

10 Ways to Save on Energy Bills

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1. Switch energy supplier: save ££s

If you haven't switched your energy supplier in the last **3 years**, there's a good chance you could save money. For example according to people who used an independent comparison site "**Which? Switch**" to switch suppliers saved on average £297 a year on their gas and electricity bills.

If you have already switched energy supplier make sure you're on the **cheapest tariff**. The biggest savings are for paying by monthly **direct debit** and choosing an **online tariff** managed on the internet.

If you want the **same supplier** for gas and electricity, then getting a **dual-fuel** deal will nearly always be cheaper. But if you don't mind having **separate suppliers**, research found that going for the **cheapest** electricity supplier and the **cheapest** gas supplier can still save you money.

It's also worth considering going for a smaller, newer Supplier rather than one of the Big 6 as the newer companies may have better offers available.

2. Turn down your thermostat: save ££s

Reducing room temperatures by just 1°C can cut heating bills by up to £85-£90 a year in a typical home, according to the Energy Saving Trust.

- ☆ Set the room thermostat to 18°C and then turn it up by **one degree** each day until you find a temperature you're comfortable with. Note that the **temperature should not drop below 16°C** for elderly people and those with impaired mobility.
- ☆ Try putting an extra layer on (such as a jumper, socks or slippers) rather than turn up the heating.
- ☆ Ensure **the thermostat** has a free flow of air to sense the temperature accurately, make sure it is **not covered** by curtains, **or blocked** by furniture as this will affect the temperature (as will other heat sources, televisions and lamps).
- ☆ You could set **lower temperatures** in parts of the home that aren't used very often, or at certain times of the day/night.
- ☆ **Don't block** radiators, storage heaters etc. with furniture or curtains as the **air** needs to **circulate**.
- ☆ Consider a **smart thermostat** which lets you operate your heating remotely via the internet. There are numerous ones out there including Nest, Hive and Honeywell Evohome to name a few.

3. Replace light bulbs: save ££s

Energy-saving light bulbs can help to **reduce** your energy bills easily. For example if you replace **10 light bulbs** in your home with **energy-saving ones**, you could save about **£70** a year. Remember, energy-saving light bulbs do last longer than traditional ones ~ most LEDs claim around 25,000 hours, whereas traditional light bulbs last around 1,000 hours.

As traditional, incandescent light bulbs have been phased out under EU rules, energy-saving light bulbs are now used in households throughout Europe. Replacing just one 60W incandescent light bulb with an **LED** bulb can save almost £7.50 a year and with Best Buy bulbs from around £5, they can pay for themselves within 12 months, and they last much longer. Don't forget to turn off lights when they are not in use, and use the best bulb for the size of room or the job it will do.

[Even though energy-saving light bulbs are slightly more expensive to buy than traditional types, you'll usually make back the difference in electricity savings in a year. On average, a single halogen bulb under normal usage will cost £8.42 a year to run, a CFL £2.04 and an LED £1.71]

4. Cut draughts: save up to £50

Stop heat from escaping through unwanted gaps it could help you save up to £50 a year. Take a look at the following areas:

- ☆ **Windows** ~ use draught-proofing strips around the frame (brush strips work better for sash windows). The foam seal is like a thick tape and comes in rolls of various colours, and are easy to install as they are self adhesive. (These are available from DIY stores)
- ☆ **Doors** ~ use draught-proofing strips for gaps around the edges, and brush or hinged-flap draught excluders on the bottom of doors (also known as a weather bar, or door brush strip). Even a good old fashioned draught excluder which looks a bit like a stuffed sausage dog would suffice (and these can be made by filling a piece of fabric with old clothes, or dry uncooked rice etc).

Letterbox draught excluders are also popular and the plate fits to the letterbox.

Keyhole covers are a metallic disc that stops draughts coming through but don't stop you using your keys!

- ☆ **Chimney and fireplace** ~ if you don't use your fireplace speak to the Council about getting it blocked.
- ☆ **Floorboards and skirting.** Floorboards need to move, so use a flexible silicone-based filler to fill the gaps
- ☆ **Loft hatches.** You can prevent hot air escaping by using draught-proofing strips.

However you do not want a completely sealed home as you will then find you may get issues with condensation, you will need to ensure there is good ventilation in areas where there are open fires or open flues and in rooms where moisture is produced (i.e. kitchen and bathroom).

5. Choose energy-efficient appliances

If you're replacing an appliance, you can cut your electricity bills by choosing the **most energy-efficient model**. For example, running costs for washing machines vary between £11-£50/year. Things to look out for are whether there is an **eco (energy save) setting; time delay**

Choosing the most energy-efficient models can result in annual savings of around £39 for a washing machine, £100 for a tumble dryer and £62 for a fridge-freezer. So when your appliance is in need of replacing check out the energy efficiency of the replacement. (A++ rating is the best)

One test carried out showed that a 50 inch plasma TV had an annual running cost of £83 based on watching it for 5 hours a day. Check to see if your TV has an **eco mode** as this will save electricity. (LED TVs are more energy efficient than LCDs or plasma TVs)

Remember to **switch** the TV **off** as leaving appliances on standby can cost households on average £86 each year

6. Know the most economical setting to have your boiler on

Make sure you are using your boiler **efficiently**, and that it has had its annual service. (If you are unsure when the boiler was last serviced call the Contact Centre on 03450 450 501 and ask them to check.)

Ensure **radiators** are working correctly (**no air pockets**) and that there are **no obstructions** in front of them (such as furniture).

WHEN TO HAVE YOUR HEATING ON:

This does come down to personal preference a lot of the time, however there is much research that suggests that having the heating on **continuously**, at a **lower temperature** during the colder months uses less energy to heat up the house from cold each and every time, as it maintains the heat at a constant temperature (thus costing less).

Whilst we appreciate people have been used to using the programmer to control when the heating comes it might be worth doing a little trial of both methods to see for yourself, you may be surprised with the results!

Take meter readings for 2 weeks with the heating on timer, and then again with it on continuously for a further 2 weeks with the temperature set lower and then compare the readings, and make your own decision.

7. Get an energy monitor or smart meter

An **energy monitor** is a simple handheld gadget that estimates in real time how much energy you're using, so you can see where to cut back. Monitors cost from around £25, but some gas and electricity suppliers give them away free, ask your gas or electricity supplier.

Smart meters are an alternative to traditional gas and electricity meters. They measure your exact energy consumption and send all the information back to your gas or electricity supplier ~ so no more estimated bills. The government wants every home to have a smart meter by 2020, and plans to start officially rolling this out from 2016. However, some energy suppliers have already started installing smart meters in their customers' homes. Call your energy supplier for more details.

Wherever possible (at least quarterly) give meter readings to your energy supplier so that your bills are accurate and not estimated

8. Loft Insulation

The Council has an extensive programme to ensure all lofts have **at least 270mm** of insulation in them to stop heat being lost.

This is a rolling programme of works, being carried out over a number of years, and tenants will be contacted when they are due to have the works done. *[Please bear with us, as there are some 1500 properties still to be done!]*

Once the insulation is in place, please try not to move it about or place items directly on top as this will affect how it works and can cause cold spots which can then lead to other issues.

9. Save energy on household chores!

- ☆ **Rechargeable batteries:** These are definitely worth the investment but it's important to buy ones that offer good value for money, last and hold their charge. The best batteries will hold up to **90%** of their charge **after 50 days** ~ the worst, only 38%.
- ☆ **Energy saving plugs:** Eco button can be plugged into a USB port on a computer, and it flashes to remind you to press it when you take a break. It then puts your computer into its most efficient energy-saving mode.
- ☆ Make sure your **Hot water tank/cistern is insulated**. If on Economy 7 check to see if there is a timer on your immersion and make sure it comes on overnight when electricity is cheapest.
- ☆ Remember to **switch off** appliances that aren't being used – don't just leave them on standby!
- ☆ Remember to **turn lights off** in rooms that aren't being used.
- ☆ **Open curtains** to let the sunshine in, but remember to close them at dusk to stop draughts and heat escaping through the windows.
- ☆ Only fill the kettle with the **amount of water** you need for a cuppa, and remember to **descale** the kettle of limescale as you use more energy to boil the same amount of water.

☆ Be **efficient with cooking** – bake a **few meals** at a time to get the most out of the oven being on! Once you've finished cooking leave the **oven door open** to make the most of the heat.

(You could even consider using stainless steel skewers when baking a potato or joint of meat to speed up the cooking process.)

- **Cut food into smaller pieces** as these will cook more quickly than larger pieces.
- **Turn off an electric oven 10 minutes** before the end of the cooking time – it will still keep to the same temperature and save you pennies
- Put just **enough water** in a pan to cover the vegetables, or alternatively consider microwaving them, or get a steamer. Always **put lids on pans** when cooking to keep the heat in.
- **Turn down** rings/burners once the cooking temperature / boiling point (or state) has been reached.

☆ Always put a **full load** in the washing machine or dishwasher.

- Use the **eco cycle** ~ or wash clothes at 40°C
- Use the **spin / drain cycle** after the wash to give the clothes an extra wring, and if you must dry clothes in the home use a clothes horse, and open a window to avoid condensation build up.
- Make sure you use the machines during the **cheapest electricity rate** – so if you are on Economy 7 set the machine's delay-start function to come on at night.

- ☆ Don't forget to **clean the lint filter** every time you use the tumble dryer.
- ☆ Don't leave the door open longer than necessary for **fridges/freezers**, and avoid putting warm food in – allow it to cool first.
- ☆ Keep the inside of the fridge between 0~5°C (but make sure it's not too warm or the food will spoil so use a fridge thermometer).
- ☆ Defrost the frozen food section of the fridge regularly to avoid frost buildup, not forgetting to remove dust on the condenser coils at the back of the fridge/freezer.

10. Free help and advice

The **Energy Saving Trust** has a free home energy check tool on its website that could help you find out where to make energy-efficiency improvements and how much you might save.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) can give free, independent advice on dealing with debt.

Home Heat Helpline offer advice and help with your heating bills 0800 336 699

Warm Homes Discount: If you get the **Guarantee Credit** element of **Pension Credit** and your electricity supplier is part of the scheme ask them about the **Warm Homes Discount**. (You should get the discount automatically so check with your electricity supplier in the first instance, if you are unsure then call the Government's Warm Home Discount Scheme on 0345 603 9439)

Winter Fuel Allowance: If you were born on or before **5th January 1953*** you should receive £100-£300 to help with your heating bills.

[This date changes every year as it is for people aged 63yrs plus]*

National Concessionary Fuel Scheme: Only available for ex-employees (and their widows/widowers) of the National Coal Board or British Coal Corporation. Contact National Concessionary Fuel Office on 0845 759 0529 or email ncfo@capita.co.uk

Cold Weather Payment: You will get £25 for each consecutive **7 day period** of very cold weather (**zero degrees Celsius or lower**) between 1st November and 31st March, and are on certain benefits. (This will be paid automatically in to your bank account.)

Please note: If you need assistance with paying certain bills contact JobCentre Plus (or Pension Centre if you're a pensioner) and ask for their assistance with third party deductions, or Fuel Direct.

Struggling to pay your energy bill? Contact your supplier to explain your situation and offer to pay an amount you can afford. All energy suppliers follow a code of practice that means they **must** take certain steps before cutting off your supply. (So they won't cut you off if you agree a regular payment plan with them and then keep to it.)

Check your energy company's code of practice to find out its policy on helping vulnerable customers. You can do this by checking the **About Us** section on your gas / electricity supplier's website, or by calling them on one of these specialist phone numbers:

British Gas: Priority Service Register 0800 072 8625

EDF: Priority Service Register 0800 269 450

Eon: Caring Energy Team 0345 301 5882 (option 1)

Npower: Warm Response Service 0808 172 6999

SSE: Careline 0800 622 838

Scottish Power : Carefree Response 0800 027 0072
(from landlines) or 0345 270 0700 (from mobiles)

Energy suppliers should be willing to set up a payment plan for debt that suits you, even if you have been threatened with disconnection. Debt can be repaid through a variety of means including:-

- **Fuel Direct** - a scheme where energy payments are made direct from benefits (more information below)
- **Pre-payment meter** - but usually you end up paying far more for energy, so ask about other options first
- British Gas, EDF, Eon and Npower have set up independent **charitable trusts** to give grants to some customers to help them pay for fuel arrears.