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## Staying warm in chilly or draughty rented accommodation this winter

Tips for renters, from quick fixes to getting repairs actioned

07 Dec 2021



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If you're shivering in your rental home, what can you do about it, given you're probably not allowed to embark on intensive renovations?

Living in cold accommodation can be dangerous - particularly if you're aged 65 or older or have a long-term health condition.

You shouldn't have to worry about keeping warm in winter. Find out what your landlord is obliged to do for you and what you can do yourself without spending too much money.

A portable electric heater can be a renter's best friend. Head over to our [electric heater reviews](#) to find a model that's proven to perform well.

### Your tenancy rights in a cold home

Your home has to be fit for habitation and it's your landlord's responsibility to ensure this. If your house is too cold (or swelteringly hot) or damp, then this is a danger to your health and the landlord must make necessary repairs.

There are exceptions to this rule, though. If you have caused damage to the property, either intentionally or through negligence, the onus is on you to fix issues caused.

Visit our [tenant rights guide](#) to find out more about your statutory rights and tackling common renter's issues.

### Asking your landlord to make repairs



If your rental home is cold because repairs are needed, write to your landlord. Keep your a record of your requests (including the content of the requests and their dates) as evidence.

If your home is managed by a letting agent on behalf of your landlord, talk to the letting agent. It should talk to your landlord on your behalf, as it is the letting agent's responsibility to make sure that repairs are made.

We've written a [guide on how to claim against your landlord for disrepair](#) if you need more support.

If you're concerned that your home isn't fit to live in, and your landlord won't make repairs, then [contact Citizens Advice](#) for professional help about the best steps to take.

If your home is in such a state of disrepair that it's actually unsafe for you to live there, instead

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talk to your local council immediately. They will have an Environmental Health department who can inspect your home and demand repairs on your behalf.

Shelter has further advice about [complaining to Environmental Health about the state of your rented home](#).

If the situation isn't quite that dire, read on to find out what you can do yourself.

## Seal any gaps in the room

Rooms in your rental property may have cracks and holes where hot air escapes, causing your room's temperature to plunge. You can't go out-of-pocket double-glazing your landlord's windows or insulating the space between the walls, but there are quick solutions you can try.



- A door snake, or a draught excluder (pictured above), looks like a long pillow. This can lie across the bottom of your door to seal the gap and stop hot air escaping to the rest of the building. You can buy these for as little as £10.
- Curtains reduce the air exchange between your room and the freezing cold windows, and so it's best to keep these drawn when possible. Thermal curtains have extra layers of material and padding insulate them better. If you're handy with a needle and thread, sewing in extra layers of your own behind the curtain will also help.
- Glazing film is a cheap (albeit rather fiddly) way to provide another layer of insulation over single-glazed windows.
- A rug, even a cheap one, will keep your feet warmer if you have hardwood or tiled floors
- Weatherstrips (below) bought from DIY shops can be stuck around the perimeter of your windows and doors to seal any apertures. You can still open your window when you use these.



## Common draughty areas

Doors and windows are the biggest culprits for leaking warm air, but you should also look out for:

- Cracks in the walls
- Extractor fan outlets
- Fireplaces
- Keyholes and letterboxes
- Loft hatches
- Skirting boards

Where possible, using a foam strip or a disc to cover over these points will reduce heat loss. As solutions go, it's just applying a plaster over the problem, but it's a low-cost and temporary solution that works.

Read about other [ways to save money on your household bills this winter](#).

## Put on an extra layer





It seems obvious, but do wrap up in the meantime.

You lose heat from exposed skin when the temperature around you is cooler than your body temperature. So do put on extra layers when the ambient temperature is low.

## Buy a portable electric heater



An electric heater can give you concentrated heat when and where you want it. They're particularly well suited for some renters: they're versatile, quick, and easily transportable from one tenancy to the next.

Their drawback is their high cost per hour. Electricity is much more expensive per kilowatt hour (kWh) than gas, and portable heaters usually run at two or three kW.

- If you want a fast blast of heating, look for a fan heater
- If you want longer heating that shrouds the room in warmth evenly, then look for a convector heater or a radiator (either oil-based or oil-free is fine).

To keep yourself comfortable, and make sure that your energy use is proportionate to your needs, buy a heater with a thermostat that's proven to work. It's the most important feature of any electric heater, and our tests show that quality varies widely.

Heaters have to be fitted with thermostats now because of energy efficiency rules.

Make sure that electric heaters (sometimes called space heaters) are not forbidden by your contract though.

Find a [Best Buy electric heater](#) to make sure you grab a model that's proven to work effectively in our test lab.

## Cheap electric heaters

Electric heaters are often fairly cheap up-front. There are plenty of electric heaters that cost between £30 and £40:

- [DeLonghi HFX30C18.IW Capsule Ceramic Heater](#)
- [DeLonghi HTF3033](#)
- [Glen Fan heater GF30TSN](#)
- [Russell Hobbs RHRETPTC2001G](#)

Their true cost can come later in the form of bills, though. Make sure you consider how much you'll be paying in electricity.

Electricity typically costs around 21p/kWh if you're on a price-capped tariff paying by direct debit.

Many electric heaters are rated for maximum outputs of 2 to 3kW. So you need to use them sparingly and use their thermostats too.

Few heaters need to run for a full hour on 2 or 3kW. Most need between 15 - 30 minutes to heat a medium sized room by 10 degrees celsius. If you run a 2kW heater for half an hour to get the temperature up, in real terms that's 1kWh of consumption.

Read about the [cheap heaters for autumn and winter 2021](#) to see the heaters on the market that don't break the bank.

## Manage your home's humidity

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It's important to strike the right balance between humidification and ventilation. This can be hard when your windows and doors are tightly shut to insulate your home.

Your home will become damp and mouldy if you don't limit the humidity that builds up through drying clothes, cooking and showering. A dehumidifier can help you keep damp in check.

- **Damp traps**, also known as moisture absorbers, are quick, cheap fixes that can suck in water vapour. They normally cost around £10 and are good for low-level condensation. They won't do much if you have a serious damp problem
- **Dehumidifiers** work more quickly and offer more control. Most have a humidistat that let you monitor the humidity level and choose your preferred setting, striking an ideal balance. These usually cost over £100.

Find a model that will help you keep your home damp-free by reading our [dehumidifier reviews](#).

## Get help with your heating costs



There are a lot of ways you can get help with your heating costs, including:

- **Winter fuel payments:** yearly payments to help you with energy costs
- **Cold weather payments:** additional money for people in receipt of other benefits such as Pension Credit
- **Warm home discounts:** a single payment for low-income and retirement-age people

See our advice on the [Cold Weather Payment](#), [Winter Fuel Payment](#) and [Fuel Direct](#) to find out about the schemes that can help you pay your energy bills.

## The warm homes programme

If you're over 65 years of age, and you fit into one of the following criteria, you're eligible for Age UK's warm homes programme:

- You're on a low-income
- You have a long-term health condition
- You live in a property that's hard to heat properly.

If you qualify, then Age UK, through a local partner, will offer you support. Through Warm Homes, Age UK will help you to claim the benefits you're entitled to, send a tradesperson to your home to carry out an energy check, and provide further advice and support.

Read our guidance on the [Warm Home Discount](#) to find out if you can get help meeting your winter energy costs.

## Tenants on prepaid meters

If you're a renter who can't top-up your meter for any reason, you can apply for emergency credit from your energy supplier.

You are expected to repay this credit when you next top-up, although this can be discussed further with your supplier and repayment schedules should be set according to your ability to pay for energy.

Struggling to meet the cost of energy this winter? Read our guide to [saving money on your energy bills](#).

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