

7 Tips for a Warm and Sustainable Winter
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The chill of winter makes it the perfect time to snuggle up in cozy sweaters and fuzzy socks in front of the fire or your favorite heater vent. However, don't let your carbon footprint nor your wallet get bitten by the frost! Grab your Fair Trade coffee or hot cocoa and consider implementing some of these tips to keep your winter warm and energy efficient.

Avoid Idling Your Vehicle: One of the greatest winter misconceptions is that our vehicles need to idle before they should be driven in cold temperatures. This is simply not true. Auto experts recommend that you idle your engine no more than thirty seconds before you start driving in the winter. Additionally, you should ease into driving rather than revving your engine. When idling, your vehicle emits toxic fumes and releases harmful greenhouse gases. Moreover, the engine will warm up much faster when driven. Choosing not to idle your vehicle will promote better air quality in the valley and save your pocketbook.

De-Ice Your Windshield With Ease: You may be asking yourself, "if I'm not supposed to idle my car, how will I de-ice my windshield?!" No, we aren't going to tell you to stand out in the cold trying to reach across your car with a semi-effective ice scraper. You only need three things to de-ice your windshield with ease: water, rubbing alcohol, and a spray bottle. Simply mix 2 parts rubbing alcohol to 1 part water (i.e. 2 cups rubbing alcohol with 1 cup water) in a spray bottle. Spray liberally on your windshield, turn on your windshield wipers, and watch the ice melt away! You will still want to turn your defroster on inside your vehicle to keep the windshield from refreezing, but this deicer formula helps you get on the go much faster without idling.

Program Your Thermostat: Installing and using a programmable thermostat can save you a lot of energy, money and effort! By programming your thermostat to be 10 degrees cooler at night, or when you are not home, you can save 10% on your energy bills. If 10 degrees is too much, try bumping it down just 5 degrees. When you are home, try programming your thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler to balance comfort and energy savings.

Weatherize Your Home: By improving the envelope of your home, you can save energy and live more comfortably year round! Plus, the City of Ashland has programs to help you, including energy audits to help identify what measures will benefit you and incentive programs to help cover the cost of weatherizing your home. By adding insulation, upgrading windows, installing proper weatherstripping around doors, and sealing leaks, you can keep the warm air from running out of your house. Visit www.ashland.or.us/conserv to learn more about the incentives and resources available through the City of Ashland.

Wear Layers: It may seem obvious, but we all need a reminder sometimes. If you are feeling a little chilly, before heading over to turn up the thermostat try putting on another layer. Simply putting on a jacket, a pair of cozy socks, or a warm hat can make a huge difference in your comfort level without using precious energy sources nor increasing your utility bill.

Close Window Shades at Night: During the day, we love to open the shades on windows (especially south-facing ones!) to gain warmth from the sun and take in our beautiful views! However, it is best at night to cover all windows with drapes or close your blinds to prevent the cool night air from seeping in and to keep the warm air in.

Use Your Ceiling Fan in Reverse: Ceiling fans aren't just for summer! Flip the switch on your ceiling fans so they spin clockwise during the winter. Use your ceiling fans on a low setting (clockwise!) during cooler months to push hot air back down into the room to keep you warm and maintain better airflow.