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## Wasting Energy

Waste, from the Old Northern French *wast(e)*, means to use or expend carelessly, extravagantly, or to no purpose. You can *lay waste* to something or *lay something to waste*. You can *waste your breath* and let something *go to waste*. And you can *waste not want not*, which is a good thing to do. Here we're talking about wasting energy, meaning you're using more than your share.

There are lots of ways to waste energy around the house. You can leave the lights on, leave the refrigerator door open, or take a hot bath every night. Why a hot bath? Well, baths use up lots of energy heating the water. Showers use lots less hot water, especially showers with water-saver showerheads. And the less hot water you use, the less energy it takes to heat it. And the less energy you use, the lower your monthly electric bill is—all good things.

Did you know that most electronics, like chargers, computers, TV's, and your electric toothbrush, suck up electricity when they're plugged in and sitting idle? It's called *vampire power*. Collectively, it adds up to more than \$4 billion a year of wasted energy in the United States. The Department of Energy says that about 75% of the electricity used to power home electronics is used while the products are turned off.

Most of us get our electricity from our local power company. But, if you're really resourceful you might consider generating your own electricity. All you need are solar panels and the sun. If you live in Seattle, though, just hope your house sits on a geothermal vent (steam power), next to a river (hydro power), or you have a windmill (wind power) in your backyard. Remember that if you make more electricity than you use, you can sell the extra back to the power company. They'll send *you* a check every month instead of the other way around.

### Wasting Energy Dos and Don'ts

- Conserve electricity. Small changes (in how you use it) make big differences.
- Conserve water. It takes lots of energy to make clean water come out of your faucet.
- Use recycled products. It takes more energy to produce a new bottle from scratch than from recycled material.
- Be on the lookout for ways you can save energy. It helps the environment and saves you money.