

Tips for Creating Your Dream Space by Sara Shragal

Become a Ceiling Fan-atic

Ceiling fans offer a myriad of design options and energy savings

Think ceiling fan and most of us think of the obvious: a great way to cool off a room. Well, that's partially correct, but the benefits of a ceiling fan go far beyond merely moving air around.

Ceiling fan blades come in a wide range of styles—mahogany, maple, walnut, oak, to name a few—giving you any number of options to accentuate a room, indoors or out. Same goes for the vast array of available light fixtures available.

For example, ceiling fans can help create a plantation motif for your parlor area. Add a ceiling fan to the bar area of your man cave/family room/entertainment room and you can fashion your own version of Rick's Café (from Casablanca). You can even find ceiling fans that continue a motif for a child's bedroom (e.g. a soccer ball or basketball light fixture for boys, a ballerina for girls).

Yet for all the aesthetic appeal a ceiling fan can give a dining room, kitchen, bedroom or bath, the real value of a ceiling fan lies in its energy savings. A ceiling fan uses as much power as a 100-watt light bulb. If used correctly, it can save you between 10 and 40 percent on your heating and cooling bills, depending on the time of year.

For example, you don't necessarily think of using your ceiling fans during the winter. Yet, that's when your ceiling fans can help you save quite a bit. Why? Well, without getting too technical on you, warm air is lighter than cool air. Consequently, the warmer air in a room will be at the ceiling. By running your ceiling fans in a clockwise direction, you're effectively recirculating the warmer air throughout the room.

So, how much can you save by running your ceiling fans during winter months? Experts estimate up to 10 percent. Yet the real beauty of running your ceiling fans clockwise is that you're recirculating the air from the ceiling down the walls. That means you're moving the warmer air throughout the room without creating a cool breeze.

Ceiling fans can help you save even more during summer months. By running your ceiling fans in a counter-clockwise direction, you can create a cooling breeze. While this may not lower the room temperature, the cooling effect can make a room feel up to eight degrees cooler—maybe even enough to turn off the air conditioning or central air. Do that enough times over the warm weather months and that can translate to tremendous savings of up to 40 percent off your air conditioning costs.

To maximize the savings potential for ceiling fans, you should install fans in the most frequently used rooms in your home. Position the blades of the ceiling fans seven to nine feet above the floor and 10 to 12 inches below the ceiling.

If energy savings is your primary reason for installing ceiling fans, you also have the option of buying more energy-efficient ceiling fans. For example, Energy Star ceiling fans circulate an average of 15 percent more than other ceiling fans—in many cases without sacrificing style or attractiveness.

In today's economy, running your home efficiently is more important than ever. With ceiling fans, you can do that *and* still create a room that wows your guests while providing enjoyment and comfort for you. In fact, you can literally say there is no ceiling to the benefits you can derive from installing ceiling fans in all the favorite rooms of your home.

Sara Shragal is a staff writer for DirectBuy. For more information or other helpful tips for your home, visit www.directbuycares.com. You can send suggestions for future columns to questions@directbuycares.com.