

How to keep your house cool in the summer (on a budget)



This article was written in collaboration with experts from Griffith University's Ethos Project

You can take control of your health and comfort this summer. Prepare for heatwaves in Australia by learning how to cool your home efficiently.

Since older people are more vulnerable to heat stress, it's important to have somewhere cool to be on hot days.

Here are some cheap ways to keep your house cool in summer.

Start with insulation

The first step in cooling your home is to reduce heat buildup with proper insulation:

- Create heat-reflective windows. You can use car sunshades, aluminium foil, or window film to block out heat.
- Combine blackout curtains with exterior window shades for additional insulation.

Optimise your AC use

Air-conditioning (AC) is essential in extreme heat. Research suggests fans aren't always enough when the temperature is past 35°C. But AC can be costly, so here are ways to use it more efficiently:

- Set your AC to 27°C and use with fans. This combination can be as effective as setting your AC to 24°C. You can optimise this further by wetting your skin, so you can cool down through evaporation.
- Consider a window AC unit. These are usually the cheapest to buy and run, though they only cool one room at a time.

Manage ventilation and airflow

Effective airflow management helps reduce indoor heat buildup:

- Keep your curtains and windows closed during the day and open them when it's cooler at night for ventilation. Use fans at night to push hot air out of the house.
- Draught-seal your home to prevent hot air from seeping in. You could do this with [draught stoppers](#) around doors, windows, and vents.

Make the most of fans

Fans can enhance cooling and are cost-effective when used properly.

- Put a frozen water bottle in front of your fan. The fan blows air over ice, creating a cooling mist. [It's a DIY AC!](#)
- If you have ceiling fans, use them in conjunction with pedestal fans.
- If you have multiple fans, create crosswinds by facing one out the window and facing another one inwards. [It's a breeze!](#)
- Consider using fans in conjunction with a dehumidifier on humid days. Removing moisture from the air will allow for more cooling through evaporation.

Make a cool room

You can focus your cooling efforts on one area of your house to save energy. Here's how to cool down a room efficiently, making an [energy-smart cool room](#):

- Select a small, ideally shaded room.
- The windows in this room should be small, fully shaded, and possible to cover. Consider tinting the windows, using blackout curtains inside, and placing a sunshade on the exterior side.
- Seal the room using draught stoppers on doors, to keep cool air in and hot air out.
- Ensure the room has a working air conditioner such as a window AC unit.
- Limit use of heat-generating devices like big TVs in this room if you notice your AC is struggling.



Prepare for power outages

Extreme weather can cause power outages. So, it's important to have a plan to beat the heat:

- Know where your nearest community cooling centres or cool refuges are. These are places you can go for relief from heat, such as a public airconditioned library or shopping centre.
- Ensure you have backup power for [powered medical devices](#).
- Look into backup cooling options. These could include battery-operated fans and portable AC units. You could even use sprinklers to cool the air around your house.

Explore financial assistance

Don't overlook financial help that could reduce your air-conditioning costs:

- [Rebates and assistance | energy.gov.au](#)
- [Household Energy Upgrades Fund | energy.gov.au](#)
- [Energy4Seniors - COTA QLD](#)
- [Apply for the Thermoregulatory Dysfunction Energy Subsidy](#)
- [Home Assist Secure | Homes and housing | Queensland Government](#) (This program may free up funds for AC or improve security so you can safely open doors and windows at night)

Remember that pets need cool homes, too

Keeping your house cool will keep your pet healthy as well as you. You can also put ice in their water or provide cooling toys like kiddie pools.

Spread awareness, take action

With these strategies, you can protect your health this summer—and you can do it on a budget!

Many older people in Australia don't identify heatwaves as a risk to their health. Consider sharing this article with a friend to spread awareness on this topic.

Don't forget to read the previous article in this series about [staying safe in hot weather](#). And watch out for our next article with more practical tips to beat the heat.

If you want to learn more about protecting yourself from extreme heat, check out Griffith University's [Ethos Project](#).

Get in touch with LiveUp

Everyone is different so some of these tips may work better for you than others.

If you need more information, get in touch with one of our helpful team on **1800 951 971**.

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