



# Let's get comfy!

How to buy the best furnace for your home.

## Buying a new furnace

Your furnace is a significant investment in your home. With a new furnace, you control the comfort levels in every room of your house. Temperature is often an important factor we take for granted ... until a furnace stops working.

Don't be left in the cold. If your furnace is older or if your service technician has recommended a replacement, it's time to start exploring your options. Follow due diligence to select a technician, furnace type, thermostat, and additional add-ons that will protect and enhance your investment. Once you've invested in a new furnace, use the proper techniques to care for it, extend the life of the system, and ensure years of temperature comfort for your family.

Unsure where to begin? We've compiled this furnace buying guide, ***Let's Get Comfy***, to help you walk through each step of the furnace selection and installation process.

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# Selecting an installer

There are many furnace contractors and technicians out there and *all* of them are willing to sell you a unit for your home. It's hard to select a contractor you trust and who has the expertise to do the job right. [At Stramowski Heating, we have years of experience](#), a dedicated staff of caring experts, and the right tools for the job.

If you're wondering what qualities to look for in an HVAC pro, here are several standards:

## Good reputation

In this business, reputation matters. One of the best places to check your installer's reputation is online. Read through recommendations and reviews. We recommend [checking Google reviews](#), as they're free so you're eliminating the probability of bias or paid endorsements.

Ask for recommendations and do your homework. Check the ***Better Business Bureau*** and ask plenty of questions about the company's history and reputation. A furnace installer should stand behind their work; satisfied customers are the best indication of a great company.

## Solid experience

There are installers who join the furnace business hoping to earn a quick buck. These fly-by-night companies pop up, undercut the competition, and are often nowhere to be found once the work is finished. In fact, faulty installations can void your warranty and leave you high and dry down the road.

Look for an installer with experience. Your furnace company should be well-known and established in the community. They should offer quick responses to questions and concerns, as well as [24-hour service](#) when you need them the most.

## Tech-savvy

The HVAC industry is on the forefront of home environmental technology. After all, your home's environment is key to ensuring your comfort and coziness. Smart thermostats, energy efficient furnace designs, and quality home heating products continuously evolve. It's important that your installer is up on the latest technology trends, including their scheduling and installation services.

Your furnace installer should offer the option to schedule your appointments online. With a few clicks, they should be able to access manuals, service reports, and the history of your system. Select a tech-savvy installer who knows the latest products and technologies in HVAC.



## Licensed

It may seem obvious, but a surprising number of contractors are unlicensed or unfamiliar with local rules and regulations. Installation contractors should be well-versed in code compliance, building permits, and the requirements of home inspection.

Gas and electric are critical pieces of HVAC installation. Your furnace installer needs to be an expert in these areas before they touch your precious home. When it comes to furnace installation, you often get what you pay for. Remember, this is a long-term investment in your home. Offering the job to the lowest bidder isn't always the best answer. We recommend that you get at least three bids. You should also compare the experience, reviews, and long-term plans offered by each installer.

Want more tips for selecting the right installer for the job? Visit the Stramowski blog and read more in our blog post: [Don't Roll the Dice on Your Next Furnace](#). A furnace is a major purchase. Select an installer you feel comfortable with and trust.

# Understanding furnace size

When it's time to buy a new furnace, one of the top challenges is understanding the different furnace types and sizes. You may end up feeling overwhelmed by industry jargon and information. At the end of the day, furnace type and size boils down to a few simple parameters.

Here are the details you need to help you select the proper size and type of furnace for your home.

## The three types of gas furnaces

For most residential homes, the most popular type of furnace is a gas forced-air furnace. This type of furnace runs on natural gas or oil. There are three types of gas furnace heating systems.

### Single stage (standard)

The basic single stage (or standard) heating system has a single gas valve. The valve opens fully with only two options: on or off.

### Two-stage

Two-stage heating systems have a two-stage gas valve. This means that, via the thermostat, you regulate the amount of fuel burned. Two-stage furnaces run on longer cycles (often with lower heat levels) and have variable speed blowers. Two-stage systems provide steady comfort and keep heating and gas costs down.

### Modulating

Modulating furnaces have precision (modulating) gas valves to adjust gas flow. With variable speed blower motors, the modulating gas valves ensure constant comfort and precision control. These are highly efficient units, keeping your heating bill down and making modulating furnaces an excellent long-term investment.



## Furnace size

Furnace units come in different sizes and capacities. Your technician will recommend the right size based on your home's exact square footage. The unit size is a precise calculation based on several important factors—it isn't a one-size-fits-all job.

Your technician should take time to discuss the unique needs of your home. Understanding the ductwork, room volume, and vent placement are critical factors in determining the best unit size. Keep in mind, selecting a unit that is too small or too large results in unnecessary wear and tear, shortening the life of your furnace. A trustworthy installer will take the time to recommend the right size unit for your house.

Still not clear on furnace size and types? [That Big Box in the Basement](#) on the Stramowski blog has more information on this crucial step towards buying a furnace for your home!

# Choosing a thermostat

The thermostat is a key feature of your new furnace system. Yet for many homeowners, the box on the wall is somewhat a mystery. We all know that when we turn the dial up, it gets warmer. Turn it down, and the room cools down.

But there are many great features built into thermostats to save you money and make your life easier. Here are the three types of thermostats so you can decide on the best controls for the comfort of your home.



## Manual thermostats

The manual thermostat is what most folks would call a “traditional” thermostat. There’s typically a dial or button to turn the temperature up or down within the room. Modern manual thermostats may have a digital LCD display.

## Programmable thermostats

Programmable thermostats have a digital LCD screen. These units are set to turn on and off at a certain time or can be overridden manually. The schedule is usually set to a 7-day or 5/2-day schedule, ideal for homeowners who follow a regular schedule. You can program the thermostat to reduce the temperature at night, too. Programmable thermostats help save money on your energy bill.

## Smart thermostats

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and offer the benefit of being programable without the need to manually reprogram them. These smart thermostats “learn” as you use them and create a schedule of your needs, adjusting the temperature to fit your preferences. Smart thermostats can be adjusted remotely from a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Some also use sensors in each room to identify which ones need heating or cooling. Other smart thermostats recognize your voice commands.

## Follow recommendations

Your installer will determine which thermostat works best with your new furnace unit. The best thermostat choice for your home also depends on the wiring, age of your home, and other factors. Choosing the right option ensures you’re heating bill stays low and your furnace runs efficiently.

Choosing a thermostat is one step closer to a brand-new furnace in your home. Don’t make the wrong choice! There’s more information over on the Strawmoski blog on [Choosing a Thermostat](#).



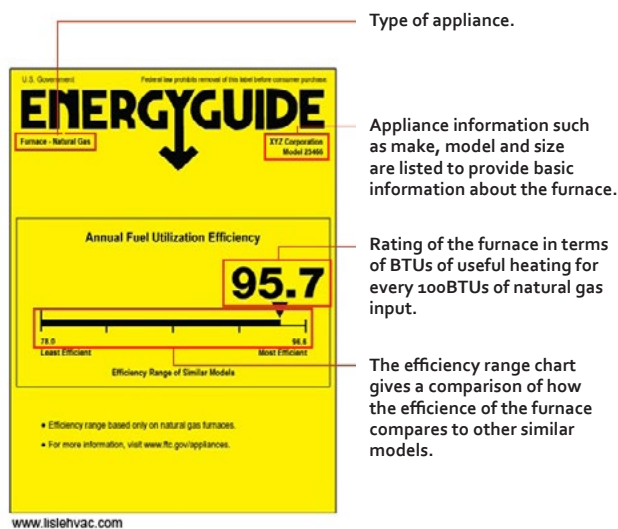
# Deciphering furnace energy ratings

Most homeowners have seen the bright yellow ENERGYGUIDE stickers on their furnace and other appliances. Yet, many people have no idea what the numbers mean. If you're in the market for a new furnace, energy efficiency ratings are an important factor to consider.

Learning the nuances of energy ratings will help you determine how to save money on your energy bills. Many new furnaces are highly efficient. Here's what you need to know to ensure you're getting the most for your money.

## Understanding the EnergyGuide label

AFUE ratings (Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency) determine how well a specific furnace uses energy. It's similar to the miles-per-gallon rating on a new car. The Department of Energy defines AFUE as the ratio of annual heat output compared to the total annual fossil fuel energy used by the furnace. For example, an AFUE of 80% indicates that 80% of the energy in the fuel transfers into heat, while the difference, 20%, is lost. AFUE is measured at the output vent of the furnace and doesn't include heat loss via the ducts.



## Lower your energy bills

To determine the energy efficiency of your older furnace unit, you may need to look at other factors. Visit our post on [Understanding Energy Efficiency Ratings](#) to help you determine your furnace efficiency if your unit doesn't feature a sticker.

High heating and energy bills are often an indication your furnace isn't running efficiently. The long-term savings from a more efficient unit often offsets the investment in it. Keep in mind, many energy companies provide incentives and rebates for energy efficient furnace upgrades.

Selecting an energy efficient furnace has a huge long-term impact on your energy bill. Do your research before you decide on a unit. Discuss the ratings as well as rebate offers with your technician to ensure your furnace selection is right for your home.

# Enhancing your furnace

When you're ready to replace your furnace, you may instinctively avoid adding bells and whistles to keep costs down. It's important to remember investing in add-ons during the installation saves the cost and hassle of an additional install down the road.

There are many enhancements and upgrades available, from more energy efficient units to specialized thermostats. A few additional add-ons you may want to consider are:

## Air-filtration & air cleaners

All furnaces require air filters to keep micro-particles and dust out of your machine. There are special filters designed to filter out allergens like mold and dander.

If air quality is a concern - for example, if your family suffers from allergies - you may also want to consider Whole House Air Cleaners (WHCs). There are many types of WHC options but the two most popular are:

- **UV Light Germicidal Irradiation:** *best for reducing mold, germs, and other airborne pollutants.*
- **Gas Phase Cleaners:** *best for eliminating organic compounds and vapors.*

Your furnace installer will help you determine which WHCs may work with your system and will best meet the needs of your household.

## Humidifiers

Winter air gets particularly dry and harmful. Not only does the air irritate your skin and respiratory system, but it also harms your furniture. Proper humidity also helps the air feel warmer, enabling you to keep the thermostat lower and save more money. A humidifier can be added to some furnace units so it functions as part of your HVAC system.



UV light in use.

## Temperature control & zoning

Thermostats control the temperature in your home and are adjusted or timed to provide you with steady comfort. Adding zoning to your system allows you to adjust the climate in different areas of your home. After all, why spend money to heat areas of your home you rarely use? Zoning is a great add-on and long-term cost saver.

There's more information and great tips on money-saving add-ons over at our blog, [Upgrade Your Furnace with These Four Add-Ons](#). Discuss your enhancement options with your installation rep, who will help you decide what add-ons best suit the needs in your home.



# Caring for your new furnace

Your new furnace is an investment that will save money and heat your home for the next 10-12 years. There's no better way to protect your investment than properly caring for it.

Furnace care entails a few basic practices to keep your unit running efficiently for years. Stramowski professionals are happy to visit your home to service your heating and cooling equipment regularly. We're also proud to offer our [True24 commitment](#): 24-hour availability for emergency repairs.

But many furnace repairs are avoided with simple, regular maintenance. This is how to take care of your new furnace.

## Replace filters regularly

Air filters are important for every furnace. Using a high-quality air filter keeps your unit running efficiently and smoothly. Air filters prevent dust and debris build up. Replace filters every 30-60 days, especially during the winter months.

## Dust and clean the unit

Many homeowners forget dusting their furnace is an important part of keeping it running efficiently. Dirt and dust cause your furnace to overheat or damage the equipment. Always turn the unit off and carefully dust the surface with a soft cloth. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations and the recommendations of your technician for cleaning your furnace equipment.

## Keep vents clear

Covering vents will cause your furnace to work harder and shortens the life of your investment. Keep all ductwork free of furniture and clutter. Remove drapes and rags that may block the vents as well.

## Install safety equipment

Keep proper safety equipment and detectors near your furnace. Install a battery-operated smoke detector on each floor of your home, as well as a carbon monoxide detector. Most detectors cost under \$100.

For more information on caring for your furnace, check out our blog post on the most important ways to [take care of your new furnace](#).



Ask your Stramowski Heating installer for more information about caring for your furnace and HVAC equipment.

We're happy to field any questions to help you protect your investment for years to come.

Are you comfy yet?

