

Baseboard & Wall Heater Tips

Zonal electric heat — such as baseboard, in-wall and radiant ceiling heat — can heat your home efficiently. Because you can heat each zone or room of your home to the temperature you want, you can be comfortable and save energy by not heating unoccupied areas. Use these tips for more savings.

Check mechanical thermostats for accuracy

It's very common for mechanical thermostats (dial or sliding lever styles) to lose accuracy over time — sometimes by as much as 25 degrees! If you're unable to upgrade your thermostat, you should check your mechanical thermostat against the actual room temperature. Here's how:

- First, place a separate digital room thermometer (available at hardware and home stores) on the wall next to the thermostat, and check the actual room temperature.
- Next, turn your thermostat until you hear a click, indicating the heat has turned on. The point at which the heat clicks on equals what the thermostat thinks is your room temperature. If it's different than the digital readout, it's likely miscalibrated. For example, if your digital thermometer says 70 degrees but your thermostat clicks on at 60 degrees, your thermostat is off by 10 degrees.
- Keep the difference in mind when you use your thermostat, and use the digital thermometer to check.

Set for energy savings

Choose an energy-efficient setting: 68 degrees when you're home and 60 degrees when sleeping or away. (Exception: For ceiling cable heat, change only 2 to 3 degrees at a time for the most efficiency.)

Save with each degree

Each degree you lower the temperature throughout your home saves an estimated 2 percent on your heating costs.

Set the thermostat to the desired temperature — no higher

Turning the thermostat higher will not warm a room faster. It will heat up just as quickly with the thermostat set at 68 degrees as it will set at 80 degrees. Setting it higher overheats your home and wastes energy.

Upgrade to a smart thermostat

If your situation permits, we highly recommend installing a smart thermostat. More precise than mechanical or lower-cost programmable thermostats, they improve comfort and economy by learning your schedule and preferences, then adjusting the temperature accordingly. With Wi-Fi capability, smart thermostats let you easily monitor and control your home's temperature from anywhere via computer, tablet or smartphone.

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Close doors

Turn the heat down or off in unused rooms and close the doors to keep heat where you want it. But watch for mold or mildew problems. Also remember that most zonal heat thermostats do not have an actual “off” setting, just a “low” setting — and the low temperature can vary depending on the accuracy or settings of your thermostat. With a “low” setting, the zonal heater might still cycle on and off, wasting energy, unless you turn it off completely at your electrical breaker panel.

Vacuum heater grills regularly

This keeps fans running efficiently and quietly, and it extends the life of the heater. Turn off power to the heater before vacuuming the grill or fins.

Allow air to circulate

Never place anything in front of a heating unit with a fan. If you have baseboard heat and must place furniture in front of it, move the furniture at least a foot away from the wall so warm air can rise from the baseboard and circulate throughout the room.

Avoid cool drafts

Air naturally flows from a cooler space to a warmer space. To help prevent these chilly drafts, keep thermostats at the same setting in rooms that connect to each other.

Weatherize to maximize comfort and savings

Insulating your home and sealing air leaks will make your home more comfortable. You'll save energy because your heating system won't have to work as hard.

If you rent, discuss weatherization steps with your landlord. Consider using caulk, weatherstripping and spray-on insulating foam to seal around the doors, windows (not the moving parts) and holes where pipes exit the wall.