

Don't stick on standby... switch it off

True of False

Is it true that you use more energy to turn lights on and off than to leave them running?

There is a widely held belief that it is better to leave fluorescent lights (like energy saving light bulbs, also known as CFLs) on rather than switching them off. It is true that they draw more power when they are warming up however this only takes a few seconds at most so is equivalent to a couple of minutes electricity use when they are on and it is best to keep them switched off when they are not needed otherwise you are wasting money and energy.

FALSE

Use less power - take a shower!

It is not a simple question if showers are better than baths. As sometimes it is true and sometimes it is false!

If you are using the same source to heat the water, i.e. your boiler, and the tank has not been on for any longer a period, or you have a combinational boiler, then there will be no cost difference. If you are comparing a bath to an electric shower, due to the price difference of a unit of gas verses a unit of on-peak electricity then the shower is likely to cost you more.

If you want to check the difference in the amount of water used, put the plug in the bath next time you have a shower, and see how much it fills up. If, at the end of the shower, there is less water than you would usually have in a bath, then you will probably save money by taking a shower. And this could all be different if you have a Power Shower!

TRUE & FALSE

It is wisest to leave your immersion heater on 24 hours a day.

It is always best to place the water heating on a timer, as the energy lost from a hot water tank depends on the temperature difference between the surface of the tank and its surroundings. It's a common myth that it somehow takes more energy to keep heating up a tank than to maintain it at a high temperature.

Unless you have a need for large quantities of hot water all day long it is much better to install a timer. A timer suitable for immersion heaters should cost less than £20 and if you can fit it yourself safely, could pay for itself in a few months: an excellent energy efficiency investment.

FALSE

If you have Thermostatic Radiator Valves you do not need a Room Thermostat.

Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRVs) will only switch the flow to a single radiator on or off. They do not stop the boiler from firing (and so using energy). They are useful, but tend to be a rather crude control of temperature in a room. TRVs can also be affected by having furniture in front of radiators and are often not set at the right temperature.

In contrast a room thermostat is accurate to within a degree or so. What's more, if it has been wired up correctly it should send a signal back to the boiler to switch itself off if there is no demand for heating for either the heating or hot water circuits.

FALSE

Replacing windows with double glazing will stop mould growth

Condensation and mould causes and solutions are: insulation, heating and ventilation. Not enough of these will cause condensation and mould, and more of these will reduce condensation and mould.

So replacing windows with double glazing should help to stop mould growth, providing there is also adequate ventilation, and a reasonable room temperature can be maintained. If the house is too airtight moisture from bathrooms, cooking and even breathing cannot escape and will congregate on the coldest surface it can find and grown mould.

TRUE

Big freezers cost more to run than little freezers

In one sense this is obviously going to be true. But in practice, it often isn't! Small freezers are often upright models, which lose a significant amount of cold air whenever the door is opened. (It can take as much as 30 minutes for a freezer to regain its temperature after a door has been opened for a minute.)

Chest freezers, with a lid opening - and typically thicker insulation levels - will often use only less than half as much energy for a given volume of food storage.

If you have empty space in either type of freezer, it's best to fill it, either with empty cardboard boxes (breakfast cereal packets are ideal) or with loaves of sliced bread to stop air flow and save energy.

TRUE

Leaving your PC screen switched on during the lunch break prolongs its life and doesn't waste much energy

Leaving the screen on over lunch may prolong the life in theory, but in practice how many office PC screens are thrown away because they have broken down, and how many because they have become superseded by more modern technology?

With typical CRT monitors using 95W to run and 15W in standby, and Flat screens using 40W to run and 5W in standby, switching off really does save energy and money.

Screens do not use less energy when they are in screen saver mode (that's just designed to stop the phosphor coating being damaged), and even when they power down into sleep mode (typically after more than 20 minutes) they still use some energy.

FALSE