

Unexpectedly high energy bills

Is your gas or electricity bill much higher than you would expect? This leaflet will help you to work out why ...

If you receive a bill that is much higher than you were expecting – even taking into account the increases in energy prices that saw bills more than double between 2021 and 2022 – then it's worth doing some further investigating. Something may be wrong with your meter, your billing or an appliance.

Are your bills based on accurate up to date meter readings?

Bills are often based on estimated readings, so it's important to make sure your bill is accurate. You can usually submit meter readings online or over the phone. (See our [website](#) for more about how to do this.) If you have a smart meter, submitting a reading you've taken yourself will help to check if it is communicating with the supplier and sending accurate readings. If you find that it's not, inform your supplier.

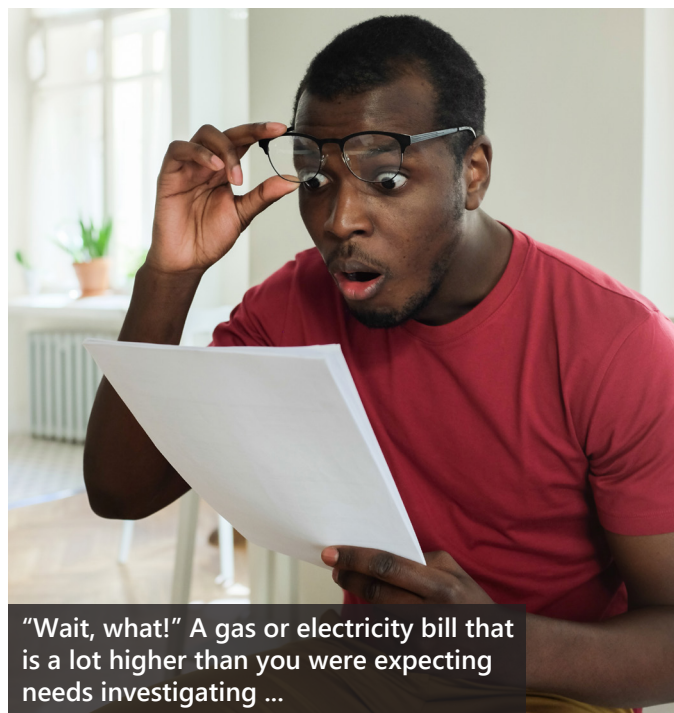
If you have changed suppliers it may be that the closing and opening meter readings were estimated. When your new supplier receives an accurate reading they will bill your actual usage across both suppliers and this may be higher than you are expecting. Especially if you haven't submitted an actual meter reading for some time.

Is there something new or different at home?

Sometimes people buy or install a new electric appliance without realising that it is very energy-hungry, and they get a terrible shock when their new electricity bill arrives.

You may be able to look at your energy usage history for your gas and electricity. This can be found on your bill, in your energy supplier's app or by calling your supplier. It may help you pinpoint when the increase started to happen as it may coincide with a new item, change in the home or change in how often you use an item.

Bear in mind items that produce **heat** such as hot tubs, electric fires and tumble dryers will use significantly more



"Wait, what!" A gas or electricity bill that is a lot higher than you were expecting needs investigating ...

energy than most of your other appliances. Older appliances can be inefficient, and if they're faulty they can use more energy than they should. (See our webpage on [how much energy different appliances use](#).)

Smart meters with in-home displays show you how much energy you're using and how much it is costing at any time. This makes it easier to identify high-use appliances and reduces the chance of there being an unidentified issue with your meter. If you would like a smart meter or a replacement in home display, ask your energy supplier. (See our webpage for more information on [smart meters](#).)

Is your home on an Economy 7 electricity tariff?

Economy 7 is a special type of contract that means your electricity is cheaper at night and more expensive in the day. This means it's only suitable for homes that aren't on the mains gas network and use cheap-rate electricity at night for night storage heaters and to heat the water in a tank. If you have night storage heaters check you are on the Economy 7 tariff. It should say on your bill and your energy company will be able to tell you.

Check that the night storage heaters and your hot water tank are set correctly so that you're not wasting money. Our website has [information on how to do this](#).

Check if your meters are set up the right way round. Sometimes your day-time usage is charged at the night rate, and your night-time usage at the day rate. If this is happening and you're using night storage heaters, it will make your bills very high. You need to compare the two readings on your meter (day-rate and night-rate) against what your bill says. The day and night-rates are normally clearly labelled on the meter, but if not you can identify which is which by boiling a kettle to make one of the numbers move rapidly. Compare the readings to those on your bill or call your energy company to check their readings match yours.

Does your bill include repayment of debt?

Check if you owe your energy company money. They may be adding repayment instalments which are making your monthly or quarterly bills significantly higher or mean the money you top up doesn't last very long. See our factsheets on Energy Debt for more advice.

Does your direct debit reflect your usage?

If the amount your energy supplier is asking for is above your usage you are within your rights to ask for it to be reviewed so that you're not overpaying and accruing large amounts of credit.

Do you have a faulty meter?

There is way you can test for this:

1. Switch off everything in your home including the lights, heating and hot water (as long as your fridge and freezer doors are closed, they'll stay cold).
2. Wait 10-15 minutes and take a reading of all your meters. Take the reading directly from the meter rather than from your in-home display.
3. Wait for an hour and take another meter reading. You can now turn everything back on.



If your second reading is not the same as your first, you may have a faulty meter.

If it's the gas meter, you might have a gas leak. Report it immediately to the National Grid Gas Emergency line on 0800 111 999.

Contact your supplier and inform them of the results of your test. They may want more information and additional meter readings. They may arrange for an engineer visit to mend or change the meter. However, they can often resolve the issue without sending out an engineer and will connect to your meter remotely to investigate further. If you ask for an engineer to visit and they find the meter is not faulty, they may ask you to pay a fee.



Regularly keep in contact with them until the problem is resolved and you have been rebilled correctly. The process may take some time.

Are your solar panels set up correctly?

Incredibly, it sometimes happens that people with solar panels are charged for the energy their panels generate due to their account being set up incorrectly. This can result in some very large bills! If you think this might be happening to you, speak to your energy supplier immediately.

If you're still not sure of the cause of your high bills, please call our advice line and we'll see if we can help to figure it out with you.

This is one of a series of factsheets on domestic energy use produced by the Centre for Sustainable Energy. See them all at www.cse.org.uk/advice-leaflets



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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 Bristol, Somerset, Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire, Dorset, Berkshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire.

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