



DIY FOR 2010



How to Kill Phantom Loads

A phantom load is the electricity consumed by an appliance or electronic device when it is turned off. With most of these, “off” does not really mean “off.” Electric current is still flowing to keep the device or appliance in standby “ready” mode. Phantom loads make up about 7% of our national energy use and most people don’t even know it! Common examples of appliances and devices that have phantom loads include televisions, DVD players, cable boxes, stereos, coffee makers, microwave ovens, clock radios, laptop chargers, and cell phone chargers. All of these devices consume energy, even while they are in the “off” mode. Appliances with phantom loads are sometimes called “vampires” because the black plug with two teeth acts as a vampire and sucks energy while it is plugged into the outlet.

What you will need to kill your phantom loads:

1. The only purchase necessary is 1 or 2 power strips – depending on the amount of phantom loads or “vampires” in your home.

Necessary steps to kill your phantom loads:

1. Identify your phantom loads: Phantom loads are all appliances or devices with remote controls, continuous digital display, and plug in chargers such as cell phones, iPods, and laptop computers, etc.
2. Identify clusters of phantom loads: After you have identified the number of phantom loads in your home, go back and take note of where **clusters** of phantom loads exist. Common phantom load clusters include computer stations, stereo and television systems, and counter top kitchen appliances.
3. The proper power strip: The power strip you purchase must have an “all on - all off” power switch. Use this switch to cut the phantom load. You may want to purchase a “smart” power strip which displays the actual kW being consumed by the cluster plugged into it. This can help you quantify how much electricity is consumed.



4. Purchase the necessary number of power strips: The number of phantom load clusters in your home will be equal to the number of power strips you need to purchase. Power strips can be purchased at most local hardware and home center stores. If you are not finding what you are looking for such as “smart” power strips, look online.
5. Install your new power strips: Beginning with your first cluster of phantom loads, make sure that all of the appliances are in the “off” position. Identify all of the chords that are plugged into the wall and unplug them one by one. Plug the power strip into an available outlet and begin plugging in all of the chords into the power strip. You may consider leaving certain devices such as satellite and cable boxes that require continuous connection for programming out of your clusters. They will need to upload each time power is cut.
6. Continue installing your remaining power strips: Follow the directions provided in Step 5 and continue installing your remaining power strips where electronic clusters still exist.

NOTE: Make sure that all cube-shaped transformers are plugged into a power strip, they waste 60-80% of their load when left continuously plugged directly into a wall. These are your chargers (cell phones, iPods, laptops, etc)

7. Killing the phantom load: Now that you have replaced a cluster of chords with a power strip, you can successfully kill your phantom load by simply switching the power strip’s ON/OFF switch each time you want to turn on your television system, stereo system, or computer, etc. Remember, after you are finished using your electronic system, turn the appliance off as well as the power strip.

The average home has about 20 phantom loads and the case with these appliances is that, “off” does not really mean “off.” By installing new power strips where electronic clusters originally existed, you will save up to \$200 in your electricity bill this year. If you are satisfied with your results and the simplicity of installing power strips, inform others about the phantom load phenomenon. Chances are, they have never heard of it!

