

## Winterize Your Home on Any Budget

Old man winter is just around the corner, and securing your home against those cold blasts should be at the top of the “honey do” list. Thankfully, there are ways to ensure that your family stays comfortable and warm without busting your budget. We’ve rounded up tips to winterize your biggest investment at three price points.

### Free

- The U.S. Department of Energy estimates you can save around 10% a year on your heating and cooling bills by simply turning your thermostat back 10°–15° for eight hours. You can do this automatically without sacrificing comfort by installing an automatic setback or programmable thermostat. Do it while you’re at work during the day or under the covers and night and you might not even feel it. If your annual heating and cooling bill is \$1,000, moving the thermostat down will save you around \$100 a year.
- Shift your ceiling fan blades so that they move in a clockwise direction. Doing so will push hot air that travels along the ceiling down towards the floor. You’ll automatically feel warmer.
- Clean out your gutters to prevent icicles from forming in cooler clients. That way, water will travel down the roof and into the gutters instead of pouring onto your driveway and sidewalks where they will create dangerous icy patches.
- Clear out the lint from the outside dryer vent. Also make sure that the cover closes completely.
- Roll up a rug or a towel and place it in front of all of your exterior doors. Doing so will help ensure cold air stays outside and your heated air remains indoors.

### Less than \$100

- The average home spends \$2,200 a year on energy bills, and nearly half of that goes to heating and cooling. Homeowners can save about \$180 per year by installing and setting programmable thermostats and sticking to those settings. (Cost: \$40-\$60)

- Buy a basic caulk gun (\$20) and some caulk (\$5 per tube) to fill in any gaps around windows, doors and siding. If you have really leaky windows, pull off the molding and check around the gaps of the window jam. A little insulating foam sealant (\$5 per can) can help to seal up the gaps.
- For single-pane or older, leaky windows, consider using a plastic film window insulating kit. (\$16 for a 5-window kit)
- If cold air rushes in from underneath your exterior doors, install a door threshold to fill in the empty space. (\$10-\$35 each)
- For leaky fireplaces, insert a fireplace plug. As metal dampers corrode and warp over time, they do not close tightly around their edges, allowing cold air to seep in and warm air from inside escape. Installing a fireplace plug to close it off with a tight, energy-saving seal. (Cost: starting at \$35)

### **Less than \$500**

- Have your utility company come out and do a home energy audit. It's the first step to assessing how much energy your home consumes and to evaluate what measures you can take to make your home more energy efficient. An assessment will show you problems that may, when corrected, save you significant amounts of money over time. (Cost: about \$200).
- Call in your HVAC contractor to clean, check and maintain your central heating and air system. (Cost: \$250)