

Do-It-Yourself Energy Audit

The arrival of fall is the perfect time to think about winterizing your home for the coming colder months. And the perfect place to begin is with an energy audit.

Having a professional audit your home is the best way to figure out where your home is losing energy, where you can save money and ensure your home stays warm all winter, according to the Department of Energy.

But you can first conduct a do-it-yourself audit that will help you pinpoint some of the easier areas to address and prioritize your upgrades to increase energy efficiency.

This is especially true for old or aging homes. Even if your home is new or relatively new, there are still opportunities to save energy — and money. Here are some tips on where to start.

AIR LEAKS

Perhaps the most obvious place to begin is to follow drafts in your home to find air leaks. Reducing drafts in your home can save you as much as 10% to 20% each year, according to the DOE.



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REAL ESTATE 101

More Energy Audit Tips

Finished your do-it-yourself audit? Consider calling in a pro to complete a more thorough assessment. Your self-audit can help the auditor better analyze your home and potential areas for savings. Learn more about professional audits from the Department of Energy at bit.ly/3jJMY.

You'll also discover your home is much more comfortable.

Inside, check around doors, windows, along the baseboard and flooring where it meets walls and the ceiling, and fireplace dampers. Other less obvious to discover leaks are electrical out-

lets and switches, where air can penetrate around loose plates and fixtures.

Outside, check for cracks in the mortar, foundation and siding and seal them with the proper materials. New caulking and weatherstripping can result in dramatic savings and comfort.

INSULATION

Heat loss through the ceiling and walls can indicate your insulation is performing at less than the minimum recommendations, according to the DOE. Investing in proper insulation can also result in huge energy savings and an increase in your personal comfort.

Your attic and basement are also obvious spaces to inspect. The DOE recommends ensuring attic hatches are heavily insulated, as well as openings for pipes, ductwork and chimney. The latter should be insulated with non-combustible sealant.

Basements are divided into crawlspaces and enclosed, walkable spaces that hold heating and cooling equipment, air ducts and plumbing. In crawlspaces, make sure there's adequate insulation under the living area flooring. In enclosed basements, the DOE recommends insulating the perimeter rather than the living floor space.

HEATING EQUIPMENT

Most manufacturers of heating and cooling equipment recommend annual inspections to ensure they are performing at peak levels. Otherwise, check and replace air filters about every two months or more frequently during periods of high usage.

LIGHTING & APPLIANCES

Because of high energy consumption, inspect all your lighting, appliances and electronics to ensure you're reducing energy when possible with items such as modern bulbs or replacing them with newer, more energy-efficient models.



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HOMEWISSE GLOSSARY

Ad valorem tax: Charged by local government, this tax is based on the value of the property, as determined by the local government authorities. SOURCE: MLS.com

AD SPACE