

## Save on Utility Costs This School Year



As kids head back to school and family routines shift, your home's energy habits can shift too. With fewer people at home during the day and new after-school schedules, now is the perfect time to reduce energy waste and lower your utility bills. These easy tips can help you start saving immediately—without sacrificing comfort.

### 1. Adjust Your Thermostat During the Day

When no one's home, you can ease back on heating or cooling.

**Tip:** Set your thermostat 7–10°F higher (in summer) or lower (in winter) while the house is empty.

**Bonus:** A programmable or smart thermostat can do this automatically. **You could save up to 10% a year on energy bills.**

### Simple Tips to Cut Energy Use as Family Routines Change

#### 2. Unplug Unused Devices

Electronics like TVs, game consoles, printers, and chargers continue to draw power even when off.

**Solution:** Plug devices into a power strip and turn it off during the day or at night. **"Phantom load" can account for 5–10% of home energy use.**

### 3. Run Appliances More Efficiently

Busy school schedules mean more laundry and dishes—but you can still save.

Always run **full loads** in dishwashers and washing machines.

**Wash in cold water** when possible.



### 4. Bright Ideas for Lower Bills

With shorter days and more time indoors for homework, lighting gets more use.

Replace older bulbs with **LEDs**, which use up to 80% less energy.

Remind kids to **turn off lights** when leaving a room.

Install **motion sensors** or timers in hallways and bathrooms for automatic shut-off.

### 5. Cut Hot Water Use

Morning showers and evening routines can lead to high water heating costs.

Install **low-flow showerheads** and faucet aerators.

Lower your water heater setting to **120°F** for safe, efficient heating. **Heating water is often the second-highest energy cost in homes.**

### 6. Power Down Entertainment Devices

With more screen time for school and relaxation, remember to:

Use **energy-saving mode** on TVs, tablets, and computers.

Turn off streaming boxes and speakers when not in use.

Unplug chargers when devices are fully charged.

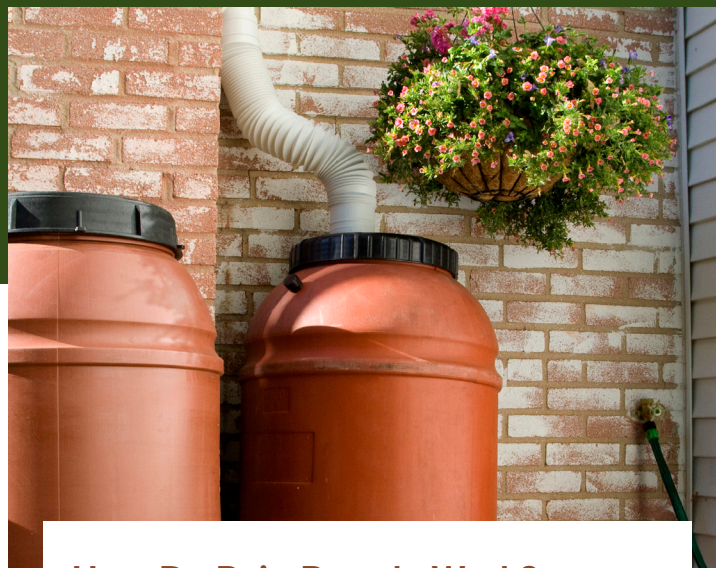
### Back-to-School, Back to Savings

Making just a few small changes as your schedule shifts can lead to noticeable savings. Plus, you're teaching kids valuable lessons about energy conservation and responsible living. It's a win for your wallet—and the environment.



# Tap Into Nature: How a Rain Barrel Can Work for You

A rain barrel is a container (usually 50–80 gallons) that collects and stores rainwater runoff from your roof via gutters and downspouts. Instead of letting rainwater flow into the storm drain, a rain barrel gives you a way to reuse it for outdoor tasks—saving both water and money.



## Why Use a Rain Barrel?

**Reduces water bills** especially in warmer months when outdoor use spikes.

**Conserves clean, treated water** by using rainwater for non-drinking needs.

**Reduces stormwater runoff**, which can carry pollutants into local streams and rivers.

**Helps plants thrive** – rainwater is naturally soft and free of chlorine, lime, and calcium.

## How Do Rain Barrels Work?

**Collection:** The barrel is placed under a downspout to catch rainwater flowing off your roof.

**Storage:** The barrel holds the water until you're ready to use it. Most have a mesh screen on top to keep out debris and mosquitoes.

**Access:** A spigot or hose connector near the bottom lets you fill watering cans or attach a hose for use in the garden.

**Overflow System:** When full, the barrel diverts extra water away from your foundation using an overflow outlet.

## Things to Know Before You Install One

**Choose the right location:** Near a garden or flowerbed is ideal. Make sure it's on level ground.

**Elevate your barrel:** Raising it on blocks improves water pressure and makes it easier to fill containers.

**Keep it clean:** Check and clean the screen and barrel periodically to prevent clogs or algae.

**Winter care:** In cold climates, empty and disconnect your barrel before freezing temps hit.



## What Can You Use Rain Barrel Water For?

Watering **gardens, flowers, shrubs, and lawns**

Washing **cars, bikes, or tools**

Cleaning **patio furniture or outdoor surfaces**

**Not for drinking, cooking, or bathing**—unless you have a proper filtration/purification system in place.



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