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Energy best deal

A quick guide to getting the best deal by shopping around and making the most of the help available

Shopping to get the best deal

If you have not yet thought about changing your energy supplier you could be paying more than you need to for your gas and electricity.

If you pay by a card, key or token meter you could be as much as £220 out of pocket.

If you pay by cash, debit/credit card, cheque or direct debit then you could be paying up to £150 more than the cheapest deal.



Can everyone switch their supplier?

Most people will be able to switch supplier. You can change energy supplier if you have a token, key or card meter, even if you have debts of up to £100.

Is switching easy?

Yes. Over half of all customers have now changed their energy supplier.

Comparing prices

It's a good idea to get a copy of your last bill or if you use a card, token or key meter to have an idea of how much you spend each month on energy.

If you cannot find any recent bills or don't know how much energy you use you could use the table below to estimate your annual usage.

It's also a good idea to get the following information together:

- the name of your current suppliers,
- the name of the deal you are on, and
- your post code.

To see if you are getting a good deal for your energy you need to find out how much you are paying.

Number of bedrooms in your property	Average Gas bill	Average Electricity bill
1	£350	£335
2	£480	£500
3	£740	£670
4	£850	£730

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*These figures are for customers who pay by cash, cheque or debit/credit card (standard credit)



Next steps

There are **three ways** to find out about the prices charged in your area.

- 1 Phone round the energy supply companies** to find out what deals are on offer and compare them with your current deal. See the numbers at the end of this booklet.
- 2 Or you can use one of the approved online price comparison services.** These are listed on the Consumer Focus website: **www.consumerfocus.org.uk** You can also download a pricing factsheet for your area from the Consumer Focus website.
- 3 If you cannot access the Internet you can call Consumer Direct on 08454 040506** for a pricing factsheet as well as general consumer advice.

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What do I do when I have chosen my supplier?


Once you've chosen a new deal that meets your needs, contact the supplier you would like to switch to and they will take responsibility for organising it.

The whole process can take up to 6-8 weeks. During that time your gas or electricity will continue to be supplied by your old supplier. You will not be cut off or be without gas or electricity.

Is there anything I need to do?

You don't need to contact your old supplier. Your new supplier will take responsibility for contacting you and taking you through the switching process. You should take a meter reading on the day you change supplier, so you can then check that the final bill from your old supplier and the first one from your new supplier are correct.

It's also worth checking each year if your current supplier is still offering you a good deal.



Most energy suppliers **offer help for customers on low incomes** who are struggling to pay their bills.

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Making the most of the help available

If you are elderly, disabled or chronically sick you should contact your supplier to make sure you are on their Priority Service Register.

This entitles you to a range of free services including quarterly meter reads if you have difficulty reading the meter.

Energy suppliers also offer a range of help and advice in using energy more efficiently.

Give them a call to find out more.



Your **first step should be to call your supplier** to see how they can help (see the contact numbers on pages 9-10).

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Where to find help

Industry initiatives

- **Home Heat helpline 0800 33 66 99**

This is a free national helpline run by energy suppliers for customers having difficulties paying their fuel bills. It offers advice on things like cheaper payment schemes and grants for insulating your home. Give them a call on **0800 33 66 99** or visit their website at **www.homeheathelpline.org**

Government initiatives

There are government initiatives available to some customers that can make energy more affordable. The key ones are:

- **The Winter Fuel Payment** which helps with the costs of keeping warm in winter for people aged 60 or over. Payments vary between £250-400 depending on individual circumstances.

For more info contact **08459 15 15 15** or visit **www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel/home.asp**

- **Energy Saving Trust Advice Centres**

Your local Energy Saving Trust can help you with advice and help on energy efficiency. Contact your local advice centre on **0800 512 012**.

England

- **Warm Front** can provide a package of insulation and heating improvements up to the value of £2,700 (or £4,000 if oil central heating is recommended).

For more information contact the Warm Front team on **0800 316 2805** or go to **www.warmfront.co.uk**

Wales

- **The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme** provides a package of heating and insulation improvements up to the value of £3,600.

For more information contact the Home Energy Efficiency Society on **0800 316 2815** or go to **www.heeswales.co.uk**

Energy suppliers' contact numbers



British Gas	0845 965 0650 (sales) 0845 955 5404 (vulnerable customers)
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EBiCo	0800 458 7689
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Ecotricity	0800 0302 302
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EDF Energy	0800 096 9000
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E.ON Energy	0800 479 2211
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First Utility	0845 215 5000
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Good Energy	0845 456 1640
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Green Energy	0845 456 9550
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Npower	0845 675 0425
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Scottish Hydro Electric	0845 300 2141
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Scottish Power	0800 027 8792
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Scottish and Southern Energy Southern Electric	0845 7444 555
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Spark Energy	0845 869 4002
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Union Energy	0800 027 9000
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