

Tips to save on energy bills

The energy price cap is due to increase again by 80% from 1st October for 24 million people across the UK. Energy regulator Ofgem sets the cap and estimates that typical households on a default tariff, paying by direct debit, will see bills increase to £3,549 a year. It says typical prepayment customers can expect payments to rise to £3,608 a year. This article explains why our energy bills have increased so significantly and the different things we can do to prepare for the new price cap, seek support with our payments and reduce our energy usage.

Why have energy bills increased so much?

Energy bills have gone up due to an increase in wholesale gas prices, caused by higher demand for gas after Covid-19 restrictions relaxed. In addition to this, Russia is one of the world's largest producers of oil and gas, supplying the EU with 40% of its gas in 2021, and the world conflict with Ukraine has impacted the availability of oil and gas.

What to do to prepare for the price cap on the 1st October

Submit your energy readings to your provider. Your energy provider may estimate your usage when the new price cap is introduced, which could result in you being charged for a higher energy consumption than what you are using.

What help is available if I can't pay my energy bill?

If you're falling behind with your energy bills, and finding yourself struggling to pay, the best thing to do is contact your supplier as soon as possible. Under rules from regulator Ofgem, your supplier has to help you – usually by negotiating a payment plan that you can afford.

- A full payment plan review
- Affordable debt repayment plans
- Payment breaks (though this won't be right for everyone)
- Payment reductions
- More time to pay
- Access to hardship funds

If you prepay for your energy, and you find yourself struggling to top up and facing self-disconnection, contact your provider as soon as you can.

- All suppliers offer small amounts of emergency credit.
- Friendly credit means you can't be cut off in certain times if your meter runs out. Friendly credit is there to protect you if you start running out of credit when the shops are closed.
- Additional support credit is available to some if you can't afford to top up.

Energy providers have the ability to offer hardship funds

- Big energy firms have charitable trusts and funds that can help if you're in debt and struggling to repay.
- Exact eligibility requirements vary – some say you need to be in receipt of certain benefits for example – but those with the greatest need are prioritised on a case-by-case basis.

One of the measures announced back in May as part of the Government's 'cost of living support' package was that all households in England, Scotland and Wales will get a £400 energy grant. All households with a domestic electricity meter will get it.

Over eight million households in the UK on means-tested benefits will get a payment of £650, as part of the wider package of support announced by the Government to help with the cost of living crisis.

Tips to save on energy at home

1. **Watch your shower time** - Keeping your shower time to four minutes - the equivalent of a long pop song - could also lop money off your annual bill.
2. **Keep tabs on your appliances** - Appliances, especially 'wet' ones like dishwashers and washing machines, are notorious for burning through energy. The Energy Saving Trust reckons you could shave £28 off your annual energy bill by keeping your washes to 30-degrees and reducing the number you do per week by one.
3. **Draught proofing** - Getting rid of jets of cold air you often feel coming through windows and doors could mean you're less likely to need your heating on. It says draught proofing your home using specialist excluders could save you £215 over five years - and can cost only £3 to do.
4. **Get to know your boiler** - Two quick changes you can make to your boiler could save you more than £300 a year, according to heating experts. Heating Hub - an energy efficiency advisory firm - recommends turning down your flow temperature to save money.
5. **Switch the TV off standby**
6. **Turn off the lights** - If you're the type of person that often forgets to turn the light off, then you might want to reconsider your habits.
7. **Get a smart meter** - These devices allow you to accurately measure how much energy you're using, even down to the appliance, so you can change your habits accordingly. If you want to get one, contact you energy provider and an installer will put one in free of charge.

If you would like to view the Webinar on '**Tips to save on energy bills**' this is being delivered live on **Friday 23rdth September at 12pm**, please use the following link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5165127820770714384>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.

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