

When is it time to replace that old energy-hog refrigerator?

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Many refrigerators and freezers will continue to operate for 15-20 years or even longer. But whether or not these appliances are really working efficiently is another question. It is probably time to replace your old energy-hog refrigerator when it becomes too expensive to operate.

For instance, refrigerators built in the 1970s may use five times more electricity than new, high-efficiency ones and may cost \$200 per year more to run than new ENERGY STAR® models. A 20-year-old refrigerator could use 1,700 kWh of electricity every year, compared with about 450 kWh for a similarly sized new ENERGY STAR model. At an electrical cost of 12 cents per kWh, that represents a savings of \$150 per year and a potential payback of about 7-9 years. Also, if your old refrigerator requires costly repairs (exceeding a few hundred dollars), then it probably makes sense to replace it with an energy-efficient model.

To calculate the energy savings you will realize by retiring your old refrigerator, visit ENERGY STAR's "[Refrigerator Retirement Savings Calculator](#)."

When shopping for a new refrigerator or freezer, consider:

- **Proper sizing.** An oversized refrigerator will waste energy and space. A typical family of four requires a refrigerator capacity of 12-16 cubic feet and another 6-8 cubic feet for freezer capacity.
- **Styles.** The most efficient refrigerator designs usually have the freezer compartment on the bottom; least efficient are usually side-by-side models.
- **Features.** Manual defrost models typically use less energy than auto-defrost models.
- **Efficiency.** Buying efficiency today means lower operating costs for the future. Look for the ENERGY STAR label when shopping. [The ENERGY STAR website](#) contains tools to help calculate savings on specific models and compare them with models with similar features.

When that new refrigerator arrives, take the old one out of service and recycle it. Don't sell it and don't put in your basement or garage where it will continue to waste energy. Some electric utilities offer rebates for recycling your old refrigerator and for purchasing a new ENERGY STAR unit. Check with your utility or visit www.dsireusa.org.

For more information on refrigerators and other appliances, check out the [Appliances, Lighting & Electronics](#) consumer guide.