



HOW TO ZAP PHANTOMS USING POWER STRIPS



Did you know that many of the electronic devices and appliances in your home continue to use power even when they aren't turned on? The amount of energy that electronics and appliances use when they are switched off but still plugged into an outlet is known as "standby power." You might have also heard it referred to as "vampire" power or "phantom" load. Although each individual device may not use a lot of power, when you add them all up, it can amount to a lot of wasted energy. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, 75 percent of the electricity used to power these devices is used when they are turned off.

"Advanced power strips can...pay for themselves in less than three months..."

Studies show that in an average home, between 5.0 and 8.0 percent of electricity consumption is due to phantom loads. The average North American household consumes roughly 10,800 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity per year. If you estimate that 6.5 percent of your total electricity consumption comes from phantom loads, that equals about 700 kWh per household annually—or \$70 per year. That's just wasted money. So how can you reduce or eliminate these phantom loads?

Plugging electronic devices such as: Personal computers, monitors, printers, speakers, stereos, televisions, DVD and video game players, and cell phone chargers into power strips can make it easier to turn off equipment with one switch. Devices such as routers and modems can also be plugged into a power strip, but these types of electronics take more time to reactivate.

Microwave ovens and alarm clocks, which use a relatively small amount of standby power, are acceptable to leave plugged in and not turn off. A digital video recorder (DVR) uses a fairly significant amount of standby power when it's turned off compared to other devices, but if you record programs frequently, then you may want to leave it plugged in. You don't have to worry about unplugging items with mechanical on/off switches such as lamps, hair dryers, or small kitchen appliances like toasters or mixers because they don't draw any power if they're turned off.

What if you forget to switch off the power strip? Some "smart" or advanced power strips feature timers that users can program to turn equipment off when not in use. Other models incorporate occupancy sensors or watt meters so that equipment shuts off automatically when you leave the room or when systems are idle for several minutes. Advanced power strips are a good choice for items that remain on continuously but typically only get used at certain times of day—for example, modems and routers. Advanced power strips can be found in most stores where you buy standard power strips, and they can pay for themselves in less than three months, assuming equipment would otherwise be left on 24 hours a day.

Finally, one surefire way to cut energy consumption is to purchase items that meet ENERGY STAR® criteria. Most ENERGY STAR-qualified products are required to meet strict standards for power consumption or efficiency in all operating modes.

