

Gas and electricity

How to read the meters

It's a good idea to provide your energy supplier with regular meter readings. This way you pay for what you've **actually** used, rather than what they **think** you've used.

If you don't read your gas and electricity meters regularly, your supplier will send you estimated bills. This might mean that either you're paying for more than you've really used – and who wants to do that? – or paying for less, in which case you could end up with a big sum to pay off later or increased monthly payments. To avoid this it's good to read your meter every 1-2 months.

Which meter is which?

It can be easy to get them confused. Your electricity meter will have five numbers before the decimal point, and kilowatt hours or kWh will be written next to it.

Older gas meters will show that they measure in cubic feet (ft³) and will have four numbers before the decimal point. Newer gas meters measure in cubic metres (m³) and have five numbers.

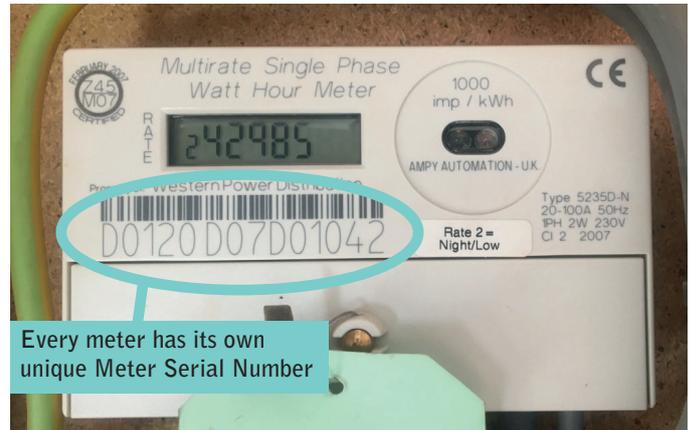
Your meters will also have their own **unique Meter Serial Number (MSN)** - see picture on right. The MSN will also be written on your energy bills by the meter readings breakdown. You can use the MSN to make sure you are matching the right meter to the gas or electricity, or to make sure you are reading your meter, if your neighbour's meters are in the same place.

Electricity

Electricity meters measure in kilowatt hours (kWh) and often have an analogue or digital display, which are straight-forward to read.



Electricity (analogue meter)



Every meter has its own unique Meter Serial Number

Read the first five numbers, and ignore any red numbers. For the one in the picture (below left) this reads **17319**.

Economy 7

If you are on Economy 7 your electricity meter will display two meter readings. One for on-peak hours (which could be marked as 'normal' or 'day') and one for off-peak hours ('low' or 'night'). On digital displays and pre-payment meters you might have to toggle between two screens, marked Rate 1 and Rate 2.

A red flashing light should indicate whether on-peak or off-peak is currently being recorded by the meter, and allows you to check that on-peak and off-peak hours are being recorded the right way round, or during the correct hours. If in doubt, contact your supplier.

Gas

Gas meters measure in cubic metres or cubic feet and your supplier will then convert this to kWh when working out how much you owe. Your bill should explain how they've calculated the conversion – see our factsheet 'Understanding your gas or electricity bill'.

Again read off the numbers, either four or five of them, ignoring any red numbers.



Gas and electricity meters show a 'cumulative' total; they don't start again from zero each time the meter is read

See all our energy advice leaflets at www.cse.org.uk/advice-leaflets



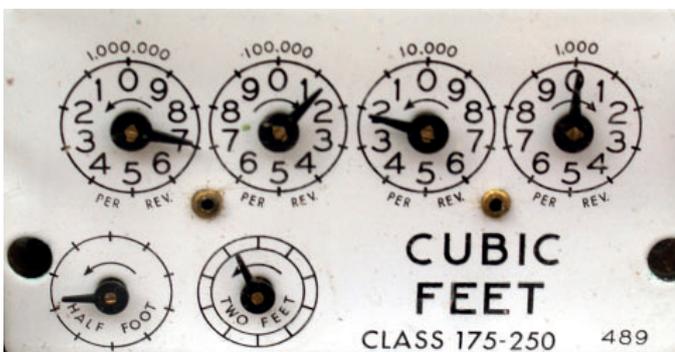
Dial meters

Some old meters have a series of dials, like little clock faces in the picture below.

To read this kind of meter, start with the dial on the left. Write down the number that the pointer has just gone past, in this case **7**, then move on to the next dial. Note that some dials in the row turn clockwise while others turn anti-clockwise – so the second dial is **1** as it has not yet reached **2**.

If a point is right over a number, look at the next dial to the right. If it shows a high number, it means the pointer hasn't passed the digit that it is hovering above. But if it shows a low number, it has.

The full reading for this dial meter is **7120**.



Gas (dial meter)

Smart meters

Many homes are now being fitted with smart meters, which means that meter reads are sent to your supplier automatically up to every half hour (you can choose the frequency).

However, when you switch suppliers some older smart meters become 'dumb' and cannot send automatic meter reads to your new supplier which means you will need to start reading them again (in the future a wireless update will remedy this). It can be easier to find the meter read on your energy monitor, if that is an option, as navigating to the correct screen on a smart meter can be confusing. Common instructions are below, but they will vary by meter, so speak to your supplier if you are unsure.

If your smart meter has a keypad you will need to press the number '9'. If you only have an A and B button, press A, and repeat until you reach the correct screen.

Electricity: When you reach the correct screen it should flash up or include the word IMP or IMPORT, and a number followed by kWh.

IMP
0012345.6 KWH

Gas: The screen will flash or show the word VOLUME or METER INDEX, and a number followed by M3.

METER INDEX
00072.317 M3

Prepayment meters



Households with pre-payment meters don't need to take meter readings to make sure they are billed accurately, but it can still be useful to keep track of your energy use. Your meter will usually have a button that allows you to cycle through various screens, including one telling you how much credit you have left, and one showing your kWh unit and standing charge costs. For an explanation of these, see our pre-payment advice leaflet, or contact your supplier who'll send a guide and instructions for your particular meter.



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Charity: 298740
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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, Somerset, Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire and Dorset.



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