

Understanding your gas and electricity bills

It's worth taking the time to understand your bills, as this is a good way to take control of your energy use and start saving money.

There are three things to check your bills for:

- 1 That you're being billed for the right amount.
- 2 That you're not building up any debt.
- 3 If there's a cheaper tariff you can move to.

The type of document you receive from your energy supplier depends on how you pay. This will be either a bill asking for payment, or a statement, showing what you have already paid. There is no standard bill layout, so documents may look different between suppliers, and some companies provide bills online.

Prepayment meters

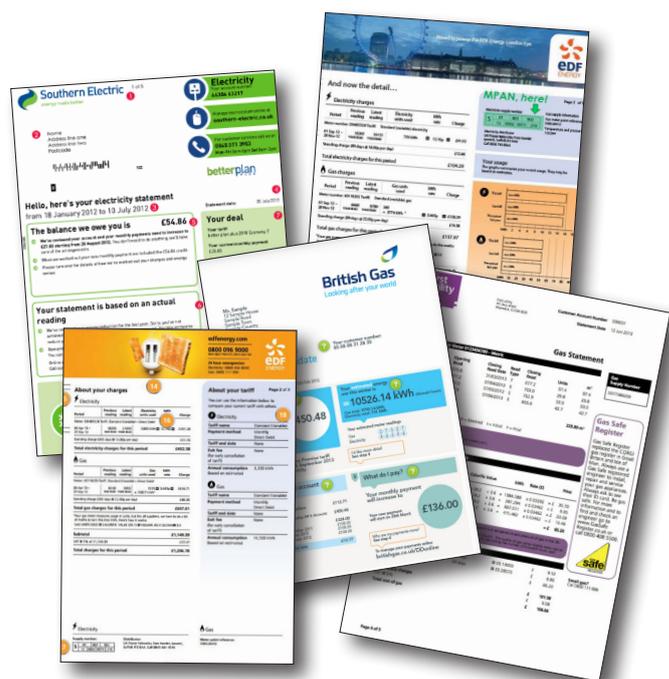
Prepayment meters require payment before energy is used, similar to a pay-as-you-go system. Energy costs are usually higher during colder months and lower in warmer months, so planning ahead is important. Some people prefer this way of paying as you can keep a careful eye on what you use and set budgets.

Credit meters

Credit meters allow you to pay for energy after it has been used, either through regular direct debit payments or by paying bills as they arrive. Bills are usually sent quarterly or monthly. Payments can be made in full, by instalments,

If you are **struggling to pay your bills**, contact your energy supplier as soon as possible. They will set up a manageable payment plan to help you. Don't just ignore your energy supplier's request for payments.

If you're juggling several different debts, speak to a specialist debt advice service before agreeing any further payment plans.



or by direct debit.

Direct debit amounts are typically calculated using past energy use and spread evenly over 12 months. This means you may pay more than you use in summer and less than you use in winter. Credit meters often offer more tariff choices, but it can be easier to fall into debt or pay more than necessary. To ensure accurate billing, meter readings should be provided regularly.

If your statement shows a large credit or debit, it is a good idea to submit a meter reading and ask your supplier to review your payments as soon as possible. You can also request a refund for any excess credit.

Smart meters

Smart meters work with both prepayment and credit accounts and include an in-home display that shows real-time energy usage, daily costs, and remaining credit for prepayment customers. Using the display is optional, and with a smart meter you may no longer need to submit meter readings.

Paperless billing

Some suppliers offer a discount to customers who manage their bills online and stop receiving paper bills in the post.

Online accounts allow you to see your bills, provide meter readings and sometimes even switch tariff. But for some this change means they're less likely to look at their bills, which may end up causing problems.



Mr G Smith
123 Fore Street
Newtown NT3 5ZZ

1 Account number **1234 0000 789**

2 Bill date **16 February 2026**

Your gas and electricity bill

Period: 10 November 2025 – 15 February 2026 **2**

Need help?

Call **0845 000 246**

Mon - Fri: 07.00 - 20.00

Saturday: 08.00 - 18.00

Sunday: 08.00 - 12.00

Please have your customer reference number handy when you call us

Last period

Balance on last statement (10 Nov 2025): **3** **£10.50** in debit

Payments received: **4** **£273.00** in credit

Direct Debit 25 November 2025: £91.00

Direct Debit 27 December 2025: £91.00

Direct Debit 25 January 2026: **5** £91.00

Your account balance on 14 February 2026: **£262.50** in credit

Your actual meter reads:

Gas: 8780

Electricity: 19151

This period

Previous account balance: **6** **£262.50** in credit

Charges for this period (including VAT): **£304.78**

Your new account balance: **7** **£42.28** in debit

What do I pay? **8**

£91

Your next monthly payment of £91.00 will be taken on 25th February 2026. You don't have to take any action.

Could I pay less? **9**

Your Personal Projection for the next 12 months for gas is £582.54 and for electricity is £475.23 (based on your annual consumption, tariff prices, discounts and VAT).

Electricity

Our cheapest overall tariff **10**

Online Fixed Saver September 2027

Estimated annual saving: £43

Gas

Our cheapest overall tariff

Online Fixed Saver September 2027

Estimated annual saving: £56

What's on your bill?

1 Account or customer number.

This is unique to you, and you'll need it when you contact your supplier.

2 Bill date and bill period.

The bill date is when the bill or statement was sent out. The bill period is the date range that the bill or statement relates to.

3 Balance on last statement.

This shows the balance carried over from the last bill or statement you received. It should match the account balance on the last bill or statement you received.

4 Payments received.

This records payments made since the last bill or statement. If it's a bill, your payment(s) to pay off the last bill should be recorded here. If it's a statement, you should see all your monthly direct debits or your top-ups. If any of these payments are missing you need to contact your supplier.

5 Previous account balance.

This is the outstanding balance from the last bill or statement less any payments made since. On a bill, this figure will be £0.00 if you have paid off your previous bill.

On a direct debit statement this figure should be a considerable credit.

6 Charges for this period (including VAT).

This records the total costs incurred of all the gas and/or electricity used within this billing period. To see more about how this is calculated see sections 13-15 below.

7 Your new account balance.

This is what you owe, or are owed, in total. It's a combination of the charges for this period plus the balance from the previous period, taking account of all of payments received.

8 What do I pay?

This is how much you pay currently if you are paying by direct debit, or how much you owe if it's a bill. It may be more or less than your average monthly usage to account for previous over or under payment.

9 Estimate for the next 12 months.

This is a prediction of how much your gas and/or electricity will cost over the next year.

10 Cheaper tariffs.

Your bill or statement must show whether there is a cheaper tariff you could switch to with your current supplier. Your supplier's

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About your tariff

ELECTRICITY

Tariff name Price Fix May 2026
Payment method Direct Debit
Exit date 31 May 2026
Exit fee Not applicable
Annual consumption 2983 kWh

GAS

Tariff name Price Fix May 2026
Payment method Direct Debit
Exit date 31 May 2026
Exit fee Not applicable
Annual consumption 9734 kWh

About your charges

Electricity | Meter: S63G09043

Period	Previous reading	Latest reading	Electricity units used	kWh rate	Charge
10 Nov 25 – 15 Feb 26	18395 <i>Estimated</i>	19151 <i>Your read</i>	756 kWh x	13.55p =	£102.44

14 Standing charge (88 days @ 18.00p per day) = £15.84
 Total electricity charges for this period £118.28

Gas | G4K68890234

Period	Previous reading	Latest reading	Gas units used	kWh rate	Charge
10 Nov 25 – 15 Feb 26	8440 <i>Estimated</i>	8780 <i>Your read</i>	340 = 3776 kWh* x	4.042p =	£152.63

14 Standing charge (88 days @ 22.00p per day) = £19.36
 Total gas charges for this period £171.99

*Your gas meter measures usage in units, but we bill in kWh. Here's how it works:
 GAS UNITS USED x CALORIFIC VALUE (39.1) x VOLUME AS (1.02264) ÷ 3.6 . So: 340 x 39.1 x 1.02264 ÷ 3.6 = 3776 kWh

Subtotal

VAT @ 5% of £290.27

Total charges for this period

£290.27

£14.51

£304.78

Your electricity supply number is:

S	01	801	902
12	0002	0075	216

Your gas meter point reference number is: 50 63 45 19 04

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customer service team can usually also advise. Your supplier normally only displays their own offers, but another supplier might be much cheaper.

11 About your tariff.

The 'about your tariff' box contains all the information needed to compare your tariff against the market, including:

- The name of your tariff.
- How you pay for fuel.
- The date your defined-length tariff ends (if you have one).
- Any exit fees you may have to pay. These can apply on any defined length tariff and you pay them if you switch to a different tariff more than four weeks before the

tariff end date (above).

- Usage over last 12 months. This is your estimated annual usage, calculated from all the meter readings received. This is the best figure to use when comparing tariffs.

12 Meter readings.

If you have an *estimated read*, your bill or statement will generally say 'estimated' or 'e' next to the reading. If it says 'c' or 'a' then it's a 'customer supplied' or 'actual' reading. You should provide an accurate reading every month if possible, especially if you've recently moved in or changed supplier.

13 Unit rate.

This is the price you pay per unit of gas or electricity, both of which are measured in kilowatt hours (kWh). If you are on Economy 7 there will be two electricity unit rates: one for peak times, the other for off-peak. Your gas meter will *measure* gas in either cubic meters (m³) or 100s of cubic feet (hcf), but, like electricity, gas is *sold* in kilowatt hours. The way this is calculated is shown on your bill. Our example bill shows a calculation for a metric meter. You can convert from hcf to m³ by multiplying by 2.83.

14 Standing charge.

This is the charge you pay per day, regardless of how much

gas and/or electricity you use. Some suppliers have no daily standing charge, or reduce it if you pay by direct debit.

15 VAT.

VAT on domestic electricity and gas is 5%. If you're paying more than this, then you're being charged a commercial rate and should contact your supplier immediately.

16 Meter Point Reference Number (MPRN) and Meter Point Administration Number (MPAN).

These are your unique supply numbers: MPAN or 'S number' for electricity and 'MPRN' for gas. By law they must appear on your bill. When you switch supplier, it helps to provide these numbers.



A few ways to cut your electricity and gas use, and save money ...



Give your clothes a day in the sun; and give your tumble drier a break. Clothes dried in the fresh air feel great, and there are drying days in winter, too.

When you're cooking, keep the oven door shut as much as possible; every time you open it, nearly a quarter of the heat escapes.



Food in the oven cooks faster when the air inside flows freely, **so don't put foil on the racks.**

Don't leave your phone on charge all night. It only needs three hours – and try not to leave the TV and other kit on stand-by.



Catch 'em young. Encourage your children to switch off electric toys and lights that they're not using. They'll soon get the hang of saving energy.

Cup of tea or coffee? Only fill the kettle with as much water as you'll actually use (but make sure you cover the metal element at the base).



Dodge the draught!

Fit draught-excluders to your front door, letter box and key hole, and draw your curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.

Buying a new appliance? Check the energy label and buy A-rated goods for the most efficient.



Be a friend to your freezer. Defrost it regularly to help it run more efficiently.

Turn your heating down by just 1 degree. You'll hardly notice the change in temperature, but it'll make a big difference to your heating bill.



Wait until you have a full load before running the dishwasher or washing machine. One full load uses less energy (and water) than two half-loads.

Sleep tight. Make sure all the lights are turned off when you go to bed, or use a low-wattage night light if you do need to leave one on.



New computer? Laptops typically use around 85% less energy than a new desktop PC.



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We're a charity (298740) supporting people and organisations across the UK to tackle the climate emergency and end the suffering caused by cold homes.

Our Home Energy Team offers free advice on domestic energy use to people in central southern and southwest England.

Contact us:

PHONE 0800 082 2234

EMAIL home.energy@cse.org.uk

See all our energy advice pages at www.cse.org.uk/advice