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Making Your Home Energy Efficient

You have been inspired to reduce the energy you use, to save money and to reduce your contribution to the climate crisis. Where should you begin?

The best place to start is a do-it-yourself home energy audit, such as <http://hes.lbl.gov/> created by the US Dept. of Energy

Here is an alternative one by the City of Palo Alto Utilities: <http://www.cpau.com/myutilitiesaccount/energyanalysis/index.html>

There are several ways to save energy:

1. Conservation – stop wasting energy

- a) Waste less (turn off lights/appliances when not in use, including unplugging TVs and other electronics that draw "ghost" energy, don't leave windows and doors open when the heat is on, etc.)
- b) Consider changes in food and transportation, as well as housing
- c) Use sun to dry clothes
- d) Carpool, group errands, walk or bike or use public transit
- e) Dress for the weather (layers or sweaters when weather is cold)
- f) Turn down the thermostat on your hot water heater

2. Efficiency – make the energy you use work more effectively

- a) Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs (you can often get these for free from the utility company or at green festivals, etc.)
- b) Replace old appliances with energy efficient ones (energy star) or stop using second refrigerator or freezer (take advantage of State and local rebates).
- c) Improve insulation in walls, roof, hot water heater; low-e windows, etc.

3. Design – house systems to optimize use of sun and natural ventilation

- a) Install solar hot water or photovoltaic system
- b) Use passive solar techniques like heat-sink floors, straw-bale construction, etc.
- c) Plant trees for shade; plant native plants to reduce need for irrigation and provide habitat for native birds and insects.
- d) Grow some of your own food.
- d) Live closer to work, or work closer to where you live.

In addition to saving energy, saving water, reducing waste and eating locally are important adjuncts to living more lightly on the planet.