



Top Tips for Staying Cool

When asked “What’s so good about living in Canberra?” most people don’t think diurnal fluctuation. They probably should!

For most of the year Canberra’s temperature changes dramatically from day to night. Frosty cold winter nights turn into beautiful clear winter days. Hot summer days cool quickly at night. The average temperature for the day is actually quite reasonable. A few basic principles can help your home use this daily temperature change (diurnal fluctuation) to keep you more comfortable all year.

Tip1: Don’t let the sun strike the glass

Before you think of turning on the air conditioner this summer, turn off the sun! Block the sun before it strikes your glass. Once the radiant energy from the sun has entered your house it heats up the things it strikes. Heated objects pass on heat to the air around them. Warm air doesn’t shed heat through your window as quickly as the radiant heat comes in, so the room gets hotter and hotter. The best solution is don’t let the radiant heat in, in the first place.

Fact: Two square metres of glass facing the sun lets in more heat than running a standard bar radiator!

Shade cloth, awnings and blinds

Retractable shade cloths, awnings and blinds outside your windows can block most of the radiant heat from the sun in summer. Even better, you can remove them when you want to let in winter warmth.

Remember that the afternoon sun in summer is low and in the west. A vertical blind will block more sun than something above the window like the roof or a pergola. Check if the sun’s rays strike the glass, and add shading if they do.

Plantings: deciduous vines and trees

Trees and vines not only shade you in summer, they also transpire cooling your home in the same way as an evaporative air-conditioner. When choosing plants for summer shade, only plant deciduous plants to the north of your house. In winter they will lose their leaves letting in valuable warmth. If you want to plant natives on the northern side, make sure you choose plants that will not grow high enough to shade your northern windows.



Tip 2 – Reduce the heat gain where it does strike the glass.

Reflective films

Reflective films can block around half of the heat entering your window. In Canberra they are best suited to west/south west glass. Using films on north facing glass can reduce your heat gain through winter, costing you more in heating costs over the year than they save.

Curtains and pelmets

Thick, backed curtains can block up to 30% of the heat from your windows. To really make them work well, make sure they go all the way to the ground to stop the air flow around them and put a box pelmet up above them.

Keep the curtains closed as much as practicable during the day. If it gets too dark inside the house, remember it's cheaper to run a light than an air conditioner! Especially if it's a low wattage compact fluorescent one.

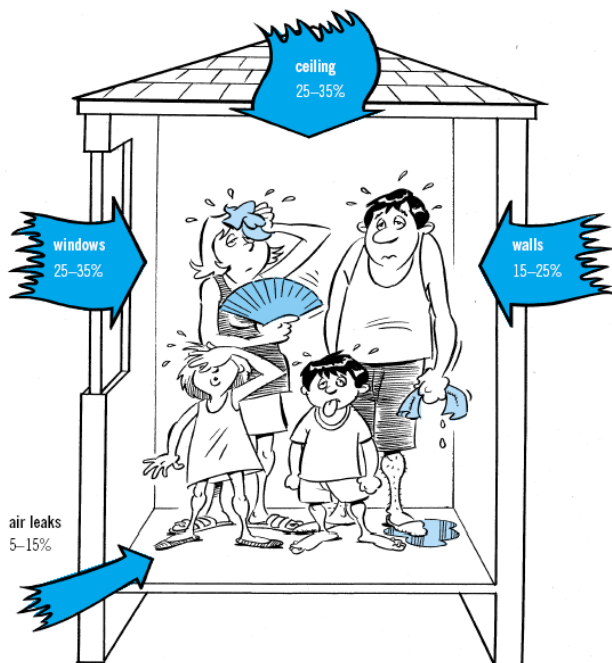
Tip 3: Seal out hot draughts.

Air leaks

Air leaking into and out of your house brings the heat with it. To keep cooler in summer and warmer in winter, plug the draughty spots in your home. Seal around doors and windows, install a flue damper in your chimney and draught excluders under your doors.

Tip 4: Insulate yourself from the heat.

Good Insulation in your roof and walls will not only stop the heat coming in during summer it will keep you warm in winter. Insulate your ceiling to at least R4 and your walls to R2.



Tip 5: Night purge - shut your house during the day and open it to the breezes at night.

If you live on the coast you might open all the windows during the day to let in the cool coastal breeze. In Canberra the wind on a summer's day is hot! To stay cool in Canberra open your house up at night to let in the cool night air. Then shut all windows and doors down during the day to keep out the afternoon heat.

More information

This fact sheet is produced by the Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) to provide you with some quick tips on how to keep your home cool. If after reading it you'd like more free information about this or any other topic to do with saving energy in your home, don't hesitate to contact us.

