



SPECIAL CONSUMER REPORT

How to Get the Most Out of Your Heating and AC Systems.

Save money on your monthly power bills
Extend the life of your equipment
Reduce breakdowns and repairs
How, when, and WHAT to buy

Introduction

There's a lot of mystery in how our heating and AC equipment operate. Between all the technical mumbo-jumbo, the overwhelming amount of brands and types of systems, and constantly changing regulations, it's easy for homeowners to get lost.

Luckily, as the owner of this guide, you now have an important tool to help you cut through all the confusion and become a well-informed consumer. You'll start saving money each month on your energy bill, know how to reduce breakdowns and extend your systems functional life, and know what to look out for when hiring a home service company.

A Custom Heating & A/C, Inc. is dedicated to helping the families in our community live in greater safety and comfort. That's why we've put together this report for you. Smart, well-informed homeowners are extremely beneficial to our industry. They keep well maintained equipment, which makes our job 1000 times easier. They also help keep the scam artists and snake-oil salesmen in check. This report helps create a win/win situation by benefiting homeowners and keeping our industry healthy.

Part I: Money Saving Strategies

Did you know your heating and AC system make up the biggest part of your energy bill by a *whopping* margin? Their energy consumption comes in at a massive 30 to **50%**! To put that in perspective, your water heater is the second biggest culprit, and it comes in at a relatively measly 18%. By maximizing your system's efficiency, you'll start seeing significant savings as early as next month.

Tip 1: Ideal Summer Thermostat Settings

Your thermostat settings are the biggest factor in measuring how much you'll save each month. Everyone knows that the warmer you keep your home in the summer the more you save, and the reverse is true for winter. But what settings are ideal for those times of year?

Well, energy.gov recommends 78° during the summer time while you're home, and 88° while you're away for more than 4 hours. For most families, 78° might seem rather high, but remember, it's not *only* about savings. It's about balancing savings and comfort. A good rule of thumb here is that for each degree you go *below* 78°, you're raising your power bill by about 1%. So maybe 78° is a little too high for comfort, but if you're sitting at 68° for example, consider trying 72°. That's a 4% jump in savings right there, with just a few clicks of a button.

Tip 2: Ideal Winter Thermostat Settings

During winter, 68° is considered ideal while you are home. Of course, every degree you can live comfortably in *below* that starts racking up those percentages saved on your power bill. During those times you're away for more than 4 hours, you can go as low as 55° depending on

the day. The closer your thermostat setting is to the temperature outside, the more you'll be saving!

Avoid turning your thermostat off completely, even when you're away for extended periods of time. It may seem counter intuitive, but it's easier for your system to maintain a temperature while you're at work than it is for it to try and heat your home from extremely cold temperatures. Plus, you risk the temperature in your home dropping below freezing, which can cause frozen and busted pipes. Whatever savings you made from turning your unit off will be lost to expensive plumbing repairs.

Tip 3: Use Technology to Your Advantage.

Smart thermostats are ideal for managing your heat and AC settings. The technology has come a long way, and these devices can learn your work and sleeping schedule, and maximize efficiency for you. If a smart thermostat is out of your budget, programmable ones can do the trick. These allow you to set your desired temperatures for different times of the day, and help your system balance those settings with running efficiently. Remember, you can always call **A Custom Heating & A/C, Inc.** and ask for one of our professionals to help you choose the right thermostat for you!

Part II: Extend the Life of Your System

Tip 1: Keep your system properly maintained.

This one shocks a lot of people, but when you break it down, it just makes sense. No one ever doubts that you need to take your car in for routine maintenance every few months. Your car has moving parts and motors that go through wear and tear and require a little attention every so often.

Your AC system is no different. It has pumps and spinning motors just like your car. Over time, those parts go through the standard wear and tear just like your car motor, and benefit from a tune up every so often. A well maintained system runs much more smoothly than a neglected one, which is reflected on your power bill. The harder your system has to work, the higher your bill will be. Plus, those tune ups help extend the life of your system, meaning less costly breakdowns in the future.

At **A Custom Heating & A/C, Inc.** our heating and AC experts are happy to help keep your system healthy and running. While we're performing your routine maintenance, we'll keep an eye out for potential problems, and offer you advice and options on how and when to fix it.

And unlike the typical auto mechanic who “finds” problems, our experts will actually show you what’s wrong, and give you no-pressure options on how you’d like to handle it.

Tip 2: Handle Repairs ASAP

Not every issue results in a complete system failure, but even minor repairs should be handled as quickly as your schedule and budget will allow. As long as the system is still running, it’s tempting to put off those minor repairs until later. But even though your system may still function with minor issues, allowing them to go unrepaired usually results in significantly more expensive repairs later.

Without getting too deep into the technical jargon, just understand that your AC system is a machine that has many different components, and they all rely on each other to heat or cool your home. If one component starts having issues, it can take the rest of the machine down with it. For example, if one of your internal motors might be going bad but still works, it can start pulling too much or too little power, which puts other components that rely on that power at risk.

During your routine maintenance, your service expert may inform you of some potential issues that could become a problem later. Don’t feel pressured; our technicians work with integrity, and will happily show you which components are a risk, explain why, and give you multiple options on how to fix it that fit your time and budget. That way there’s no guess work, and you know you’re getting your money’s worth when you make repairs.

Part III: Replacements; Who, When, and How?

Let’s face it. Replacing heat and AC equipment is not exciting. It’s a considerable investment, but there’s no cool flashy new thing to enjoy. Even still, it’s one of the most important systems in your home and when it’s time for replacement, it’s important to do it right.

Tip 1: WHO Should You Hire?

Hiring a home service company to handle your replacement can almost be as stressful as picking out which system you want. Before calling anyone to get an estimate, make a check list of what is most important to you in a home service company. These differ from family to family, but here are a few staples you should consider:

- **Qualifications** – Are they fully licensed, bonded, and insured? How long have they been in business?
- **Ratings** – what do their ratings on Google, Facebook, Yelp, and other sites look like? What is their rating with the Better Business Bureau?

- **Warranties** – Manufacturers’ warranties only go so far and usually only covers parts. Does the home service company offer supplemental warranties on their labor?
- **Value** – Notice this isn’t “price.” In this industry, cheaper is not better. But it’s still important to get your money’s worth. Paying a little extra up front to hire the best can save you countless headaches and money spent on repairs on the back end. Just make sure the price matches the value that company brings to your home.
- **Most importantly, TRUST** – Ultimately, do you trust the company? They could have the best sales pitch in the world. But if they can’t get you to trust them, don’t. Trust your gut. If you don’t feel safe with your sales rep or technician, all their promises and guarantees mean nothing.

Tip 2: WHEN Should You Replace?

It’s important to know when to stop throwing money at repairs and just bite the bullet on purchasing a new system. We know it can be a large investment but at some point, prolonging the inevitable will end up costing you more money than just replacing it.

Age – A professionally maintained AC system (like we talked about before) can last 10 to 15 years, but you should start planning much earlier. Depending on your family budget, it’s a good idea to start planning around the 8 year mark. That doesn’t mean start getting estimates, but beginning to save early can take away the sting of making that big investment.

Frequent repairs – if you’re making multiple repairs to your system each year, it’s time to start thinking about a replacement. Repairing a system past its due date actually costs you money three times. Once on the initial repair, twice on eventually having to replace the unit anyway, and three times when considering the money on the initial repair could’ve been used towards the replacement.

Refrigerant type – Ask your technician what type of refrigerant your system uses. If they say **R22**, start thinking about a replacement immediately, even if there are no warning signs. R22 is being phased out by the EPA. It is already illegal to manufacture in the United States, and will be illegal to import starting in 2020. That means every point laid out above in the “frequent repairs” section holds true for systems using R22. By throwing money into repairs, you’re wasting cash that you’ll need at your first break down in 2020 to replace the unit.

Tip 3: HOW to Handle Replacements

Besides choosing the right company and knowing when to replace, there are a few other things you want to keep in mind when going through the replacement process. Keep these final few tips in mind when you begin looking into your replacement.

- **Buy as much as you can afford** – Saving money is a good thing, and we'd never tell you to go over budget on what your family can afford. That said, it's always a good idea to get the best system within your budget. If you decide you have a budget of \$5000, buy a \$5000 system. That *doesn't* mean you shouldn't look for deals and coupons, but because this is such an important system in your home, it's not worth going under budget just to save a few hundred bucks.
- **Do your homework** – No, you don't need to become an expert. But you should learn a few things about your system, so you know what to look out for from shady salesman; don't let them sell you more than you need. A classic example of this is incorrectly sized units. There are plenty of free AC unit size calculators online. If you need a 3.5 ton unit and your sales rep is pricing out a 5 ton, ask them why. If their explanation doesn't hold up, kick them out.
- **Ask questions** – Don't be afraid to bombard your sales rep and technician with questions. As we said, they should be building trust with you from the start, and part of that is answering all your questions quickly and honestly. You have a right to know what you're buying and putting in your home.
- **Figure out payment beforehand** – Replacements are a large investment, so make sure you have a payment plan worked out. Also make sure your installer has multiple payment options, so you can do whatever works for your family. Even if you have the cash on hand, things can change mid project. Family emergencies, unexpected expenses, and other things make flexible payment options a must.

Conclusion

Above all else, the best way you can save money and keep your family comfortable is to have a solid, trusting relationship with your contractor. At **A Custom Heating & A/C, Inc.** we provide reports like this to show our dedication to being a contractor you can trust. We are dedicated to educating our clients, so they can be smart, well-informed homeowners.

You can always reach us at **(773)539-8175**. Our team of Customer Care Reps and Service Experts are always standing by, ready to help you with any and all air conditioning needs you have. If you've found this information helpful, give us a call today. When you do, mention the code **REPORT18** and you'll receive **\$20.00** off your next seasonal maintenance, to help you get started putting these tips to work!