

# Gas and electricity

## How to read the meters

It's important to provide your energy supplier with regular meter readings, rather than relying on their estimates.

If you don't read your meters regularly, your supplier will send you **estimated bills**. This means you might be paying for more or less gas and electricity than you have really used. If you pay too little for a long time, you'll end up with a big debt that you have to pay off later. Meter readers don't come round very often any more, so it's best to do it yourself once a month or when you get your bill.

### Which meter is which?

It's easy to get them confused! Electric cables can be seen coming in and out of an electricity meter, while thicker pipes and hoses come out of gas meters.

### Electricity

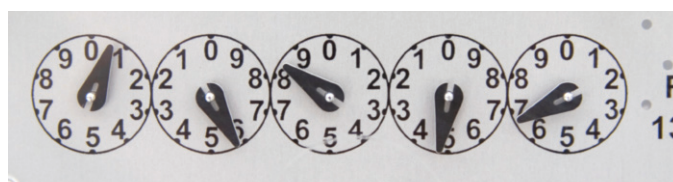
Electricity meters show how much power a home has used, measured in kilowatt hours (abbreviated to kWh). Some older ones have a series of five dials, like little clock faces (picture, top right). To read this kind of meter, start with the dial on the **left**, even if the dials are arranged slightly differently from the picture.

Write down the number that the pointer has **just gone past**, in this case '0', then move on to the next dial. This looks as if it's showing '6', but, remember, we want the number that it has **passed** which is '5'. *And note that some dials in the row turn clockwise while others turn anti-clockwise.*

Sometimes a pointer may be directly above a number, so it is difficult to tell if it has passed it or hasn't quite reached it. If this is the case, look at the dial to its right. If that one shows a high number, then the pointer has **not** passed the digit that it is hovering above. If it shows a low number it has.

### Prepayment meters

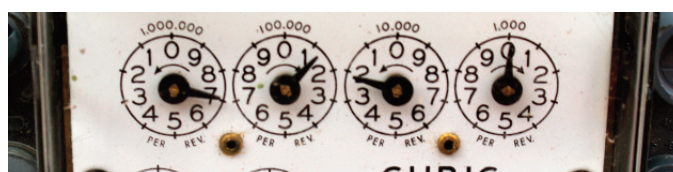
Additional information is displayed on **prepayment meters**. For an explanation of these, see our advice leaflet, or contact your supplier who will send a card/guide with instructions for using your particular meter.



Electricity (dial meter)



Electricity (digital meter)



Gas meter

The full reading for this meter is 05846. When reading an electricity meter, you should end up with a five-digit number.

Other electricity meters look like car milometers (middle photo). These are easier to read, and again, if a digit is ever in-between, look at the one to its right to work it out. Ignore any red numbers. This one reads 17319.

### Gas

While *electricity* is measured in kWh, *gas* is measured in cubic metres or cubic feet (like in the picture above). Gas bills use cubic metres (and then convert this to kWh) but should explain how they've converted from cubic feet if that's what your meter uses. See the other leaflet in this series: 'Reading your gas bill'.

Again, to read the meter, start on the left and note the digit that the pointer has just passed. If the pointer is directly above a number, you can tell if it has passed it or not by referring to the next dial. The meter above reads 7120. When reading a gas meter you should always end up with a four-digit number.

**Gas and electricity meters show a cumulative total; they are not reset each time the meter is read**

# Tips for lower energy bills

Don't your gas and electricity supplier more money than you need to? [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 don't put 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 somewhere in the house

**13) Turn your heating down by one 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.



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