

green saver

Rae Doble

Small office, big savings

Some simple practices can slash a home office's running costs and its environmental impact



COMPUTERS USE A LOT MORE energy than you may think. Many at the top of the range draw over 300 watts of power, and that can mean a lot going to waste. It's also a lot of money. Assuming a kilowatt per hour cost of 12c, a 300W computer left on 24/7 for a year costs about \$300 a year to run.

The amount of power your computer uses will depend on how many and what type of peripherals are connected to it, how fast your processor is and its workload. The faster the processor the more energy it uses, so if you want to save power a low-end processor is the way to go. Choosing energy-efficient office equipment when upgrading will also cut back on your running costs, as three and four-star rated products generally use 40% less energy than standard models.

However, you don't need to upgrade all your office equipment to slash your running

A computer in standby or 'sleep' mode uses a fraction of the power

costs. There are simple things you can do that will cut your power bill by up to half.

- **Enable power-saving settings:** A computer in standby or "sleep" mode uses a fraction of the power of an active PC. There are five levels of standby mode, with nearly every computer using level 3. This means that a 150W computer with 10 hours on standby mode will cut its annual power bill by \$64, to around \$96 a year. To find what mode your computer is in, check the "Power Options" in the "Control Panel" (for step by step instructions for your computer and operating system, go to www.energystar.gov.au/consumers).



- **Switch it off:** Switch off your computer, printer and other office equipment before leaving each day. If your computer is switched off for 15 hours a day you are saving 60% of its power usage.
- **Don't print everything:** Printers can be huge power consumers, especially laser printers and photocopiers. Print only when necessary; it will save a few trees too.
- **Avoid screensavers:** It's better to switch your monitor off rather than use a screensaver. Originally designed to protect monitors from "screen burn", technology has made this redundant. Turning down the brightness on your monitor will save on power consumption. You can use www.blackle.com, an energy saving version of google, to cut power costs too.
- **Check your office lighting:** Use fluorescent energy-saving bulbs, switch off when not in use and maximise natural light. White walls reflect light well, cutting down the need to flick the light switch on.

Two readers can win...

a copy of *True Green @Work*, by Kim McKay and Jenny Bonnin. Tell us in 25 words or less how to make an office environmentally friendly. Send entries to Greensaver competition, Money, GPO Box 3542 Sydney NSW 2001 or email money@acpmagazines.com.au. Include your name and postal address. Entries close on September 30.



Green tip

Energy-efficient office product choices

Picking the right office product will minimise a home office's power bills and equipment costs. For example:

- Inkjet printers use a lot less energy than laser printers and photocopiers. It makes sense for a small office to get an inkjet that has photocopier, scanner and fax capabilities if appropriate for its workload.
- If you're considering a new computer purchase, a laptop is more energy efficient than a desktop computer, and therefore more cost effective.
- LCD monitors use a lot less energy than their standard CRT counterparts. A 17-inch CRT monitor uses about 75 watts and 1-2 watts in standby mode. LCDs use a half to a quarter of that. To check the energy use of your office products, go to www.greenhouse.gov.au and the Energy Star website at www.energystar.gov.au.