

# Money

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JUNE 2009

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# Tech:

## SLASH ENERGY COSTS BY 30%

By CHARLES PASSY

*These gadgets can reduce power-bill sticker shock, this summer and beyond.*

This time of year, you may find yourself having an internal debate at the thermostat: stay cool or save money? If you're tired of sweating high summer cooling costs—and winter heat bills besides—these techie tools can help. Used in concert, they may save you 30% annually on energy bills, says Zeke Hausfather of Climate Culture, an online community focusing on energy consumption. And that, as you'll see below, adds up to cool cash.

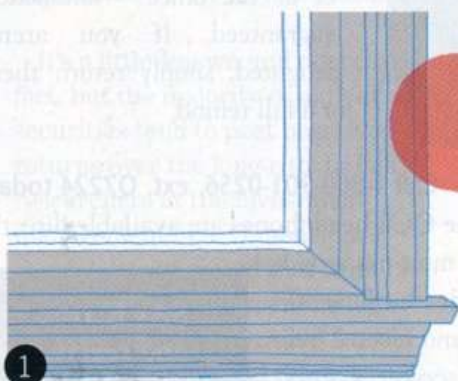
### WHAT YOU'LL SAVE

Used in combination, the tools here can reduce your energy bill by hundreds of dollars.

REGION ▶	WEST	NORTHEAST	MIDWEST	SOUTH
AVG. ANNUAL ENERGY BILL	\$1,491	\$2,319	\$1,768	\$1,758
SAVE UP TO ...	\$447	\$696	\$530	\$527



NOTE: Averages are based on a 1,800- to 2,400-square-foot house. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Energy.



### 1 Check for Drafts with an infrared sensor

→ **BLACK & DECKER'S THERMAL LEAK DETECTOR**  
(\$50; [BDONLINESTORE.COM](http://BDONLINESTORE.COM))

**WHAT IT DOES** Helps you find air leaks. Those around windows and doors, even near electrical outlets or recessed lights, force your AC or heater to work harder. Point and drag the infrared **Black & Decker Thermal Leak Detector** around your home; the light changes color where the temperature is significantly higher or lower. So you'll know where to caulk or weather-strip.

**PAYBACK TIME** Recoup the cost of the device (and the weather stripping) in under a year, based on leak-sealing savings estimates from Energy Star.



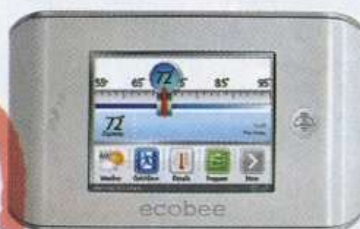
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## Manage by Degrees

with a programmable thermostat

→ **ECOBEE SMART THERMOSTAT** (\$385, [ECOBEE.COM](http://ECOBEE.COM)) / **HONEYWELL RTH 7600D** (\$84, [AMAZON.COM](http://AMAZON.COM))

**WHAT IT DOES** Lets you plug in times of day—such as when you leave for work or go to bed—to automatically raise or lower the temperature a set amount. The newest ones do some nifty things: The **Honeywell** offers settings for every day of the week, plus a vacation override; it even reminds you when to change your AC and furnace filters. The more expensive **Ecobee** (below) offers similar features and also allows remote programming over the web. So if you're stuck at work late, you can change the settings from the office.



**PAYBACK TIME** Set the temp 8° higher (lower in winter) for eight hours daily, and the Honeywell will realize savings in six months, the Ecobee in 26, as calculated from Energy Star data.



## SHOULD YOU DITCH THAT OLD AC?

### IF YOU HAVE A CENTRAL UNIT ...

... and it's at least 12 years old, you could save 30% on cooling bills with a new Energy Star-qualified one, says Dale Hoffmeyer of Energy Star. The sweet spot for value now and savings later: a model with a 16 seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER), says Joseph Harberg of Current Energy, a Dallas retailer of efficient appliances. Models with this ratio qualify for a tax credit up to \$1,500. (Find info at [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov).) He likes the 16-SEER **Trane XL16i**, starting around \$7,000 installed.

### IF YOU HAVE A WINDOW UNIT ...

Replace it if it's 10 years old; you could save an average \$30 to \$50 a year with a new Energy Star-qualified model. **GE** and **Kenmore** make some of the best.

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## Track Your Usage

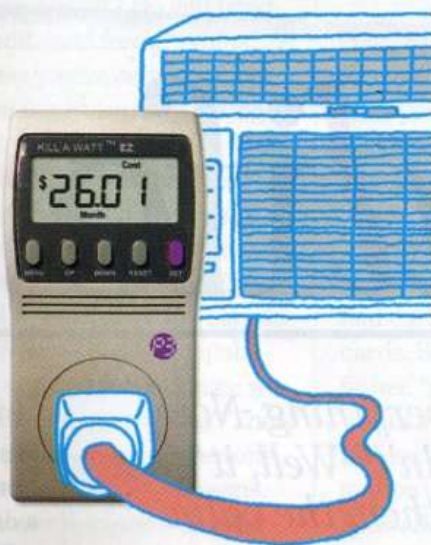
with an energy monitor

→ **KILL A WATT EZ** (\$35, [DRUGSTORE.COM](http://DRUGSTORE.COM))

**BLACK & DECKER POWER MONITOR**  
(\$100, [BDONLINESTORE.COM](http://BDONLINESTORE.COM))

**WHAT IT DOES** Acts as a live-in meter reader, revealing your power usage and costs. A review done at the University of Oxford says that people who monitored their usage changed consumption habits—and reduced energy bills 5% to 15%.

Plug a window AC, or any appliance, into the **Kill A Watt EZ** (at right), then plug that into the wall. Enter the kilowatt-hour rate from your electricity bill, and the device starts tallying costs. Or attach the **Black & Decker Power Monitor** to your outside electric meter. It displays whole-house usage only, but fiddling with the thermostat or lights will show you how small changes affect the big picture.



**PAYBACK TIME** It depends on how your usage changes. Best case: The Kill A Watt pays off in two months, the Black & Decker in five.