



# Energy advice and guidance



# Energy Supply

## Switching energy and gas supplier

The rises in wholesale energy prices over recent years have reduced the number of deals for switchers, but competition is beginning to return to the market. It's a good idea to assess all your options before you switch.

Cheaper deals may be available, but another factor to consider is obtaining a fixed price deal now. Most consumers are now on standard tariffs, pegged to the Energy Price Cap. Locking in a price now would delay the impact of future rises.

Importantly, there may be a cancellation fee if you switch tariffs or suppliers. This would need to be factored into your decision whether to switch. It is always worth speaking to your current supplier to see if they are able to offer a better tariff.

When switching is available, you can be with your new supplier within five working days (provided you opt to fast track your switch). There'll be no interruption to your service, and everything is handled by your new provider. All you need to do is compare and go.

Using a price comparison website is easy:

### Takes five minutes

Using a price comparison website all you need to do is pop in your postcode and tell them about your energy usage using your most recent bill will give you the best results.

### They'll search for tariffs

They'll search the market for deals and show you what you can get if you switch suppliers with them.

### You're good to go

Once you've started your switch you won't need to do a thing – your new provider will take care of everything.

### Ofgem's approved price comparison websites

- [Energylinx](#)
- [The Energy Shop](#)
- [Money Supermarket](#)
- [My Utility Genius](#)
- [Simply Switch](#)
- [Switch Gas and Electric](#)
- [Quotezone](#)
- [Unravel It](#)
- [Uswitch](#)



# Heating and billing

Take regular meter readings and submit them to your energy supplier as this will help you keep an eye on your energy use and keep your bills accurate.

If you receive a bill and it has an 'E' marked against the meter reading, then this means it is 'estimated' by your supplier. You may not be paying the right amount for your energy. Having several estimated readings can sometimes lead to large unexpected bills.

Meters are read from left to right. Don't include any numbers that are red or in a red box.

Note: if you have a smart meter, you won't need to take and submit meter readings as these will be done automatically and you will not receive any estimated bills as your supplier will know how much energy you're using.

## Use heat controls correctly

Make sure you are using your boiler and heating controls correctly and use the programmer to set up the system to match your needs. For example, setting your heating to come on half an hour before you get up in the morning.

Use a room thermostat to control the temperature in your home. Ideally, this should be set between 18oC and 21oC but some people may need it higher.

Make use of a programmer if available. Correct use of a programmer will avoid accidentally leaving the heating on when it is not needed – when you are at work, for example. Programmers can then be set to come on half an hour before you get in, so you arrive home to a warm house.



**Using thermostatic radiator valves.** These allow you to control individual radiators by sensing the surrounding temperature. Once the temperature is reached, the flow of hot water will be shut off, saving you money.

These should be set as low as possible whilst keeping the temperature in the room comfortable. They can also be used to provide minimal heating in rooms you rarely use

**Remember not to leave electric hot water immersion heaters on** for longer than you need as this wastes energy and money.



### **Use storage heaters correctly**

Some homes have night storage heaters. These build up heat overnight when electricity is cheaper, which is then released throughout the next day. Homes with storage heaters should be on an Economy 7 or Economy 10 tariff.

If you are not using your storage heaters correctly you could be faced with a large bill.

Further information is available from the National Energy Action [here](#).

### **Further advice from NEA's Warm and Safe Homes Advice service**

NEA's WASH Advice Service is a free support service providing advice to householders in England and Wales on their energy bills and keeping warm and safe in their home. They can also help with benefits advice and income maximisation. It offers advice workshops direct to householders and training to frontline staff. To contact them and make use of their advice service visit [www.nea.org.uk/get-help/wash-advice/](http://www.nea.org.uk/get-help/wash-advice/) for a list of ways to contact them.

# Making my home more energy efficient

The main areas that heat can be lost are through the roof and windows. Blocking draughts can be a cheap way of making your home warmer and draught-proofing products are available at DIY stores. To see larger energy savings, you may wish to invest in making your home more efficient (while some of these measures may have larger upfront costs than DIY measures, the ultimate saving will be larger).

You can reduce heat loss through the roof by investing in **Loft Insulation**:

## Loft insulation

- This is a great way to make your home more energy efficient as around 25% of heat within a home is lost through the roof. Loft insulation will prevent excess heat loss and save you money. The cost of insulation generally varies depending on the depth of the insulation so if you can invest in thicker

insulation then it will result in more savings overall. Even if you already have some former of insulation, you should find out how thick it is and consider whether it is worth updating it to be thicker.

- According to the Energy Saving Trust, if you currently live in an uninsulated property, installing loft insulation could reduce your annual energy bill by £330-590. The recommended thickness for loft insulation is 270mm so it is best to check existing insulation before speaking to an installer. Loft insulation costs around £890 (this varies based on property size and condition) - around two years'-worth of energy bill savings.
- If you use your loft as a living space, you will have to consider getting the roof insulated although this can be more expensive.

Ways to reduce heat loss through walls:



## Wall Insulation

- Up to 35% of heat loss is lost through walls. There are two main types of wall insulation based on the type of house you have. Therefore, if you are considering wall insulation, it is important to ensure that you know what type of walls you have before contacting an installer. Cavity walls have an even brick pattern while solid walls have an alternating pattern.
- **Cavity Wall insulation:** insulation put into cavity walls traps air in between fibres which prevents air leaving the house and therefore keeps the heat within the property. Cavity wall insulation costs up to £1,800 depending on the size of your home could reduce your annual energy bill by £180-690.
- **Solid Wall insulation:** solid wall insulation can be significantly more expensive but has high energy savings especially if the property is quite old. There are two types of solid wall insulation, internal and external. Depending on property size, internal wall insulation can cost around £7,500 and external wall insulation is around £11,000. The energy saving is higher than cavity wall insulation, but the payback period is significantly longer.

**You could be able to access funding for new energy-efficient boilers and insulation work.** The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and the Great British Insulation Scheme mean could be eligible for free work based upon your personal circumstances.

The Government has created an eligibility checker for the Great British Insulation Scheme [here](#).

Details of how to access ECO funding scheme can be found [here](#).

**Ways to reduce heat loss through windows:** Up to 35% of heat loss is lost through windows. Here are a few things you can think about to minimise this loss.

**Getting double or triple glazing.** Having thicker windows allows light and heat to get into your house but cuts the amount of heat that can escape. Double glazing works by having two sheets of glass with a gap in between which means that it's harder for cold air to get through. Triple glazing works in a similar way but with a third sheet of glass. Windows, however, are expensive and the payback period is quite high so these are generally only suggested to be changed if you need new windows. Getting thicker windows may also reduce outside noise in your property.

**Investing in different curtains.** The most energy efficient curtains should be floor-length to reduce heat loss through windows and thicker curtains will prevent more loss through the windows. If you have blinds instead of curtains, ensure that they fit snugly in the window frame otherwise they will not conserve much heat from the room.

**Closing curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.** This will prevent the cold air from inside coming into the house as the curtain will block it and keep some of the warm air from sunrays escaping the property. Another way to reduce heat from windows is to close windows during cold weather.

**Closing doors** is an effective way to keep heat in a particular room so if you're heating a room where you are spending time in, it will stop the heat seeping into rooms that you spend little time in, ie: hallways.

**Checking for air-leaks.** You can do this on a cold day with the heat on inside your home by placing your hand around the edges of all exterior doors and windows. It is not advised to seal up bathroom and kitchen air vents and fans as these are used to prevent condensation in the home. While utilising an extractor fan in kitchens and bathrooms will use energy, it will mean that you don't need to open windows as often which will keep some of the heat within the home.

**You can reduce heat loss through the floor by:**  
**Using thermal underlay on any flooring.** This will reduce some heat loss going through wood floors. You can also reduce heat loss by putting rugs and mats through any small holes in the

floor.

**You can reduce heat loss behind your radiators by:**

**Using radiator reflectors in your home.** You could be losing half the heat that you are paying for through the wall behind your radiator. Fitted out of sight behind your radiator, radiator reflectors prevent heat loss through walls by reflecting 95 per cent of wasted heat back into the home, helping to cut energy consumption and heating costs throughout the year.

More information on all measures and the grants is available [here](#).

If you rent your home, then by law landlords must ensure it is safe and habitable. If you are worried your privately rented accommodation is not safe or habitable, contact your local authority's Environmental Health team who can assess the property for health and safety hazards and require your landlord to make improvements out of their own funds.





# Fuel debt

When you're having any issues paying your energy bills or you're worried about falling into debt, the first step is always to get in touch with your energy supplier. If they know you're having problems, they are required to work with you to find a solution.

For example, they can help you to set up an affordable debt repayment plan and or change your payment method to better suit you. To find out who your electricity supplier is contact your network at [www.energynetworks.org/customers/find-my-network-operator](http://www.energynetworks.org/customers/find-my-network-operator). For your gas supplier you can use the Find My Supplier search tool at [www.findmysupplier.energy](http://www.findmysupplier.energy).

You can also get advice on energy debt from Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on **0808 223 1133** or your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

## Income maximisation

Make sure you are claiming the correct benefits. This could increase your income as well as make you eligible for other types of assistance.

You can check your entitlement yourself using a free online benefits calculator, or take advice from your local Citizens Advice or call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on **0808 223 1133** (textphone users call **18001 0808 223 1133**) (call charges may apply).

In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, if you were born before 23 September 1958 you could get either £200 or £300 to help you pay your heating bills. This is known as a Winter Fuel Payment. Most people get the Winter Fuel Payment automatically if they're eligible.

If you're eligible, you'll get a letter in October or November saying how much you'll get. If you do not get a letter but you think you're eligible, check if you need to make a claim by visiting [www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment/how-to-claim). Call the Winter Fuel Payment Centre on **0800 731 0160** or contact Relay UK on **18001** then **0800 731 0160** to claim by phone. The deadline for you to make a claim for winter 2023 to 2024 is 31 March 2024.

Most eligible people are paid in November or December.

If you live in Scotland, you cannot get a Winter Fuel Payment, but the Scottish Government plans to give a similar payment. If eligible, you will get it from DWP.

In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the Cold Weather Payment is paid to eligible households on means tested benefits in areas where 'exceptionally cold weather' is forecast or has occurred. You'll get £25 for each 7 day period of very cold weather between 1 November 2024 and 31 March 2025.

In Scotland, a Winter Heating Payment is made to eligible people regardless of temperature. The Scottish Government assesses eligibility based upon the benefits you receive. This winter, payments of £58.75 will be made between December 2024 and February 2025.

You may be able to get help with essential costs from your local council. This is sometimes known as the Household Support Fund.

Funding is aimed at anyone who's vulnerable or cannot pay for essentials. You do not have to be getting benefits to get help from your local council. Check with your local council to find out what support is available. You can find out who your local council is by visiting [www.gov.uk/find-local-council](http://www.gov.uk/find-local-council).

### Sign up to the Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register is a system that energy companies use to make sure the correct support is given to their most vulnerable customers. You can sign up to it to receive extra help from your energy supplier as well as from the company that operates the local energy distribution network. You're eligible to receive the services available if you're a pensioner, are disabled or suffer from a long-term medical condition. You also qualify if you have a hearing or visual impairment or additional communication needs.

Each energy supplier and network operator maintains its own register and a wide range of support is available including:

- Information provided in accessible formats
- Advance notice of planned power cuts
- Identification scheme
- Password protection and nominee scheme for a family member or carer on behalf of the customer
- Priority support in an emergency
- Arrangements to ensure that it is safe and practical for the customer to use a prepayment meter
- Meter reading services

Contact your gas/electricity supplier and distribution network operator for more information and to register. If you are not sure who your network operator is, you can use the Energy Network Association handy search tool at [www.energynetworks.org/customers/find-my-network-operator](http://www.energynetworks.org/customers/find-my-network-operator).



## In the bathroom

- **Brushing your teeth:** Remember to turn off the tap while brushing your teeth – a running tap wastes approximately 6 litres per minute.
- **Leak detection:** Leaky loos are one of the most common causes of unexpected high water use for consumers in the UK. When a toilet is leaking, water dribbles away down the back of the pan, which means a leaky loo often goes unnoticed. A leaking toilet most commonly refers to clean water running from the cistern into the pan.
  - To detect a slow leak add a few drops of food colouring to your toilet cistern
  - Don't flush it for around an hour
  - If the food colouring is present after an hour, you have a leak
  - It's easy to fix though! First contact your water company who may well fix it for free. Or you could find a recommended plumber to call or if you fancy a bit of DIY take the parts to the hardware store and ask the staff to help replace them
  - Remember to check again for a leak once fixed.
- **Short Shower:** A short shower with an efficient showerhead uses less water than a bath, which is usually 80 litres. But beware since many power showers may actually use more than a bath. Baths and showers are accountable for the highest usage of water consumption in the home at around 34%.
  - To help keep track of time try using a shower timer.
  - It is estimated that Britain 'showers away' more than 2,000,000,000 litres of water each day.
- If every home in the UK took one minute off their shower every day it would save £215 million on our collective energy bills every year.
- **Switch Showerhead:** Aerated showerheads reduce the flow but don't compromise on pressure. They maintain the pressure by mixing in air with water to produce a steady, even spray.
  - Low flow shower heads reduce the amount of water used, whilst still giving you the feel of a normal shower.
- **Baths:** By running your bath just an inch shorter than usual, you can save on average 5 litres of water.
  - You can minimise your water use by reusing your bathwater to water your houseplants or garden.
- **Toilets:** About 30% of total water used in a home is used to flush the toilet. Remember, this water is the same high quality water that's in our taps.
  - Update to a water efficient toilet: Dual flush toilets have a split flush button which gives the user the choice of how much water to use.
  - Dual flush toilets typically use 4-6 litres of water opposed to the old style flush systems which use a massive 13 litres per flush.
  - **Cistern Displacement Device (CDD):** A CDD is placed in the cistern to displace around 1 litre of water every time you flush. They are super easy to install.
  - Installing a CDD can achieve savings of up to 5000 litres per year.
  - They are available for FREE from most water companies.

- **Blockages:** Try to avoid flushing away cotton wool balls or make up tissues, simply throwing them in a bin will cut down on the amount of water wasted with every flush and obviously protect our sewers.
  - Remember the 3 P rule: only poo, pee and paper down the toilet.

### In the kitchen

- **The Dishes:** A dishwasher on an eco setting can be more efficient than washing dishes by hand, if the dishwasher is totally full. However, recent research has found that only half of people say they use the eco setting.
  - Try to buy a dishwasher with a capacity suitable for your household size so it's always full when you use it.
  - Avoid pre-rinsing dishes, detergents are highly effective so all you need to



do is scrape and place.

- Try adding a washing up bowl or plug into your sink – this can reduce water wastage by 50%.
- Adding a tap aerator can help reduce the flow.
- **Laundry:** When buying a washing machine, check the label or specifications for water use, the best models will typically use less than 7.5 litres per kg.
  - Read the manual to find out which cycles are the most water efficient.
- **Kettle:** Try to fill the kettle with only what's needed, this will save water and energy.
- **Lids:** Using the lid on saucepans reduces the amount of water lost through evaporation, it also helps veg cook quicker.

### References

- <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/how-to-switch-energy-suppliers/>
- <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/free-cavity-loft-insulation/>
- <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/switching-energy-supplier>
- <https://www.nea.org.uk/get-help/resources/how-to-read-your-electricity-bill/>
- <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/take-control-your-heating-home/>
- <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/>

