



# How to use a mini-split heat pump

Using a heat pump is a little different than using a traditional heating source like a furnace. But once you get the hang of it, it's easy.

## 1. Don't focus on the exact temperature.

Ductless heat pumps measure temperature using a sensor inside the unit, where the air could be warmer or cooler than the rest of the room. That means the temperature reading doesn't necessarily reflect the ambient room temperature.

Instead of focusing on the specific temperature reading, pay attention to how you feel in the room. Set your heat pump to a comfortable temperature, then adjust the setting up or down over the course of a few days until you've reached the temperature number that feels right for you.



## 2. Set it and forget it.

In the space being heated by your heat pump, adjust the thermostat of your backup heat source to 5°F lower than its current setting. If you used to set it to 68, turn it to 63. That way, your backup heat will kick on only if the heat pump can't maintain your desired temperature.

You might be accustomed to turning the heat up and down based on your daily schedule. But a heat pump is different: It's most efficient when maintaining a set temperature. Find the right temperature setting (see #1), then leave it alone and let it work! Exception: If you're away from home for more than 24 hours, you can set back the temperature.

In the summer, it's okay to turn your heat pump on and off as needed. When it comes to cooling, leaving your heat pump on 24/7 doesn't offer substantial energy savings in the same way that leaving it on all winter does. Do whatever is most comfortable.

## 3. Leave it on all winter.

Many Vermonters are worried that a heat pump might not be able to "keep up" on the coldest days. Today's cold-climate heat pumps can handle temperatures as low as -15°F and below. The best gauge is actually you: Are you still warm enough? If your heat pump can keep your home warm at your desired thermostat setting, there's generally no need to switch to your backup heat. If your heat pump is struggling to reach or maintain your desired indoor temperature, then it might be time for supplemental heat. This could also be a sign that your ductless heat pump needs to be cleaned or serviced, or your home could use weatherization. Before you assume it's too cold for your heat pump, try some adjustments, like:

- Turning the fan up
- Adjusting the settings
- Checking the filter
- Clearing snow or debris from the outdoor unit
- Consider whether it's time for a professional check-up

You might be surprised how warm your heat pump can keep your home, even on very cold days, if you let it.

## Contact us for more information

Call us at **888-921-5990** or visit [efficiencyvermont.com](http://efficiencyvermont.com)

## 4. Don't use "AUTO" mode.

It's natural to think "AUTO" mode would be a more efficient and convenient setting. But if you use it, your unit runs the risk of toggling unnecessarily between heating and cooling, which wastes energy and can make your home uncomfortable. Your heat pump will run most efficiently when set to "HEAT" in winter and "COOL" in summer. Note: "AUTO FAN" is a separate setting, and fine to use.

## 5. Use the highest fan speed you're comfortable with.

Strange but true: A heat pump works most efficiently when set to a higher fan speed. Of course, high fan speeds can produce more ambient noise and air movement. Use the highest speed you're comfortable with, then dial in your preferred temperature setting (see #2).

## 6. Ask your contractor about integrated controls.

Integrated controls automate your full heating system by linking your heat pump to your backup heating. Your contractor can help set it up based on your home's unique circumstances.

## 7. Remember that your electricity bill might go up, but your fuel bill should go down.

Your total heating cost is the sum of your fuel cost (propane, oil, wood, etc.) and your electricity cost from heating (electric baseboard, heat pump, etc.). If you have a heat pump and a backup system, your total heating cost will be distributed across your fuel bill and your electricity bill. That means if you start using your heat pump as your primary heating source, your electricity bill will increase, while your fuel bill will decrease. Depending on your backup fuel type and your electricity rate, your total heating costs could decrease.

## 8. Don't skip maintenance.

Your indoor and outdoor units should be professionally cleaned once a year to ensure the best performance and extend the life of your heat pump. Indoor filters need to be cleaned about once a month, which is generally quick and easy. Keep the outdoor compressor unit free of debris, snow, and ice. Consult your user manual for more details.



## 9. Weatherize.

Ductless heat pumps are most effective in well-insulated spaces. You can get rebates to insulate and air-seal your home. Your space will be drier and less drafty, which means the warm air from your heat pump isn't leaking outside.

## As you get comfortable with your heat pump, don't worry if you can't optimize it right away.

It can take time to coordinate how your heat pump works with your backup system. If your heat pump isn't working as you expected, reach out to your contractor or call Efficiency Vermont at 888-921-5900. We'll help you troubleshoot.

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