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Slash your energy bill

As the temperature mounts, utility bills are soaring. These tips can help ease the pain.

By **Gerri Willis, CNN**

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NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- The West Coast may be cooling off, but the mid-west and the great plains are sizzling. And even if this heat wave doesn't hit you, keeping cool is going to cost you.

Consider monthly projections from the Energy Information Association. There have been increases every month since 2004. And based on current projections, monthly bills could hit \$95 a month next year.

In today's top tips, we're going to tell you the best ways to slash your energy bill.

1: Audit your home

First, figure out where your money is going. To chart your own energy consumption, log onto [Home Energy Saver](#), which is sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Energy. Type in your zip code and give a description of your home and the Web site will be able to calculate how much energy you use and where you can save.

2: Shopping tools

It's the major appliances in your home that can cause big dents in your utility bill. First...grab the rebates. See if you'll get rebates for buying energy star appliances. Find out at [energystar.gov](#).

But if you want other energy-saving tips, like the fact you'll save more electricity with an ink-jet printer rather than a laser printer...check out the [National Resources Defense Council Web site](#).

And to figure out just how much air conditioning you need, you can use a calculator at [consumerreports.org](#).

3: Make some minor adjustments

Heating water accounts for a big part of most people's electric bill. To save hot water, take five-minute showers instead of baths. Do only full loads when using the clothes washer or dishwasher. You could save up to \$63 a year by switching to cold water in your laundry. Remember, detergents formulated for cold water get clothes just as clean.

And when it comes to cooking appliances - size matters. Try to use your microwave oven as much as you can.

Gerri's Mailbox: Got questions about your money? We want to hear them! Send questions to toptips@cnn.com or [click here](#) - each week, we'll give answers on CNN, Headline News and CNNMoney.com. ■

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