

# The cosy side of winter

With the right heating options you can beat the chill and stay toasty warm throughout the season, writes **Robyn Willis**

**A**t this time of year, the cold air penetrates every nook and cranny of the house. So it's little wonder we don't want to leave the comfort of our beds if the alternative is a cold floor. But handling the cold this season will depend on how you heat your home.

There are plenty of ways to mitigate the dropping temperatures such as installing heavy curtains, draft excluders and even adding insulation, but in the end most of us are still going to need a little extra help to keep warm over winter.

## Hot options

Paul Myers, energy efficiency expert with Ausgrid, says choosing the best heater for your home is not as straightforward as it might appear.

"It depends on how big the area is you want to heat and how often you heat it," Paul says.

"Another factor can be the climate zone you are in because if you go inland, you get bigger temperature extremes and that would mean more heating.

"They are important considerations and the right answers might be different for different households."

You also need to decide whether you want to heat the person, the room or the whole house.

On a straight comparison basis of hourly use and cost, Paul says reverse-cycle airconditioners come out on top at about \$7 per week to run.

## Top condition

Milton Kaloudis, national marketing manager for Fujitsu General, says reverse-cycle airconditioners allow people to cool their house in summer and warm it in winter. Many people opt for ducted systems where air is pumped into different rooms around the house via a series of hoses.

"Around the winter months we sell a lot more ducted systems," Milton says.

Airconditioning systems can be a very effective way of heating a single room or a whole house but Paul says too many people heat their houses unnecessarily.

"Our research shows more than 80 per cent of households overheat their homes, which is a huge waste of energy, money and CO2 emissions," Paul says.

"For every degree you heat above 21 degrees you're adding about 10 per cent to your heating costs."

Ideally, he says, the room temperature should hover between 18 and 21 degrees for maximum efficiency and comfort.

And it is OK to wear a jumper indoors. "If you are going to heat your room to 26 degrees and walk around in summer clothes, you will see high energy bills coming in," he says.

"Try to use your heaters wisely."

## Blanket coverage

For evenings in front of the television, a heated throw rug could be all you need.

Priced from about \$70, they have lower running costs than the average heater.

"Electric blankets and throw rugs use less energy than room heaters," Paul says.

An electric blanket or even a thicker quilt are good ways to keep warm at night, rather than leaving expensive room heaters on through the night.

For some, however, running a heater overnight might be necessary, especially for those susceptible to respiratory problems when the temperature drops.

While oil-filled column heaters can be costly to run, they can be a safer option for children's rooms because of the slow release of heat which is not hot to touch.

## Single-minded

Even the traditional fan heaters or

radiators heater have their place.

"The old bar radiator can be a fairly efficient option," Paul says.

"If you are one person in a big space, it is better to switch that on and sit in front of it because it has the advantage of instant heat whereas airconditioners take time to heat up the room.

"Radiators are a really good option for bathrooms too because you spend so little time there."

Although they have fallen out of favour, overhead light and heater systems such as IXL Tastic in the bathroom are a great way of staying toasty warm after a shower and are more cost-effective than the more popular underfloor heating.

Whatever method you opt for, Paul suggests using timers where possible so that heaters are not left running when they are not required.

"Underfloor heating is not an efficient type of heating because in the end it is a type of electrical heater," Paul says.

"It would be an easy one to leave running for longer periods of time.

"You really need it on a timer to avoid letting it run too long."

How you use your heater will also have an impact on how quickly and for how long you will feel warm.

Because hot air rises, it is best to direct blades on portable heaters and airconditioners towards the floor.

You can even enlist a summer stalwart to improve the movement of heat.

"Most [ceiling] fans have a reverse setting on a low-turning speed which will help push hot air down," Paul says.

## Good wood

For those who like the look of the traditional hearth, combustion heaters can be an environmentally sound choice.

While the old open fireplace allows up to 85 per cent of its heat to go straight up the chimney, an enclosed combustion burner has a much better ability to disperse heat through a room.

“Wood is a renewable energy source so it is good from that point of view,” Paul says. “On the downside, if you are in a built-up urban area, there is air quality to consider.”

The other option for those who like the real flame look is gas.

While alternative gas sources such as ethanol are gaining attention because of their portability and good looks, most people look towards an old favourite for a reliable source of heat.

Peter Harcus, head of gas network development for Jemena, says that over 90 per cent of new homes now have natural gas supplied.

“There was a period of development during the 1960s and 1970s where gas was supplied in some areas rather than others,” Peter says.

Jemena is responsible for the supply of gas in NSW.

Peter says gas is available for ducted airconditioning as well as portable heaters that combine gas and electricity.

He says many homeowners use a combination of energy sources.

“The combination of electricity and gas is delivering high-efficiency appliances which have the advantage of being programmable,” he says.

Next to reverse-cycle airconditioning, unflued gas heaters are the most energy-efficient option for heating rooms.

The one you buy will depend on the size of the room you want to heat – a good retailer should be able to advise you if you take your room measurements.

[willisr@dailytelegraph.com.au](mailto:willisr@dailytelegraph.com.au)

#### MORE INFORMATION

**Ausgrid** [ausgrid.com.au](http://ausgrid.com.au)

**Fujitsu** 1300 882 201, [fujitsugeneral.com.au](http://fujitsugeneral.com.au)

**Jemena** [jemena.com.au](http://jemena.com.au)





A



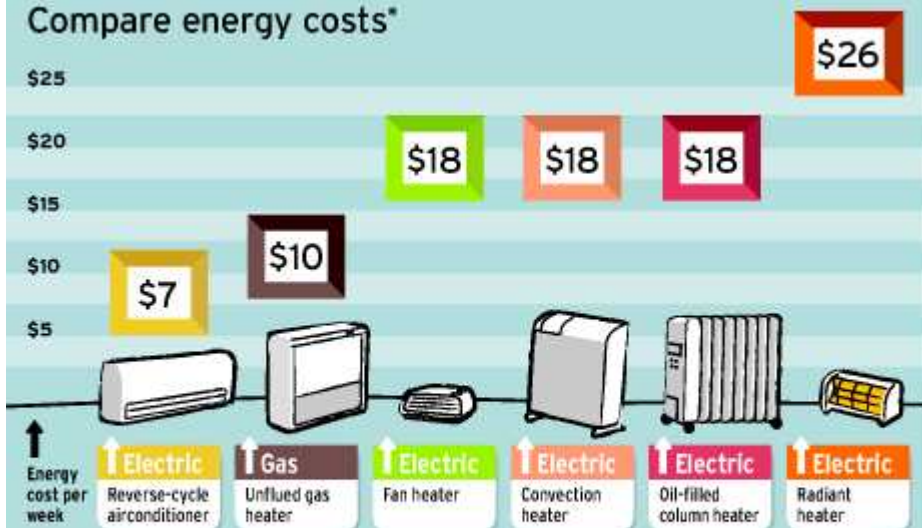
B

A Gas log flame fires, such as this one from Rinnai are a good option B This EcoSmart fire fuelled by bioethanol is worth considering C Try heating yourself rather than a room with products such as this one from Sunbeam



**A** Reverse-cycle airconditioning is an economical choice  
**B** Slow combustion heaters such as the Kemian Tempo Stack are better than an open fireplace at dispersing heat

## Compare energy costs\*



\* Estimated weekly energy costs are based on an average of eight hours per day per heater, for a heat capacity of 2.4kW output with 70 per cent duty cycle for thermostat type heaters (that is, all but radiant heater), and tariff of 19.085c/kWh for electricity and 1.9492c/MJ for gas. Running costs are estimates only. If you use the heater for more than eight hours per day this will cost more. If you have more than one heater multiply the cost by the number of heaters. Source: Ausgrid