

## 21 Tips to Keep Your Home Warm When It's Freezing Outside

**When winter settles in and outdoor temps plunge, stay cozy and warm with these tips.**

### 1. Maximize Heat Distribution

Vacuum dust and dirt from around registers and returns to maintain air circulation. Make sure registers aren't blocked by furniture, long drapes or rugs. Heated air rises, so put all ceiling fans in reverse with to push warm air down into the living space.

### 2. Add Moisture to the Air

When outdoor temperatures drop in the winter, the humidity level falls dramatically and home heating pulls even more moisture from the air. Install a humidifier on your system to add moisture or run portable units in occupied rooms.





### 3. Maintain the Heating Equipment

Having the heating system inspected, cleaned and tuned up by a licensed HVAC professional ensures that it's ready to perform efficiently and safely all winter long. Check the air filter every month, and replace it when it looks dirty.

### 4. Air Seal the Living Space

Prevent unnecessary heat loss by identifying and sealing sources of air leaks around the home such as around window frames, exterior doors, recessed lights and electrical outlets. Install sweeps and weatherstripping around exterior doors.

### 5. Pay Attention to the Windows

Older windows can be a major cause of heat loss. Replace or add exterior storm windows or seal drafty windows with plastic film and double-sided tape. Installing heavy, tight-fitting blinds or drapes is another effective way to keep heat indoors.

### 6. Boost Attic Insulation

[Ample insulation](#) on the attic floor not only increases comfort, it also helps keep energy consumption and costs under control all year long. For the Chicago area, the Department of Energy (DOE) advises that homeowners should install a total R-value between 49 and 60. Here are some other easy ways to boost the comfort inside your home when the weather turns frigid:



# Tips to Extend HVAC System Life

- 1. Change the air filter often.** You should inspect and change or clean the [air filter](#) as needed, usually quarterly. A dirty air filter reduces airflow, which makes your blower motor work harder and can shorten its lifespan.
- 2. Clean your system.** Your cleaning priorities should be focused to the outdoor condenser unit. Grass, leaves, dust and more can accumulate over the outdoor coil and lower your system's efficiency. Spraying it gently with a garden hose is usually all it takes.
- 3. Keep your vents open.** You might be tempted to close air vents in certain parts of your home, but try not to. If a vent is continually closed, moisture can buildup and cause mold, which then gets into your air. Mold is bad news for your HVAC system and for your health.



- 4. Vacuum and dust vents.** Even if your vents are open, dust and other debris will accumulate. Vacuum to [clean the vents](#) every once in a while.

- 5. Check your discharge pipe.** The pipe that leads outdoors and is part of your HVAC system is called a discharge pipe or condensate line. If it becomes frozen in winter or clogged in summer, water could cause significant damage.



## 7 Troubleshooting Tips for a Gas Furnace

1. **Check that the furnace is actually turned to the "on" or "heat" position on the thermostat.** Someone in your family may have flipped it off.
2. **Turn up the thermostat** a few degrees and then wait several minutes for the furnace to turn on.
3. **Make a room-by-room check of your home and inspect the heat registers** to ensure they're not blocked by furniture, clothing or heavy window treatments.
4. **Pull out the furnace filter.** If it's clogged with dust and dirt, it's time for a new filter. A thoroughly dirty filter can cause the furnace to shut down. Inspect the air filter every month during high-use seasons.
5. **Check that the socket switch** on the furnace, is turned on.
6. **Check the circuit breaker** and reset if necessary.
7. **Relight the pilot** light if it's out.



If none of these tips help, please call for a service or maintenance visit.

## 3 Ways Humidifiers Help You and Your Indoor Air

We spend most of our time indoors, so it's important to make sure that the indoor air we're breathing is good quality. Humidifiers can help increase indoor air quality by preventing overly dry air, a common occurrence during winters in Chicago homes that affects our health and home. The ideal indoor humidity level is between 35 and 50 percent, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). How a humidifier helps:

### 1. Better Health

A common result of indoor air with low humidity is dry, itchy skin, dry lips and noses and a sore throat. Too-dry air can cause other health issues, such as:

- respiratory problems
- dried out nasal passages, which reduces your natural protections against colds or the flu
- higher susceptibility to infection
- worsening of asthma and allergy symptoms
- faster spread of the flu virus, which thrives in cold temperatures



## 2. Less Damage to Your Home

Dry air can also cause damage to your home and possessions. Static electricity becomes an issue when indoor air is too dry, which can lead to computer and electronic equipment damage. And it's not that much fun to feel painful shocks yourself.

Hardwood floors can lose moisture and contract causing flooring to separate. Wood furniture can crack and split, wood doors won't fit as well and chairs can become wobbly. Lack of moisture in the air can cause wallpaper to peel at the edge and house plants don't thrive as well in too-dry air.

## 3. Lower Energy Bills

A humidifier can also help you save money on [energy bills](#). The more humid the air is, the warmer we feel. That's why it feels much hotter in Florida than California at the same temperature.

When humidity is maintained to the ideal level in your home, it never feels too dry and you can lower the setting on the thermostat and still feel warm and comfortable. The heating system will use less energy and you'll save money.



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