

# Time for a Fall Tuneup

As summer comes to an end, assess the health of your home to maximize savings



## Thermostat

A programmable thermostat allows you to control settings to suit your climate, schedule and temperature preferences.

Consider installing a smart thermostat. After installation, input your schedule and temperature preferences. As you change the settings, the thermostat adjusts to minimize energy use. Bonus: You can control the thermostat remotely with a smartphone.

Don't adjust the thermostat drastically. Your home will not heat or cool more quickly.

Keep the temperature at or below 68 F during the day and cooler at night.

Save up to 10% on your monthly heating and cooling bill by turning back your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees for eight hours a day.



## Windows and Doors

Energy loss and drafts often occur in the cracks between window components. Use weatherstripping where a window's movable parts meet the window frame.

The seam between the window frame and the wall is a common source of air leakage. Fill any crack less than 1/4-inch wide with caulk. For larger cracks, use expanding foam and paint over it.

Use window coverings to cut energy costs. Cellular shades, curtains and draperies can provide increased comfort year-round.

Use a door sweep—a flexible piece of rubber or plastic held to the door's lower edge by a piece of aluminum—on an exterior door to block drafts.



## Insulation

Insulation reduces heat loss during winter and heat gain during summer. Before you add or replace insulation, check your current levels.

Start with your attic. Aim for at least 14 inches of insulation for warmer climates and at least 18 inches in colder climates. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends an R-value—which refers to the insulation's ability to resist heat—of about R-60 for most regions.

According to DOE, air leaks are among the most significant sources of energy loss in a home. They also are the easiest to fix. Check for leaks throughout your home, including insulation.



## Heating and Cooling

Frequently replacing your furnace filter is one of the easiest and cheapest ways to keep your HVAC system running efficiently. A clogged filter causes your system to work harder and can shorten its life span.

Depending on the home, filters should be changed every month or every other month when the HVAC system is in use.

Schedule an annual service on your HVAC system. A clean system is safer and more efficient. A preventive service call for a tuneup and cleaning usually is less expensive and less stressful than an emergency service call if your equipment fails.

Leaky furnace ducts mean higher utility bills. Improve their performance by sealing exposed ducts in the attic, crawl space, unfinished basement and garage.

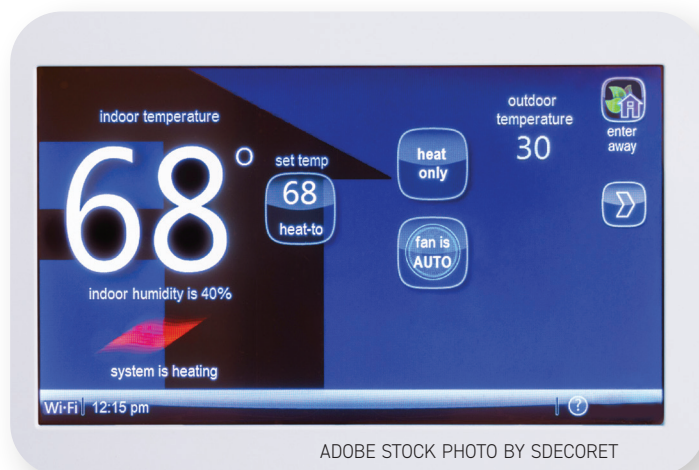


## Outdoors

Trim shrubs, and clear leaves and other debris. Keep branches away from the house and electrical wires to prevent property damage or power interference. Cut cracked and diseased limbs close to the trunk. For large jobs, hire a pro.

Rake yard debris away from the outdoor compressor unit of your heat pump. A heat pump needs good circulation to work efficiently, so make sure there is a 2-foot clearance around the outdoor compressor.

Ensure gutters are clear and downspouts are correctly connected so water drains away from your home. The dirt grade around your home should slope away from the house. ■



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