

## 7 Tips to Boost Energy Savings with Thermal Window Panels

Here in the heart of New England, we pride ourselves on the number of historical colonial and victorian homes we have here. However, since many are more than 50 years old, the insulating efficiency of those same beautiful homes is less than desirable during the freezing New England months.

In an ideal world, every older home would go through a a costly remodel that included adding or updating the insulation in the walls and replacing the windows with today's energy-efficient ones. Unfortunately, that's not always in the immediate budget. So as you save for that long-term investment, there are some things you can do right now to insulate your windows and doors and save money on heating (and even air conditioning) utility bills.

### Add Thermal Window Treatments

Windows are the leading source of heat loss or exchange in your home. Adding insulated window treatments to your home is the easiest way to help keep the warm air in during the winter months and also the hot air out during the summer.

Insulated curtains, also known as thermal, are lined fabric panels which keep warm air from leaving or entering through your windows. They help control room temperature. Layers of insulation trap pockets of air, not only between the window and the room, but also between the layers of fabric. Just as it's a good idea to add multiple layers on cold days, adding layers to your window treatments can also increase their insulating properties.

A heavy, insulated drape can actually add an insulating R-value of up to R-7, compared to an old single-pane window which has an insulating value of just R-1 or a double-pane window of R-2 or R-3.

While we refer to insulated curtains here, energy-efficient window treatments actually come in different forms; from curtains and heavier drapes to honeycomb shades.

Most any fabric can be used to make an insulated window treatment by adding an insulate core, typically a fabric called *bumph*, between the curtain and the lining. Obviously, the heavier each layer of fabric, the better its insulating properties. Heavier fabrics such as velvet, wool, and brocades will offer greater efficiency than a light -weight cotton, silk, or sheer. A thermal drape can actually be up to five times more energy-efficient than a traditional curtain.

Hunter Douglas makes a Duette® line of energy-efficient honeycomb shades. From their original single and double-honeycomb Duette® shades to their Architella® and Alustra® series with unique fabrics layered together to offer superb energy efficiency.

In addition to warmth, insulated curtains can also help block light and soundproof a room. So if you're not a morning person, live on a busy street, or like to play your music rather loud, consider adding thermal curtains to keep the light out and absorb those sound waves.

### Layer Window Treatments

Layering your window treatments can also help keep drafts from windows and doors under control. By hanging a sheer curtain, roman shade, or honeycomb shade between the window and the curtain, you're adding layers that will create those pockets of air we talked about earlier. Even bamboo or wood blinds can be effective, especially to keep out the hot sun in the summer months.

### Hang Curtains Properly

When hanging curtains, there are few things you can do to maximize their energy-saving capabilities. First, hang curtains as close to the window as possible to minimize gaps. Second, hang the curtains so that the sides overlap both the window and the wall. Third, raise the height of the curtain rod to hang a curtain well above the window so when the curtains are pulled closed, drafts are not entering the room from the top of the window. Finally, allow the curtain to make contact with the windowsill and the floor. Properly hanging the curtains this way helps cover the edges of the windows where the drafts would be most.

### Close Gaps with a Magnetic Strip

Sewing a magnetic strip into the edges of the curtain and placing the corresponding magnet along the window frame can also help keep drafty windows at bay. When the magnets attach, they'll form a tighter barrier between the wall and the curtain. Hook-and-loop fasteners, also known as Velcro®, also work well.

### Install a Cornice or Valance

Installing a wood cornice board or fabric valance can also help lesson the gap between the top of the curtain and the ceiling. Install them over the top of your curtain and wider than the window frame to prevents drafts from entering the room at the top of the window.

### Overlap the Fabric

So you've hung your curtains so they adequately cover both sides of the window, high above to the window, and extending to the floor. Don't forget to allow for enough fabric so that when closed, they also overlap in the center. A magnetic strip or hook-and-loop fastener can also be used to keep the fabric tightly sealed when pulled closed.

### Close Curtains

Closing curtains tightly at night when the temperatures drop will provide a barrier against the cold night air. Conversely, during summer months, closing the curtains keeps the hot sun out and the cool air trapped inside.

By following these tips of correctly hanging insulated curtains you may reduce heat loss and increase your energy savings significantly.

