

Checklist for efficient and safe wood burning

1. Only burn seasoned firewood. Wood should be split and then stored under cover but with good wind access for at least a year. Splits in the end grain are a good sign of well seasoned wood as is the smell of the wood. A moisture meter can be a handy tool: split a log open and test one of the split faces. Only burn wood under 25% moisture, under 20% is more ideal.
2. Light the stove using dry kindling to heat up the firebox fast. Softwood makes good kindling. The air vents should be fully open when first lighting the stove.
3. When the fire is going well add some bigger logs but do not totally fill the firebox – you want to make sure there is good spacing around and between the logs. When these are burning well you can shut down the air a little. If your stove has primary and secondary air controls then shut down the primary air and control the stove using the secondary air control.
4. Do not slow / slumber burn. Do not “turn the stove down for the night”. There should be good visible flames in the firebox.
5. Wait till the logs have burnt down to a bed of glowing embers before adding more logs. If you keep adding logs all the time the stove's efficiency drops by around 15% and more smoke will be produced. Turn the air up a little to help the new logs catch fire, then back down again once they are going well.
6. When the stove is burning properly (other than when it is first lit) there should be no visible smoke coming out of the chimney. If there is smoke then you are probably doing something wrong.
7. Sweep your chimney at least once a year before the burning season. The frequency of sweeping depends on how much you burn and what you burn. An indication as to how often you should sweep the chimney is given by the amount of deposits that are produced at each sweeping. Frequent wood burners should sweep at least twice a year. Consult a registered chimney sweep if in doubt.