

Let's face it: It's getting hot out, and it's only going to get warmer as summer goes on. While it's tempting to crank the AC or plant yourself in front of the nearest fan, these aren't the only tricks to keeping cool. It turns out there are plenty of ways to buffer your home from the heat without racking up your electric bill. And they'll make you feel like a DIY champ, too.

Keep your cool, and...

1. Keep your blinds closed.

As simple as this tip may seem, up to 30 percent of unwanted heat comes from your windows, and utilizing shades, curtains and the like can save you up to 7 percent on your bills and lower indoor temperatures by up to 20 degrees. In other words, closing the blinds essentially prevents your home from becoming a miniature greenhouse, which is especially the case for south- and west-facing windows.

2. Be smart about your doors.

Closing off rooms will prevent the cool air from permeating these areas during the hottest part of the day. You'll want to capitalize on the cooler night hours, too, letting air flow naturally through your home.

3. Hack a fan instead of turning on the AC.

Not even an air conditioner can give off a faux sea breeze... but this simple trick can. Fill a mixing bowl with ice (or something equally cold, like an ice pack) and position it at an angle in front of a large fan, so that the air whips off the ice at an extra-chilled, extra-misty temperature. Trust us: it's magic.

4. Swap your sheets.

Not only does seasonally switching up your bedding freshen up a room, it's a great way to keep cool. While textiles like flannel sheets and fleece blankets are fantastic for insulation, cotton is a smarter move this time of year as it breathes easier and stays cooler. And as an added bonus, buy yourself a buckwheat pillow or two. Because buckwheat hulls have a naturally occurring air space between them, they won't hold on to your body heat like conventional pillows, even when packed together inside a pillow case.

5. Set your ceiling fans to rotate counter-clockwise.

Whether you know it or not, your ceiling fan needs to be adjusted seasonally. Set counter-clockwise in the summer at a higher speed, the fan's airflow will create a wind-chill breeze effect that will make you and your guests "feel" cooler.

6. Focus on the temperature in your body, not the house.

If your ancestors survived without air conditioning, so can you. From sipping tasty iced drinks to applying a cold cloth to strong-pulsed areas like your neck and wrists, cooling yourself from the inside out is not a bad idea. Other tricks include being smart about your clothing choices.

7. Turn on your bathroom fans.

...or the exhaust fan in your kitchen, for that matter. Both of these pull the hot air that rises after you cook or take a steamy shower out of your home.

8. Heat-proof your bed.

Go straight to the source, and put a cool-inducing Chillow under your head while you sleep. For feet, fill a hot water bottle and put it in the freezer before placing at the foot of your bed. And it sounds strange, but slightly dampening your sheets before bedtime will majorly help you chill out.

9. Let the night air in.

During the summer months, temperatures may drop during the night. If this is the case where you live, make the most of these refreshing hours by cracking the windows before you go to bed. You can even create a wind tunnel by strategically setting up your fans to force the perfect cross breeze. Just be sure to close the windows (and the blinds) before things get too hot in the morning.

10. Ditch the incandescent lights.

If you ever needed motivation to make the switch to CFLs, or compact fluorescent lamps, this is it. Incandescent bulbs waste about 90 percent of their energy in the heat they emit, so tossing them to the curb will make a small difference in cooling your home while lowering your electric bill.

11. Start grilling.

It's obvious, but we're going to say it anyway: Using your oven or stove in the summer will make your house hotter. If it already feels like 100+ degrees in your home, the last thing you want to do is turn on a 400-degree oven. Besides, who doesn't want to get more mileage out of their outdoor furniture and seasonal accessories?

12. Make a few long-term improvements.

If you're really, really committed to the whole no-AC thing, you can make a couple changes to your home that will keep it cooler for seasons to come. Insulated window films, for example, are a smart purchase as they work similarly to blinds. And additions like awnings and planted trees or vines on or in front of light-facing windows will shield your home from the sun's rays, reduce the amount of heat your home absorbs and make your investment nothing but worthwhile. Just give us a call. 203.988.1500 www.slimfixin.com

