

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 you'll be paying for more than you've really used – and who wants to do that? – or for **less**, in which case you'll end up with a big sum to pay off later.

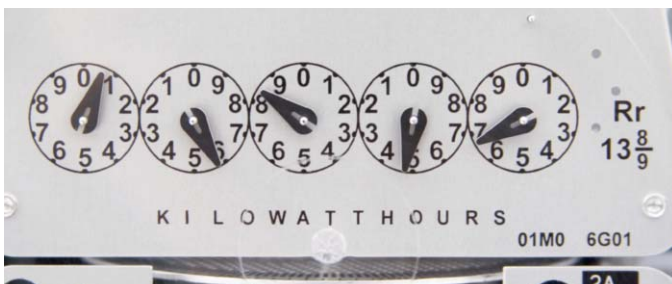
Meter readers don't come round very often any more, so it's best to read your meter yourself once a month or at least when you get your bill.

Which meter is which?

It's easy to get them confused, but here's how to tell them apart: your electricity meter will have electric cables attached to it, while your gas meter will be connected to thicker pipes and hoses.

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 as in the picture below.



Electricity (dial meter)

To read this kind of meter, start with the dial on the **left** (even if the dials are arranged slightly differently from those in 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's difficult to tell if it's passed it or hasn't quite reached it. To find out, look at the next dial to the right. If that one 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 meter is **05846**. When reading an electricity meter, you should always end up with a five-digit number.

Other electricity meters look like car milometers, like in the photo below. 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**.



Electricity (digital meter)



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



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 meters (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 meter

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.



Tips for lower energy bills

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.



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.

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

Buying a new washing machine, TV or dishwasher? Look out for the Energy Saving Trust logo.



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.

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.

Sleep tight. Make sure all the lights are turned off when you go to bed. If you want to light a child's room or a landing, use a low-wattage night light.



There's a full list of our energy advice leaflets at www.cse.org.uk/advice-leaflets

Last updated, January 2016

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 to householders in Bristol and Somerset, including the unitary authorities of North Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset.

Freephone 0800 082 2234
or 0117 934 1957 (cheaper from a mobile)

Email home.energy@cse.org.uk

Web: www.cse.org.uk/loveyourhome



www.facebook.com/EnergySavingAdvice



www.twitter.com/@cse_homeenergy



3 St Peter's Court
Bedminster Parade
Bristol
BS3 4AQ

0117 934 1400
info@cse.org.uk
www.cse.org.uk
charity 298740