NO LIMITS

Helping Young People Help Themselves

tec

the Environment Centre (tec)

A GUIDE TO HOME ENERGY

Tips and information to help you heat your home and save money

Introduction

There's a lot to think about when you live independently, especially for the first time. Our friends at the Environment Centre (tEC) are specialists in home energy and have provided information in this resource to help you get set up with energy in your new home.

There's also a glossary at the back to accompany this, which you might find useful to understand what things mean.

If you're living in a particularly cold or damp home or would like to find out more about making your home more energy efficient, please use the contact details below to contact the Environment Centre for support:

the Environment Centre (tEC)

enquiries@environmentcentre.com
0800 804 8601
For more tips and advice, visit environmentcentre.com

NO LiMiTS
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Youth workers at our Advice Centre are trained to support you with housing. Our support is free and confidential for young people up to 26. Come down to our Advice Centre or call 02380 224 224 for support.

Opening Hours

Monday	10am - 5pm
Tuesday	10am - 5pm
Wednesday	1:30 - 8pm
Thursday	10am - 8pm
Friday	10am - 5pm
Saturday	10am - 1:30pm
Sunday	CLOSED

Address

13 High Street
Southampton
SO14 2DF

Website

nolimitshelp.org.uk

What to do straight away

Read your meters

If possible, take a photo in case you need proof of your readings on the day that you moved in.

Find your gas and electricity supplier and submit your readings

You can find out who your supplier is by asking your landlord, estate agent, the previous tenant, or on Find My Supplier or ssen.co.uk/supplier-search. Then, submit your readings on your suppliers' website, app or over the phone.

If you have a pre-payment meter, contact your supplier straight away

This is so they can re-set your meter. You don't want to end up paying someone else's debt!

Check your tariff

Energy suppliers don't usually put new customers on their cheapest tariff, so give them a call or contact them online to check if they have any cheaper tariffs available. Be careful of exit fees though, especially if you're thinking about ending an agreement early.

Check whether your bills or statements seem accurate

For more on how to read your bills, see tEC's information at environmentcentre.com/home-energy/understanding-your-energy-bills/.

Want to pay less?

You may be able to find a better deal by visiting an OFGEM-accredited comparison site. You might need your landlord's permission to switch supplier, so check your tenancy agreement first.

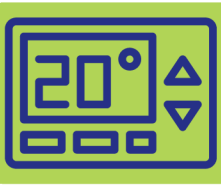
Managing your home

Familiarise yourself with equipment around your home

You might have a gas boiler with radiators, room thermostat, programmer and thermostatic radiator valves to locate. Or you may have storage heaters, and a hot water tank with an electric immersion heater. Or something different altogether!

Learn about your heating controls

Ask your landlord or estate agent to show you, or look for a manual. You can often find the manual for your heating controls online.



Experiment with the settings

You'll need to learn how to warm and cool your home appropriately, depending on how and when you need your heating and hot water.

Controlling hot water

If you have a gas boiler with a hot water tank, you may have a hot water timer to set too. Most households only need the hot water on for 1-2 hours a day, so experiment to find the minimum time you need. The recommended temperature for a hot water thermostat is 60-65°C.

If you have storage heaters and an immersion heater, you're most likely on a Time of use tariff. Most people leave their immersion heaters on the automatic 'Timed' setting, so it heats up water overnight using cheaper electricity.

You should have a 'Boost' switch, letting you top up on hot water if you run out during the day, using more expensive daytime energy. Make sure this isn't left on when you don't need it.

Top tips for speaking with suppliers

General

- Lots of suppliers offer live chat, WhatsApp messaging etc, so you may like to try this if you have a simple enquiry (but bear in mind that these online teams may not be able to help with complex queries).
- If you do call, you may find wait times are lower first thing in the morning.
- Check you're calling the right number (e.g. if you have a pre-payment meter, search online for the number for pre-payment meter customers).
- Get your account number ready in case you need to input this or read it out.
- Always take notes, including the name of the person you've spoken to.

Making a complaint

- Always take notes of conversations, including the name(s) of advisors you've spoken to.
- Find out the company's complaints process or procedure (e.g. timeframes and different escalation steps). You can often find this information on a company's website.
- Ensure that you follow up on complaints and don't let your supplier close it until you're happy that the issue is resolved.
- If your supplier hasn't met its obligations, you may be eligible for automatic compensation (for example, if they don't show up for an arranged appointment or are late sending you a final bill/refund). Consider asking for a goodwill gesture. Speak to tEC if you'd like to find out more about this.

Top tips for saving money

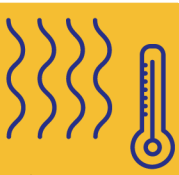
Clothes

- Wait until you have a full load before doing the washing.
- Put washes on at 30°C.
- Avoid the tumble dryer unless your home is damp or mouldy.

Kitchen

- Don't overfill the kettle.
- Use an air fryer, or try one-pot cooking on the hob.
- Batch-cook, then use the hob or microwave to heat up.

Keep the heat in



- Close your curtains when it gets dark.
- Make sure your heaters aren't blocked by furniture.
- Draught-proof your windows (check with your landlord first).

Lights and appliances

- Change to LED lightbulbs.
- Turn off lights and appliances when not using them.
- When buying new appliances, choose smaller options with higher energy efficiency ratings.

Water

- Use a washing up bowl when washing up.
- Only use a full dishwasher, on the most efficient setting.
- Set a time limit for showers - can you manage 4 minutes?
- Use cold water when possible - like when rinsing vegetables.
- Fit water-efficient shower heads and tap aerators (check with your landlord first).

ENERGY GLOSSARY

General

Energy supplier

The companies that supply the gas and electricity to your home. Common energy suppliers are British Gas, Ovo and Utilita.

Energy meter

A device that measures the amount of electricity or gas used in your property. Your meter might be in a cupboard under the stairs, near the front door, or on a wall outside your property. If you live in a flat, your meter might be in a communal area. If you're unsure how to read your meter, find out how online, or on your energy supplier's website.

Smart meter

A device that sends meter readings automatically to your supplier, so you won't need to read your meter yourself. You can see how much energy you're using on an In-Home Display, an online account, or your energy supplier's app.

Standing charge

A daily charge to be connected to the grid. You have to pay this whether or not you use any energy.

Unit rate

The price you pay per unit of gas or electricity you use.

Tariffs

A tariff is your energy plan or deal. The main types of tariff are:

Fixed rate

Your standing charge and unit rate won't change while your contract lasts. There is sometimes an exit fee to pay if you leave the contract early.

Pre payment (pay as you go)

You pay for your energy before you use it, using a key or card which you top up at a shop, or – if you have a smart meter – an app on your phone. If you don't top up, your meter will cut off your energy supply.

Standard variable

The rate you pay for gas and electricity will change as energy prices do.

Time of use*, like 'Economy 7'

This means you're charged two different rates for your electricity – cheaper at night, more expensive during the day. This is usually only cheaper overall if you have electric storage heaters and an electric immersion heater which charge up overnight.

* Unless you have a time of use tariff, your electricity will cost the same during the day and at nighttime.

Heating your home

Gas central heating

Where you have a boiler which supplies heat to radiators around the home.

Hot water cylinder

A large tank that stores hot water before it gets to your taps and shower.

Heating programmer

This allows you to set when your heating goes on and off, at different times on different days of the week. If you leave your home for work, you might want to set your heating so that your home is warm when you get up, cools down while you're at work, and warms up again for when you're back home.

Room thermostat

This controls the temperature your home warms up to. The recommended temperature is 18°C in a hallway, or 21°C in a living room. You don't need to turn your thermostat up when it is colder outside, and turning your thermostat up higher won't make your home heat up faster.

Thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs)

These are the radiator controls that allow you to change the temperature in each room.

Storage heater

Storage heaters use electricity overnight to produce and store heat to be released the following day. Whereas gas central heating is controlled with one central programmer, storage heaters need to be controlled individually.

Storage heaters - input control

This controls how much heat storage heaters store overnight. Set this so it's right for you and the room it's in. If you know it's going to be cold the next day, you might want to set it a bit higher so the heater stores more warmth overnight.

Storage heaters - output control

This controls how quickly storage heaters release heat. You might want to keep the output low throughout the day when it's warmer, then turn it up in the evening to release more heat. Don't forget to turn it down again before bed!

Immersion heater

Homes with storage heaters usually have an immersion heater that uses electricity to heat water inside a hot water tank.