

THE EFFICIENT HOME



Spring Cleaning

Tips, tricks and hacks galore.

The Future of Homeownership

What you find out may surprise you.



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FOREVER FRIENDS ♡

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10 months



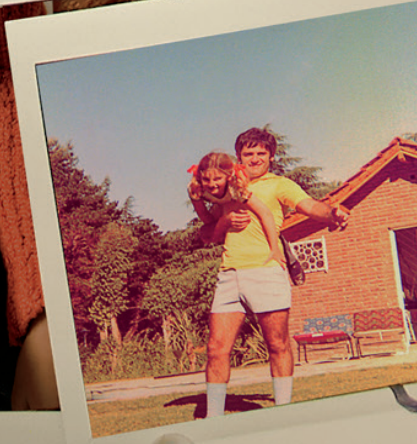
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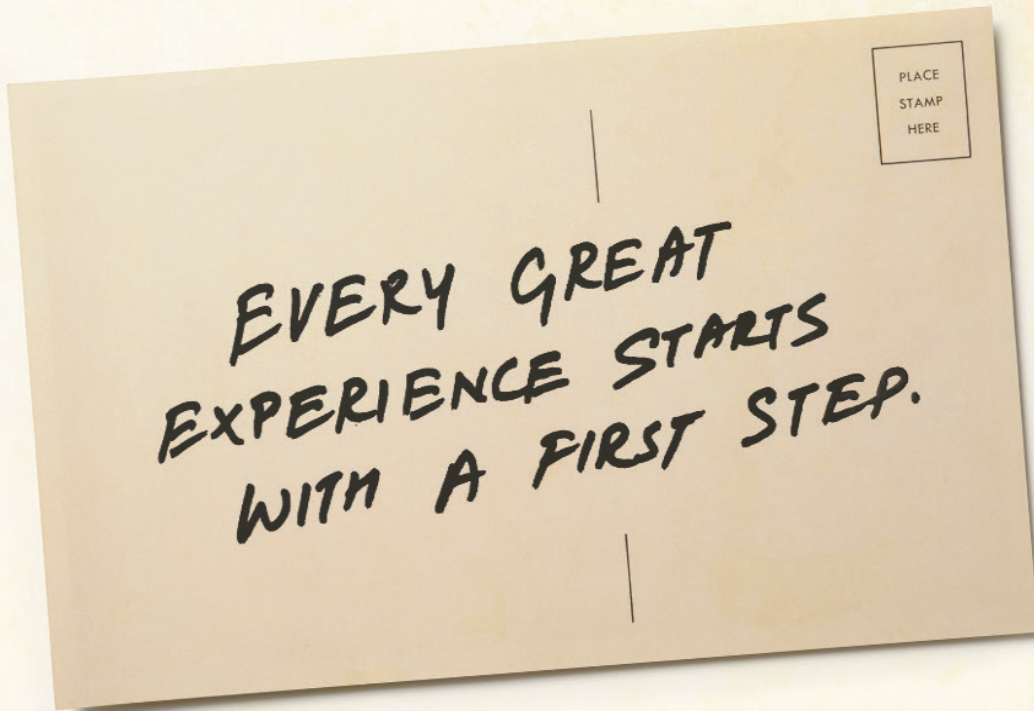


BOWSER



FIRST BICYCLE





From the first day of school to the first date with the love of your life, each time we try something new, we unlock opportunities that enrich our lives. And it all starts when you take that first step. When it comes to your home's energy efficiency, there's no better way to get started than with a **QUICK HOME ENERGY CHECK-UP**. It's fast. It's easy. And it's included at no additional cost with your BGE service.

START YOUR PATH TO AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT LIFESTYLE AT
[BGSMARTENERGY.COM/FIRSTSTEP](https://bgsmartenergy.com/firststep)



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This program supports the EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act.

EmPOWER
MARYLAND

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

THE FIRST OF MANY



I'm honored to be the first-ever editor of the first-ever edition of *The Efficient Home*. Now, that title is more than a little ironic. Truth be told, my home could be more efficient. My life could be much more efficient, but I guess that's why we're all here.

We began creating the pages you are about to experience with one very pointed mindset: Let's get people from a good place to a better place. Eventually, it evolved into the shorter, "Let's get people from Good to Better." You don't have to be perfect. You can and should be grateful for where you are, and that thankful heart can be the launchpad for discovering new ways, both small and not-so-small, that get you to "Better."

The road to energy efficiency is less expressway and more country road. And there is more than one way to get there. What works for me might not work for you. And that's OK.

Because, after all, energy efficiency is more journey than destination. It's a lifestyle. One that uses less energy, yes. But it's so much more than that too. It saves you money doing everything you love at home. It makes every room more comfortable season after season. It provides much-needed relief to a warming planet. And it brings people together. (What else unites penny pinchers, technophiles and tree huggers so harmoniously?)

Our goal was to give you a sly smile as you breeze through this little magazine. We want you to enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together. The writers, editors and designers wanted to put a little bit of "Better" on every page. I think they've done a fantastic job, and I am thankful for all their hard work.

So, get going, get reading.

I hope you'll find inspiration in these pages to seek out opportunities here and there in your own home to make the changes that make sense to you and how you live. And, I hope these changes get you closer to "Better" in your life and bring you moments of peace in our wonderful, beautiful, continually changing world.

ERIC A. RIOPKO

MANAGER, ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS
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CONTRIBUTORS



**AMEY
BAYES**

**SENIOR EFFICIENCY
PROGRAM MANAGER**

Amey's days are filled with getting the word out about energy efficiency, and her new granddaughter. She'll gladly gush about either, but only one adorns the home screen on her mobile device.



**BEN
SCHOTT**

**SENIOR EFFICIENCY
PROGRAM MANAGER**

Ben is the ultimate pet parent to Obi. He's also recently taken up woodworking with a focus on reclaimed materials—proof that Ben can make a difference with both energy efficiency and his hobbies. Oh, and the scrap wood keeps Obi in chew toy heaven.



**CYNTHIA
EDWARDS**

**SENIOR EFFICIENCY
PROGRAM MANAGER**

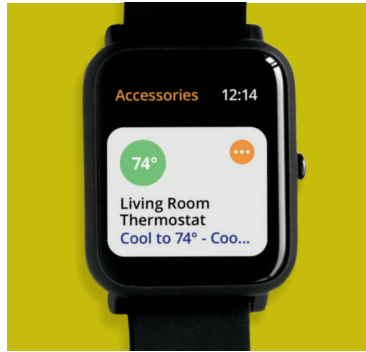
Cynthia spends a lot of her time outdoors, getting closer to nature. She also spends a great deal of time on family matters and energy conservation—the mind, body and spirit kind, of course.



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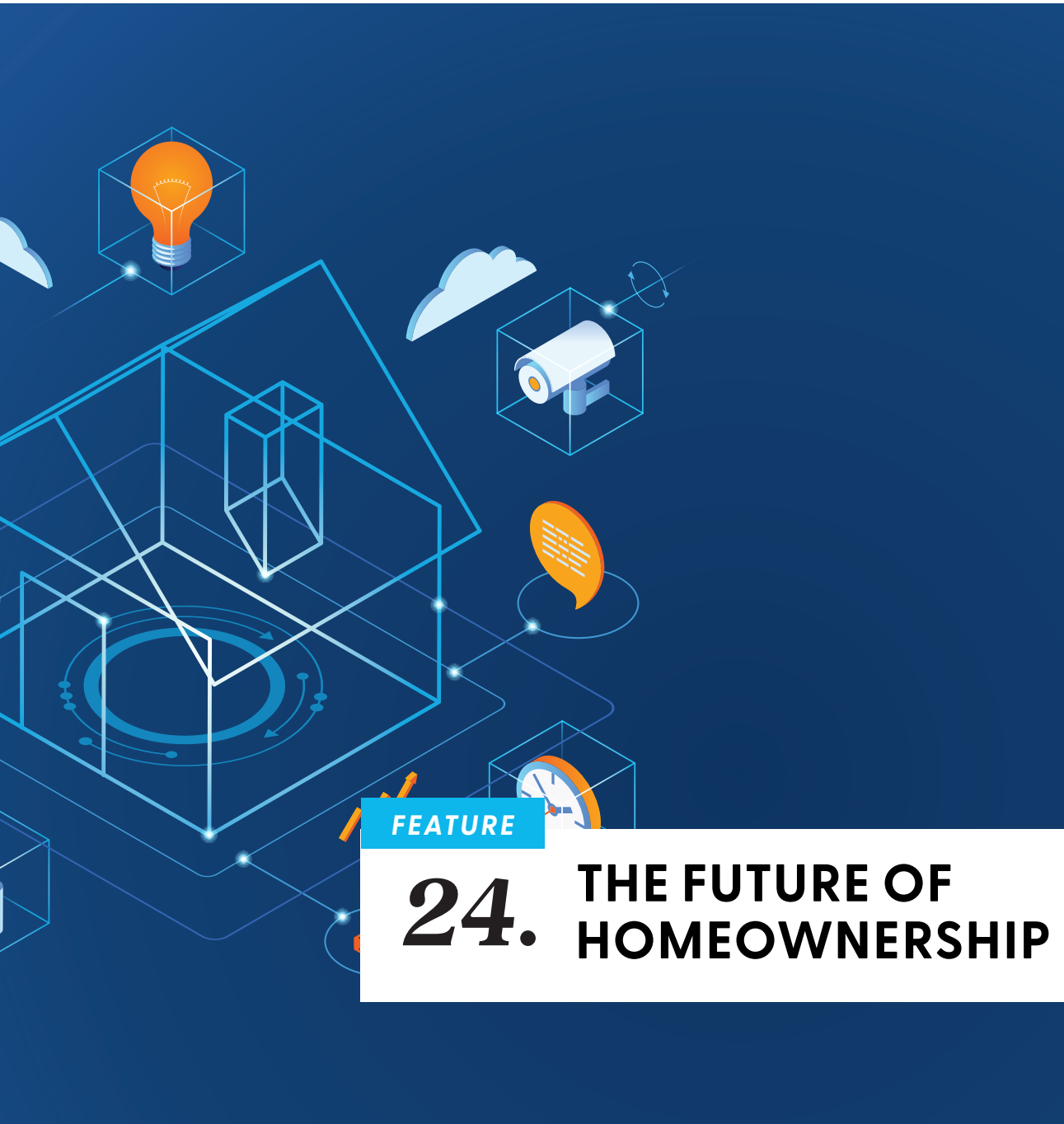
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SPRING CLEANING





THAT TIME OF YEAR

With a little planning, you might actually enjoy this seasonal rite of passage.

First off, let's be clear. There are levels of clean. There's Just-getting-by-clutter-pickup clean. There's Unexpected-company-last-minute-just-throw-it-in-the-closet clean. Then there's Deep-almost-reach-a-Zen-level-of-inner-peace clean.

Spring cleaning is classic Level Three.

This is rarely a spur-of-the-moment event. You plan. You buy supplies. You give up sacred space on your calendar. Often, family members are recruited—often against their will.

And this idea of an annual cleaning event isn't new. During the Persian Empire, the now century-old tradition of khaneh tekani, which literally translates to “shaking of the house,” involved an annual cleaning that would make any compulsive tidier proud. Carpets, drapes and furniture were thoroughly cleaned, and often a fresh coat of paint was involved. This was all done in preparation for Nowruz, or the Persian New Year, to entertain ancestors. So, apparently, doing this to impress your relatives isn't a new idea either—in-laws included.

The American tradition has its origins in the 19th century, when the cleaning in March lined up with the time when the coal furnace stopped running. No matter the time or heritage, spring is now the time to clean.

THAT TIME OF YEAR



Cleaning Tips

TIP 1

Make a Plan

Write down what you are going to do, estimate the time it will take and give out assignments to the whole clan. And if you get any static about all the attention to detail, give that naysayer a steely-eyed stare and say, “Hope is not a plan.” What does it mean exactly? Who knows? But it will confuse them enough to get back to work.

This is rarely a spur-of-the-moment event. Often, family members are recruited—often against their will.

TIP 2

Gather Supplies

Spring cleaning is an event. And, unless you want to adjust your carefully planned schedule, having the right tools for every job will serve you well. In short, don’t put “Wandering around a big-box retailer looking for the right cleaning caddy” on your schedule. Be prepared. An entire youth organization that has lasted for over a century used it for their motto. You can too.

HERE’S A QUICK LIST OF SUPPLIES:

- ▶ Cleaning Caddy
- ▶ Microfiber Cleaning Cloths
- ▶ Towels or Cotton Cleaning Cloths
- ▶ Wand Duster
- ▶ Vacuum Cleaner – With HEPA Filter
- ▶ Mop and Bucket
- ▶ Carpet Cleaner
- ▶ Blind Cleaner
- ▶ Scrub Brushes
- ▶ Window Squeegee
- ▶ Lint Roller
- ▶ Garbage Bags
- ▶ Dish Soap
- ▶ Hydrogen Peroxide
- ▶ All-Purpose Cleaning Spray
- ▶ Window/Glass Spray
- ▶ HVAC Filters

TIP 3

Declutter

Here's a crazy thought. If you have less stuff, you have less stuff that needs to be cleaned. Yep. Very deep. But it's valid, and there's an entire movement called Swedish death cleaning. The idea is that if you declutter your world, your life (in this case your cleaning) will run smoothly.

This is also the perfect time to rid yourself of that old, energy-guzzling fridge. You clean up your space all while decluttering your energy bill. For a \$50 reward and free pickup, visit BGESmartEnergy.com/Recycling22.

TIP 4

Give Mother Earth a Break

There are ways to clean up your home with a nod to the environment. When you declutter, recycle or donate your unwanted stuff. When you air out your home, open a window instead of buying chemical air fresheners. Clean with a little elbow grease instead of toxic chemicals. And when you replace a light bulb, replace it with an energy-efficient LED. We can help you out on this item with discounts up to \$3.50 on qualifying ENERGY STAR® certified bulbs. For participating retailers, visit BGESmartEnergy.com/LEDs22.

TIP 5

Spiff Up Your Energy Use Behaviors

The final step in getting your home ready for spring is to make sure you're running it as energy efficiently as possible. Switch your ceiling fans to spin counterclockwise to create a cooling downdraft effect.

And the easiest thing you can do to get your home ready for spring? Get a Quick Home Energy Check-up. It's fast, it's easy and it's included with your BGE service, at no additional cost. All the details are available at BGESmartEnergy.com/Quick22.

Following these tips could just save you enough to pay for next year's spring cleaning extravaganza. And, maybe, you can even splurge and upgrade your cleaning caddy. We know. Crazy, right?



THE TOY BOX

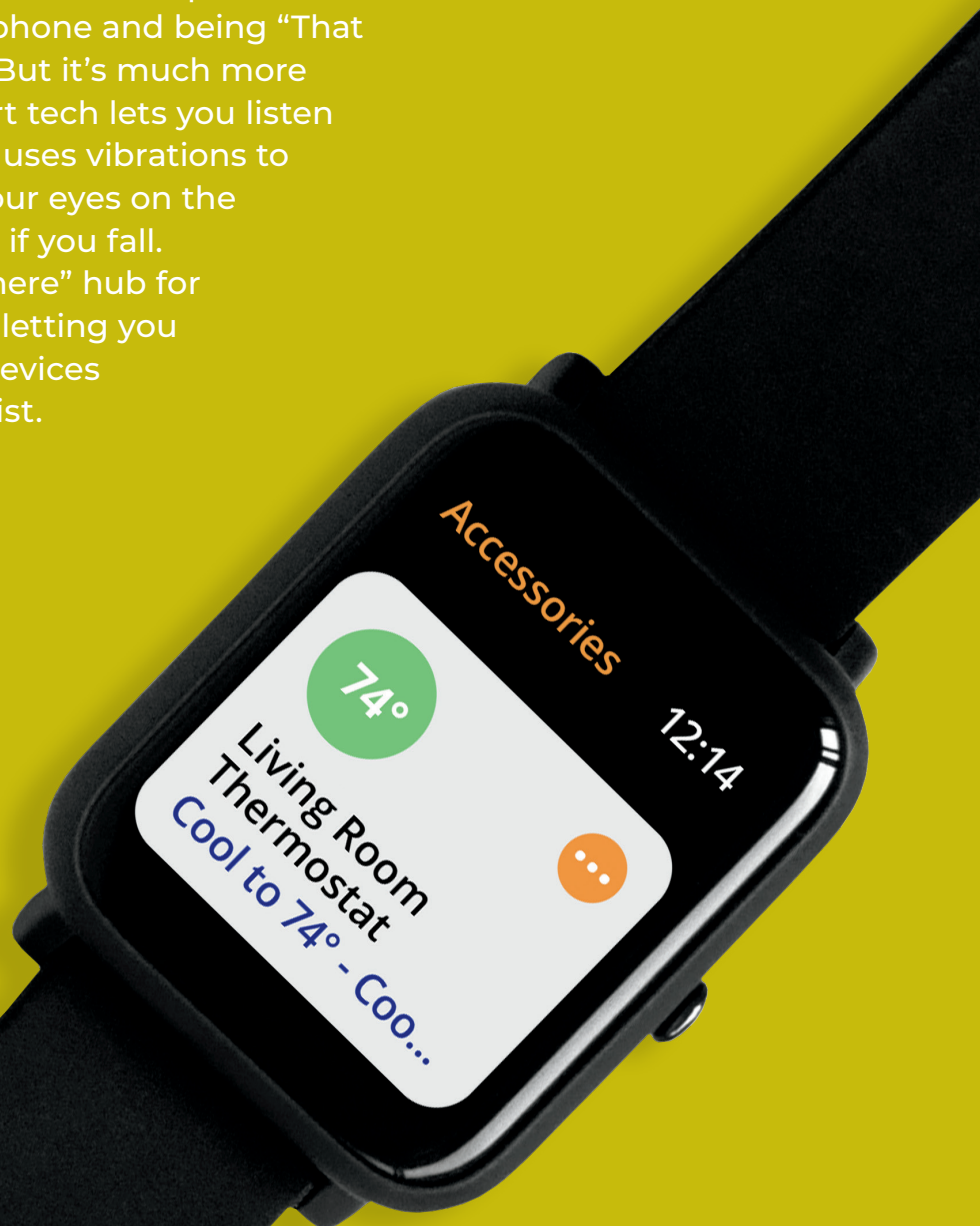
SMART GADGETS

The term “gadgets” really doesn’t have the connotation we’re looking for. It just doesn’t have the gravitas required to describe the revolution happening in our homes. Everything—OK, OK, nearly everything—is connected. When we look at these “smart” devices as a whole, it’s easy to see how they’re bringing about a new way to run and enjoy life at home.

01.

SMART WATCH

Sure, a smart watch helps you do smartphone tasks without whipping out your phone and being “That Person” in social situations. But it’s much more than that. This piece of smart tech lets you listen to music while working out, uses vibrations to guide you while you keep your eyes on the road and can alert someone if you fall. Plus, it can be the “always there” hub for a more energy-efficient life, letting you easily control lots of home devices from the comfort of your wrist.



The perfect tech for your inner Control Freak.

Tell people that it's for enhanced safety.



Admit to yourself it's for enhanced laziness.

02.

SMART DOORBELL

This device is more than a way to stay on the couch and still see if the pizza guy has arrived. Add a smart doorbell and you add resale value to your home, offer up a visible deterrent to would-be criminals and you might even lower your homeowner's insurance premiums.

—
TO BUY:

SMART DOORBELL, \$229; BGEMARKETPLACE.COM

03.

SMART WATER HEATER

Hot water. Yet another item on a long list of things you don't know how much you need until you don't have it. And with a smart water heater, you do more than have it; you control it from your smartphone.



Adjust water temp, check water levels and monitor energy usage remotely.

04.

SMART REFRIGERATORS

Yes, they can now look up recipes and read the steps while you cook, and they can chat with your smartphone to alert you of food that will soon expire.

They can also save you about 9% compared to the energy costs of your old fridge. Since your refrigerator accounts for up to 10% of your energy costs, both that soon-to-be-spoiled cottage cheese and your budget just might be saved.

TO BUY:

SMART REFRIGERATOR; ENERGYSTAR.GOV

ENERGY STAR® appliances sip kilowatts vs. old models that guzzle them down.



Hey, look. A light bulb that will outlast most relationships.



05.

SMART LED LIGHT BULBS

These little marvels pack a wonderful efficiency one-two punch. You have complete control over when they're in use, including the ability to turn them off using your smartphone. And, when they're in use, they use a fraction of the energy gobbled up by a traditional incandescent light bulb. Lastly—for the folks who've seen too many horror flicks—your home can be lit up before you show up. It keeps the blood pressure and the bills low.

TO BUY:

SMART LED, UP TO \$3.50 OFF,
FIND PARTICIPATING RETAILERS AT
BGESMARTENERGY.COM/LEDS22

**A smart thermostat
will pay for itself in as
little as two years.**



TREND WATCH

HOW SMART IS IT TO GET A SMART THERMOSTAT?

Some devices are just game changers. The DVR, for example, changed the way we watch TV. Some may shudder at the thought, but there was a time when, if you missed a show, you missed it. This probably explains all the tense looks in many photos from the 1970s and 1980s. Bottom line: The DVR changed our everyday lives. And, since then, we've waited for an invention to top it.

Until now.

The right smart thermostat can be a game changer for many reasons. First and foremost, it will change your bank account for the better. Here are five ways you can take advantage of a smart thermostat and the awesomeness it provides.



A recent study at Nest revealed that most households save 10–12% on heating and around 15% on cooling.

01.
IT WILL PAY FOR ITSELF.

Recent studies have shown that adjusting your thermostat 7° to 10° from its standard settings while you're away can save you 10% annually on your heating and cooling costs. Great news if you want to constantly tweak your thermostat based on your coming and going to save every kilowatt. Yeah, we don't want to do that either—but smart thermostats do. And that's where you get your savings.

02.
YOU WON'T LIFT A FINGER.

That's not exactly true. You will need to lift a finger, on your smartphone. With a swipe or two, you can adjust your thermostat from anywhere. And yes, anywhere includes your couch. Some thermostats even have sensors that detect movement and adjust the temperature when your home is empty.

03.
YOU CAN TRACK YOUR SPENDING.

Most smart thermostats allow you to track the amount you spend on energy. This can help you see how much you're saving and even help you create a more efficient energy usage plan. This sort of knowledge is vital when planning an annual budget or preparing for high-usage months. You can also use the data to justify a vacation. Look how much money you saved from your reduced energy costs the week you were away.



Need one?

Save up to \$75 on select ENERGY STAR® certified models. Learn more at BGESmartEnergy.com/Thermostat22.

04. YOU WON'T NEED TO DO ANY SCHEDULING.

Most learning thermostats do just that—track your patterns, learn your preferences and predict when you're home and when you're not. They can even monitor the weather to heat your home more when a cold snap is coming or cool it more when a heatwave is setting in.

Now, you might say, "That seems excessive. I can program a thermostat on my own, thank you very much." This may be true, but you'd be the exception. A recent study revealed that only 42% of the respondents had a programmable thermostat, and of those, a whopping 67% said they didn't know how to program their device. So, why not lean on technology and let it take one thing off your plate?

05. YOU CAN PROBABLY INSTALL IT YOURSELF.

Sure, there are professionals who can install more complicated smart thermostats for more complicated HVAC systems, but chances are your needs can be met by a simple install. Finding out is pretty easy. By popping off your current thermostat cover, you can find the marked wires required to connect your new thermostat. Just make sure the device you are buying is compatible with your specific HVAC system. This is a booming industry that started with a few niche companies, but the larger manufacturers you're sure to recognize have jumped into the game, so you should be able to find the right match.

That being said, if you immediately got uncomfortable when you read the phrase, "popping off your current thermostat cover," get a pro involved. They have reasonable prices, and you'll quickly get to recouping your investment without the headache.

So, there you have it. It's not everything you need to know to get this money-saving device, but it's enough for you to get started. So, do just that. Get started and get saving.

You may have a **mini landfill** in your garage.

A SINGLE SPARE
REFRIGERATOR CAN
CONTAIN UP TO:

11 POUNDS
OF PLASTIC

6 POUNDS
OF FOAM

4 POUNDS
OF GLASS

135 POUNDS
OF METAL

Join us in celebrating
the BGE Smart
Energy Savers
Program® milestone
of collecting 100,000
home appliances for
recycling by making
your old appliance
number 100,001.



**MONEY-
SAVING TIP**

Burying a sandwich bag stuffed with cash in the backyard is not a recommended technique.

YOUR ENERGY. YOUR MONEY.

**HIDDEN
SAVINGS**

**THERE'S MONEY IN YOUR HOME.
LET'S GO FIND IT.**

Shhhh.

Don't look now, but there's hidden money in your home. It's undercover, living its best life without any regard for you, or your need to leverage its power. The good news? It's closing time for your concealed cash. There are no free rides here. So let's do a little digging, find the loot and put it to work.



Get rewarded.

Maybe it's been on your list. Maybe others have sat silently, hoping you'd work this out on your own. But it's time. We're talking about that old refrigerator in the basement. You've gotta let this one go.

Sure, you've built a relationship with that fridge. When you had to binge-watch a certain medieval fantasy series that disappointed the whole world at the end, who was there for you? Your fridge.

When you had to host a colossal watch party during the big playoff run, who was there for you? Your fridge. And when your team had lost, and it was time to eat your feelings, who

was there for you? Well, you know the answer.

Unfortunately, your fridge is worn out like a linebacker trying to stop the run in overtime. The humming, the rattling—those aren't symptoms of a fridge past its years. They're weary cries for help.

It doesn't matter how you rationalize issuing a "do not resuscitate" order for your trusty friend. Maybe you tell yourself it's going to a better place, like a fridge farm where it can run and play. Maybe you can envision a Viking funeral where you load that poor beast up in a boat and shoot one flaming

arrow into the vessel as the sun—symbolically—sets. Or maybe you get a killer reward by recycling your fridge and heal your pain by using the cash to order some takeout. Is that cruel? Yes. But the real cruelty would be to let that kitchen cohort go on chugging away, guzzling as much as \$100 a year in energy. And did we mention the reward? Fifty bucks, and they'll even haul your old fridge away for you. Crazy, right?



Schedule a pickup at
[BGESmartEnergy.com/Recycle22](https://www.bgesmartenergy.com/Recycle22).



Bring in the savings pros.

We call it a Quick Home Energy Check-up. You'll call it professional help without the professional price tag. That's right, as a BGE customer, all of this additional help comes without any additional cost. You just invest about an hour. And trust us, there's a big return on that investment.

It goes like this.

STEP 1

The Walk-Through

A Check-up professional will conduct a walk-through of your home. They'll carefully inspect your:

- Insulation levels
- Air leakage
- Heating and cooling systems
- Windows and doors
- Lighting and appliances
- Water-heating equipment

STEP 2

The Upgrades

These same fine people will install upgrades to many features of your home, with your permission, at no additional cost. This hardware includes:

- LED light bulbs
- Faucet aerators
- Efficient-flow showerheads
- Water heater pipe insulation
- Smart power strips
- ShowerStart® showerhead adapter
- Smart thermostat

STEP 3

The Report

The inspection and the energy-saving products would be enough for most. In this case, they go one step further, with a full report on money-saving recommendations and details on what was installed during the inspection. So it's money savings on money savings.

You can request an appointment at **BGESmartEnergy.com/Quick22**.

You can call for an appointment at **877.685.7377**.

FEATURE

THE FUTURE OF HOMEOWNERSHIP





It can be a sprawling 8,500-square-foot mansion, where guests must leave breadcrumbs to get back to the main foyer. It can also be a 500-square-foot studio, where the plumbing is so eccentric guests are asked not to flush the toilet while the dishwasher is running. From Tudors to bungalows, from raised bedrooms to multistory penthouses, it's a common thread that connects us. It's the bedrock of your life, often your family, and definitely a community. It's home.

So, it would behoove us—and yes, we are celebrating working “behoove” into a sentence—to take a solid look into the future of homeownership. And we really need to come up with our own term for this phenomenon since you don't need to own a home to make it yours. How about “homehavership?” Yes. Yes. Much more inclusive.

Now, back to the future. Having a home is evolving, which should come as a surprise to no one, based on our ever-changing world.

Tech is changing the way you live.

Here are a few pieces of technology making living at home all the more homier.

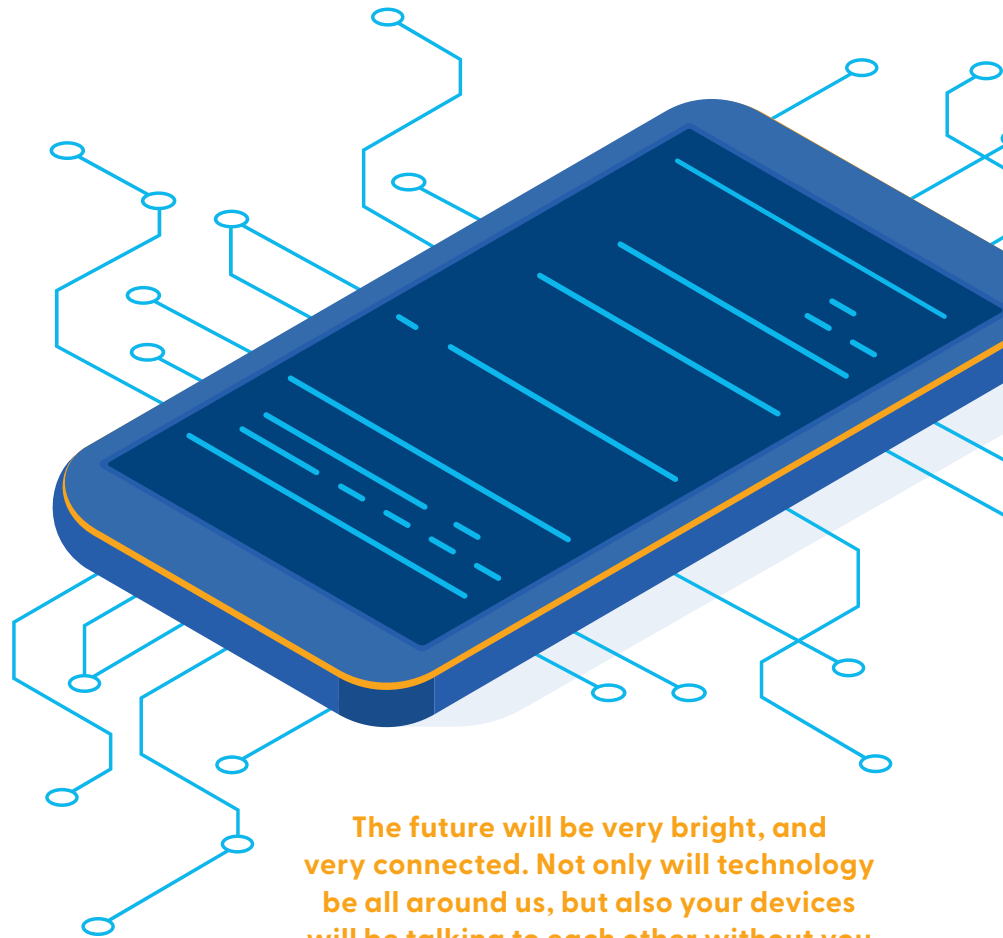
Smart speakers? Please. That's so 2019. The best way to build your home tech arsenal with the future in mind is to deploy smart displays. They have all the functionality of a smart speaker but with the added feature of a full-color display screen. This results in more spontaneous video calling and having your digital assistant look up more visual content. Asking for a recipe and using the screen to make something fresh for dinner is a great example of increased utility.

The only reasons to go with a smart speaker versus a smart display are budget and appearance. Some don't see the tech return on investment of displays, opting for the more budget-friendly speaker. And many enjoy how a smart speaker will blend into the décor of their home and see a smart display as a glaring eyesore. It's just a matter of design preference.

Smart plugs can turn nearly anything that requires electricity into a smart device. Just plug them into a wall outlet and set them up via any Android or iOS device. This may be a quantum leap option for the chronically forgetful. Imagine “remembering” to turn off the basement lights or to brew a fresh morning cup of coffee without leaving the delicious cocoon that is your bed. These devices are small and even unassuming, but they can make a big difference.

Putting this through the tween filter, you can also hook these devices up to TVs and game consoles. Your kiddo not coming down for dinner? No problem. Turn the gaming system off remotely during a rousing online game with his friends, and you will end up with a very attentive yet very perturbed kiddo. Yes, this will make you feel a touch omnipotent, so use judiciously.

Wireless doorbell cameras are a great on-ramp into smart home devices. They send push notifications to your smartphone when movement is detected, can record any activity day or night, and let you talk to anyone at your door through your smartphone from wherever you are.



The future will be very bright, and very connected. Not only will technology be all around us, but also your devices will be talking to each other without you having to lift (or swipe) a finger.

Tech talking to tech is changing.

It's called the Internet of Things, and for years folks have been waiting for it to hit the critical mass needed to change our daily lives. The easiest way to explain it is this—all the connected devices in your life will start talking to each other without your involvement. It's as exciting as it is potentially harrowing.

And while the Internet of Things is still evolving, it can bring many energy efficiencies to your home. Here's how: These devices are being created to (smartly) shift into low-power mode when not in use. Additionally, when your life is more efficient, your energy usage is as well. For example, if the Internet of Things enables you to make fewer trips to the grocery and other big-box retail stores, less energy is consumed, and we reap the efficiencies of a simpler life.



Environmental home building is changing.

Your home can have the biggest impact on your carbon footprint, mostly because of its longevity. The lifespan of a house is 50 to 200 years. Make a good decision at the outset, and you—and the planet—reap the benefits for decades. There are several trends in building a home that play nicely with the Earth.

Passive Houses

This may be the worst name for a thing since “slacks.” Passive houses aren’t passive at all. They are, in fact, a very active, if not aggressive, approach to home building. What makes a passive house a passive house? These homes use rigorous energy efficiency and comfort standards, including extreme airtightness, continuous insulation, and high-performance windows and doors. Owners find the reduction in their carbon footprint an added feel-good bonus to all the additional benefits.

Prefab Houses

Prefabricated homes are environmentally friendly for one very important reason—waste. There are three types of prefab homes—manufactured, modular and mobile. All can be luxurious and sophisticated, and all can be built while reducing unused materials. Our country creates over 600 million tons of construction and demolition debris annually. Prefab homes work to eliminate this level of waste and, for that reason, have become an attractive option for those wanting to reduce their environmental footprint.

ENERGY STAR® Certified Homes

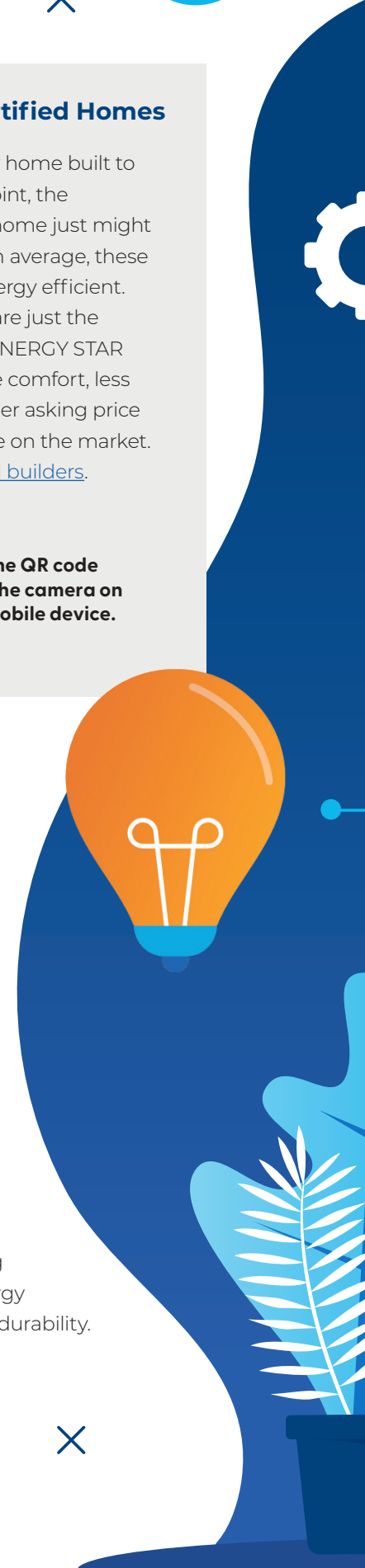
For those who see a new home built to code as just a starting point, the ENERGY STAR certified home just might be the perfect option. On average, these homes are 20% more energy efficient. And lower energy costs are just the beginning. The trusted ENERGY STAR label offers greater home comfort, less maintenance, and a higher asking price when you put your home on the market. Check out our list of [local builders](#).



Scan the QR code using the camera on your mobile device.

Zero Energy Ready Homes

Many buyers are asking their new home builders to pursue this future-focused form of home construction. A Zero Energy Ready House is so energy efficient that once a renewable energy source is added, the home could meet its own annual consumption needs. The idea is to create a home with the highest level of performance, offering unprecedented levels of energy savings, comfort, health and durability.







Where we call home is changing.

It's called the Suburban Resurgence, and while it may be driven by pandemic fatigue, it looks like a trend that's here to stay. Boosted by those wonderfully quirky, unpredictable millennials, people are moving in droves

to the car-dependent, big-box-retail, more-space-for-your-dollar suburbs, and even rural locations. Remote work allows folks to live just about anywhere, and the new destination of choice has seen a dramatic rise in demand.

Working from home is changing.

With millions getting in a day's work without commuting to the office, many have faced a very profound question. Are you working from home or living where you work? Often the answer to that question comes with a full home office renovation. Thousands have ditched the TV tray on the couch to create a home office that offers an office-like atmosphere at home. This can happen by adding space or adapting space. No matter what you choose, the goal is

to have your own dedicated space for work.

Millennials are changing the value of homeownership.

The American dream of owning your home is being questioned by millennials. This group has the lowest ownership percentage in generations. And, surprisingly, this trend of not making homeownership a priority isn't exclusive to their generation. According to the latest census survey, each group—from the silent generation (78.8%) to the baby boomers (77.8%) to Gen-X (69%) to millennials (47.9%)—has experienced a decrease in homeownership demand.

Why? Some point to the millennial generation seeing a home as too difficult. They have student debt, get married later in life, and the lending standards have tightened up since the housing crisis. Others see the driver being more emotional.

They have lived without stability, so the stability that owning a home provides doesn't appeal to them.

The line between the indoors and the outdoors is changing.

[A recent survey from Forbes revealed](#) that 85% of home building experts had seen a spike in outdoor living space additions and upgrades.

These days, people want to cook outside, relax outside and recharge outside. The two outdoor spaces that have enjoyed the biggest spike in usage in recent months? The porch and the patio. Both offer accessibility and flexibility, with the option of easily covering—with an awning or umbrella—during inclement weather.

How we exercise is changing.

Just because fewer people are going to the gym doesn't mean dad bods and muffin tops are making a comeback. Recently, "going to the gym" means staying at home. Purchases of home workout equipment continue to rise,

and downloads of fitness apps continue to increase.

Where our children learn is changing.

After tackling the home's transformation into a home school and a home office, some actually like the change. More employers are open to having their employees work remotely full time. Many Marylanders have evolved their homes into multiuse hubs permanently. It takes meticulous management of your time and your space. But when done well, it can redefine your home, your work and your life.

To sum it all up, it seems that the one constant in homehavership is change. The old rules are getting tossed out, and they're being replaced by a wonderful tidal wave of fresh thinking. If you're looking for a perfect time to redefine your home, you've found it. And with every step, you can find ways to save energy and money.

It's a brave new world for the home. And it's the perfect time for you to make the changes that best fit your life.



WHO DID IT BEST?

David's Dilemma

David Hartcorn's new home needed much more than a home energy audit. It was still a good place to start.

Meet David Hartcorn

This former investment advisor and newlywed instantly comes off as a clever creator. You can see it in the mischievous gleam in his eye. You can experience it in his dry wit. We sat down with David to hear his thoughts about his new home and its transformation.

How long have you lived in Annapolis?

Forty years ago, I was living in Boston. I got sick of having to take the battery out of my car every night, getting my car out of the snow. It was bad. My girlfriend used to live in Annapolis. She goes, "It's a nice place." I said, "Let's go." And like two days later, we moved to Annapolis. That's what you do when you're 24.

Who's at your house?

My son and myself, but we're soon to be joined by my fiancée and her two children.

What do you do for a living?

I was a registered investment advisor for 24 years, and I finally sold that business and opened a photography studio.

What work skills did you use to make your decision to schedule a home energy audit with BGE's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® Program?

Photography is problem solving and decisions. So, it was a natural fit for me.

When did you move into your current home?

June of 2018.

Did you start seeing some things that raised your eyebrows?

Every square inch of this house was a problem. Living in and restoring this house is sort of like living on a wooden boat. Wooden boats are beautiful, but they can be demanding mistresses.

Do you regret buying it?

Oh no. The house had great bones—a great floor plan. And, it's got 9-foot ceilings. Even though the rooms are not huge, they feel big. But the house was painted with high-gloss paint—ceiling, walls, everything. And the colors were so cringe-y, so we set about correcting that.

Throw out a color that just made you shudder.

Do you remember the really horrible avocado green appliances? That was the color of the master bedroom. But it gets worse. The previous owner had CFL bulbs everywhere. That ghoulish 5,000 Kelvin tint made everybody look like a cadaver. So, that first trip to the hardware store was to find bulbs to correct that.

“The previous owner had CFL bulbs everywhere. That ghoulish 5,000 Kelvin tint made everybody look like a cadaver.”

What things do you really like about your home?

The layout is fantastic. You walk in the front door, and you're in a nice-sized living room. And it has a great dining room and kitchen. To the left is what I would call the private area, and there are three bedrooms and a bath.

What about the closets?

Let's talk about the closets for a second. Apparently, in 1922, people had like two pairs of underwear and two shirts because there was—the closets are hysterical.

One of them is 31 inches wide and nine feet tall. So maybe they collected tennis ball cans or something. So, I've had to work around that.

What does homeownership mean to you?

Homeownership is a place I belong. Have you ever heard the expression, nobody's ever washed a rental car? It's the same thing when you're renting. It's not really yours, and it's transitory. I like the project of owning a house. I enjoy basically treating it like a blank slate and redoing it like it should be done.



Before

You had a pretty good idea the moment you got there that you were going to be working on it, and that seems like something you enjoy.

Totally. Just ask my neighbors. In fact, I'm finishing the basement, and I've had to buy exotic chocolates and bottles of wine for all my neighbors for all the noise I have been making, especially in the last month. But I've always had an eye for that kind of stuff.

Did you use that eye when you bought this home?

This house is one block away from where my studio was. I used to drive by this house all the time to get to the post office. Every time I drove by, I was like—man, I really like that house. One day, I finally decided, you know what? I'm going to write the guy a note saying if you ever want to sell

this house, call me first. And I drove around the corner, and there was a “for sale” sign. I was like, you're kidding me! So, I called my agent, and I said, “Find a way to buy this house.” So, we did it.

Congratulations.

I think it was meant to be.

What interested you when it came to learning about energy efficiency in your home?

It's not exactly one of the glamorous aspects of homeownership. My whole career as a photographer is about aesthetics, so aesthetics are super important to me. Form has to follow function, but form is important to me for certain things. The energy side of it got my attention when I started looking at my utility bills. It's 1,300 square feet, and I'm getting a \$500 utility bill. So, there's something wrong here.

Being a guy who made investments, that's not good math.

It's bad math. So, I called up BGE and had them do a test on my meter. They sent some folks out who looked around and offered some suggestions, but it really wasn't anything transformative. I called them back, and they said, “We have contractors that we work with. They will come and analyze your house, and then they will figure out what needs to be done to make your house more energy efficient.” And, I said, “Cool.”

What was the process like?

This fellow, Seth, came out, and he did a pressurized test, the blower-door test. They closed all the doors, and then they depressurized the house to measure how much air leakage there was. Then we went up to the attic. It was the type of thing



After

you'd see in horror movies. There was insulation hanging out of the rafters. It was just dreadful. He looked around and said, "You might as well just leave all the windows open, because this attic is a sieve."

It was freezing up there during the winter, and during the summer, it was like 125°.

What happened next, after you agreed to make the recommended home improvements?

He went in with his crew, and they sealed the whole attic. And then, what was interesting after that was, during the winter it stayed a steady 68°, and during the summer it got up to maybe 80°, 85°.

A big difference.

It did make a big difference. It probably resulted in a 10% to 15% drop in my utility bills, and the house was a lot more comfortable.

Did you feel it was money well spent?

Very much so. I told everybody that would listen to me what a good job they did, especially in the attic. They transformed it. And now, just a couple of months ago, I had it all drywalled and turned into a giant walk-in closet for my fiancée.

You finally got your closet.

Well, my fiancée did, yes.



Before After

YOU'VE GOT THIS

TIME TO SHINE.

OR HOW TO PICK
THE RIGHT LIGHT BULB.



As anyone who has ever tried to take a selfie will tell you, lighting is everything. And the right light bulb can make all the difference in the lens, as well as for everyday life. There was a time when you'd just go to the hardware store—or supermarket—and just pick up light bulbs. There was also a time when people rode in horse-drawn carriages and looked forward to the next talking picture show.

The point is times have changed. Light bulbs have changed and getting the right one can make a ton of difference.

So let's look at how things have changed since Thomas Edison stretched coiled tungsten filament between two wires.

Out With the Old

Standard bulbs are remarkably inefficient, which wasn't a big deal when the only other electricity used was to power the family gramophone. In today's world, everyone is charging everything. We're also looking for ways to conserve energy for our planet and spending for our households.

Now, the argument is that these light bulbs are remarkably inexpensive. And they are, at the cash register. But, standard bulbs will cost you more—much more—in the long run.



In With the New

Consider LED bulbs and the new technology that comes with them. Sure, these bulbs are initially more expensive than the standard option, but let's look at the total cost of ownership. Let's do some math.

Multiply the hours you use your light per week by your wattage and then by your electricity rate. Then divide that by 1,000, because the electricity rate is by kilowatts per hour. So:

$$\text{Hours} \times \text{Wattage} \times \text{Rate} \div 1,000 = \text{Weekly Cost per Bulb}$$

YOU'VE GOT THIS

Let's compare a standard bulb with an LED, assuming 56 hours of use per week and an electricity rate of 10 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh).

First, the standard bulb:



56 Hours x 60 Watts
x \$0.10 kWh ÷ 1,000
= Weekly Cost per Bulb

\$0.34

Now let's do the LED bulb:



56 Hours x 9.5 Watts
x \$0.10 kWh ÷ 1,000
= Weekly Cost per Bulb

\$0.05

As you can see, the standard bulb costs **six times** as much in electricity use.





Bulb Vocab

Let's tackle the terms that you'll need to know to make the right choice for each fixture in your home.

Watts.

Many make the mistake of connecting brightness with this term. In truth, watts are the amount of energy the bulb consumes. The lower, the better.

Lumens.

Now that we know how brightness *isn't* measured, let's look at the correct term for measuring a bulb's brightness: lumens. An LED bulb's brightness typically delivers 2,600 lumens. To give you some context, 800 lumens is roughly equivalent to the brightness of a standard 60-watt bulb, and 1,500 lumens equates to a 100-watt standard bulb.

Kelvins.

This is a new term for many. It measures the color or warmth of your light. The higher the Kelvin, the more the light hue turns from gold to blue. 2,000 Kelvin has a golden tone, while 5,000 Kelvin looks bluer.



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