

fact sheet



Top 10 tips for keeping cool

Things can get sweaty in summer. Here are some tips to make your house feel like a home and not an oven on hot days, without sending your electricity bill or your greenhouse gas emissions through the roof.

1. On hot days, heat comes straight through unprotected windows

almost as if there was nothing there at all. The answer is to shade your north, east and west facing windows in summer, with whatever you can find. Awnings, deciduous trees and pergolas with deciduous vines are particularly good options, because they give you shade in summer and sun in winter. If it's too late this year, start planting in time for next summer! If shading isn't an option, you could consider putting a reflective film on the glass. This works well in summer, but means you get less sun in winter — unless you get the clever stuff you stick on with Velcro dots. If you're a renter and want to know which of these things you could get away with, check out the Victorian Green Renters' Guide, at www.environmentvictoria.org.au/rentersguide.



2. A bit of strategic opening and shutting can make a big difference.

Shut your doors, windows and curtains on hot days to keep the heat out, then open up the whole house when it gets cool in the evening, to let the cool in. It's worth having thick curtains with block out backing or solid blinds (not ones with gaps in them like Venetians), because they'll make a bit of a difference to your summer cooling and a lot of a difference to your winter heating. Also, if you have bits of your house which you just can't keep cool, and which you don't use much, shut the door to these areas so they don't heat the rest of the house.



3. Use a fan first

instead of turning on the cooling as soon as it gets warm. Then if it gets too hot for the fan, try the fan and the air con together, to help move the air around the room. Fans are a good money saving tip — they cost virtually nothing to run, while your air conditioner can guzzle electricity, which in Victoria means it's also responsible for a fair whack of CO₂. Evaporative coolers don't use as much energy as refrigerated air conditioning, but they guzzle water instead — as much as 60 litres an hour for ducted systems.





4. Set your thermostat to 26°C.

Hot weather can make you want to set the cooling all the way down to 21°C and get out your scarf and roast marshmallows. But cooling to just 26° should keep your home comfortable and save you money — setting your thermostat just 1° cooler can up your cooling bill by 15%.

5. Just cool the room you're in

and you'll save lots of energy, and give your cooler a chance to work properly, instead of trying to cool a bigger area than it's capable of. Shut the doors to this room and seal the gaps so your nice cool air doesn't sneak out under the door. Weather strips are a cheap and easy way to do this, and will also keep the heat in when you want it, in winter.

6. Get yourself some insulation.

It doesn't just keep your house warm in winter, it also keeps it cool in summer, particularly if you combine bulk insulation (big batts) with foil insulation (thin sheets). Ceiling insulation can cut your energy use by 45%, which means it pays for itself in reduced energy bills. And with the price of energy set to rise, insulating now is a smart way of avoiding excessive energy bills in the future.

7. Hang out in the great outdoors

No, we don't mean in the middle of the day. But when it gets cooler in the evenings, cooking in the backyard or at the electric BBQ at the local park can be a lot nicer than cooking in a sweaty kitchen. Pull out the bean bag, garden furniture and mozzie coil and make your outdoor space a nice place to hang out.

8. Get inventive!

If you just can't cool your house properly, it's time to pull out creative ideas, which might not be that schmick, but they're a whole lot better than nothing. Try using a spray bottle to spray water on your face, carrying around a wet face washer on the back of your neck, wetting your sheet before going to bed or setting up a kiddie pool on the verandah for your sweaty feet.

9. Look after your cooler.

If you've got an air conditioner, keep the outdoor bit of it shaded (e.g. with plants) and clean its filters regularly.

10. Got money to burn?

Here are some suggestions that don't quite fit into 'quick and easy' but are worth thinking about:

- If you're thinking of buying an air conditioner, think about ceiling fans and good insulation first. Then make sure you get one with a high star rating for energy efficiency, and one which is the right size for the room you'll be cooling.
- Paint your roof and walls a light colour! This will keep your house cooler, by reflecting heat (but you might want to check with your council — some have rules around roof colour).
- If you're getting new windows, go for ones which open wide, so you can get lots of cool air into the house quickly. Also avoid aluminium frames, because heat passes through them easily.
- Outdoor paving can store heat, making your house cool down slower in the evenings. You

