

## Air conditioning - keep cool, keep costs down

Purchasing and running an air conditioner can be a costly exercise. Good housing design and the use of insulation can reduce the need for an air conditioner. However, if you have an air conditioner or if you are considering buying one, follow these handy tips and you can reduce running costs significantly.

### Step 1 – Purchasing air conditioners

Before you purchase an air conditioner, you need to know the size of the area you wish to cool. An air conditioner that is too small for the area will not be effective.

An air conditioner that is too large will cost you more to buy and run, and can also suffer more wear and tear because the thermostat repeatedly switches itself on and off to reach the desired temperature. Once you have established the correct air conditioner for the area, you should also consider the energy rating when deciding on a brand or model.

Energy rating labels appear on many electrical appliances, and feature star ratings detailing comparative energy efficiency on a scale of one to six.

The more stars, the more energy-efficient an appliance is, and the more money you will save in running costs. An air conditioner with a star rating of two needs more energy to function than an equivalent unit with a star rating of five.

### Step 2 – Installing air conditioners

To ensure your air conditioner is installed correctly, it should be installed by specialist air conditioning dealers or contractors. They will also be able to advise you on the best placement of your air conditioner. Ideally, air conditioners should not be placed in direct sunlight as this will reduce the unit's efficiency, instead, install it on the shady side of the building, or shade the unit itself.

### Step 3 – Running and maintaining air conditioners

The most comfortable and energy efficient temperatures for air conditioners are 24°C during summer in South-East Queensland (25°C in other areas in Queensland) and 19°C during winter. Using a reverse cycle air conditioner set to 19°C in winter is the most energy efficient way to heat your home.



In summer, set the thermostat control on as high a setting as is comfortable. By increasing the room temperature by 1°C, you can save up to 10 per cent of operating costs.

Before turning the air conditioner on, close all doors and windows and draw the curtains or blinds to prevent unnecessary heat getting in and cool air escaping.

Drawing warm air in from the outside uses more electricity, so select the 'air recirculate' setting on your air conditioner. In summer, adjust air vents to point towards the ceiling, because cold air falls. In winter, point the vents towards the floor.

To ensure your air conditioner is working at its optimum level, maintenance should be carried out every fortnight. This includes cleaning the air filter and dusting return and supply air grills to maintain a clear airflow.

#### Other cool considerations

Good housing design, home insulation, ceiling and pedestal fans, blinds and lighter coloured curtains are all energy efficient ways you can cool your home. For more information visit [www.energywise.qld.gov.au](http://www.energywise.qld.gov.au) or [www.epa.qld.gov.au](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au) and search for Climate Smart Living.