



This factsheet tells you about:

- ways to pay for your energy
- estimated bills
- what to do if your bill is an estimate or you think it is wrong
- getting help with paying your bills.

## Ways to pay for your energy

You can choose which way you want to pay for your energy. It is a good idea to think carefully about which way to pay so you choose the way that will be best for you. For example:

- **do you want to save money?** Some ways to pay can save you money
- **do you find it hard to budget (make sure you put enough money aside to pay your bills)?** Some ways to pay can help you to budget.

Choosing the best way to pay can really help you to pay your bills and manage your money.



## Some of the ways you can pay for your energy are:



- **By sending a cheque in the post**

Your energy company will send you a bill telling you how much you need to pay. You can send them a cheque for this amount in the post. You normally pay once every 3 months.



- **By cash or cheque at the post office or bank**

You can take your bill to the post office or bank and give them cash or a cheque for this amount. Or you can arrange to pay a bit of money for your energy each week or month. You might have to pay some extra money to pay at the post office or bank.

- **By direct debit**

You can arrange for money to be taken straight from your bank account to pay for your energy. This is called direct debit. The same amount of money is taken from your bank account on the same day every month.

It is often cheapest to pay by direct debit. It can also help you to budget because you pay the same amount of money each month.

- **Through a prepayment meter**

You pay for your energy by putting a card, token or key in your prepayment meter. You can buy tokens or keys at the Post Office or in some local shops. Your prepayment meter lets you pay for your energy before you use it.

It is normally more expensive to use a prepayment meter. But it can help you to budget.

Your energy company might have other ways you can pay for your gas and electricity. Ask your energy company if you would like to find out about them.



Think carefully about choosing the way to pay that is right for you. You might want to ask a family member, friend or carer to help you.

## Estimated bills



Your gas and electricity meters measure how much gas and electricity you have used. You can see how much gas and electricity you have used by looking at the numbers on your meter. This is your **meter reading**.



Your energy company uses meter readings to work out how much money you need to pay. Someone from your energy company will come and read your meter. They then send you a bill for the right amount.

But sometimes you will get a bill when no one has read your meter. Instead, your energy company will 'guess' how much gas and electricity they think you have used. If this happens, the bill you get is called an **estimate**.

### How will you know if your bill is an estimate?

If your bill is an estimate you will see a letter 'E' on your bill. Look carefully for a letter 'E' on your bill.

It is very important to check if your bill is an estimate. This is because if your bill is an estimate:

- it could be for **too much money**. You might find it hard to pay.
- it could be for **not enough money**. This can cause problems too. This is because you will have to pay for the energy you have used eventually. So you might end up having to pay a bill for a lot of money all at once. This can be really difficult.



Gas and electricity companies only have to read your meter once every 2 years. So you could be paying the wrong amount of money for a long time.

## What you should do if your bill is an estimate or you think it is wrong

---

If your bill is an estimate it is really important to make sure you are paying the right amount for your energy. This will stop you getting a really big bill for a lot of money all at once.

It is also really important to check with your energy company if you think your bill is wrong.



### If your bill is an estimate or you think your bill is wrong:

- read your gas or electricity meter
- telephone your gas or electricity company and give them your meter reading.



You will then get a new bill for the right amount.

### Get help with reading your meter

If you find it hard to read your meter, you could ask a friend, family member or carer to help you. If you have a disability or are over 60 years old, you can get help to read your meter – see factsheet 3 for more information.

## Getting help with paying your bills

---



If anything on your bill is not clear or you are going to find it difficult to pay your bills, talk to your energy company straight away. There are lots of things they can do to help you.

For more help and advice, contact **energywatch**.  
Look on your folder to find out how to get in touch.