

ofgem

Making a positive difference
for energy consumers



How to save money
and use less energy



This information leaflet is about how you can manage your energy costs and efficiency. It gives practical things you can do and explains the support available to keep costs down.

Talking to your supplier

Make sure you're on the best tariff

Tariffs are the rate you pay for your gas and electricity. Talk to your supplier or look at their website to see what tariffs they have available and if you can pay less. It's useful to have some meter readings, if possible, as well as your latest bill. This is so they know how much energy you're using, and how much it is costing you.

Asking to change your payment method from prepayment and standard credit to Direct Debit can also help reduce your tariff.

You can also use a price comparison website to see if another supplier can make you a better offer. We keep a list of accredited comparison services on our website at [ofgem.gov.uk/confidence-code](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/confidence-code).

Your bill must include personalised information about your supplier's cheapest tariff and how much you could save. The bill will also give you estimated costs for the next year.

Ensuring you give your supplier regular meter readings of your usage will also mean you get accurate bills instead of estimates.

If you are struggling

If you are struggling to pay for your gas and electricity bills or if you get into debt, you should contact your supplier as soon as you can and find out what help they can give you. Your supplier will be able to:

- work with you to agree a regular payment plan (for example every week or month) to spread your bills so you can better budget for them.
- put your name on a list of customers who need extra help or support.
- suggest schemes and grants to help with money you may owe them.

Check your gas or electricity bill for your supplier's contact details. If you don't know who your supplier is see [ofgem.gov.uk/find-my-supplier](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/find-my-supplier).

Switching tariff or supplier

There are many energy suppliers who can offer a range of tariffs and services that suit how you use energy and your personal needs.

Comparing them regularly can help you make sure you're getting the best deal. It can also highlight if you could cut your bills by switching to a different offer.



How to switch

You can phone different energy suppliers or use a price comparison website to find a better tariff or supplier. A list of Ofgem approved online comparison services are available at [ofgem.gov.uk/confidence-code](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/confidence-code).

Citizens Advice also publish information on suppliers and have a comparison tool. See energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk.

It can take up to 21 days to switch and you have 14 days to cancel a contract if you change your mind. Some suppliers also offer a switching guarantee service. Find out more at energyswitchguarantee.com.

What you'll need

Switching is simple, speedy and safe. It is helpful to have to hand:

- the name of your current energy tariff and energy supplier
- how much you spend on gas and electricity.

Before you switch, you should also check if:

- you could be charged an exit fee from your current contract.
- your chosen new tariff or supplier could charge an exit fee if you choose to leave the contract early.
- you are receiving extra support like the government's Warm Home Discount or the Priority Service Register, that your new supplier is part of these schemes (see page 8).

Repaying a debt and switching

If you've been in debt to your supplier for less than 28 days you can still switch. Any money you owe will be added to your final bill from your old supplier.

If you've been in debt to your supplier for over 28 days, you'll need to arrange to repay the debt first. If it's your supplier's fault you're in debt, they can't stop you from switching.



Saving energy

Make your home more efficient

Home improvements such as better insulation can reduce your energy bills. To see what a difference they can make, start with a home energy check. Visit hec.est.org.uk.

Then look into government initiatives (see page 8) that may be able to help pay for home improvements:

- In England, Wales and Scotland, the Energy Companies Obligation (ECO) and the Green Deal.
- In Wales, Nest.
- In Scotland, the Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland (HEEPS).

For England and Wales, call **0300 123 1234**. In Scotland, call **0808 808 2282**.

Smart meters

Smart meters are the new generation of gas and electricity meters which will replace the traditional meters in our homes. They:

- come with an in-home display which help you track how much energy you are using and the cost in pounds and pence.
- take regular readings and share these automatically with your energy supplier, meaning you can get accurate bills instead of estimates.

These features could help you save money on your bill.

Every household in England, Scotland and Wales is being offered a smart meter at no extra cost. For more information, contact your energy supplier.



General tips

Follow these tips to avoid wasting energy. Doing so could help reduce your energy costs.



Use a timer on your central heating system. Set heating and hot water to come on only when required.



Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows. Check for draughts, too. And seal gaps around doors with draft excluders.



If you have a hot water tank, set the cylinder thermostat to 60°C (140°F).



Always turn off the light when you leave a room.



Use energy-saving light bulbs.



Don't leave appliances on standby or laptops and mobile phones on charge unnecessarily.



When washing up and washing or drying by machine, try to fully load the appliance. One full load uses less energy than two half loads.



Turn taps off properly – in a single week, a dripping hot tap can waste enough hot water to fill half a bath.



Dry your clothes outside during nice weather.



If using a kettle, only boil the water you need.

Schemes, grants and price caps

Warm Home Discount scheme

Some energy suppliers in England, Scotland and Wales offer rebates and help to people who are of pensionable age, disabled, have severe health problems or are on a low income. Call your supplier to see if you qualify or visit [gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme).

Winter Fuel Payment scheme

You could get between £100 and £300 to help pay your heating bills if you were born on or before 5 January 1952. This is the Winter Fuel Payment.

You usually get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you get the State Pension or another social security benefit (not Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction or Child Benefit). If you qualify but don't get paid automatically, you'll need to make a claim.

Check whether you qualify by calling **03459 15 15 15** or visiting <https://www2.dwp.gov.uk/tps-directgov/en/contact-tps/winterfuel.asp>.

Priority Services Register

If you have particular care needs (e.g. if you are elderly or have health and disability needs), your supplier can put you on a Priority Services Register. Being on this list gives you access to free extra services including priority support if your power supply stops working, for meter reading and custom communications.

Contact your energy supplier for more information.

Energy grants

You can find out what government grants and payments are available to help you manage your energy costs through the UK government's grants calculator. See [gov.uk/energy-grants-calculator](https://www.gov.uk/energy-grants-calculator).



Price caps

Ofgem and the UK government have introduced price caps to ensure consumers, particularly the more vulnerable, pay a fairer price for their energy and are protected from being overcharged. They found the energy market is not working for all consumers and those who have not switched tariff or energy supplier were losing out.

You could be protected by:

- a **'prepayment' price cap** (sometimes called the 'safeguard tariff'). This applies if you use a prepayment meter to pay for your energy. This cap lasts until 2020.
- a **'default tariff' price cap**. This applies if you are on a 'default' or 'standard variable' energy tariff. This cap starts on 1 January 2019.

If you get the government's Warm Home Discount, and are on a 'standard variable' or 'default' tariff, you will currently be protected by the prepayment price cap. At the end of the year, this protection will transfer to the default tariff price cap.

Price caps work by limiting how much suppliers can charge you per unit of energy. They are based on the costs that Ofgem – Great Britain's energy regulator – calculates suppliers need to spend to get energy to your home. They don't limit your total bill, which will vary depending on how much energy you use.



If you have chosen to be on a fixed-term energy tariff, your prices will not be protected by the caps. These tariffs are more likely to be good value.

You don't need to do anything to be price protected – your supplier must apply the caps. But, even if you are covered, you should still shop around to see if you can save by switching to a different tariff or supplier. It is likely there will be offers which could save you even more money on your gas and electricity than staying on an energy contract covered by the price caps.

Your supplier can tell you if your energy tariff is covered by a price cap. They must also write to tell you if your tariff is changed in a way that could disadvantage you, or if the tariff you are on is no longer available. Find out more at [ofgem.gov.uk/energy-price-caps](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-price-caps).

Suppliers and price comparison websites may not show the capped price for 'default' and 'standard variable' tariffs for you to compare to other offers until the default tariff price cap applies on 1 January 2019.

Other help

A number of local charities and independent advice centres may be able to provide grants for people needing help with their energy costs. Contact your local council for more details. Visit [gov.uk/find-local-council](https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council).



Further information and support

Consumer support

Citizens Advice

For general help on consumer issues including energy, debt and legal information.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Tel: 0345 404 0506

Ombudsman Services: Energy (England, Scotland and Wales)

If you can't settle a dispute with a supplier.

www.ombudsman-services.org/energy

Tel: 0330 440 1624

Scope UK

Provides information and advice for disabled people.

www.scope.org.uk

Tel: 0808 800 3333

Age UK

Provides information and advice for older people.

www.ageuk.org.uk

Tel: 0800 169 2081

Energy saving

Energy Saving Trust

Provides free advice on home heating and energy efficiency in the UK.

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Tel (England): 0300 123 1234

Tel (Scotland): 0808 808 2282

Tel (Wales): 0800 512 012

Financial support

Department for Work and Pensions

For information on benefits and how to apply.

www.gov.uk/browse/benefits

Money Advice Service

For information and tools to help you manage money and debt.

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

National Debtline

Free debt advice, tools and tips.

www.nationaldebtline.org/

For more information, or if someone you know needs this information in another format, visit ofgem.gov.uk/energy-support.

This leaflet was written by Ofgem. We are the energy regulator in Great Britain. Information correct at November 2018.

www.ofgem.gov.uk