

Improving your rented home

In this fact sheet:

- Stop heat escaping (draught-proofing, DIY double glazing, curtains, solar shutters)
- Get rid of dampness (under-floor ground cover)
- Efficient heating

People who are renting their home often face problems when trying to make their home warmer, drier and more energy efficient. Ideally the landlord would take advantage of Energywise™ grants to install insulation – the most effective first step to a warm home. However, as a tenant, there are lots of little things you can do for relatively little cost which will greatly improve your indoor temperatures and save you money on your energy bill.

Firstly, stop that heat escaping:

1. Stop any draughts.

Window drafts can be stopped by fixing V-seal to window frames where the window sash closes. V-seal is a flexible, adhesive-backed V-shaped vinyl strip that fills gaps from 1mm to 5mm. Check the internet for your nearest supplier.

Draught stoppers for the door are fashionable and easy to make. Just stuff a couple of old socks with screwed or rolled up newspaper and decorate.

2. DIY double glazing – shrink wrap insulation kits such as 3M Window Insulator Kits (\$30 to \$50 depending on the size of the area) can be fixed to timber (but not aluminium) window sashes using double-sided tape. These are made of an acrylic sheet, like a thick glad wrap, which creates a kind of temporary double glazing for the window. Use a hairdryer to shrink it into place for a tight wrinkle free layer. They only last a winter, but they're cheap and removable.



This window has been fitted with a shrink wrap insulation kit

3. Curtains – Thermal-backed curtains only stop reflected heat or cold, so two layers of curtains with a gap in between them is a more effective option. Choose a heavy material for the outside layer, and light calico for the side closest to the window.

Putting your curtains on a double rail track is the best option. However, by attaching a single row of rufflette tape (which has slots for curtain hooks and drawstrings) to the side of the heavier curtain which faces the window, you can then hook a lighter curtain onto it so that it creates another layer.

You can make temporary curtains out of three layers of old double sheets hung on bulldog clips hooked on to a standard curtain rail. Or try a curtain exchange for second hand curtains.

4. Solar shutters – Cut Pinex softboard to snugly fit inside a south-facing window and use it at night, to make homes warmer. It's a great way to reduce noise as well as draughts and heat loss. Leave a couple of finger holes for removing it when you want daylight!

Secondly, get rid of as many sources of moisture as you can:

A damp home is harder to heat

1. Don't dry your clothes inside. It introduces extra moisture into the house and exacerbates condensation and mould growth.
2. Lay black polythene on the ground under a suspended timber floor. As much as 1kg of moisture rises up from water table below the ground every day, so a moisture barrier can make a difference to both your perception of warmth and your heating bill. Available from most hardware stores, about \$120 will cover the cost of plastic and tape needed for a medium sized house or flat. Fold it out away from you to provide a smooth clean surface. Lap and tape joints, tape around piles, run a few centimetres up the edge of the walls and weigh down with bricks or stones.



Thirdly, use healthy heating efficiently:

1. Contrary to popular thought, portable unflued gas (LPG) heaters are not the cheapest form of heating. Their only advantage is that they are prepaid, so you know exactly how much it costs you. However, they cost more than an electric column heater to run and are not as good for your health. Unflued gas heaters increase the level of indoor air pollutants and moisture in your home – these lead to respiratory and other health problems for your family.
2. The cheapest short term heating for renters (after stopping draughts, improving curtains and insulating where you can) are electric column heaters or radiators. These should be on timer plugs as well to ensure they are used efficiently.



For more information:

- See Fact sheets on
 - Heating: Unflued gas heaters
 - Introduction to heating your home
 - Keeping heat in: Draught-proofing
 - Keeping heat in: Windows
 - Healthy indoor air
 - Easy DIY renovations
- Find out about Warm Up New Zealand: Heat Smart subsidies at www.energywise.govt.nz
- See the Consumer website for the latest costs on heaters: www.consumer.org.nz/
- You can buy 3M window insulation kits from Community Energy Action www.cea.co.nz
- You can buy V-seal from your local hardware store.