SET UP YOUR FRIDGE

Refrigerators, freezers and bar fridges are one of the largest users of energy in the home because they run 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. Running a family fridge plus a bar fridge could be costing a household up to $200 per year to run and generating 1,500kg of greenhouse gas. A 'spare' fridge in the garage and a wine cooler on the bench-top can be even more costly (both financially and to the environment). Simple changes to the position, setting, maintenance and number of fridges that you run will make a very big difference to everyday costs. The age of your fridge also makes a big difference – newer fridges are generally much more energy efficient than older models.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Run only the fridges that you need day to day – switch the bar fridge on only for parties. Adjust the temperature settings and position of your fridge to minimize running costs. Upgrade to a new energy efficient fridge and dispose of the old one.

HOW DO I DO IT?

Count How Many.
Check the number of fridges, freezers and coolers that you have running. Look inside – does everything need to be kept cool all of the time? If you are chilling more drinks than you need for an ordinary day, then move the essentials into your main fridge, switch off the bar fridge/ second fridge/ wine chiller, prop it open and save on running costs.

Check What Condition.
Check door seals by placing a business card in between the seal and the closed door – if it won't stay in place your seals need replacing and the cold air (and dollars) are 'draining out of the fridge. Get new fridge seals fitted by a fridge maintenance supplier (or plan to upgrade to a new model).

Look - Where is it?
A fridge should have good air flow around it (to let the hot air that is extracted as part of the chilling process) to ventilate away from the unit. A cooling space behind and above a fridge will improve its efficiency. A second fridge in a hot room such as a garage or back verandah will use more energy trying to beat the heat from the hot room – move it or throw it out.

Act - Set it up?

A fridge should be set to between 3°C – 4°C, and the freezer unit to between -15°C to -18°C. Get a good quality fridge/freezer thermometer (available from kitchen shops for around $8.00 – it will pay for itself many times over!) and leave it in a closed fridge for at least an hour without opening the door. By leaving the fridge closed you will be measuring the normal working temperature and not the 'spike' caused by opening the door. If the fridge is below 3°C, then turn the temperature up, if it is above 4°C then turn the temperature down. Repeat the exercise for the freezer unit (aiming for -15°C to -18°C). The saving from a fridge/ freezer running at the right setting (as compared to one running too cold) can be around $20 a year!

FOLLOW ENERGY WISE TIPS

Running costs and healthy food storage temperatures are maintained by:
- Not leaving the fridge/freezer door open for long periods of time.
- Keeping the fridge well stocked (or putting empty, but sealed, plastic containers inside to trap the cold air and prevent it from 'falling' out every time the door is opened).
- Thaw frozen food in the fridge (just allow a little longer).
- Let the steam from hot foods disperse before storing in the fridge.
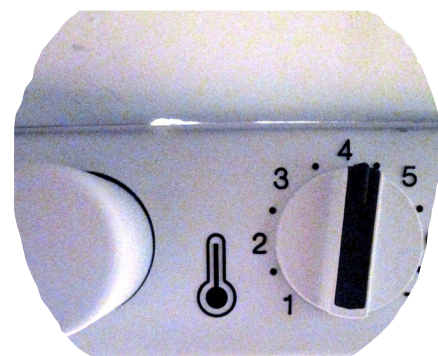
WHY?

The energy, financial and environmental costs of fridges can be large.

Action	Saving (each year)
Switch off the bar fridge (except for parties)	Save 280kg CO2 & $40
Change the setting to the recommended level (on a large 5 star model running 4oC too cool)	Save 75kg CO2 & $15

10 House Living Labs Study: A research project by Curtin University and the CRC for Low Carbon Living.
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