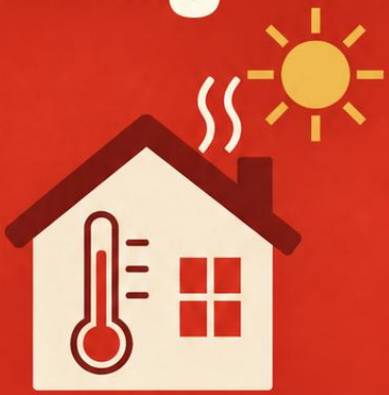
PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

# It's Thirty Degrees Indoors, and Air Conditioning Is Still on the Drawing Board



How to Organize Your Home, Daily Tasks, and Support for More Vulnerable Household Members During Heatwaves, and Plan Necessary Adaptations Without Waiting for Another Record-Breaking Summer

Max Paradox

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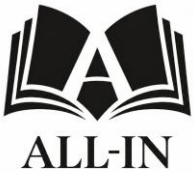
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# INTRO

At 6:47 on a Wednesday evening, someone announces that they're making lasagna. Ordinarily, this would be excellent news. Unfortunately, the apartment is already thirty degrees Celsius, the kitchen shares a wall with the living room, and the oven has just been switched on to 200 degrees. The person making dinner insists that it will only take an hour. Someone else points out that an hour is quite a long time when your home is already auditioning to become a commercial greenhouse. A third household member says nothing, having discovered that speaking requires energy best conserved for surviving until bedtime. The lasagna, meanwhile, remains blissfully unaware that it has become the subject of a domestic crisis.

This is how ordinary life changes during a heatwave. Tasks that barely deserve a second thought in spring suddenly require negotiation, planning, and occasionally an impressive level of diplomacy. Cooking becomes a strategic decision. Laundry drying indoors feels suspiciously like manufacturing additional humidity. Working from home involves choosing between the room with the strongest internet connection and the room where your brain still functions. Sleeping becomes an experiment in finding a comfortable position on bedding that seems determined to retain every molecule of warmth it encounters. And somewhere in the background, there is always that familiar promise: next year, we'll definitely do something about the air conditioning.

The difficulty is that next year has a remarkable habit of arriving without consulting our plans. By the time the first serious heatwave appears, the installation company has a waiting list, the landlord hasn't responded, and the money intended for improvements has mysteriously acquired several other responsibilities. Perhaps the car needed repairs. Perhaps the washing machine stopped working.

Perhaps you simply couldn't justify spending a substantial amount on cooling during months when opening a window felt perfectly adequate. These aren't necessarily examples of irresponsibility. They're examples of real life, where decisions compete for limited time, money, and attention. Unfortunately, buildings don't become less vulnerable to overheating because their occupants have entirely reasonable financial priorities.

Heat also exposes something we often overlook: a home is not experienced equally by everyone living in it. One adult may manage reasonably well while another struggles to concentrate. A young child may be unable to explain what's wrong. An older relative might be reluctant to admit that ordinary activities have become exhausting. Someone with a medical condition or limited mobility may face risks that go far beyond discomfort. The cheerful family announcement that "we're all hot, so we'll just have to put up with it" can conceal some very different individual needs. Equality of temperature is not equality of risk, and the person complaining least may not be the person coping best.

High temperatures can affect sleep, physical effort, concentration, and the body's ability to regulate its internal temperature. Prolonged exposure can become dangerous, especially for people more vulnerable to heat-related illness. That deserves serious attention, without turning every warm afternoon into an emergency. It means learning to distinguish inconvenience from warning signs and recognising when practical adjustments are no longer enough. Confusion, loss of consciousness, seizures, or other severe symptoms during heat exposure require urgent medical attention. This book offers general guidance for managing homes and daily routines, not individual medical diagnosis or treatment. People with particular health conditions may need personalised advice from qualified professionals.

Meanwhile, the physical building has its own agenda. A top-floor apartment beneath a sun-exposed roof behaves differently from a

shaded ground-floor home. Large windows can turn an otherwise lovely room into a powerful collector of solar energy. Walls, floors, and furnishings may store heat and release it long after sunset. Opening a window can help when outdoor conditions are favourable, but it can also introduce warmer air when they aren't. A fan may make you feel more comfortable without meaningfully lowering the room's temperature. None of this requires a degree in engineering to understand, but it does require moving beyond the comforting idea that every heat problem has one universally effective household trick.

Then there is the impressive commercial industry devoted to selling us relief. Portable coolers, cooling blankets, reflective materials, miniature gadgets promising Arctic breezes, and appliances with enough blue lighting to illuminate an airport runway. Some products are useful. Others have very specific limitations that advertisements tend to discuss with considerably less enthusiasm. A device that makes the air around your face feel pleasant is not necessarily capable of removing heat from an apartment. A costly installation may improve conditions dramatically, provided it suits the building and is correctly designed and installed. The practical challenge is understanding what a product actually does, what it cannot do, and whether the improvement justifies its cost.

You may also have remarkably little freedom to change your surroundings. Perhaps you're renting and cannot drill holes or install equipment without permission. Perhaps your building has technical restrictions, or you're waiting for a management company's approval. Maybe you own your home but currently cannot afford major improvements. You might have a perfectly workable idea that falls apart because a member of your household cannot operate the equipment independently. Advice that begins with "simply install air conditioning" is not particularly helpful when the word "simply" conceals three permissions, an electrical

assessment, and a bill that could finance a modest holiday. Realistic planning starts with the limitations you actually face.

Fortunately, improving the way you manage heat doesn't always require transforming your entire home. It may involve understanding which spaces become uncomfortable first, making better decisions about when particular chores are performed, or identifying somewhere genuinely cooler for necessary rest. It may mean dividing responsibilities more sensibly, arranging practical assistance for someone who needs it, or recognising that a temporary measure is only temporary. These actions won't magically change the weather or guarantee everyone's safety in extreme conditions. They can, however, reduce avoidable difficulties and help you recognise when more effective protection is necessary.

There is also an important difference between coping with today's temperature and preparing for future summers. The first may require immediate changes within existing constraints. The second gives you an opportunity to investigate building improvements, compare equipment, understand ongoing costs, obtain permissions, and make decisions before discomfort turns every sales pitch into an attractive proposition. A successful long-term plan doesn't have to involve purchasing the most expensive system available. It should reflect what your household needs, what your home can accommodate, and what you can realistically maintain. Sometimes discovering that a proposed improvement is unsuitable is itself an extremely valuable result.

Throughout this book, we'll approach those decisions with practical curiosity and an appropriate suspicion of miraculous solutions. We'll examine why homes overheat, how everyday behaviour can add to the problem, how to organise support for vulnerable household members, and how to distinguish useful adaptations from expensive disappointments. There will be room for conflicting preferences, exhausted caregivers, imperfect

budgets, and the inevitable household member who believes every problem can be solved by opening a different window. The goal is not to produce a family of amateur meteorologists conducting daily briefings around the breakfast table. It's to make sensible decisions easier when the temperature makes almost everything else harder.

And there is something reassuring about accepting that preparation doesn't mean perfection. Some summers will be more demanding than others. Equipment can fail. Plans can change. A rented apartment may remain difficult to cool, and an essential improvement may take longer than expected. You cannot remove every uncertainty, but you can become less dependent on last-minute improvisation. You can learn which problems need attention immediately, which decisions deserve careful planning, and when asking for help is the sensible thing to do.

The next time your indoor thermometer reaches thirty degrees, you may still be uncomfortable. You may still have to negotiate dinner arrangements, rethink the afternoon schedule, or make another phone call about that long-awaited air conditioner. But you won't have to treat the entire situation as a mysterious annual disaster arriving without warning. You'll have a clearer understanding of your home, your options, and the people who depend on your decisions.

Because the weather doesn't need your permission to become unbearable. But it doesn't get to make every household decision for you, either.

# Chapter 1 - Why Your Home Is Thirty Degrees When Nobody Invited the Heat

At eleven on a Saturday morning, Daniel notices something peculiar about his apartment. The hallway feels perfectly tolerable, the bedroom is already uncomfortable, and the living room appears to have developed its own climate. The weather forecast reports twenty-eight degrees Celsius outside, but the thermometer beside the living room bookshelf reads thirty. He checks the balcony door, confirms that it is closed, and looks accusingly at the ceiling. Nothing obvious has gone wrong. The heating is off, the windows are intact, and nobody has secretly installed a furnace behind the television. Yet the apartment is warmer than the street. Apparently, the building has discovered a way to retain summer heat with the enthusiasm usually reserved for retaining security deposits.

This situation becomes less mysterious when you stop imagining your home as a sealed container of air and start thinking of it as a collection of materials exchanging heat with their surroundings. Sunlight enters through windows, exterior surfaces absorb energy, appliances release heat, and walls and furnishings warm up over time. The amount of heat entering or leaving depends on the building's construction, insulation, ventilation, exposure to sunlight, and outdoor conditions. An apartment can therefore become unusually hot without any single dramatic cause. Several modest influences may be working together, producing an impressive result that none of them could achieve alone. Unfortunately, they're rather better at teamwork than the people trying to assemble flat-pack furniture in the same room.

Understanding those influences matters because different causes require different responses. If direct afternoon sunlight is responsible for much of the discomfort, controlling solar exposure may help. If heat is entering through a poorly insulated roof,

changing the curtains may provide only limited relief. If outdoor temperatures remain high throughout the night, relying on natural ventilation may not produce the cooling you need. Before spending money, moving furniture, or conducting another household debate about whether a window should be open, it helps to establish what is actually happening. The aim is not to turn you into a building engineer. It is to make the building slightly less mysterious and your decisions considerably more useful.

Your apartment has a heat history

Buildings do not instantly forget what happened to them during the day. When sunlight strikes a wall, roof, floor, or piece of furniture, some of its energy may be absorbed and stored as heat. Materials differ in how quickly they warm up and how they release that heat afterward. This helps explain why a room can remain uncomfortable long after direct sunlight disappears. You may open a window and briefly enjoy cooler air, only to discover that the room warms again after closing it. The air was refreshed, but the surrounding surfaces remained warm. It's rather like replacing the water in a bathtub while leaving the heating element switched on, although the actual physics is somewhat more complicated.

Thermal mass, the ability of materials to store heat, can be helpful as well as troublesome. Under suitable conditions, massive building elements can moderate temperature changes, especially when cooler periods allow accumulated heat to escape. During prolonged hot weather, however, those same materials may remain warm and contribute to uncomfortable indoor conditions. This is why a strategy that works during a single sunny afternoon may prove inadequate after several consecutive hot days. The building starts each new morning with some of yesterday's heat still aboard. By the end of the week, it may seem to be collecting temperatures as a hobby.

The location of your home changes the picture considerably. A top-floor apartment may receive additional heat through the roof,

while a shaded apartment lower in the building may experience less direct solar exposure. A corner apartment can have more exterior surfaces exposed to outdoor conditions than one surrounded by neighbouring units. Large windows may provide wonderful daylight and attractive views while also allowing substantial solar energy to enter. Nearby trees, balconies, adjacent buildings, and the orientation of each room can make significant differences. Two apartments with identical floor plans can therefore behave differently, even when their occupants use similar equipment and follow the same advice.

Consider a hypothetical building containing two apartments on the same floor. One has living-room windows facing east, where direct sunlight arrives relatively early. The other faces west, where solar exposure becomes particularly important later in the day. The residents of the first apartment may notice that their living room is uncomfortable before lunch but becomes easier to use afterward. In the second apartment, the room may remain pleasant through the morning and become progressively hotter toward evening. Telling both households to follow precisely the same window and shading schedule ignores an important distinction. The relevant question is not simply whether the sun shines, but when and where its energy reaches the rooms you use.

Why the thermometer needs context

One of the cheapest improvements you can make to your understanding of the home is to measure conditions sensibly. This doesn't require elaborate sensors, colourful dashboards, or a subscription service that sends congratulations whenever the temperature changes by half a degree. A reliable indoor thermometer, positioned away from direct sunlight and local heat sources, can provide useful information. If possible, compare different rooms at several points throughout the day. Note where the sun falls, which spaces remain warm after sunset, and when the occupants report the greatest discomfort. Measurements taken

beside a sunlit window or directly above a warm appliance may not represent conditions in the places where people actually spend time.

A short observation record can reveal patterns that memory tends to blur. For example, an office may be comfortable at nine in the morning but difficult to use by three in the afternoon. A bedroom may have a moderate afternoon temperature yet remain warm enough to disturb sleep at midnight. A kitchen may become uncomfortable mainly when several appliances operate together. Recording a few relevant circumstances beside the temperature gives those readings meaning. You are trying to identify repeatable problems, not produce a scientific paper entitled An Investigation into the Personal Betrayal of My South-Facing Windows.

Humidity deserves attention, too. The body's ability to cool itself depends partly on sweat evaporating from the skin. When humidity is high, evaporation becomes more difficult, so a room may feel particularly oppressive even without an exceptional thermometer reading. Air movement, clothing, physical activity, and individual health also influence thermal comfort. This means temperature alone cannot describe everything a person experiences, much less establish that a room is safe for everyone. An indoor humidity reading may add useful context, but it should not become another number to watch obsessively. The purpose of measuring conditions is to improve decisions, not to establish a command centre where household members spend the evening monitoring decimal places.

There is a practical difference between noticing that your home feels uncomfortable and discovering the pattern responsible. The first tells you that something needs attention. The second helps identify a reasonable response. Suppose your bedroom warms considerably whenever direct sunlight reaches its windows, even though the outdoor temperature hasn't changed much. That observation suggests examining solar protection. Suppose the same room stays hot through the night despite reduced sunlight. Now

heat storage and the possibilities for releasing accumulated heat deserve closer attention. The next decision follows the evidence rather than whichever product happened to appear in an advertisement that morning.

The window argument has two sides

Windows are particularly confusing because they perform several different jobs. They provide daylight, views, ventilation, and sometimes access to outdoor space. They also influence heat transfer. Opening a window can allow outdoor air to replace indoor air, but whether that cools the room depends on the conditions on both sides. If the outdoor air is substantially warmer, leaving the window open may increase indoor temperature. When outdoor air becomes cooler, suitable ventilation can help remove accumulated heat. Wind direction, the location of openings, building design, and safety constraints also affect the result. An open window is therefore not automatically a cooling device, despite its remarkable popularity as a universal household solution.

There are additional considerations that temperature readings cannot settle by themselves. A busy road may make nighttime ventilation noisy or expose residents to polluted air. Rain, insects, security concerns, and the presence of children can limit how windows may safely be used. Buildings with fuel-burning appliances have specific ventilation requirements that must not be compromised. These realities mean that advice to "just open everything overnight" may be completely unsuitable for some households. A useful recommendation must work in the actual building, with actual people, rather than in an imaginary house located in a peaceful meadow where the evening breeze arrives precisely when requested.

Closed windows and shading also need to be considered separately. An effective solar shade can reduce the amount of energy entering through glazing, but its performance depends on where it is installed, its material, and the type of window. Some

exterior shading systems can intercept solar energy before it passes through the glass. Interior blinds and curtains may improve comfort and control daylight, though their effect on heat gain varies. This explains why simply buying the thickest curtain available is not necessarily the ideal response. You may achieve magnificent darkness while the window area continues to become warm. Proper product selection depends on the circumstances, not on how convincingly a shop describes a fabric as revolutionary.

The home contributes some heat of its own

Outdoor weather and sunlight are major influences, but ordinary household activities add to the total heat load. Cooking appliances, electronics, lighting, and occupants themselves release heat. Some activities also release moisture, changing how comfortable the air feels. The importance of each contribution varies with the size of the room, appliance power, duration of use, and other conditions. A small phone charger is unlikely to explain an overheated apartment, whereas an oven operating for an extended period in an open-plan kitchen may make a noticeable contribution. Sensible investigation means distinguishing significant causes from tiny ones rather than conducting an increasingly hostile campaign against every electrical socket.

You can begin with a simple question: when does the apartment seem to become hotter for reasons unrelated to changing outdoor conditions? If a particular room becomes noticeably warmer during certain activities, examine whether those activities introduce additional heat or moisture. Sometimes changing their timing or method will help. Sometimes the effect will be too small to justify reorganising your day. You should never disable necessary medical equipment, compromise safe food storage, or obstruct ventilation merely to reduce heat production. The objective is to eliminate avoidable burdens, not create new hazards while celebrating a modest reduction on the electricity meter.

This distinction becomes even more important when assessing fans and portable cooling devices. A conventional fan moves air and may improve comfort by supporting heat loss from the body under suitable conditions, but it does not remove heat from a room in the way an air conditioner does. A refrigeration-based air conditioner must reject heat somewhere outside the area being cooled. Devices that rely on evaporation have different limitations, particularly when indoor humidity is already high. Understanding where the heat goes is often more revealing than the product name. If a gadget claims to cool an entire apartment while rejecting no heat outside it, a little scepticism is warranted.

When understanding the problem is not enough

There is an important limit to observation and small adjustments. If indoor temperatures remain dangerously high, particularly for vulnerable occupants, identifying the causes does not itself make the environment safe. A household may need access to genuinely cooler accommodation, effective cooling equipment, or other appropriate assistance. Serious symptoms of heat-related illness require prompt medical attention, regardless of what a room thermometer displays. Measurements are tools for understanding conditions, not permission slips to continue exposure when someone is becoming unwell. Nor should you spend several days gathering more readings while a dependent household member cannot rest safely.

For less urgent situations, however, a clearer picture of the building can prevent wasted effort. It can also improve conversations with landlords, property managers, contractors, or neighbours. Describing which room overheats, at what times, and under what circumstances is more useful than saying the apartment is unbearable, even when the latter is emotionally accurate. A contractor can ask better questions, and a landlord has a more concrete problem to consider. You still may face budget restrictions or technical barriers, but at least the discussion begins

with evidence rather than competing accounts of who suffered most last Tuesday.

Your home will probably never behave exactly as you would like. Buildings cannot change their orientation, and a west-facing window will not agree to become north-facing because you have made a persuasive argument. But the heat entering, accumulating, and moving through your home is not entirely mysterious. Once you understand the main patterns, it becomes easier to separate measures that address causes from those that merely produce temporary comfort.

And that is the first useful victory over a thirty-degree apartment. You stop treating every hot room as an inexplicable personal insult from the weather and begin seeing a particular physical problem with identifiable influences, practical constraints, and possible responses. The walls may still be warm, but at least you no longer need to interrogate the ceiling.

# Chapter 2 - Everyone Feels the Heat, but Not Everyone Faces the Same Risk

One of the most misleading sentences in a hot household is, "We're all in the same boat." Technically, everyone may be inside the same apartment, dealing with the same weather and paying a share of the same electricity bill. But imagine a boat carrying an experienced swimmer, a toddler, an older passenger with limited mobility, and someone recovering from an illness. Their ability to cope with difficulties would hardly be identical. Yet households often make decisions about heat according to whoever speaks most confidently. If the most outspoken adult declares that the temperature is perfectly manageable, everyone else is apparently expected to agree. Unfortunately, human physiology has never demonstrated much respect for majority voting.

Heat affects people differently because the body's ability to maintain a safe internal temperature depends on several interacting systems. Sweating and increased blood flow near the skin help release heat, but their effectiveness varies with humidity, physical activity, hydration, health, and other circumstances. Some medications and medical conditions can influence how well a person tolerates hot environments. Age and mobility matter, too, although neither tells the whole story. A fit older adult may remain highly independent, while a younger person with a serious condition may require substantial assistance. The practical lesson is that vulnerability must be assessed individually, not assigned automatically according to appearances or birthday candles.

The difficulty is that households tend to organise themselves around what people usually manage. Someone who has always done their own shopping is assumed to be capable of continuing. A grandparent who rarely complains is considered particularly resilient. A child who remains busy playing is assumed to be

comfortable. Those impressions may prove misleading during prolonged heat, especially when circumstances change gradually. Being independent yesterday doesn't guarantee that today's conditions present no additional risk. Equally, needing some assistance does not mean a person should lose control over every aspect of their routine. Good support requires observation, conversation, and respect in roughly equal measure.

The people who may need closer attention

Infants and young children deserve particular consideration because their needs and responses differ from those of adults. Babies cannot tell you that they are becoming uncomfortable, and young children may struggle to recognise or communicate early symptoms. Their ability to regulate temperature and their dependence on caregivers make appropriate surroundings especially important. Clothing, sleep arrangements, feeding, access to suitable fluids, and exposure to hot environments should be considered in relation to the child's age. Advice intended for adults must not automatically be applied to infants, particularly regarding additional water or feeding. Caregivers should follow age-appropriate medical guidance rather than relying on the assumption that a baby will always cry loudly when something is wrong.

Older people may face a different combination of challenges. Some experience changes in temperature regulation or thirst perception, and certain health conditions can increase vulnerability. The important point, however, is not that everyone over a particular age becomes helpless when the forecast turns orange. Many older adults manage their lives extremely well and have little interest in being supervised by relatives who still cannot work out how to fold a fitted sheet. A more respectful approach asks whether the person can maintain suitable conditions, obtain food and drinks, recognise difficulties, and access assistance when needed. Those questions reveal far more than age alone.