

Help with your winter energy bills: what you **need** **to know**

During the winter we tend to use more electricity and gas to light and heat our homes.

Energy regulator Ofgem wants to make sure that **you are getting the best out of the energy market**. So that you only pay what you need to, **save energy** where you can and are aware of assistance available if you have financial concerns.



1 Be energy-prepared

Have all your information at hand (most of this is on your bill and annual statement):

- Your current tariff.
- Your annual consumption and how much you spent in the last 12 months (this will be on your annual statement but don't worry if you don't know).
- Your monthly / weekly spend if you pay by prepayment meter.
- Your current payment method.

2 Shop around for the best deals



Talk to your own supplier and other suppliers or use price comparison services to make savings:

- If you have never changed energy supplier, you could save money by switching to a different supplier.
- Check if your existing supplier offers a better deal.
- Explore changing to a different payment method. Direct debit tariffs are often priced more competitively.
- See if you can get an online or dual fuel discount.
- Look out for special offer fixed price contracts (although check the small-print for any fees you may have to pay if you cancel early).
- You can still switch supplier if you have a prepayment meter.
- Ask whether you qualify for a social tariff. You may qualify for these if you are over 60, on means tested benefits or are on a low income. (If you are over 60 – make sure you are getting the Government's Winter Fuel Payment.)
- Use a Consumer Focus Confidence Code approved switching site: 08454 04 05 06
www.consumerfocus.org.uk/confidencecode



3 Become energy efficient

Get advice on how to use less energy:

- By insulating your loft, windows or cavity walls; or by installing new heating, boilers and energy efficient devices you can save money year after year.
- Speak to the energy suppliers and ask for special offers, or if you qualify for the Government's energy efficiency schemes. If you are over 70, you may not need to pay anything.
- Speak to your local Energy Saving Trust for more advice on energy efficiency: 0800 512 012

4 Get help with your bills

If you are having trouble paying your bills:

- Speak to your supplier to find out about solutions to fit your needs.
- Your supplier must offer a payment arrangement that takes into consideration your specific circumstances and ability to pay.
- Suppliers offer specific help such as special tariffs, benefit entitlement checks, and Fuel Direct (allows your energy bills to be paid through your benefits).

Alternatively, call the free national helpline Home Heat: 0800 33 66 99