

Using your central heating efficiently



A 'wet' central heating system pumps hot water around radiators. In order to make the most efficient use of such a system, the first thing to do is identify what controls you have and how to use them effectively.

1. Setting the temperatures

● Boiler Thermostat

This controls the temperature of the water going around the radiators and the heating coil in the hot water tank. It also prevents the boiler from overheating.

If the boiler thermostat is the only control you have set it on maximum in the winter and between maximum and minimum during the summer. If you don't have a thermostat on your hot water tank setting your boiler thermostat on maximum will mean you have very hot water coming out of your taps, so it is best to insulate your hot water tank well and fit a tank thermostat.

Where you have a room thermostat or thermostatic radiator valve (TRVs) as well as a boiler thermostat these should be used to control room temperature. In this case the boiler thermostat should be set at maximum to ensure it operates at its most efficient.

● Room Thermostat

This reacts to the temperature of the air around it and is normally located in either the living room or the hall.

Only the air immediately around it influences the room thermostat so for it to work effectively it should be in a room where the temperature is typical of the temperature in the whole house.

It is recommended that the thermostat be set at between 18 and 21°C (64 to 70°F). You should set it as low as possible in order to save energy. A 1°C reduction on your room thermostat could save up to 10% on your annual fuel bill.



● Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRVs)



TRVs allow you to control individual room temperatures. They are fitted to the radiators and operate by reacting to the air temperature around them and opening or closing the valve controlling the flow of hot water through the radiator.

If you have a room thermostat you should not have a TRV on the radiator in that room. There should always be one radiator left without a TRV, this is usually in a bathroom, to avoid damaging the circulating pump.

A low setting on a TRV gives a low radiator temperature while a high setting gives a hot radiator. When the heating system is turned off for a long time, for instance through the summer, set the TRVs at their highest setting to prevent them from seizing closed.

2. Setting the timer

Heating your home for half an hour longer than you need can add 6% to your heating bills, so it is important to control the times your heating is on.

● Timer/Programmer

This allows you to set your heating and hot water system to switch on and off automatically at times you have pre-set.

You must make sure the clock is showing the right time and will have to remember to reset it each time the clocks change, or if there is a power cut.

Set the system to come on about half an hour before you get up in the morning and to go off half an hour before you either leave the house, or go to bed. The house will remain warm for about 30 minutes after the heating has been turned off - slightly longer if the house is well insulated.

Read the timer/programmer instructions for your particular model carefully before setting them.

3. Setting your hot water

● Hot Water Thermostat

A hot water thermostat is fitted either to the hot water tank or is part of the combination boiler if you don't have a tank. It allows you to control the temperature of the water. If the water coming out of the taps is too hot, lower the thermostat. The thermostat on the tank and the one built in to the immersion heater should be set at around 60°C (140°F).

● Immersion Heater

An immersion heater may be fitted in your hot water tank. This is an electric element immersed in the water in the tank which operates on peak electricity. It is usually controlled by a simple on/off switch and probably by a thermostat as well. It should only be used when the heating system is off and only when needed, say 15-30 minutes before the hot water is required. It is more expensive to heat water with an immersion heater than with a wet central heating system.

A timer can be fitted to an immersion heater to give extra control over when it is switched on and off. This should only be necessary if this is your only source of heating water.



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