

A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a computer keyboard. The central focus is a white key with a left-pointing arrow and the word 'home' printed on it. To the left, a portion of a key with a green arrow is visible. To the right, a blue key and a white key with 'p' are partially seen. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the keyboard and a hint of a desk surface.

saving the world starts at home

Thanks to technology, many of us enjoy the freedom and flexibility of working from home.

However, higher energy usage also means we pay for the privilege. Computers, lighting, heating and air conditioning, not to mention putting the jug on for a cuppa several times a day, are all guaranteed to drive power bills up. So, what are some key things to consider when setting up an energy-efficient home office that will keep you comfortable while taking care of business?

Manage your office equipment diligently

Activate sleep features on computers, copiers and other machines – contrary to popular belief, screen savers do not save energy. If you've finished for the day, switch everything off at the wall. Laptops use less energy overall than a desktop computer, as do LCD (flatscreen) monitors.

Be an "Energy Star"

Energy star equipment - products that qualify for the global mark of energy efficiency – incorporates special power management features to save energy. Such products use approximately half the amount of power of standard equipment.

Lighten up

Switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) – they use about one fifth of the energy of an ordinary lightbulb

and last up to 10 times longer. Also, consider using task lighting. Clean light bulbs and fittings regularly – dirt and dust can reduce output by up to 30%.

Re-use, recycle

Do you have somewhere to keep your paper and cardboard until collection day? What do you do with your old printer cartridges? What else gets cast off in the course of business that might find a good home elsewhere?

Maximum comfort, minimum energy

Insulate to prevent up to 40% of your heat escaping through ceilings, walls and floors, and seal gaps in windows and doorframes. Install a heat pump – the most energy-efficient ones release up to three units of energy in heat for every one unit of electricity consumed.

Layout

Investing time and effort into creating an efficient design and layout for your home office will pay off in the long term, whether you're rearranging the furniture or creating a new space. Simple things, such as positioning your desk near a window to maximise natural light and sunshine, all help to reduce power costs, energy consumption and, ultimately, greenhouse gas emissions. **H**