For any electrical load with a constant energy draw, you can measure the wattage and then multiply by the hours of use. For instance, if your favorite desk lamp draws 20 watts (you’ve already upgraded to an efficient compact fluorescent bulb) and you use it four hours a day, the energy load is 80 watt-hours per day.

Appliances that cycle on and off—such as your refrigerator, washer, or coffee maker—take a different approach. Plug the appliance into the meter and leave it for a few days or a week. When your test period is done, divide the KWH consumed by the hours the appliance was plugged into the meter, and multiply by 24 to get KWH per day. Then visit the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy and Energy Star Web sites for energy-efficient appliance electrical consumption, so you can decide whether it’s time to upgrade your appliances to more efficient ones.

If you want to get a handle on our home’s energy usage, understanding the difference between a watt and a watt-hour is the first step. Then you need to buy a meter and get to work on finding out where your watt-hours are going. Determined homeowners can cut their energy use by one third or more by implementing energy efficiency and conservation measures. Give yourself a goal to reduce your energy use, and start identifying and eliminating those wasteful watt-hours today!

Access
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American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy • www.aceee.org
Energy Star • www.energystar.gov
Watt/Watt-Hour Meters:
Digital Power Meter • Brand Electronics • www.brandelectronics.com
Kill A Watt • P3 International • www.p3international.com
Watt’s Up • Electronic Educational Devices • www.doubleed.com