

Everything you need to know about smart meters



What is a smart meter?

A smart meter is a new kind of electricity and gas meter.

Unlike your current meter, it sends meter readings directly to your electricity and/or gas supplier. The supplier doesn't need to visit your house to do a meter reading, and you don't need to take a reading yourself. This means there are no more estimated bills.

Both electricity and gas meters can be smart. They may also have an in-home display to show you how much energy you're using, and a communications hub which shares the information with your energy supplier.

Why are smart meters being rolled out?

Smart meters are part of the plan to improve the efficiency of the national energy network. By knowing more about how much energy is being used at different times, suppliers can match supply to demand more effectively. They may also offer lower-priced tariffs during times when they know fewer people are using electricity.



Should I get a smart meter?

A smart meter could **help you make better decisions** about how you use energy. It will show you which activities use the most energy, so you can make simple changes to help **save energy and pay less on your electricity and/or gas bills**.

If you want to switch electricity and gas supplier, the data collected by your smart meter can help you find the cheapest tariff for your energy use.

A smart meter may be right for you if you want:

- ✓ To remove the hassle of taking meter readings
- ✓ To see a visual display of your electricity and/or gas usage
- ✓ More accurate bills
- ✓ To top-up your prepaid meter remotely, by phone, online or through an app.

You may wish to stick with your current meter if you:

- Worry about sharing your electricity and/or gas consumption with your supplier
- Lack a strong mobile phone signal in your home (you should check with your energy supplier if this is an issue).

Do I have to have one?

No. Energy suppliers will offer everyone a smart meter by 2020, but you do not have to accept one. If you do have one put in, you can have it removed any time.

If you feel pushed into getting a smart meter you can make a complaint through the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) helpline (03454 040506) or by emailing consumers@tsi.org.uk (calls cost up to 9p per min from a landline).

Are there different types of smart meter?

Yes. Most people have a SMETS 1 meter. SMETS stands for Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specifications. These don't use a standardised system for sending meter readings to electricity and/gas suppliers, so if you switch suppliers, your new supplier won't be able to get readings. You'll need to provide regular readings, wait for a meter reader or have estimated bills.

You can choose to wait for a newer SMETS 2 meter if you prefer. These meters can give readings to any electricity and/or gas supplier. In rural areas, SMETS 2 meters can tell the energy network if there is a power cut. Eventually all meters will be upgraded or replaced by a SMETS 2 meter.



What happens when my smart meter is installed?

When someone comes to install your smart meter, they must:

- ✓ Explain how the smart meter works and tell you how you can use it to make better use of your energy.
- ✓ Tell you if your meter can be read by a different supplier, if you decide to change your energy supplier
- x Not sell you anything while they are in your home¹.

The cost of getting a smart meter installed is covered by everyone's electricity and gas bills. You won't pay any extra.

Is my personal data safe?

A smart meter will tell your electricity and/or gas supplier about how you use your gas and electricity, but you control how your data is used:

- You can choose how often your smart meter sends information to your energy supplier (at least once a month, but no more than once every half hour)
- Your supplier may collect one reading per day (which you can refuse), but must ask to collect anything more detailed
- Suppliers may not use your data for marketing without your permission
- Suppliers may not see the detailed data shown on your in-home display without your permission.

Remember, you can refuse:

- A smart meter
- Daily meter readings
- Half hourly readings

Can I get a smart meter if:

I don't have internet?

Yes. Smart meters communicate with suppliers using a secure network like the one used by your mobile phone.

I rent a property?

If you pay the electricity and/or gas bills and they're addressed to you, you can decide whether to get a smart meter. However, you may wish to speak to your landlord first. If your landlord pays the energy bill, it's up to them to decide whether to put in a smart meter.

I am on an Economy 7 / Economy 10 / ComfortPlus tariff?

Possibly. You should check with your supplier.

¹ As explained in the Ofgem Smart Meter Installation Code of Practice (SMICoP)

I have a prepaid meter?

Yes. Smart meters may make prepayment tariffs cheaper in future. Smart meters will also allow new ways to top-up your meter by phone, online or through an app.

I've got solar panels?

Some solar-panel owners have had problems getting smart meters put in. If you're getting a smart meter installed, make sure your energy supplier is aware you have solar panels.

I have a smart meter:

Why do I still have an estimated bill?

It may take a while for the readings to be submitted automatically to the supplier. Allow up to a few weeks for the system to start working. If you still receive estimated bills after this, your meter may not be working properly, and you should contact your energy supplier.

If you pay by direct debit or an annual payment plan, your supplier estimates how much electricity and/or gas you'll use over a year and splits this into 12 equal amounts. You will receive monthly statements (not bills) showing your exact energy usage.

You can choose to pay for your exact energy usage at the end of each month. This could mean paying more in colder months and less in warmer months. You should ask your supplier to arrange this.

Why have I received a huge bill ('back-billing')?

If you had estimated bills before getting a smart meter, you may get a 'back-bill' if the amount of electricity and/or gas you used is higher than the amount you paid for. Depending on the circumstances, suppliers can't back-bill further back than 12 months and should offer a payment plan.

I think my smart meter readings are inaccurate

If you think your readings are wrong, your supplier can have it inspected. If it shows that your meter is working correctly and you requested the inspection, you will have to pay for the inspection.

You can also buy an energy monitor to check your electricity meter, such as Owl or Efergy, however these may not be as accurate as an inspection carried out by your supplier.

If you doubt your meter readings you should contact your supplier, who can carry out checks. They can also pass your complaint on to the power grid operator.



If you have questions about your smart meter, your readings, or your bill, you should contact your electricity and/or gas supplier.

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