

Dishwasher Maintenance Tips for Energy Efficiency

Push the right buttons to save

Most of the energy used to run a dishwasher isn't for powering the appliance; instead, it's for heating the dishwasher's water. Focus on making the most of your current machine's water consumption, in addition to reducing its energy use. Also, keep in mind that washing dishes by hand is not an energy-wise choice: According to ENERGY STAR®, in a year, you'll save about 5,000 gallons of water and \$40 in utility costs by letting a dishwasher do the work.

- Help your dishwasher do its job efficiently. Scrape (don't rinse) large pieces of food and bones. Rinse, soak, or pre-wash dishes only if food is dried on, burned on, or extremely greasy.
- Match the cycle selection to the load.
- The typical setting will work best for most loads (even pots and pans).
- Run only full loads.
- A dishwasher can't vary the amount of water it uses based on load size.
- Avoid using the rinse-and-hold cycle.
- Depending on the age of your dishwasher, just rinsing the dishes could use several gallons of water.
- Let the dishes air-dry: if there's no air-dry button, stop the cycle after the final rinse and prop open the door (Watch for escaping steam when you first open the door!).

Find the filter and clean it.

- If your dishwasher doesn't have a self-cleaning filter, regularly remove it and clean out trapped food particles.
- Clean the spray-arm nozzles and water jets.
- Use a toothbrush to remove hard water deposits that can reduce the powerful flow of water necessary to clean dishes.
- Use the delay-start setting.
- Run the dishwasher late at night when some utilities offer reduced rates. Also, avoid times when hot water demand is high, such as during morning showers or preparing meals.

Don't overload your dishwasher!

Everything in a dishwasher load must be exposed to the water spray and not interfere with the spray arms or water jets. Dishes, bowls, and silverware that touch or "nest"—and cookie sheets or other large items that rest against the tub's interior walls—won't get thoroughly washed or rinsed.

Keep your cool.

Almost all new dishwashers (and front-load clothes washers) include a booster heater that raises the water temperature from your water heater to the higher temperature needed for cleaning. As a result, you can lower your water heater's thermostat to an energy-saving 120 degrees, which is adequate for most families needs. To check the temperature of the water coming from your water heater:

- Run hot water into a bowl from the faucet closest to your dishwasher for a minute or two.

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- Check the temperature of the water with a candy or meat thermometer.
- Adjust the thermostat (or both thermostats, on many electric water heaters) as necessary.

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