Buy Sale Meat

If you really look at what you're spending on in the grocery store, you'll probably find that meat takes up a lot of the bill. Of course, many people would argue that meat is a necessary part of the diet and removing it completely just isn't going to work. You certainly don't have to get rid of all of it, but try to purchase meats that are on sale. Chances are, you can find some great family packs.

Consider eating less meat too though - most Americans eat WAY too much of it, and it's terribly unhealthy, as well as expensive. Consider meat substitutes, such as veggies or cheese, next time you're making a dish that includes meat that can be swapped out (salad, lasagna, etc).

## Shop Discount Items

At some point, you won't be able to pare your list down anymore. When you get there, make the decision to only shop for discounted items. You don't need the fancy brand name milk; just purchase the one that is the cheapest. In most cases, it's going to taste exactly the same.

## About Aspire FCU

Aspire Federal Credit Union, originally known as FAA Eastern Region Federal Credit Union, was founded in 1948 to serve a small group of Civil Aeronautics Administration employees (currently the Federal Aviation Administration).

Our Credit Union has come a long way since those humble beginnings, which included seven people who pooled together shares of \$5.00 each to initiate the original charter. Today, Aspire FCU is a \$178 million dollar credit union, serving over 20,000 members within many diverse employee groups throughout the northeastern United States. Aspire FCU is a not-for-profit financial cooperative, which means all earnings at the end of the year are returned to our members in the form of better, low-cost financial services.

The decision to change our name to Aspire Federal Credit Union was made because we serve more than just the employees of the Federal Aviation Administration. The name Aspire means to "soar," which is a reflection of our heritage, while at the same time represents our members' dreams and aspirations.

As our tag line states, "***Your Dream. Our Purpose,***" the employees at Aspire FCU are dedicated to helping make your financial goals and dreams a reality. The cornerstone of our existence continues to be our "member first" philosophy. Whatever it is that you aspire for, we want you to believe you can get there and we're going to help you along the way.