

# Smart Stuff

## with Twig Walkingstick

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For the week of  
April 22, 2007

**Q. Dear Twig: My brother said there are energy vampires. True?**

A. True. But not in a Dracula sense. In a “I’m a plug-in device like a TV set and I’ll slurp up **electricity** even when you think I’m turned off” sense. Ahhh! Energy vampire!

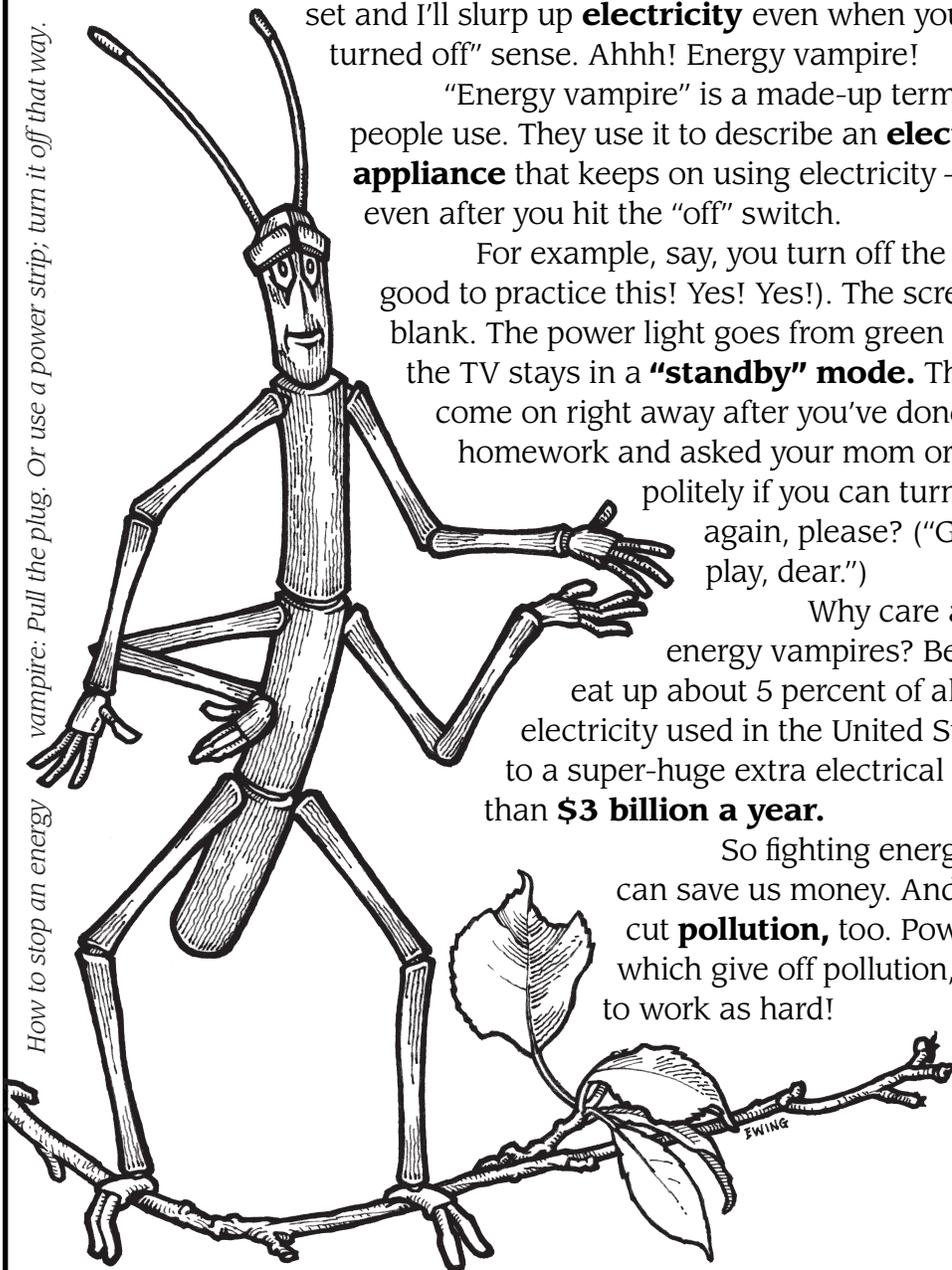
“Energy vampire” is a made-up term that some people use. They use it to describe an **electrical appliance** that keeps on using electricity — energy — even after you hit the “off” switch.

For example, say, you turn off the TV. (Always good to practice this! Yes! Yes!). The screen goes blank. The power light goes from green to red. But the TV stays in a “**standby**” mode. This lets it come on right away after you’ve done all your homework and asked your mom or dad very politely if you can turn it back on again, please? (“Go out and play, dear.”)

Why care about energy vampires? Because they eat up about 5 percent of all the electricity used in the United States, equal to a super-huge extra electrical bill of more than **\$3 billion a year**.

So fighting energy vampires can save us money. And it can help cut **pollution**, too. Powerplants, which give off pollution, don’t have to work as hard!

How to stop an energy vampire: Pull the plug. Or use a power strip; turn it off that way.



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center ([www.oardc.ohio-state.edu](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu)) and OSU Extension ([extension.osu.edu](http://extension.osu.edu)).

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**Notes:** The \$3 billion a year figure comes from the Energy Information Administration (EIA) of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) puts the figure at more than \$5 billion a year. Sources included the EIA “Energy Kids’ Page,” <http://www.eia.doe.gov/kids/classactivities/energyarticles.html#energyvampires>; UCS, <http://www.ucsusa.org/publications/greentips/energy-vampires.html>; and the Web site “Grinning Planet,” <http://www.grinningplanet.com/2004/10-26/vampire-power-electricity-article.htm>.

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