

5 Simple Ways to

Go Green and Save with Smart Fridge Habits

Refrigerators use more electricity than other appliances and more energy than anything in homes except heating and cooling. A few changes in everyday fridge habits can result in significant savings for your household budget and the planet.

1. Use glass containers when possible.

Switching from plastic to glass containers is a win-win for the environment and for your food budget. Glass keeps foods and beverages colder than plastic, meaning the fridge uses less electricity. Since items are colder, they stay fresh longer. In clear glass containers, leftovers may get eaten sooner, since your family can see what is in them.

2. Fill it up and space things out.

Here's what you'd see if you looked into a well-stocked, eco-friendly fridge: Shelves that are full of foods and beverages with small spaces between to allow for air flow and quick cooling. If your fridge has bare shelves, fill extra space with water-filled containers. You'll use less energy and have plenty of water on hand for emergencies.

3. Take the temperature regularly.

The optimal temperature for food safety is 36-40 °F. For every degree below 38 °F, the unit will consume 5 percent more energy. A refrigerator thermometer is the best way to keep your fridge in the safest, most efficient zone. Leave the thermometer in an easy-to-read location, check it regularly, and aim for a range between 38-40 °F.

4. Mind the expiration dates.

To keep a fridge from being a food safety hazard, be an expiration date checker. The *sell by* date tells grocers when to pull the item from their shelves; you have a few days after that to use the product. The *use by* date is just that; consume it or turn it into compost. Get in the habit of writing a date on leftovers and using them within 3-4 days.

5. Keep it clean.

Regular cleaning (inside and out) will keep a fridge operating efficiently, as well as preventing spoilage and waste. Once or twice a year, use a soft vacuum attachment to remove all dust from the coils behind and underneath your unit. Once every couple of months, wipe dust and grime from the rubber seals around the door.