

actsmart[®]

choosing a heating system

For many ACT households, winter heating will account for more than half their annual energy use. There are two ways your family can make substantial savings on heating bills. The first is to minimise heat loss in your home and reduce the need for heating. See the Actsmart fact sheet **Staying Warm On Less Energy** to get some great practical advice in this area. The second way to save is to choose the most efficient heating system for your circumstances.



Assessing your heating needs

Here are some key questions you should consider before purchasing any heating system:

- ✓ How much of my home do I regularly need to heat?
- ✓ How energy efficient is the heating system?
- ✓ How much does it cost to buy and install, compared to its running costs?
- ✓ What are its greenhouse gas emissions?
- ✓ Is it thermostatically controlled?
- ✓ Does it have a range of heat settings?
- ✓ Can I zone it?
- ✓ How much noise does it make?
- ✓ Can I improve free heating opportunities by letting the winter sun in?

It's important to get the right sized heater for the areas you want to heat. Before making any sales enquiries, work out the volume of the areas you want to heat. Multiply the length x width x height of the room.

Actsmart's Sustainable Home Advice is free to all ACT residents and can help you assess your individual heating needs.

Space heating or central heating?

Think about whether you regularly need to heat your entire home or if you could concentrate on smaller areas of the house.

Heating required	System recommended
Living areas only	Space heating
Living areas and minimal heat to bedrooms	Space heating
Several disconnected rooms at the same time	Central heating
Whole house	Central heating

If you don't need to heat the whole house and you can close off rooms that do not need warmth, efficient space heating can provide good comfort at much lower costs than a central system.

Ducted central heating systems (gas or electric reverse cycle) may be quicker at distributing heat, but if you're unnecessarily heating additional rooms, the extra energy used is likely to be wasted. All ducted systems have a somewhat reduced energy efficiency when compared to space heating because some heat is lost via the ductwork.

The 'star rating' efficiency index for centralised systems does not take into account heat lost through the ducting system; commonly, 15% heat loss occurs for ducts with standard insulation.

Central heating: important considerations

Many families will choose central heating for comfort and convenience during the long Canberra winters. There are ways to maximise energy efficiency in such systems:

- ✓ Choose a system capable of being zoned, so you only heat the rooms you're using.
- ✓ Buy a system with a high 'star rating', a high insulation level for ducting, a wall-mounted thermostat, and a timer/programming option.
- ✓ Consider hydronic central heating. The distribution pipes have significantly lower heat losses than ducted heating. Often, the pipes run through internal walls where losses are effectively zero. These systems can also be zoned down to one room.
- ✓ Check if your heating can be supplemented by your solar system. There are many options to heat water and heat your home using free energy generated via solar. Speak with our team, email us or come to our workshops for more information on solar heating options.

Did you know?

If you already have an older central heating system that cannot be zoned, you can close off up to 20% of your vents without damaging the system.

For more ideas, tips and information

visit: actsmart.act.gov.au
email: actsmart@act.gov.au
or call: 13 22 81

For additional advice on choosing a heating system, call the free Actsmart Sustainable Home Advice, on 1300 141 777 or email actsmartadvice@act.gov.au

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