

Get the most from your storage heater



Storage heaters are insulated boxes containing bricks with electric elements running through them. When the elements are switched on the bricks heat up. This is called "charging" the heater.

Storage heaters charge up on off-peak electricity. The insulation keeps most of the heat in the box. At the top of the box is a damper flap which can be opened to let the heat out. The more this flap is opened, the faster heat can escape from the heater into the room.

Although storage heaters are insulated, quite a lot of heat leaks out and so it is not possible to stop a heater giving off heat once it has been charged up.

As with all heating systems you will get the most out of your storage heaters if your home is well insulated.

Most storage heaters have two controls: the Input (sometimes called "Charge" or "Auto-set control") and the Output (sometimes called "Boost" or "Room temperature"). Both controls are usually located at the top of the heater under a flap. If you have a combined storage heater and on-peak convector heater, make sure you know which set of controls operate which part of the heater.

Input

This controls how much heat is stored in the heater - and how much electricity it uses. A thermostat inside the heater measures the temperature of the bricks and turns off the electricity supply when the selected temperature is reached. Temperature might be shown as cool, warm, hot or as degrees Celsius (oC) or Fahrenheit (oF) depending on the model.

With the input on its lowest setting a small amount of heat is stored in the heater - you may want to use this setting when the weather is mild. With the input control on its highest setting the maximum amount of heat possible is stored. To stop the heater storing any heat, switch it off at the wall.

If you have manual heaters the input should generally be increased as the weather gets colder. Start at around 2-4 during autumn and spring and increase the setting to maximum in colder weather.

Some electricity companies have a service where they can automatically charge your storage heaters remotely according to the weather forecast in your area.

Remember that using top-up heat from an alternative heat source, such as a fire, late into the night will affect the input to an automatic storage heater.



Output

This controls room temperature. It opens and closes the flap at the top of the heater. On its lowest setting heat leaves the heater slowly. On its highest setting heat leaves the heater quickly and so the stored heat is used up faster.

For maximum energy efficiency the output should be turned up during the day only when heat is required and turned down at night before retiring to bed. Generally the setting should be increased as the weather gets cooler and reduced when the weather gets warmer.

Some heaters have an automatic output control - a thermostat controls the opening and closing of the flap which makes heat leave the heater more quickly.

The most common brands of storage heaters are:

Dimplex

If you have a Dimplex automatic storage heater you should initially set the right-hand automatic dial to between 4 and 6. After the first night's charge you should be able to tell whether the room temperature is adequate. Adjust the dial up or down to give you the comfort level you require then leave it in this position.

Generally you can leave the left-hand room temperature boost dial set at 1 but if you require more heat in the evening then you can increase the setting to 9. This will open the damper and release more heat. If you change the dial remember to put it back to 1 before going to bed.

With Dimplex Ultra-slim Storage Heaters, set the right-hand input dial to the maximum setting of 9 in cold weather and a lower position in milder weather.

Creda

If you have an automatic Creda TSR heater the input control will work similarly to that on the Dimplex model. You can expect the trial and error process of finding the right temperature setting to take a couple of days but once you have the level that suits you, the heater will charge automatically each night depending on weather conditions.

With the manual heaters the input control should be adjusted manually in line with seasonal changes in the weather. Avoid changing the setting daily - two or three times a heating season should be sufficient. Use a setting of 1-3 in the autumn and gradually increase it as winter draws on. Reverse the pattern when winter turns to spring.

The output control can be left on minimum setting during the day, turned up as required in the evening and returned to the minimum setting at bedtime. Most people find a setting that suits their lifestyle and leave the dial undisturbed.

Berry

In addition to the usual output and input controls on the top of the heater, Berry heaters have a comfort level switch on the lower right-hand side of the casing. The heater can be used as either a manual or as an automatic model.

Automatic operation is usually the most economical to run. With the input control set to maximum adjust the comfort control daily until you find a suitable level of warmth. Leave the output control at minimum unless you need more heat during the day.

To operate the heater manually set the comfort control to maximum and adjust the setting of the input control according to the weather. Leave the output control on minimum unless you need more heat during the day.



Tips to remember

- Leave the on/off switch on for the heating seasons (normally October-April).
- Turn down the "output" to stop heat being given out when you don't want it.
- If your room is cold, turn up the "output" control until the room warms up.
- When the room is warm, turn down the "output" control to save heat for later in the day - the higher the output during the day the less heat is available at night.
- As the weather gets warmer and you need less heat, turn down the "input" control to store less in the heater for example 3-4 in mild weather and 5-6 in cold weather is usually adequate.

- If your home is warm enough in the summer turn the heaters off at the wall - and back on when it starts to get cold.
- Set the output dial to 1 in unoccupied rooms and 2-4 when the room is in use.
- Don't put furniture right in front of heaters and don't cover them with curtains.
- Fit shelves above them to reflect heat back into a room.
- It should cost less to heat your home with storage heaters than by electric fires, as storage heaters use cheaper off-peak electricity.
- Taking advantage of off-peak water heating
- If you have electric storage heaters, you are likely to have an electric immersion heater. Most immersion heaters have a built in thermostat which should be set at 60oC (140oF), but check with your local water company about the hardness of your water as this can influence the ideal temperature setting.
- The water heater should be connected to a timer, which should be set to switch on when off-peak electricity becomes available in your home and off again when the off-peak period ends. The thermostat will stop the water overheating until the off-peak electricity stops being available. If you use up all the hot water in the tank and wish to heat up more water during the day you will have to use the "boost" switch, which uses on-peak electricity.



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