

# energy-saving tips for renters



## taking responsibility

As an individual, your efficient use of energy brings benefits such as lower bills, improved comfort levels in your home and a reduced personal impact on the environment.

Acting together, our individual choices add up—for the benefit of our community, our environment and our energy future. That's the power of working together.

As your community energy company, we are committed to sharing our experience and energy expertise. You can always contact us for:

- Answers to your energy questions.
- Energy efficiency information and advice.
- Help in evaluating energy-saving options.
- Assistance in finding energy-efficient products.

## Before and after you rent

Saving energy and money can be easy if you know what to look for before you sign your lease. This booklet explains what to be aware of and how to plan ahead. In addition, you'll find helpful energy-saving ideas to keep your costs down throughout the year. For more information, visit [mge.com](http://mge.com) or call us at 252-7117.

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## **What to ask before you rent**

### **Heating/air-conditioning**

#### **Who pays for electricity? Who pays for gas?**

Ask the landlord exactly what energy items you must pay. Plan for utility expenses ahead of time.

If you'll be paying for gas or electricity, visit [mge.com](http://mge.com) and click on "Average Energy Use and Cost" or call MGE at 252-7222. We can provide the average monthly utility cost or the highest and lowest utility cost for the apartment you are considering. For some accounts, we can provide both. Use this as an estimate of what you'll pay.

#### **Who pays for the air-conditioning?**

The tenant usually pays for air-conditioning unless electricity is included in the rent.

#### **What kind of a heating system does the house/apartment have?**

The common types of heating systems are electric baseboard, forced air, hot water or steam. The most expensive to operate is electric baseboard—at least twice as much as natural gas.

#### **Where is the thermostat located?**

You can control your comfort and your budget if the thermostat is located in your apartment. An older two- or three-unit apartment building may have only one heating system with one thermostat. If heat is not included in your rent, find out how the heating bill is divided.

## Appliances

### What appliances are included?

- Make sure appliances furnished by the owner work properly.
- Gas dryers and ranges cost half as much to operate as electric appliances.
- Side-by-side refrigerators usually cost more to run than top or bottom freezer models. Newer auto-defrost refrigerators cost much less to operate than older ones.
- Don't expect a wall or window air conditioner to cool a multi-room apartment.
- Some appliances (made before 1990) can cost three times as much to operate than newer, energy-efficient models.

## Water use

In most cases, the landlord pays the water bill. In a duplex or rental house, tenants might pay the water bill.

- The most expensive way to heat water is with an electric water heater. An energy-efficient natural gas water heater heats water for half as much.
- Ask if the shower has a low-flow showerhead. It helps conserve water and energy.

## Building insulation/weatherization

Ask if older buildings have been weatherized. A building with no insulation may have high heating bills and feel uncomfortable.

## Save energy after you move in

Ask your landlord to repair energy-using equipment that isn't working properly. Prompt repair saves money for you and your landlord. Follow these tips to save energy and stay comfortable:

<b>Heating</b>	<b>Benefit</b>
Wear warm clothes to stay comfortable at lower thermostat settings.	Improve comfort.
Don't open windows when you feel too warm.	Wastes energy and costs more.
Check furnace filter monthly; replace as needed.	Improve furnace efficiency by increasing airflow.
Tune up heating system at least every other year.	Save money and improve safety.
Keep registers and cold-air returns clear of furniture and drapes.	Improve comfort and system efficiency.
Open drapes to allow sun in. Close at night.	Save money and improve comfort.
Use fireplaces only in the early fall or late spring when not using your furnace. Close the fireplace damper after the fire is out.	Save money and improve comfort. Prevent heat loss.
Keep windows tightly latched.	Improve comfort and security.
Cover wall-mounted air conditioners with plastic film or air-tight cover.	Reduce air infiltration.

### Heating - Gas

Keep the thermostat at 68°F or below.	Save on heating costs.
Lower thermostat at night and when you're gone (55°F lowest setting).	Save 1% during setback time period for every 1°F decrease in temperature.

## Heating - Electric

## Benefit

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If you only have one thermostat:  
Set temperature lower at night and when you're gone.

Save on heating costs.

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If you have more than one thermostat: Set temperature lower in unused rooms and close door.

The bigger the setback, the more you save on heating costs.

Air-conditioning is a big electricity user. The lower you set the thermostat, the higher your bill will be.

## Cooling

## Benefit

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Set the thermostat at 78°F or higher.

Save 1% for every 1°F increase in thermostat setting when unit is running.

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Turn off the air conditioner when no one is home. Use a programmable thermostat for central air or a timer for room air conditioners to start cooling before you get home.

Save 20 to 60 cents per hour for central units. Save 10 to 20 cents per hour for room units.

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Use window fans to blow hot air out or bring cool air in.

Save on cooling costs.

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Use room fans or ceiling fans instead of air-conditioning.

Save on cooling costs.

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If buying a dehumidifier, look for an ENERGY STAR® model.

Save money.

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Shade your windows:

- Close drapes, shades and blinds during the day.

Save money. Reduce heat from direct sunlight.

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Keep air conditioner filters clean.

Operates more efficiently.

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Cook outside or use a microwave to avoid a hot kitchen.

Reduce cooling costs.

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Use exhaust fans to remove heat and moisture produced from cooking and showering.

Reduce cooling and dehumidification costs. Improve indoor air quality.

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Keep registers and cold-air returns clear of furniture and drapes.

Improve comfort and system efficiency.

# Energy-saving tips by type of product

## Lighting

## Benefit

Replace the most-used incandescent bulbs and fixtures with ENERGY STAR lights.

Use less than one-third the energy with fluorescent bulbs and fixtures. Keep your home cooler.

Turn lights off when leaving a room.

Save energy.

Use the lowest wattage bulbs, except for reading.

Save energy.

Replace halogen torchieres with ENERGY STAR fluorescent torchieres. The 300- to 500-watt halogen bulbs can reach 1,000°F!

Save \$50 per year. Keep your home cooler.

Keep bulbs and fixtures clean.

Get more light.

## Appliances & entertainment

## Benefit

Switch from an electric to a natural gas dryer.

Reduce drying costs by more than 55%.

Cook in a microwave oven rather than stove.

Heat food faster with less energy.

Use cold water to wash clothes.

Save 12 to 25 cents per load.

Refrigerators use the most energy. Defrost manual-defrost models when the ice gets over 1/4-inch thick.

Save energy.

Run the dishwasher at night.

Reduce cooling costs and daytime humidity.

Wash a full load of dishes in the dishwasher.

Save hot water, electricity and detergent.

Use the dishwasher's air-dry or energy-saver cycle.

Save up to 8 cents per drying cycle.

Dry laundry on a line or rack.

Save 8 to 11 cents per load for a gas dryer or 27 to 32 cents per load for an electric dryer.

## **Appliances & entertainment**

## **Benefit**

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Clean the clothes dryer lint trap after each load.

Dry faster and safer and save money.

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Turn off TV and computer plus the devices connected to them when not in use. Even better, put them on a power strip and turn off the power strip when not in use.

Save electricity and keep your home cooler.

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Configure sleep/hibernate settings on computer.

Save up to \$40 per year.

No matter which fuel heats your water, take these steps to save:

## **Water use**

## **Benefit**

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Measure the hot water temperature at the tap. Keep it at 120°F.

Save money and prevent scalding.

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Tell the owner about dripping faucets or water heater leaks.

Save water and energy.

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Ask the landlord to install a water-saving showerhead.

Save water and reduce water-heating costs.

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Take showers instead of baths.

Save water and energy.

Ask your landlord if your building meets energy codes for insulation and weatherization. You can also take these steps:

## **Insulating/weatherizing**

## **Benefit**

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Keep windows, storm windows and doors closed in winter.

Save energy.

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Use removable rope caulk or shrink-film plastic on drafty windows. Get the owner's permission first. Removing window plastic sometimes takes paint with it.

Eliminate drafts and improve comfort.

## Home office equipment

## Benefit

Buy ENERGY STAR monitors, printers and computers. Use power-saving settings.

Save money and reduce heat produced.

Shut off equipment that's not in use. A powerstrip can make this more convenient.

Save money and reduce heat produced.

Use energy-efficient lights

Save money and reduce heat produced.

## Resources

### Focus on Energy

[focusonenergy.org](http://focusonenergy.org)



**focus on energy**<sup>sm</sup>

Partnering with Wisconsin utilities

MGE partners with Focus on Energy to bring energy-saving resources and incentives to our customers.

(800) 762-7077

### **[energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov)**

Includes information about how to save energy and which appliances are ENERGY STAR qualified.

### **CNET Energy Efficiency Guide**

Energy-saving and TV power-saving tips:

[http://reviews.cnet.com/2708-19754\\_7-42.html](http://reviews.cnet.com/2708-19754_7-42.html)

## listening. learning.

MGE takes responsibility to provide information and education to serve our customers and stakeholders. We educate customers today to help inform their decision making. We educate tomorrow's stakeholders so they can help plan our energy future.

Replace the five most frequently used lightbulbs in your home with compact fluorescent bulbs. If we all take this step, we can save 44 million pounds of coal a year. Working together we can make a difference.

Contact us for information about:


- Heating/Air-conditioning.
- Insulating/Weatherizing.
- Lighting.
- Windows/Doors.
- Appliances.
- Water heating.

Get more home energy information at:

- [mge.com/home](http://mge.com/home).
- Home Energy Line 608-252-7117.
- 800-245-1125.

Questions about billing? Call:

- 608-252-7222.
- 800-245-1125.

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your community energy company