
Creating a Warm and Cozy Home

The dark days of winter can really do a number on your well-being. Shorter days trigger the blahs; freezing temps spark the sniffles. So we put together a list of ideas that'll turn your home into a comfy haven.

Cozy and Clever Energy Savers

Here's how to create a brighter and warmer home without using more energy or cranking up the thermostat.

- 1. Clean dirty light fixtures and dusty bulbs** to make your home appear 30% brighter without turning on more lights.
- 2. Seal sneaky air leaks.** It's not just window and door leaks killing your cozy vibe. Don't forget to plug stealthy gaps around recessed lights, electrical boxes, and wall outlets. Use a lit incense stick or scented candle to hunt down drafty spots while leaving behind a cozy scent.
- 3. Replace your traditional gas or wood fireplace.** Why? Both suck out heated indoor air and send it up the chimney. A gel fireplace insert is an eco-friendly option that produces a burning fire without gas, wood, electricity, or even a chimney. It's also smoke-free and emits fewer allergens than a wood fireplace; some options crackle like the real thing. A basic model costs between \$100 to \$210; custom models go up exponentially from there. A case of gel fuel comes with 12 cans that burn for three hours each (about \$35).

Immunity Boosters

You'll feel coziest in a healthy indoor environment that keeps allergies at bay and reduces your chances of getting sick.

- 4. Get plants.** Some indoor plants, like golden pothos and gerbera daisies, are particularly adept at sucking up nasty VOCs – the vapors emitted from household cleaners, paints, and dry cleaning. And since plants increase humidity levels, they help decrease household dust.
- 5. Vacuum while your thermostat is set to “fan on.”** This helps filter dust that gets kicked-up while cleaning. Just leave the fan on for about 15 minutes after you finish vacuuming and switch it back to “auto” afterward. HVAC blowers aren't intended to run all the time.
- 6. Change your HVAC filter every couple months** (monthly if you have pets) to prevent excess dust from circulating.

Sun Worshippers

Lack of natural light can trigger a mean case of the winter doldrums – or worse, mood-altering seasonal affective disorder. Maximize daylight and make rooms feel warmer by adding the following to your yearly fall maintenance checklist.

- 7. Make your windows pane-fully clear.** Clean glass not only lets more natural light into your home, it's a feel-good task, according to a survey by the American Clean Institute. When ACI asked consumers what clean surfaces make them happy, “gleaming windows” made the top five above a “spotless sink.”
- 8. Ditch your window screens in the fall and winter.** They trap dirt and can make your home appear darker inside and out. It's a good curb appeal booster, too.
- 9. Add an interior window to a room next to a sun-drenched space to take advantage of natural light.**

Tip: Paint chilly rooms, especially north-facing walls that don't typically get sunlight, in reds, oranges, or yellows – cozy colors that can actually help the room feel warmer, according to a Michigan State University study.