

the real estate **advisor**

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How to Keep Your Utility Bills Low



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As a homeowner, costs can really start to add up, so it never hurts to take measures to help you reduce your monthly utility bills. Below are a few ways to do just that!

Electricity Bill: Saving money on your electricity bill can be done multiple ways. Some easy changes include running appliances, like the stove, dishwasher, washing machine, and dryer, at night, opting to air dry clothes, or cooking meals in a crockpot or toaster oven. Set aside time throughout the year to inspect the areas around doors and windows and seal any cracks with caulk or weather stripping. Additionally, make sure to unplug electronics when not in use or use a power strip to turn them all off at once.

Water Bill: Your monthly water bill can sneak up on you, but small changes can be made to cut costs. Install WaterSense-certified faucets and shower heads and convert toilets to low flow to reduce the amount of water

used. Make sure to regularly check toilets and sinks for leaks and repair them. Opt for using your dishwasher instead of handwashing and ensure it's a full load each time. Also, don't forget to turn off water while brushing your teeth and shaving.

Gas Bill: Investing in some changes up front can make a difference on your natural gas bill long term. Add insulation in your attic and around your water heater and pipes. Make sure to repair any leaks in your ducts, inspect your furnace regularly, and check your home for any blocked vents that could cause your gas heating system to work overtime. You can also reduce the temperature of your water heater.

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Take 5: Entertaining at Home

One of the joys of homeownership is getting to host your friends and family on various occasions. Here are a few hosting tips for your next party!

- 1. Pick a theme.** Once you select a theme, planning the rest of the party is simplified. The menu options are pared down, finding decor inspiration is as easy as a Google search, and guests will have attire direction. Some common themes are fiesta, backyard BBQ, wine and cheese night, and garden party.
- 2. Plan your menu.** Whether you are serving small appetizers or a formal dinner, it's important to survey your guests for food allergies or preferences (ie. vegan, vegetarian) to ensure you offer options for everyone.
- 3. Stock up on refreshments.** When it comes to drinks, it's better to

overstock than understock. Make sure to have alcohol staples on hand, such as beer, wine, vodka, and bourbon. Equally important is ice, fruit garnishes, and a good supply of juices and soda that can be used for mixing as well as drinks for children and those who don't partake in alcohol.

4. Don't forget the kids. Hosting a party with children in attendance? To ensure their parents get to enjoy the party, plan a few child-friendly activities. Purchase coloring books and crayons, pick up children's board games, or have a couple age-appropriate movies queued up.

5. Make sure you have fun too. By having a flexible timeline for the party and setting aside time to prep ahead of people arriving, you can minimize the stress of hosting. Make sure you take time to talk to all your guests, enjoy the food you've prepared, and have some drinks (alcoholic or not) too!

Tips for Baby Proofing Your Home

When the littlest member of your family gets close to becoming mobile, it's time to baby proof. Some people might enlist the help of a professional, but many take on the task themselves. If you're a do-it-yourselfer then below are some tasks to get you started!

- Place baby gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Cover all sharp corners of furniture, counters, and cabinets with bumpers or padding.
- Insert safety plugs in all outlets or switch over to self closing outlet covers.
- Install blind cord wraps next to any windows with dangling cords.
- Add safety locks to all toilets.
- Lock cabinets and drawers in the bathrooms and kitchen.
- Secure furniture that can easily tip over, like bookshelves, TV stands, end tables, and sets of drawers, by anchoring them to the wall.
- Add pinch guards on the side of the doors.

- Install door knob or lever covers.
- Cover stove knobs and install an oven door lock.
- Purchase garbage cans with lids that lock.
- Mount your TVs on the wall and tuck away any loose cords.
- Set the water heater to no higher than 120 degrees to avoid scalding.
- Put window guards on screens.

- Hire someone to install a gate to enclose the pool, if applicable.
- Lock away tools in a cabinet.
- Use cord holders to fasten cords to walls or hide them with a cover.
- Place any chemical products, like antifreeze and pesticide, on a high shelf in the garage.

Although it takes a little time and work upfront, baby proofing properly will give you peace of mind and assurance that your little one will be protected from unintentional injuries in your home.

If you are already working with a real estate professional, please disregard this solicitation.