



Winter heating

Queensland homes are not well designed to deal with cold weather. When winter strikes, albeit for only a brief period, we often pull out the heater to make ourselves more comfortable, but how does that impact on our energy usage and electricity bill?

Some types of heating are far more energy efficient than others, saving both money and the environment. The simplest way to stay warm is to wear an extra layer or two of clothing and/or curl up under a blanket. Insulation and closing the curtains or blinds will also help to keep the heat inside. If this is not practical, you may be looking into electric or gas heating.



Purchase cost

On average, small fan heaters are less expensive to purchase, but often use more electricity. However, CHOICE warns that more expensive heaters are not always the best and both cheap and expensive heaters can leave you cold and disappointed.



Running cost

Not all heaters cost the same to run. On average, oil column heaters are usually the cheapest to run however are slower to heat and less effective at heating a whole room if they're not accompanied by a fan. Convection heaters such as panel and micathermic panels are the next cheapest to run.



Cost efficiency

Considering both running costs and effectiveness of heating, the most cost efficient heating is provided by reverse-cycle air conditioners, followed by gas heaters and wood heaters.

Electric heaters tend to be the least cost efficient form of heating in Australia.



Using a ceiling fan in winter

Usually a ceiling fan blows a cooling breeze down towards you, but in reverse or "winter" mode, the fan draws the room's air up, where it mixes with the warm air rising from the heater, and is moved along the ceiling and back down the walls, meaning your heater has to do far less work to maintain a constant temperature,



Setting the temperature

If you're using a heater that allows you to set the desired temperature, aim for a difference of no more than 8°C between the outside temperature and the temperature set on your heater or reverse cycle air conditioner. An ideal setting for both comfort and energy efficiency is between 18-20°C.

Each degree warmer usually adds about 10% to the running cost of your reverse-cycle air conditioner



Safety first

When purchasing a heater, you may also want to consider safety features such as timers, tilt switch (turns heater off if it falls or tips over), thermal cut out (turns the heater off if it gets too hot internally), cord length and storage.

Regardless of the type of heater you're using you should follow these guidelines for safe operation.

- Only ever use a space heater on the floor – never use a space heater on a shelf, bench or any raised or uneven surface
- Don't use a space heater in bathrooms, kitchens or any other wet areas – water and electricity are a bad combination
- Keep flammable items such as clothes, curtains and furniture at least a metre away from your space heater, and be mindful of the risk of items falling onto the heater from above, and
- Never leave a running space heater unattended, especially if there are small children around.



Environmental impact

In addition to being cost efficient, reverse-cycle air conditioners can be more eco-friendly than other types of heating. Make sure to clean the filters regularly to keep the air con running efficiently.

Electric heaters produce more greenhouse gas emissions than any other heating type due to Australia's use of fossil fuels to produce electricity.

Generally wood fire heating is less energy efficient than electric and gas heating and is a major contributor to outdoor air pollution. However, the use of sustainably produced firewood can mean less carbon dioxide is produced compared to other types of heating.

When electrical appliances are no longer fit for purpose, they should be disposed of responsibly. Many components can be recovered and reused through e-waste recycling programs – contact your local council to find out more.

Information in this sheet has been collated by Kyabra Community Association in June-August 2022 and reviewed in April 2023.

Further information is available from:

CHOICE www.choice.com.au

Origin Energy <https://www.originenergy.com.au/electricity-gas/efficiency/>

