

Home energy monitor

How to make the best use of your **OWL micro+**

Energy monitors can help you keep tabs on your electricity use and even save you money. Western Power Distribution is giving away over 1000 **Owl micro+** monitors to households in their network area. This leaflet tells you how to make the most of yours ...

What can an energy monitor show you?

The **OWL micro+** is simple to use, and, once set up, it can display all sorts of information such as:

- How much electricity you are using right now
- How much you've used in the last week (or month or year)
- What this is costing you
- Which appliances use the most electricity

The setting that most people find most meaningful is the one that shows the current usage cost in pence per hour.

How does it work?

The **OWL micro+** has three parts: a **current sensor** which clips onto the red cable connected to your electricity meter; a **transmitter** which is joined to the sensor by a thin cable; and the **display** which looks a bit like a digital alarm clock and which you can carry around the house. Both the display and the transmitter need batteries which are provided.

The box also contains instructions for setting up your **OWL micro+**. These are fairly straightforward, but if you still need help with getting your energy monitor set up, call a CSE energy advisor on 0800 082 2234.

Energy monitors can be found in about a million UK homes. They help save electricity and money, but they need a little help from the householders!



Photos: monitor, 2 Save Energy Ltd, owl, iStock.com/Brett Charlton

To get the most out of your **OWL micro+** there are three things you need to know ...

First of all, remember that an energy monitor is not the same as an electricity meter. It can tell you, for example, whether your fridge uses more electricity than your TV, or whether you used more electricity last week compared to the week before. But it can't tell you, accurately, how much electricity you've used in total, and your meter is still what counts when your supplier sends you your electricity bill.

Secondly, note that the **OWL micro+** shows electricity consumption in Watts (W) which is the measure of the power an appliance needs to work. The higher the number, the more power the appliance needs, so a laptop will use 100W while a kettle will use about 2,000W. A kilowatt (kW) is 1,000W, and a kilowatt hour (kWh) is the number of kilowatts an appliance will use in one hour, and is the same as **one unit** on your electricity bill.

Thirdly, you need to find out how much you are paying your supplier for your electricity and programme your **OWL micro+** accordingly. If you are on Economy 7 or Economy 10 you will pay a different amount for your electricity during peak and off-peak hours (and also summer/winter rates for Economy 7) and you'll

continued overleaf ►

The OWL can help you keep a sharp eye on your energy use



need to programme both rates into the energy monitor. Your electricity supplier will be able to tell you what rates you're paying, although it may be easier to simply look at your latest electricity bill.

Your electricity bill
Your tariff is **Economy 7 No Standing Charge**

Previous reading	Last reading	kWh used	Pence per kWh
60150 1 October	60955 31 December (E)	805	Standard day energy 142 units at 21.08p each Night energy 663 units at 5.26p each

Using your energy monitor

A good way to get the hang of your new **OWL micro+** is to take it on a tour of your home! Go around the house switching electrical items on and off, and watch the display change accordingly. This will show you which appliances or lights use the most electricity, and where you could save money.

This can be a fun activity for children who like to guess which items use the most electricity. They'll notice that those that make heat, such as tumble dryers, hairdryers, electric fires and electric showers, use the most. It helps motivate them to switch things off, too.

And you may also find an item that uses a surprising amount of electricity and which you don't really need – an old fridge in the garage for example, or an electric room heater.

Your home's 'base load'

A very useful thing to establish is how much electricity your home uses when it is completely 'at rest', that is at night, or when everyone is out. To do this, go around your house and switch off all the lights and other electrical items that would normally be off if you left the house. Your energy monitor will now be showing the standard 'base load' of your home. Lots of households keep their



OWL micro+ by the front door, and can check when they leave the house that the monitor is showing the base load. If it isn't, something's been left on.

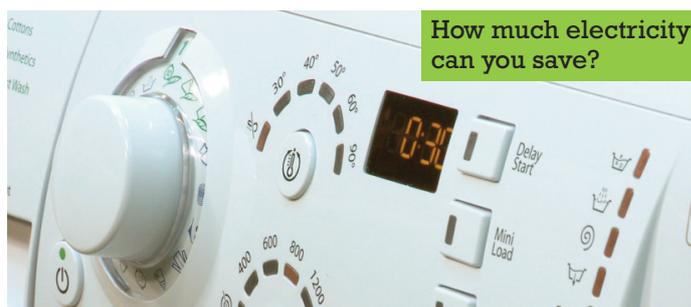
You can lower your base load by switching off – at the socket – appliances which don't need to be on, and which may be drawing a few Watts of electricity, even if they're idle. This may include the dishwasher, microwave, washing machine, tumble dryer, phone chargers, DVD player and even the toaster or kettle. At the same time switch off items that may be on stand-by. The difference between what the energy monitor is showing now, and the base load is the amount of electricity you could be saving simply by turning all appliances off on a daily basis.

Got the hang of your OWL? Then try this ...

Another thing your **OWL micro+** allows you to do is set targets for how much electricity (or money) you would like to save. It will even alert you if you exceed your maximum or fall short of your target.

One target might be a daily maximum usage. Don't be too ambitious, though. A good target is around 90% of your current average daily electricity consumption which you'll be able to work out from the energy monitor once you've had it for a couple of weeks. Bear in mind that you'll probably use more in winter when the lights are on for longer.

These daily consumption targets can be a great way to engage the whole household in reducing electricity consumption and making everyone more aware of how much electricity they are using.



A range of useful energy-advice factsheets are available at www.cse.org.uk/advice-leaflets. See particularly:

- What uses Watt? • Economy 7
- Understanding your electricity bill • Lighting



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Charity 298740
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The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) 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)

Call us free on **0800 082 2234**,
email home.energy@cse.org.uk
or follow us on twitter [@cse_homeenergy](https://twitter.com/cse_homeenergy)



Photos: owl, iStock.com/Eric Isselée; washing machine, Appliances Online (www.appliancesonline.co.uk)

This project is managed by CSE on behalf of Western Power Distribution

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