

# Help Dad save some dollars

## These five Father's Day gifts and gadgets are perfect for the energy-wise guy.

Helping Dad make the home more energy efficient is a great way to spend time together, lower household bills and do something good for the planet. And if he's the techy sort, giving an energy-efficient gadget as a gift on Father's day is sure to excite his inner Spock.

Here are five ideas for projects you can do together on Father's day that will also help Dad save energy and money.

### 1. Install a programmable thermostat

From the [inventor of the iPod](#) comes [Nest](#): a programmable thermostat that learns your daily routine and adjusts itself for optimal home energy efficiency. You can set Nest manually, like any thermostat, but you can also control it online with a computer, tablet or smartphone. It even provides regular home-energy reports. Though it isn't cheap —about \$250— Nest is probably the coolest way to manage your heating costs, and could even pay for itself with energy savings.

### 2. Track home energy use with an energy monitor

Remember when Dad would scare away monsters under the bed? Now it's time to return the favour: help to rid the house of energy-stealing rascals with [a whole-house energy monitor](#) that shows you how much electricity you're using at any time. For the skeptical father, [studies](#) have shown that it works: families in British Columbia saved over nine per cent of their electricity consumption using a power monitor, and those in Newfoundland and Labrador saved 18 per cent.

### 3. Zap phantom loads with a smart power strip

Video players, stereos, TVs — there's probably more than a few energy-sapping electronics kicking around the house that use power even while in "standby" mode. These are

called “phantom loads,” and [smart power strips](#) (aka current- or load-sensing powerbars) can help. They sense when the TV is off, for example, and power down other components of the entertainment system like the Blu-ray or subwoofer. The [Belkin Conserve Smart Auto-Off Surge Protector](#) is one model that’s received good reviews. As a bonus, you can offer to help Dad recycle his old electronics too.

#### 4. Manual mowers are a gift for your father and for the planet

Depending on age and model, your gas-powered lawn mower can produce as much [carbon pollution](#) in one hour as a car driven 32 to 320 kilometres! For the health-conscious father, manual mowers are a great gift that can also eliminate noise, fumes and maintenance costs. Though much lighter and more efficient than in days past—[Fiskars](#) models claim to be 30 per cent easier to push and 50 per cent more efficient—manual mowers offer a light workout to boot. Commit to mowing the lawn a few times this summer and Dad is sure to be thrilled.

#### 5. Warm his heart, and his home, with a thermal leak detector

One of the best ways to save energy is to ensure that a [house’s envelope](#) is airtight. But first, find out specifically where in the house you’re losing energy by using a thermal leak detector. It can help find cold spots caused by poor insulation, or sneaky energy-draining air leaks, using infrared light. So grab a [thermal leak detector](#) and a caulking gun and help Dad draftproof the house. And if you really want to give him the ultimate in home energy insight, give him the gift of a home energy audit!

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