GET MORE OUT OF YOUR SAVINGS AND YOUR CASH

Ways to fight job bias
Make your house quieter
Safe strategies for small investors
Buy your own phone?

Choosing a cruise
Video games
Books for kids
Much household noise can be eliminated or sharply reduced, often with relatively simple do-it-yourself measures.

**Start with appliances**

Practically every appliance in your house is a noisemaker. When you buy new equipment, give quietness of operation a high priority. You can, for example, buy window air-conditioning units designed specifically for bedroom use. They may be less energy-efficient than other models, but the trade-off can be worthwhile where sleep is concerned.

The kitchen is the noisiest room in most homes. You'll find that different makes and models of dishwashers, disposals, food processors and refrigerators have significantly different sound characteristics.

That's true of outdoor equipment, too. A gasoline-powered lawn mower with a muffler underneath the housing should be considerably less noisy than one not so equipped, and electric models are fairly quiet.

Unfortunately, picking the quietest household equipment may be difficult unless you compare models in operation. Noise data are usually scarce, if available at all. However, in enacting
the Noise Control Act of 1972, Congress authorized the EPA to develop a program under which products are to be labeled according to how much noise they make. The agency has begun drafting regulations and compiling a list of ten leading candidates for labeling (air-conditioners and vacuum cleaners are all but certain to be on it). Also in the works are requirements for disclosing the efficiency of products designed to reduce noise, such as acoustic tiles and engine mufflers. It will be at least a year before labels actually start appearing on products, EPA officials say.

Appliance noise is often magnified by floors or walls. You may be able to correct this by placing resilient pads or antivibration mountings under the apparatus. If an air-conditioner or exhaust fan causes a window to rattle, put a rubber pad under the unit and, where possible, slip weather stripping or rubber gaskets between the unit and the window frame. A partition or room divider stationed between a window air-conditioner and the occupants of the room may soften the sound and also diffuse drafts.

All over the house

Sound-absorbing materials, such as carpets, throw rugs, draperies, curtains and acoustic tiles, can lower high-pitched sounds in most rooms by 5 to 10 dB and low-pitched sounds by 2 or 3 dB. Storm windows and doors, preferably with rubber gaskets around the glass, deaden sounds from outside in addition to impeding heat transfer. Air-conditioning, though creating its own noise, enables you to keep the windows closed in hot weather and thus cut down on outside noise (traffic is a leading offender).

Squeaks in stairs and floors can be cured by nailing down loose boards, inserting wedges or shimmed materials, or applying mineral oil. Closing a chimney damper and covering a fireplace opening when the fireplace is not being used can muffle exterior noise. Mail slots, exhaust-fan outlets and other openings should be kept closed whenever possible. Large, slow-running fans are generally quieter than smaller models.

Plumbing and air ducts can cause vexatious noises. Vibrating pipes should be wrapped in sound-absorbing material at all points of support, and possibly additional brackets or hangers can be used. "Ticking," a sound that sometimes occurs when hot water flows into a cold pipe, causing it to expand rapidly and rub against a beam, may be halted or minimized by wedging soft, heat-resistant material between the pipe and the structure. You can silence ducts by wrapping them with building paper, lining them with sound-absorbing material, using resilient mounts to support them and placing braces around thewidest sections.

Does your toilet tank emit a whistling sound? If there's an adjustment screw on the water intake valve, change the setting. If there is no adjustment screw, partly close the shut-off valve.

Then there's "water hammer," a loud bang-

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For more information

The booklets described below are available without charge from the Office of Noise Abatement and Control, Environmental Protection Agency (AP-471), Washington, D.C. 20460.

- *Quieting in the Home* contains many practical and detailed suggestions for suppressing noise around the home, illustrated.

- *Noise: A Health Problem* discusses the various harmful effects of excessive noise on sleep, safety and mental well-being.

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"There is someone downstairs. I told him to be quieter."
ing that sometimes occurs when valves are closed quickly, creating a sudden rise in water pressure in the pipes. Frequently this can be corrected by installing a tightly capped vertical pipe in the line to serve as an air chamber. Commercial waterhammer arresters are available from plumbing supply houses.

If you have a recreation room in the basement below sleeping or study areas, consider sound-insulating the ceiling. Foam-backed floor tiles or indoor-outdoor carpeting will cut down noise from footsteps and falling objects. Rubber or cork pads can be placed behind drawers and in the pockets and chutes of billiard tables. A Ping-Pong tennis table can be undercoated with a liquid mastic to cut down vibration.

In home offices and dens, use pads under typewriters, mimeograph machines and other equipment. Remember that telephones are usually equipped with volume controls. The ringing of wall-mounted instruments is often louder than that of desk models because of the sounding-board effect.

The sound resistance of walls can be improved by sealing holes and cracks and by attaching additional material, such as gypsum wallboard. Solid-core doors, installed with gaskets, can be effective noise barriers and are especially appropriate for recreation rooms, kitchens, bedrooms and the hallways leading to bedrooms.

These, then, are some of the things you may be able to do for the sake of peace and quiet. You may discover others from further reading (see the box on the opposite page). Don't expect miracles. And remember that some kinds of noise just won't go away. Soundproofing your home against the noise created by a nearby factory or low-flying aircraft could be prohibitively expensive.

Most noise problems can be alleviated, though. If you can't do it yourself, consult an acoustical contractor or a home improvement firm.

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**Gaining weight?**

Americans are getting fatter. A survey by the National Center for Health Statistics shows that men and women in most age groups weigh more than their counterparts did in a similar survey over a decade ago. The "desirable" weights shown for a medium frame are from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. and assume indoor clothing, with men wearing one-inch heels and women two-inch heels. The company's booklet, Metropolitan Life's Four Steps to Weight Control stresses that the weight that's best for you depends on your individual frame and muscular development—"it is the weight at which you look and feel your best." For a free copy of the booklet, write to the Health Publications Dept., Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., One Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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