Money-Saving Freezer Tips by JC Tolentino

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Freezers do not come with an expiration date, but you don't have to wait to upgrade until you feel like you are the only one on your block with an old fashioned refrigerator. There are some easy ways to figure out whether or not you need a new freezer.

Frozen in Time

If your freezer stops cooling food, it's probably time to invest into a new one. Most freezers should last 10 years; divide the original purchase price of the freezer/fridge by the average cost of electricity over that time to see what it's currently worth.

When it's time to get a different unit, you don't necessarily need to buy a brand new one. Ask your family and friends if they have got any leads, or check out Sulit.com.ph, Craigslist, eBay, or Freecycle.org to see if someone is selling a freezer below retail rates. Make sure to ask if the freezer is still under warranty, as well as its year, make and model. You can look it up on Consumer Reports to see how that particular freezer stacks up. If you're buying secondhand, you'll want to negotiate. Typically, newer freezers are more energy efficient, so avoid buying a used (or previously owned) freezer that is over 5 years old.

The Cold Truth

Another way to save is to purchase a smaller, stand-alone unit. The smaller the freezer (and fridge), the less your electricity bills will run. When you buy any major appliance, your first question should be about the initial price, but your second major financial consideration should always be the unit's operating costs over time -- i.e., what it will cost you in electricity. Freezer models' operating costs can range widely, so you can find yourself paying anywhere from $5 to $15 a month depending on age, size, energy efficiency of the model, how it's operated, and the overall cost of electricity in your area.

Freezer Blocking

Lastly, if you're not using all of the space in the freezer, you can try "freezer blocking." Basically, freezer blocking means filling up any unused space inside the freezer, as the less air inside the freezer, the less electricity required. The theory is that the compressor will spend less time and, therefore, energy keeping the interior cold.

To freezer block, simply take empty cardboard boxes and fill them with leftover wall insulation. Any form of insulation can do the trick, but most folks stick to basic household wall insulation (fiberglass), as it's both inexpensive and easy to get. You can also use the insulating Styrofoam peanuts used for shipping and packaging, although those aren't environmentally friendly. Once the boxes are completely filled, seal them shut with tape and place them in the empty areas of the freezer.

Since freezer blocking hasn't been scientifically tested, the only evidence that it's working will be your electricity bill. Give it a couple months, and if it is working, you'll probably warm up to the idea of freezer blocking. Otherwise, you'll have some pretty chilly boxes on hand, which may work as cold compresses if you're running low on frozen peas.

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