

Audit your home: Search for common leaks

Hiring a professional to seek out air leaks in your home is a good investment—but chances are it might not make it to the top of your to-do list any time soon. That doesn't mean you have to accept living in a drafty house.

Instead, take matters into your own hands with a do-it-yourself home energy audit using Energy Savers tips from the Department of Energy.

Start by closing all exterior doors, windows and fireplace flues and turning off your furnace, water heater and any other combustion appliances. Then turn on every exhaust fan in the house—like bathroom and kitchen fans—to help suck the air out of the house. Use a large window fan to help if necessary. Doing this helps increase the air flow through leaks and cracks, making them more obvious as you search for them.

Now, you're ready for the hunt. Start at one end of the house and move room by room, meticulously feeling for drafts flowing through:

- electrical outlets and switch plates,
- window frames,
- baseboards,
- seals around exterior doors,
- fireplace dampers,
- attic hatches and
- window-mounted air conditioners.

Unsure if you've detected an air leak? Wave a damp hand in front of the potential draft; does your hand feel cool? Also, look for daylight coming in around closed doors, and see if you can rattle the windows. Keep track of drafty locations in each room and make note of any possible fixes. This will help you decide which repairs to do first.

The leaks that are easiest to find also could be the easiest to fix with caulking or weatherstripping, especially around windows and doors. While you've got the caulk gun out, seal your attic hatch door and add some insulation.

All around the house, look for holes and penetrations for faucets, pipes, electric outlets and wiring, and then seal large gaps or caulk around them.