
What is a programmable room thermostat?

... an explanation for householders

A programmable room thermostat is both a programmer and a room thermostat. A programmer allows you to set 'On' and 'Off' time periods to suit your own lifestyle. A room thermostat 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.



So, a programmable room thermostat lets you choose what times you want the heating to be on, and what temperature it should reach while it is on. It will allow you to select different temperatures in your home at different times of the day (and days of the week) to meet your particular needs.

Turning a programmable 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 programmable room thermostat to a lower setting will result in the room being controlled at a lower temperature, and saves energy.

The way to set and use your programmable room thermostat is to find the lowest temperature settings that you are comfortable with at the different times you have chosen, and then leave it alone to do its job. The best way to do this is to set low temperatures first, say 18°C, and then turn them up by one degree each day until you are comfortable with the temperatures. You won't have to adjust the thermostat further. Any adjustments above these settings will waste energy and cost you more money.

If your heating system is a boiler with radiators, there will usually be only one programmable 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.

The time on the programmer must be correct. Some types have to be adjusted in spring and autumn at the changes between Greenwich Mean Time and British Summer Time.

You may be able to temporarily adjust the heating programme, for example, 'Override', 'Advance' or 'Boost'. These are explained in the manufacturer's instructions.

Programmable 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.