SAVE MONEY BY LEARNING TO BETTER MANAGE YOUR HEATING SYSTEM

First, make friends with your boiler!

Did you know that you can change the boiler temperature on your gas combi boiler? This is the temperature of the water that flows from the boiler to heat your radiators. (This is different from the room thermostat that you set to 18-21 degrees.)

You can have it higher in the cold winter months, and lower in the Spring and Autumn.

The government recommends having it at 60 degrees, to save energy. You can then turn it down to 50 - 55 degrees in the Spring and Autumn.

However, if you are elderly, have health problems or live in a very cold house, you may want to put it up to 65 degrees or even 70 degrees in the coldest months.

Any higher than this and the boiler won't enter condensing mode and be at its optimum efficiency. But if you are still cold the boiler will work fine if you turn it above 70 degrees. It is most efficient at 55 degrees or lower.

Once you put radiator panels behind your radiators you can generally turn down the boiler temperature, so using less gas, and saving more money!

How to turn the boiler temperature down

The boiler temperature controls are on the front of the boiler itself. Sometimes beneath a metal flap that you can open. The boiler controls are different for different boilers.

Older boilers generally have a dial for radiators and a dial for hot water for the sinks and bath. If the radiator dial is turned all the way up the hot water going into your radiators will be at 70 degrees or even higher, sometimes nearly 80. You will need to experiment to see what point on the dial is warm enough for you.

More modern boilers have a digital display screen with either two dials or two buttons that have up and down arrows.

This guide is about boiler temperatures for heating radiators. **It is not a guide about hot water for sinks and baths** as these operate at lower temperatures.

The temperature displayed on the screen is the current temperature of the water in the boiler, the temperature shown will depend on whether you have your heating or hot water on or not at that moment. (Image 1)

Image 1

To change the target temperature (the temperature you want the water that heats up your radiators to be when it leaves the boiler) you will need to either press the up or down arrows until they display the temperature you want or move the dial. This target temperature will only be displayed on the screen for a few seconds (Image 2) and then the display will go back to showing the actual temperature of the water in the boiler (Image 1).

The dial you need to turn is the one for the radiators. This will have a symbol of 4 vertical lines (this symbolises a radiator).

Image 2

Room Thermostat

The room thermostat is either attached to the wall, usually in the hallway, or for more modern ones, it is a little portable white monitor. (Image 3)

You generally set it somewhere between 18 to 21 degrees. The room thermostat measures the temperature of the air around it. If the air is colder than the temperature you want the room to be, then the thermostat will send an electronic signal to the boiler, so the boiler turns on. If the air is warmer than the temperature you want, the boiler will turn off. (The thermostat will usually turn off the boiler once the air around it is a little bit higher than the temperature you want.)

If you live alone and if your room thermostat is portable, make sure you put it in the room you are using, so the room you are in is the right temperature for you. This is usually the living room. It is useful to put the thermostat in your bedroom at night, to ensure your bedroom is the right temperature.

It is generally advisable for the Thermostatic Radiator Valves (see next page) to be open fully (usually this is 5 or 6) in the room where the room thermostat is placed. This is so that the room you want to get warm heats up as quickly as possible. Otherwise, your boiler will be on for longer than it needs to be, using more gas than it needs to.

Image 3

Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRVs)

These should be on every radiator in your house, except for one. This is so if all the TRVs are turned off, hot water from the boiler still has somewhere to go.

In rooms that you don't use very often, such as guest bedrooms, TRVs can be put on frost protect * or on 1 or 2, then turn them up when you want to use the room. Unless there is a problem with damp in the room, in which case you will want to turn them up higher.

Turning TRVs down in rooms you don't use very much will reduce your heating bill substantially.

If you don't have TRV's, getting them installed is one of the best things you can do to save money.

References:
https://www.vaillant.co.uk/advice/understanding-heating-technology/boilers/what-temperature-should-my-combi-boiler-be-set-at/ Accessed in Oct 2024

TRV picture credit; Centre for Sustainable Energy www.cse.org.uk

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