

Refrigerators & Freezers – Tips and Facts

Two major appliances with a voracious appetite for power are the refrigerator and the freezer. Refrigerators are power pigs, *scarfing* up to 7% of your electric bill and freezers are among the most significant energy-consuming appliances in the average home. In most cases only space conditioning (heating and cooling) and water heating use more energy. While most people are aware of the importance of saving energy on heating, cooling, and water heating, the energy consumed by refrigerators and freezers is often overlooked.

How much is that 6-Pack Costing you? If you have a second refrigerator in your garage or basement it's probably costing more than you think...as much as \$100 per year! That's a stiff price to pay to keep a few beverages cool.

The temperature of the air around a refrigerator significantly affects its energy usage. Don't keep a refrigerator in the garage, near heat sources such as ranges, stoves or dishwashers or in direct sunlight. A refrigerator or freezer located in a garage or area where temperatures reach 90° F or higher can use a significant amount of energy – as much as 45-50% more. Give a refrigerator space and allow for good air circulation around the coils.

Likewise, if ambient air temperature drops below about 40 degrees Fahrenheit, the thermostat on the refrigerator may not run its cooling and defrost cycles for the appropriate amount of time. And refrigerators are not designed to heat their interiors, so placing a refrigerator in an environment that is below freezing may result in the freezing of your foods.

As with refrigerators, the garage is a bad place to keep a freezer because they use a significant amount of energy in rooms with temperatures at or above 90° F. Because of less thermal spillage and better insulation, chest freezers do use less energy than upright models.

Refrigerator Maintenance - Because these appliances run every day, small steps taken to improve their efficiency can leap into giant savings over the course of a year.

- **Prolong the life of the refrigerator gasket sealing by wiping it regularly with warm water. Once the gasket starts deteriorating, you're in for a big waste of energy and money. Test the quality of the seal by closing the door on a sheet of paper. The sheet should be firmly anchored. Repeat the test along the length of the gasket. Adjust the door hinges or replace the gasket if the seal is bad.**
- **A dusty condenser coil reduces a refrigerator's efficiency and shortens its life. Clean it several times a year with a coil brush or a soft bristle attachment on a canister-style vacuum cleaner. Unplug the refrigerator first. Cleaning coils regularly will help your refrigerator run more smoothly, which means lower energy usage.**
- **Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations, and disconnect the power before performing ANY maintenance on your refrigerator.**

Facts to Consider - A ten year-old refrigerator or freezer can cost considerably more to operate than a new energy-efficient model of the same size. Improvements in the design of compressors and cooling coils, better insulation, tighter door seals, and other design improvements all contribute to the higher efficiencies of newer

Energy Star qualified refrigerators and freezers provide energy savings without sacrificing the features you want. When considering the purchase of a new refrigerator or freezer, look for the **Energy Star** label. It looks like this:



The **Energy Star** label is designed to help consumers identify appliances that have been rated by the federal government as the most energy-efficient products on the market. Appliances with an **Energy Star** label exceed existing federal efficiency standards, typically by 13% to 20%, and as much as 110% for some appliances.

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