

Beat the Heat

It's hot, hot, hot.

Perfect for sitting in the house and savoring the cold emanating from the air-conditioning vents, right? **Wrong.**

Get outside and take advantage of sunny summer days—and evenings too. Trust us, with a few fun moves, you can stay cool outdoors even when the thermometer is in the 90s—and by giving the air conditioner a break while you're out, you can save energy too. Try these three ideas for keeping cool:

Get wet. Sure, running through the sprinkler or setting up the Slip 'n Slide are great ways to cool off. But remember that one hour of running through the sprinkler uses about 220 gallons of water. So if you set one up, pick an area of the lawn that could use the moisture so all that water goes to good use.

Find a shady spot. Just because you spend the day outside doesn't mean you have to be in the direct sun. Fully grown trees naturally cool your home and reduce cooling costs (by up to 40 percent!), produce oxygen, and add value to your property—and when you're outside, they also provide the perfect, shady spot for reading a book, playing a game, or taking a snooze.

Eat frozen treats. Life doesn't get much better than sitting on the front step with a dish of homemade ice cream or a frozen fruit pop. Making tasty freezer treats is fun, easy, and a great way to provide instant relief from soaring temps.

In addition to taking the strain off your air conditioner, you can cut down on other forms of energy use while you're outside too:

Go solar. Bring your MP3 player, cell phone, or whatever other small electronics might need charged outside with you. With a solar-powered charger such as the Solio (www.solio.com), you can recharge them with the sun's rays at the same rate you would if you plugged them in indoors.

Hang the laundry outside. Running the clothes dryer heats up the house and hogs energy. Instead, head outside and hang just-washed clothes on a clothesline. Your clothes will smell summer-fresh—and you can soak up some rays at the same time your t-shirts do.

Ride your bike. Instead of hopping in the car to head to the store or visit a friend, ride your bike. You'll save gas and get a workout while you're at it.

Dine outside. Take dinnertime outdoors—and keep the house cool—by grilling rather than using your stove or oven. Then be sure to enjoy your grilled meal at a picnic or patio table rather than inside.

What ways do you stay cool all summer long? Share your favorite ideas with us by emailing goinggreen@ecoathome.org with "My Ideas" in the subject line.

