

# 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 fuel 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 fuel bill.

Your energy supplier may also offer something called the **Warm Home Discount Scheme** which is a discount for vulnerable customers. All the 'big six' energy companies (plus some of the smaller suppliers) are participating in this scheme. For the winter of 2013-14, it will give a £135 electricity bill rebate to people named on a gas or electricity bill who received the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit. The qualification benefit and amount of the rebate may change for next year. See [www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme).

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](http://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](http://www.uswitch.com) | **0808 1783 492**  
[www.energyhelpline.com](http://www.energyhelpline.com) | **0800 074 0745**  
[www.moneysupermarket.com](http://www.moneysupermarket.com) | **0845 345 5708**  
[www.theenergystore.com](http://www.theenergystore.com) | **0845 330 7247**  
[www.simplyswitch.com](http://www.simplyswitch.com) | **0800 011 1395**  
[www.energylinx.co.uk](http://www.energylinx.co.uk) | **0800 849 7077**  
[www.myutilitygenius.co.uk](http://www.myutilitygenius.co.uk) | **0203 468 0461**  
[www.switchgasandelectric.com](http://www.switchgasandelectric.com) | **0871 711 7771**  
[www.ukpower.co.uk](http://www.ukpower.co.uk) | **0808 250 7341**  
[www.unravelit.com](http://www.unravelit.com) | **0800 862 0021**  
[www.which.co.uk/switch](http://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 your switching company or new supplier 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 are of pensionable age, disabled or have long-term health issues you can ask to be put on the Priority Services Register and receive extra help from your energy supplier. This might include:

- Quarterly meter readings to keep on top of bills
- Free gas-safety check
- Relocation of meters to a more accessible place
- Advance notice of disruption to supply
- Special controls for appliances and meters
- Password protection scheme to deter bogus callers
- Bills sent to friends, relatives or carers
- Services for hearing-impaired and/or vision-impaired customers

Lots more information, free downloads and tips on saving energy at [www.cse.org.uk/loveyourhome](http://www.cse.org.uk/loveyourhome). Check out the **understanding your electricity bill** page.

This leaflet was originally produced by the **Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE)** and reprinted in this version on behalf of SEACS.

CSE's Home Energy Team offers free advice on domestic energy use to householders in Bristol and Somerset (including the unitary authorities of North Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset).

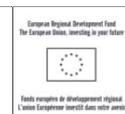
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