



What Are Smart Thermostats?

Nearly half of energy costs for a home come from heating and cooling. Thermostats that are ‘smart’, or connected, have a lot of advantages over the traditional thermostats. Their ability to learn and the user’s ability to control them more precisely can really help you use less energy and save more money.

What are the benefits of smart thermostats?

Users of smart thermostats can realize savings of 10-20 percent on their energy costs, due to the ease with which they can be programmed and controlled. Apps give smart thermostat owners remote control over the devices, allowing users to deal with contingencies when they’re not home. Many companies send monthly rich, detailed reports, which help users manage costs. Using smart thermostats can help utility companies respond to anticipated blackouts and other disruptions. They can do this by varying temperatures in homes by one or two degrees when demand increases. This allows for energy conservation across the power grid, but continues to keep a house comfortable. For participating in such programs, users often receive rebates from utility companies. ■

How do smart thermostats work?

Smart thermostats do what normal thermostats do – they control heating and cooling systems – but do it with a increased level of convenience and intelligence. Many contain presence sensors that will instruct the thermostat to turn down or off if no one is home. Some are able to learn their user’s schedule and can anticipate when to turn themselves up, down, on or off. Most can connect to other smart devices and act together with them, so (for example) the thermostat will turn on the heating or air conditioning when a garage door opens. Users greatly value the ability to control a smart thermostat from a smartphone app, making the days of leaving the heat on when you’re not home a thing of the past. ■

What are the challenges of smart thermostats?

Installing a smart thermostat is not the most difficult thing a homeowner will do, but it will be a challenge for some users (HVAC professionals know about these devices and can help you out). At a cost ranging from \$170-250, they are more expensive than regular thermostats. Concerns of privacy and security are prevalent, and users should read the terms of service to understand how data will be used. Thermostats that are part of a real estate transaction must be reset and control given to the new homeowner. ■



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