

# Switching supplier



## Thinking about switching to a new supplier?

According to the energy industry regulator, Ofgem, switching could save you around £300 a year. And, despite what you might have heard switching gas or electricity supplier is very easy.

The best and easiest way to find out if you could save money by switching is to use an independent comparison site.



CSE has a partnership with [energyhelpline](http://energyhelpline.com) to make comparing suppliers easier: [www.energyhelpline.com/cse-switch](http://www.energyhelpline.com/cse-switch)

All the comparison sites below are accredited by Ofgem and give accurate and impartial information about tariffs.

[www.energyhelpline.com](http://www.energyhelpline.com) | 0800 074 0745  
[uswitch.com](http://uswitch.com) | 0808 1783 492  
[moneysupermarket.com](http://moneysupermarket.com) | 0845 345 5708  
[theenergyshop.com](http://theenergyshop.com) | 0845 330 7247  
[simplyswitch.com](http://simplyswitch.com) | 0800 011 1395  
[energylinx.co.uk](http://energylinx.co.uk) | 0800 849 7077  
[myutilitygenius.co.uk](http://myutilitygenius.co.uk) | 0203 468 0461  
[switchgasandelectric.com](http://switchgasandelectric.com) | 0871 711 7771  
[ukpower.co.uk](http://ukpower.co.uk) | 0808 250 7341  
[unravelit.com](http://unravelit.com) | 0800 862 0021  
[which.co.uk/switch](http://which.co.uk/switch) | 01992 822 867

## What information will I need?

Recent changes have made switching energy suppliers much simpler. One of these changes has been to ensure the bills you receive contain all the information you need to accurately compare suppliers. This can usually be found underneath the section called "about your tariff" (or something similar).

This box should tell you: the name of the tariff you're on, how you pay for your energy, if you have to pay any fees to exit your tariff and how much energy you use per year in kilowatt hours (kWh).



**Bear in mind that an offer from your new supplier may be only temporary. You should check this before making any commitment to switch.**



## Gas and electric supply reference numbers

Every gas and electricity supply has a unique reference number and you may be asked for this when switching. These are unique to your house and won't change if you change supplier. The gas reference is called the Meter Point **Reference** Number (MPRN) and for electricity it's the Meter Point **Administration** Number (MPAN).



Don't forget you can also change gas supplier

## What's the process of switching?

Once you've agreed a deal with your new supplier you'll sign a new contract with them. They will then let your old supplier know you are leaving. The process of moving can take up to 21 days, but your new supplier should manage the process so contact them if you experience problems. Your old supplier will then send you a final bill to pay.



## Can I switch if I'm renting?

If you live in a rental property and your name is on the bill, you have the right to switch to the energy supplier of your choice even if your tenancy agreement says otherwise.

You also have the right to change your meter from a prepayment to a credit meter (or vice versa). The exceptions to this are if your landlord's name is on the bill.

## Will I have to take meter readings?

Taking regular meter readings is one of the best ways to stay on top of how much energy you are using. If you don't submit meter readings to your suppliers they may send you bills based on estimates and these can be inaccurate.

Some suppliers may offer you a smart meter as part of your deal. If you already have a smart meter which automatically sends meter readings to your supplier you may lose this functionality if you switch. This won't stop you from switching; it just means you'll have to send meter readings manually.



## Is it cheaper to pay by direct debit?

Usually, yes. Energy suppliers can no longer offer 'discounts' to direct debit customers, but as they can still restrict access to the most competitive tariffs to those prepared to pay by direct debit it amounts to a discount in all but name.

The other advantage to paying by direct debit is that it spreads the cost of fuel evenly over the course of the year, avoiding high winter bills.

Direct debit payments are based on estimates of how much energy you will use, and as these are frequently over or under estimated you should still take regular meter readings and check your bills.

Your supplier is only obliged to attempt to read your meter once every two years so, to avoid shock bills, send a meter reading every time you receive a statement.

Your direct debit should be reviewed at least once a year to make sure you're not paying too much and building up credit, or too little and building up debt.



See all our energy advice leaflets at [www.cse.org.uk/advice-leaflets](http://www.cse.org.uk/advice-leaflets)

## Is it cheaper to buy electricity and gas from the same supplier?

Often, but not always. Buying both fuels from the same supplier is convenient but may not be the cheapest option. If you have one supplier for gas and a different one for electricity then you can check with both to see which would offer you the better deal to become a dual fuel customer.



It pays to shop around for the best deal

Remember, to find the cheapest available tariff it's better to use an independent comparison service and check tariffs from separate suppliers as well as dual fuel options.



## What's a fixed deal tariff?

A fixed deal tariff means the rate you pay for each unit of gas or electricity you use, and for your daily standing charge, won't go up for the duration of your contract (though how much you pay each month will still be affected by how much energy you use).

If your supplier drops its prices after you've started your contract with them then being on a fixed deal might mean that you end up paying more.

However, in recent years the trend has been for energy prices to go up rather than down; so being on a fixed deal tends to offer better value than being on a variable rate tariff.

## Are internet tariffs cheaper?

Switching to an online tariff can save you a further 10% on your bill but not all suppliers offer this. The only thing that will change is that you will get your bills by email rather than through the post.



## What happens if I change my mind?

By law you have 14 days "cooling off" period to change your mind without incurring a penalty, starting from the day you take on a contract with a new supplier.

## Warm Home Discount

If your energy supplier has 250,000 customers or more then they are obliged to offer the **Warm Home Discount**. This is a rebate on the household electricity bill, which for the winter of 2016-17 was worth £140. It is available to customers who receive the guarantee credit element of Pension Credit.

Suppliers also offer this discount to a broader group of customers, with each supplier having its own specific eligibility criteria. So if you receive any type of benefit or are on a low income it's worth calling your supplier to check. See [www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme).



## Priority Services Register



If you have a disability or a long-term health issue that means you rely on a constant electricity supply, e.g. for an oxygen machine (pictured below) or a stairlift, you should contact your Distribution Network Operator (the company that owns and runs the wires in your area).

They can put you on their Priority Services Register so that you'll receive emergency help in the event of a powercut, like providing you with a generator or sending the Red Cross to help you.

Your energy supplier will also have a Priority Services Register. Being on this will entitle you to help like:

- Quarterly meter readings to keep on top of bills
- Free gas safety checks
- Moving your meters to a more accessible place
- Special controls for appliances and meters
- Password protection scheme to deter bogus callers
- Getting your bills sent to friends, relatives or carers
- Services for deaf or visually impaired customers
- Advance notice of disruption to supply



## Tips to cut your electricity use, and save money ...



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

**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.



**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.



**Only fill the kettle with as much water as you actually need** (but make sure you cover the metal element at the base).

**Wait until you have a full load** in your dishwasher or washing machine before doing a wash. Two half-loads use more energy than one full load.



**Sleep tight.** Make sure all the lights are turned off when you go to bed. You can get low-wattage night lights for children's rooms or landings.

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



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

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The **Centre for Sustainable Energy** is a national charity that helps people change the way they think and act on energy.

Our **Home Energy Team** offers free advice on domestic energy use to householders in Bristol and Somerset (including the unitary authorities of North Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset).



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