

For climates with moderate heating and cooling needs, heat pumps offer an energy-efficient alternative to furnaces and air conditioners.



Like your refrigerator, heat pumps use electricity to move heat from a cool space to a warm space, making the cool space cooler and the warm space warmer. During the heating season, heat pumps move heat from the cool outdoors into your warm house and during the cooling season, heat pumps move heat from your cool house into the warm outdoors. Because they move heat rather than generate heat, heat pumps can provide equivalent space conditioning at as little as one quarter of the cost of conventional heating or cooling.

The most common type of heat pump is the air-source heat pump, which transfers heat between your house and the outside air. If you heat with electricity, a heat pump can trim the amount of electricity you use for heating by as much as 30% to 40%. High-efficiency heat pumps also dehumidify better than standard central air conditioners, resulting in less energy usage and more cooling comfort in summer months. However, the efficiency of most air-source heat pumps as a heat source drops dramatically at low temperatures, generally making them unsuitable for cold climates, although there are systems that can overcome the problem.

For homes without ducts, air-source heat pumps are also available in a ductless version called a mini-split heat pump. In addition, a special type of air-source heat pump called a "reverse cycle chiller" generates hot and cold water rather than air, allowing it to be used with radiant floor heating systems in heating mode.

Geothermal (ground-source or water-source) heat pumps achieve higher efficiencies by transferring heat between your house and the ground or a nearby water source. Although they cost more to install, geothermal heat pumps have low operating costs because they take advantage of relatively constant ground or water temperatures. Whether a geothermal heat pump is appropriate for you will depend on the size of your lot, the subsoil, and the landscape. Ground-source or water-source heat pumps can be used in more extreme climates than air-source heat pumps, and customer satisfaction with the systems is very high.