

# Switching tariffs and other ways to get the best from your energy supplier

According to the energy industry regulator, Ofgem, you could save £130 per year by switching supplier or by changing your tariff.

The process of switching suppliers is very easy, and can usually be done with a phone call and/or a letter. And you will often make savings because the new energy company wants your custom and will offer you a good deal. An easy way to make the switch is by using one of the price comparison and switching services listed below.

[www.uswitch.co.uk](http://www.uswitch.co.uk) | 0800 404 7908

[www.moneysupermarket.com](http://www.moneysupermarket.com) | 0845 345 1296

[www.saveonyourbills.co.uk](http://www.saveonyourbills.co.uk) | 0800 055 3800

[www.switchwithwhich.co.uk](http://www.switchwithwhich.co.uk) | 0800 533031

[www.theenergyshop.com](http://www.theenergyshop.com) | 0845 330 7247

[www.simplyswitch.com](http://www.simplyswitch.com) | 0800 011 1395

However, before doing this, you should check if your existing gas or electricity supplier has a cheaper option for you. You may find that an offer from your new supplier is only temporary, and that you'll be put on a more expensive tariff in due course. The thing to remember is that it is not only **who** supplies your energy that matters, but **how** you are billed as well.

## 1) Dual fuel?

If you buy your gas **and** electricity from the same supplier it is usually cheaper, but not always, so you should bear this in mind when making your comparison.

## 2) Paying by monthly direct debit

Energy companies like it if you pay a fixed amount each month and will offer discounts of 5-10% to customers who do this. If your direct debit is not covering the bill or you are being charged too much, you can call up and request that the amount you pay is changed.

## 3) 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.

## 4) 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 end of the year. If they have over-estimated, you'll get refunded, but not for several months.

## 5) 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. Compare pre-payment tariffs at [www.energyhelpline.com](http://www.energyhelpline.com)

## 6) Do you qualify for a 'social' tariff?

Some energy companies offer special, cheaper tariffs to those who are in financial hardship. But, oddly enough, these aren't necessarily the cheapest tariffs (people paying by direct debit and on-line often pay less). If you think you may qualify, ask your supplier.

## 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/vision impaired customers



You can save money by saving gas and electricity. Turn the page to find out how

Turn over for energy saving tips ▶

Most UK households get their gas and electricity from one of the 'big six' energy suppliers



# Tips for lower energy bills

Happy paying your gas and electricity supplier more money than you need to?

Thought not. Here are 15 ways to cut your bills ...

1) **Keep the oven door shut as much as possible;** every time you open it, nearly a quarter of the heat escapes.



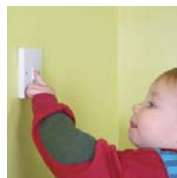
2) **Give your clothes a day in the sun;** and give your tumble drier a break. Clothes dried in the fresh air feel great, and there are drying days in winter, too.

3) **Food in the oven cooks faster when the air inside flows freely,** so avoid putting foil on the racks.

4) **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.

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

6) **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.



7) **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.

8) **When boiling water, only fill the kettle with as much as you'll actually use** (but make sure you cover the metal element at the base).

9) **Buying a new TV, washing machine or dishwasher?** Look out for the Energy Saving Trust 'recommended' logo, and remember: the bigger the TV, the more energy it'll use.



10) **Dimmer is smarter.** Use your dimmer switches to reduce the amount of energy used to light your room.

11) **Wait until you have a full load before putting on a wash.** Two half-loads use more energy (and water) than one full load.



12) **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.

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

14) **Put your fridge in a good spot.** Somewhere the air can circulate behind it, but not next to a cooker or radiator.

15) **New computer?** Remember a laptop typically uses around 85% less energy than a new desktop PC.

For free domestic energy advice, call **0800 512 012** \*  
or go to **[www.cse.org.uk/advice](http://www.cse.org.uk/advice)**



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We are a national charity that shares our knowledge and experience to help people change the way they think and act on energy.



More energy advice at  
[cse.org.uk/advice](http://cse.org.uk/advice)