

Smart plugs

Smart plugs monitor a device's current, voltage, and energy consumption, providing real-time reports on energy consumption via a phone app.

If you don't have an energy monitor, or would like to monitor some appliances more closely, you could use a smart plug. These usually look similar to normal extension plugs or cables that fit into sockets at the wall, but they have the capability to control the appliances that are plugged into them remotely and monitor their energy consumption via an app.

Prices start at around £10.

Smart plugs allow you to:

- Monitor energy consumption of individual appliances.
- Turn appliances on or off remotely.
- Set times for appliances to be turned on or off.
- Activate appliances through voice recognition.

Smart plugs can reduce your electricity consumption by setting timers for appliances to turn off when you don't need them or by turning off appliances when you're not at home. You can also identify power hungry appliances and think about when best to use them. Appliances can also be set to turn on during times where electricity is cheapest if you are on a time-of-use tariff – these are tariffs where you pay different rates per kilowatt hour of electricity at different times of the

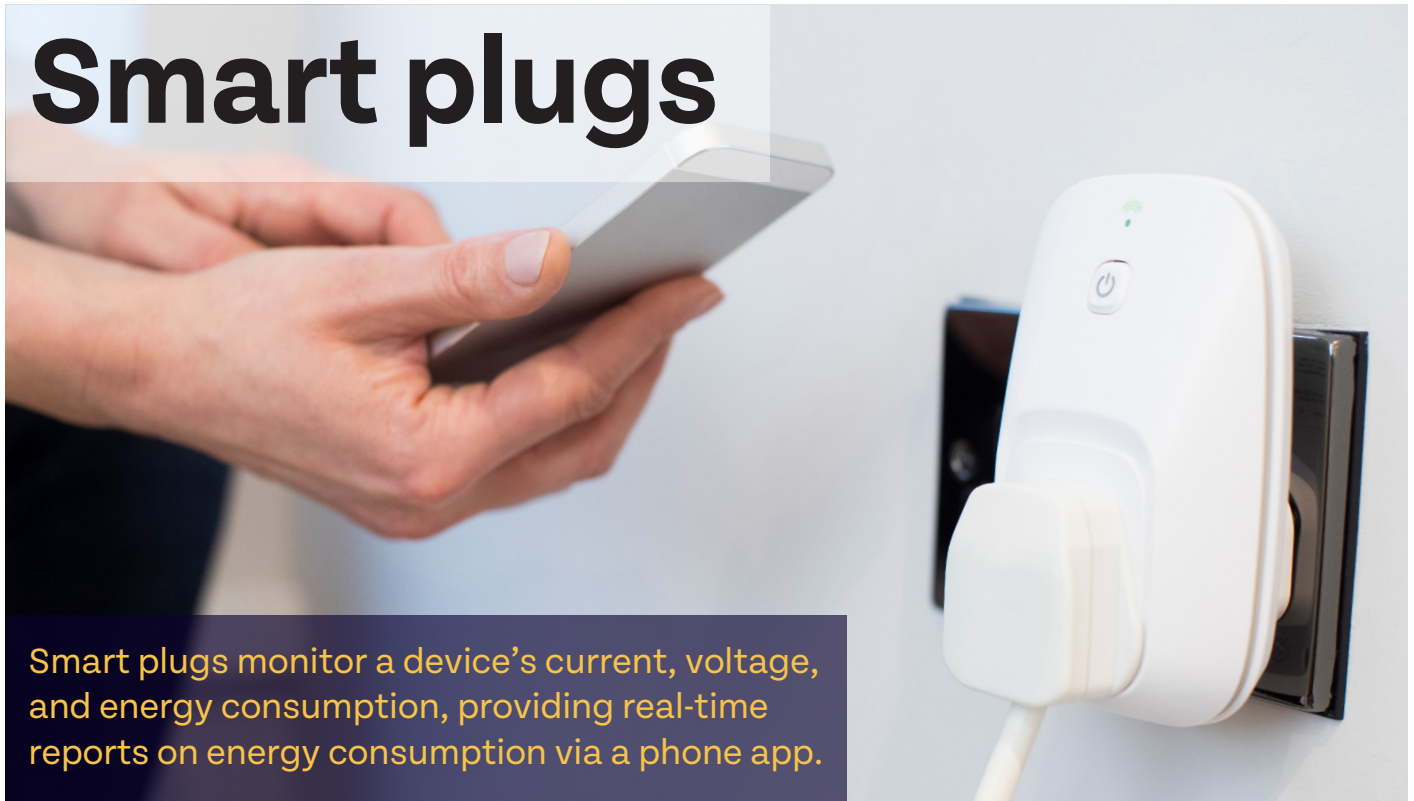
day. More information on time-of-use tariffs can be found in our Getting Smarter with Energy factsheet.

Smart plugs don't just potentially save you money but can help in other ways, too. If a wall socket is hard to reach to turn appliances on or off, a smart plug can help you to control these appliances more easily via the app or through voice control. Some smart plugs have 'away modes' where they can turn appliances like radios and lights on and off to simulate occupancy while you're away.

Scheduling issues

Although smart plugs can remotely control when power is delivered to your appliance, often appliances such as tumble driers, washing machines, and dishwashers do not start their cycles just when power is delivered. Digital settings often need to be configured or a physical 'start' button may need to be pressed. In these cases, the smart plug would only be able to monitor power consumption and would not be able to be used for scheduling when your appliances operate.

With some appliances, you can press 'start', cut the power at the wall, and then when the wall switch is





pressed again, the appliance will continue operating. If this is the case, you could set your appliance running in the morning, cut the power with your smart plug via the app, and then select a time on the app that you would like the appliance to turn on again. This is usually more typical with older washing machines and tumble driers.

Installation

Most smart plugs are easy to install as they simply plug directly into your existing wall socket and then your normal appliances are plugged into them. You will also need to download an app so that you can control your smart plug. A home wireless connection is also required, and connection type varies by smart plug – Wi-Fi, Bluetooth or Thread (a smart networking technology designed to connect devices in the home). Some plugs need an additional hub installed for control outside of the home.

What to consider when buying a smart plug:

- **Installation:** is it simple, can you just plug it into your existing wall socket?
- **Is an additional hub needed?**
- **What features are needed?** Energy monitoring, away mode, scheduling?
- **What is the connection type?** – Wi-Fi is needed for remote control outside the home; Bluetooth and Thread for at home control.

If you use voice assistants or other smart devices because of a visual or other impairment, look at whether the smart plug can work with these?

Smart button pusher

If you need to remotely start an appliance and that appliance also doesn't have an in-built timer, there's an alternative: an automated button pusher. These devices have little mechanical arms that flick a switch or push a button, and are controlled in a similar way to a smart plug, via an app on a smart phone. They start at around £30.



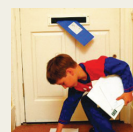
Tips to cut your electricity use, and save money ...



Give your clothes a day in the sun (and give your tumble drier a break). Clothes dried in fresh air feel great.

Draught-proof! Fit

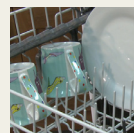
draught-excluders to your front door, letter box and key hole, and draw your curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.



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

Buying a new appliance?

Remember to check the energy rating label and consider the size.



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.



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We're a charity (298740) supporting people and organisations across the UK to tackle the climate emergency and end the suffering caused by cold homes.

Our Home Energy Team offers free advice on domestic energy use to people in central southern and southwest England.

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