

Getting the best from your gas or electricity supplier

Whoever you buy your gas and electricity from, you need to make sure you are getting a good deal. This leaflet gives you a few starters ...

1) Are you on the best tariff?

If your existing energy supplier hasn't put you on the cheapest option (or 'tariff') you may be paying more than you need to for your gas or electricity. You can phone them to check; the number will be shown on your bill.

Your energy supplier may also offer something called the **Warm Home Discount Scheme**. All the 'big six' energy companies (plus some of the smaller suppliers) offer a fixed discount to certain vulnerable customers. For the winter of 2014-15, it's a £140 electricity bill rebate to bill payers who receive the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit. Some suppliers also offer this discount to other groups of customers, so if you receive any type of benefit, it's worth calling your supplier to check. See www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme for updates.

You may also qualify for the 'Priority Service Register' because you're disabled or have another particular need. See overleaf for details.



Everyone wants a good deal from their energy supplier. And there are savings to be made by switching supplier or by changing the way you pay for your gas or electricity.



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2) Dual fuel?

If you buy both your gas and electricity from the same supplier it is usually, but not always, cheaper. Again, check with your supplier.

3) Paying by monthly direct debit

Energy companies prefer customers to pay a fixed amount each month and will offer discounts of 5-10% to customers who do this. If you're not currently paying by direct debit, it may be worth doing so. If the amount you chose to pay by direct debit is not enough to cover the bill, or if you are being charged too much, you can call your supplier and request that the amount you pay is changed.

4) Switch to an internet tariff

This can save you another 10%. The only thing that will change is that you will get your bill by email.

5) Do a meter reading every time

Every time you receive a bill, check your meter. Most bills are based on estimates, and these are often inaccurate. If your supplier has under-estimated, you'll have to pay the difference at the end of the year. If they have over-estimated, you'll get refunded, but not for several months.

6) Avoid pre-payment meters if you can

Some people like pre-payment meters because they do make budgeting easy. But pre-payment customers don't benefit from direct-debit discounts, online discounts or prompt-payment discounts. So it usually pays to switch to a billed meter, though there may be a charge to do this. Go to www.energyhelpline.com to compare different companies' pre-payment tariffs.

What about switching to a new supplier?

According to the energy industry regulator, Ofgem, you could save £130 per year by switching supplier. The process is very easy: usually just a phone call and/or letter. And you will often make savings because the new energy company wants your custom and will offer you a good deal.

Use one of the price comparison and switching services listed below - these are accredited under the Ofgem Confidence Code:

www.uswitch.com | 0808 1783 492
www.energyhelpline.com | 0800 074 0745
www.moneysupermarket.com | 0845 345 5708
www.theenergystore.com | 0845 330 7247
www.simplyswitch.com | 0800 011 1395
www.energylinx.co.uk | 0800 849 7077
www.myutilitygenius.co.uk | 0203 468 0461
www.switchgasandelectric.com | 0871 711 7771
www.ukpower.co.uk | 0808 250 7341
www.unravelit.com | 0800 862 0021
www.which.co.uk/switch | 01992 822 867

It's very important to bear in mind that an offer from your new supplier may be only temporary, and that in due course you'll be put on a more expensive tariff. You should check this before making any commitment to switch.



What information will I need?

There are five pieces of information you will need to provide any switching company or supplier with so that they can calculate the best tariff for you and then do the switch. These are:

- Your current energy supplier
- The tariff you are on
- How much energy you use in kWh – it's always best to get these figures from an annual statement rather than a quarterly bill if you have one
- How you pay for your energy
- Your electricity and/or gas supply number

If you have a bill in your hand, you should be able to provide all of these details – see our 'Understanding your electricity/gas bill' leaflets for help finding them.

The Priority Services Register

If you have a disability or long-term health issue that means you rely on a constant electricity supply, e.g. for an oxygen machine, stairlift or bath hoist, you should contact your **District Network Operator**. This is the company that owns and runs the wires locally (in most of the South West it's 'Western Power Distribution'). They can put you on their Priority Services Register so that you'll receive emergency help in the event of a powercut, like providing you with a generator or sending the Red Cross to help you.

You can also register for your **energy supplier's** Priority Services Register. This will entitle you to help like:

- Quarterly meter readings to keep on top of bills
- Free gas safety checks
- Moving your meters to a more accessible place
- Special controls for appliances and meters
- Password protection scheme to deter bogus callers
- Get your bills sent to friends, relatives or carers
- Services for deaf or visually-impaired customers



This leaflet was originally produced by the Centre for Sustainable Energy, a national charity (no. 298740) that helps people change the way they think and act on energy | www.cse.org.uk

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

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For more support with energy efficiency please call **03332 404 444** or email enquiries@freebridge.org.uk