

## Thermostats

### Thermostat buying guide

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#### Getting started

Programmable thermostats can trim about \$180 a year from your energy bill by automatically reducing your heating or cooling when you need it least. Some thermostats tested by Consumer Reports were easy to set and use but others were so complicated that you might end up spending more on energy, not less.

That's why you won't find the Energy Star on any thermostats, which stopped certifying them in 2009 mostly because they were hard to use. New standards that factor in ease of use are being developed. But you don't have to wait. Manufacturers have made some thermostats less daunting by adding colorful interactive touchscreen displays.

Most thermostats can keep rooms close to the set temperature so our testers rated ease of use based on how simple each thermostat was to set up and make routine adjustments to before reading the manual and then, if needed, with the manual. All of the thermostats in our Ratings have basic pre-programmed settings.

#### How to choose

Nearly all the tested models work on common heating and cooling systems, but check the packaging for exceptions. Most let you program different settings for each day. If you're on a regular routine consider a thermostat that offers one schedule for weekdays and one or two for weekends. The majority of models attach to your heating or cooling system with as few as two low-voltage wires, making do-it-yourself installation relatively easy.

Keep in mind that the best place to install a thermostat is on an interior wall and away from vents and other sources of heat and drafts that could distort temperature readings. If you're doing more than a simple replacement, call a heating and cooling professional.

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