

## Explaining the Home Energy Score

The Home Energy Score uses a 10-point scale so anyone can understand how different homes compare in terms of their likely energy use. Some clients and real estate agents may be curious to understand how the score is calculated. As the first point of contact regarding the Score, Home Energy Score Assessors need to be able to explain the results and what they mean. Keep in mind that it's important to:

- ✓ **Tailor your message.** Think about how the home scored and what pieces of information will be most helpful for your client. If a home scores particularly well or poorly, be prepared to explain what contributed to that score (e.g., house size, equipment, insulation levels).
- ✓ **Use common language, not technical terms.** Most clients are not familiar with SEER numbers, efficiency levels, etc., so avoid technical terms unless your client shows particular interest or knowledge.
- ✓ **Keep your explanation brief.** Be prepared to answer follow-up questions should the client show interest.

The following talking points cover the most commonly asked questions. Use this information and your own expertise to come up with messages that work best for you.

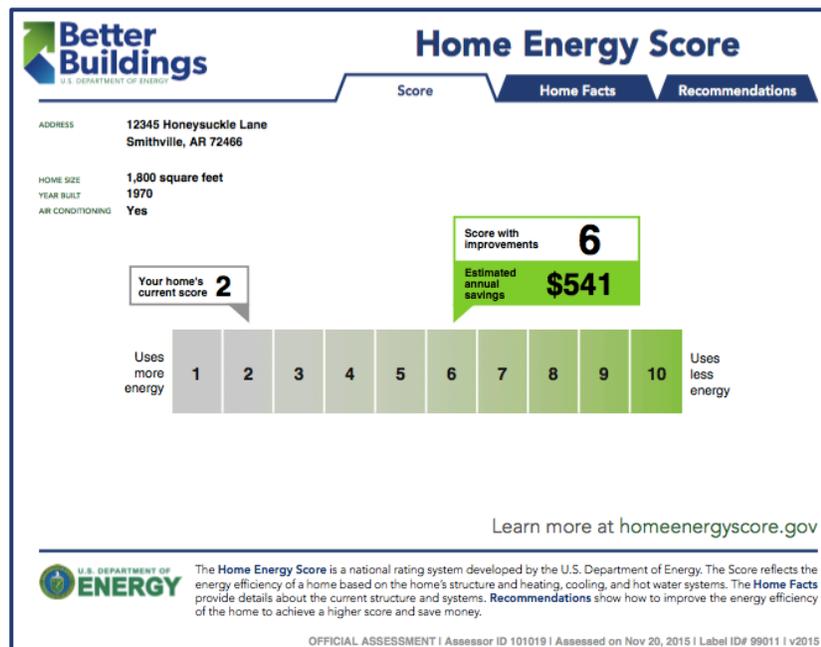
### What it does:

- The Home Energy Score provides a quick way to understand how much energy a home is likely to use under standard operating conditions and how it compares to others in the area and nationwide.

### How it is done:

- A qualified Assessor collects about 40 data points during a home walk-through, then uses a standard energy modeling tool to estimate how much energy the home will use, assuming "average" resident behavior and "average" weather for that zip code. This energy estimate is then converted into a value on the 10-point scale, where a score of 1 represents a home that is expected to use a lot of energy, and a score of 10 represents a home that is likely to use very little energy.

### Example Score:



## What it does & does not include:

- The Home Energy Score is sometimes referred to as an “asset rating” because it takes into account relevant energy “assets” of the home, such as heating, cooling, and hot water systems, and the home’s “envelope” (foundation, roof, walls, insulation, windows, etc.).
- Since it only reflects the efficiency of the assets, and not the behavior of the occupants, the Score information won’t necessarily line up with actual utility bills.
- Efficiency improvements concerning “non-asset” features of the home (e.g., thermostat settings, lighting, appliances) can be extremely useful in reducing the home’s energy use, but are not reflected in the score since they are not “fixed assets” (i.e., they can easily be changed).

## How to improve:

- The Score generates recommendations unique to each assessment to improve the home's score. The Score recommends repairing and replacing various energy assets to use less energy. A home's "Score With Improvements" is based on all of these recommendations being installed; the total savings the interactive effects of installing multiple improvements into account.
- Recommendations are calculated to be cost-effective within ten years or less based on state average utility rates and national average installation costs. These rates may not match actual costs or rates in your specific area.
- A home with a low score can usually improve its score by making cost-effective improvements that reduce how much energy will be used on heating, cooling, and hot water. Occasionally, homes, particularly large ones, have already made efficiency improvements, but still use significant amounts of energy. In such a case, the home may be able to reduce its “footprint” by installing solar panels.

## Does home size matter?

- Yes. If two homes have equivalent energy equipment, insulation, etc., but differ in size, the larger home will generally receive a lower (worse) score than the smaller home, because the larger home requires more energy to heat and cool the home’s living space. The score reflects how much energy a home is likely to use – **not** how much energy per square foot will be used.

## Does home location matter?

- The 10-point scale is adjusted to account for local climate. So, while a “5” in San Diego and a “5” in Minneapolis are both considered “average” (that is they are in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in terms of energy use for their area), the one in San Diego will use a lot less energy given the mild local climate.

## What it means:

- The 10-point scale reflects the nation’s current residential building stock – that is, it is based on data from “RECS” (the 2009 Residential Energy Consumption Survey). A home that scores a “5” is considered “average” in that its energy use is equivalent to the energy use of homes in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile nationwide. A “1” reflects those 15 percent of homes with the greatest energy use, while a “10” reflects the 10 percent of homes using the least amount of energy.

## More information:

- The Home Energy Score website: [www.homeenergyscore.gov](http://www.homeenergyscore.gov)
- Assessor help email: [assessor@sra.com](mailto:assessor@sra.com)

