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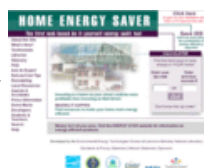
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January 10, 2008

### Energy audit might actually save you money

My neighbor Steven has been nagging me for months to replace the halogen floor lamp in my living room. It's not that he finds it unattractive—this nice-looking modern fixture does add a touch of style to an otherwise drab room. Rather, Mr. Know-It-All tells me, this fixture is an energy hog that chows down far more electricity than a lamp that uses compact fluorescent bulbs and even incandescents. Indeed, this fixture can cost up to \$100 to run each year.



My goodness Steven hasn't seen my aquarium at home. Sure, it's kind of dirty since I haven't been cleaning it, but I'm more concerned he's going to howl about how much electricity the equipment uses since an aquarium gear can consume as much juice as a refrigerator.

How do I find this energy-consumption information? I ran an energy audit with the Home Energy Saver (shown). This tool from the U.S. Department of Energy estimates home energy use and carbon-dioxide emissions and provides you with advice on how to reduce both.

How pretty neat tool. I plugged in my ZIP code and within seconds found out that the average house in my New York City suburb spends \$2,267 annually on energy—nationwide the average is about \$1,300—while an energy-efficient house there spends \$1,451.

Getting a bit more information got me a more-accurate estimate of my energy use—I actually spend about \$3,000 a year on energy and a laundry list of changes to consider, such as replacing halogen and incandescent bulbs with CFLs where they are in high-use fixtures (there you go, Steven), insulating boiler pipes, installing an Energy Star-qualified programmable thermostat, and upgrading my refrigerator, dishwasher, and heating system to new, more-efficient models.

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