What is a room thermostat?

... an explanation for householders

A room thermostat simply switches the heating system on and off as necessary. It works by sensing the air temperature, switching on the heating when the air temperature falls below the thermostat setting, and switching it off once this set temperature has been reached.

Turning a room thermostat to a higher setting will not make the room heat up any faster. How quickly the room heats up depends on the design of the heating system, for example, the size of boiler and radiators.

Neither does the setting affect how quickly the room cools down. Turning a room thermostat to a lower setting will result in the room being controlled at a lower temperature, and saves energy.

The heating system will not work if a time switch or programmer has switched it off.

The way to set and use your room thermostat is to find the lowest temperature setting that you are comfortable with, and then leave it alone to do its job. The best way to do this is to set the room thermostat to a low temperature – say $18^{o}C$ – and then turn it up by one degree each day until you are comfortable with the temperature. You won't have to adjust the thermostat further. Any adjustment above this setting will waste energy and cost you more money.

If your heating system is a boiler with radiators, there will usually be only one room thermostat to control the whole house. But you can have different temperatures in individual rooms by installing thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) on individual radiators. If you don't have TRVs, you should choose a temperature that is reasonable for the whole house. If you do have TRVs, you can choose a slightly higher setting to make sure that even the coldest room is comfortable, then prevent any overheating in other rooms by adjusting the TRVs.

Room thermostats need a free flow of air to sense the temperature, so they must not be covered by curtains or blocked by furniture. Nearby electric fires, televisions, wall or table lamps may prevent the thermostat from working properly.