

Energy bills are rising for all customers on their supplier's standard variable tariff. We all need to take action now, to understand our bills, our energy use, and what future rises might mean for us.

## HERE ARE OUR ANSWERS TO THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS "GAS CRISIS":

### What is the gas crisis?

Many countries had cold winters in 2021, so more gas than usual was burned. This reduced availability and drove costs up. Supplier costs quadrupled during 2021. Thankfully our suppliers can't pass on the full cost of this to us, as our energy bills have a "price cap".

### What is the "price cap"?

This is the maximum energy suppliers are allowed to charge us, per kWh (kilowatt hour) for the energy we use on the standard variable tariff. For an "average user" this is approximately 12,000kWh for gas, and 3,000kWh for electricity, which costs around £1,971 per year combined in April 2022. Read your bills to see how many kWh your energy supplier states you use in a year, then make a plan to take action now to reduce it.

### Will the price cap rise again?

Ofgem has confirmed an 80% rise to take effect on the 1st of October 2022, taking bills from £1,971 to £3,547. Ofgem will review this again in November, when they will announce a further rise from January 2023. This additional rise is expected to be another 52%, which will take the average bill to £5,392

### Should I look for a better tariff now?

Most suppliers are just offering the 'standard variable rate' which is controlled by the price cap. Any fixed deals we've seen have been far higher than the standard variable rate, so our advice is to stay put for now.

### I'm not on mains gas, why are my bills rising?

Many UK power stations generate electricity by burning gas, so that's why electricity-only customers are also being affected.

### I use prepaid meters, am I affected by all of this?

Yes, it doesn't matter how you pay for your energy, the price cap ensures you're not paying too much, but your prices are rising too. If your meter doesn't show you your annual usage, ask your supplier for this information.

### My energy supplier has gone bust, what should I do?

Don't panic. Your supply won't be cut-off, and your account will be picked up by another supplier. Take a meter reading now, so you're ready to provide that when your new supplier gets in touch. Be sure to keep paying your Direct Debits in the meantime.

### My energy supplier has gone bust, who am I with now?

It can take several weeks for your new supplier to be appointed. If nobody's been in touch after 6 weeks, you can find the official list of which supplier has taken over which others on Ofgem's website.

### Is the government doing anything about this?

Yes. As soon as Ofgem announced the price rise, government confirmed a raft of support measures, in an attempt to ensure most people are protected by the full force of the price rise. These measures are:

- 1) All households will receive a £400 reduction to their accounts, from October 2022 to March 2023.
- 2) Council Tax band A-D properties will have their tax rate lowered by £150 in 2022-23.
- 3) Local Authorities received a share of £150m to support additional households.

### I'm already struggling to make ends meet. How am I supposed to afford this?

If you worry you won't be able to afford to increase your payments from April, let your supplier know now. The sooner they're aware of a problem, the sooner they can offer any support they have available. It is also crucial for us to all to ensure we're not using more energy than we need to, in order to reduce our bills. Please see some of our suggestions overleaf to help you take action at home.

For further information call the Save Energy Advice Line:

# WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY ENERGY USE AND BILLS?

## 1) Read your bills and meters

Most of us pay for our energy use without giving it much thought. Those of us who pay by direct debit are possibly even guilty of not keeping track of how much we pay.

Read your most recent bill. If you've not got one, ask your energy supplier for one. If your bill is based on estimated readings, it could be greatly inaccurate. Provide meter readings at least monthly, to ensure your billing remains accurate.

If you pay by direct debit, ensure your payments are covering your current usage. If you increase your payments now, that could help you budget when the prices rise.

Prepay customers can get an annual usage statement. This will tell you what you used over the past year.

## 2) Monitor your energy use

If you don't have a smart meter yet, ask your supplier for one. The smart meter display shows you what you're using right now, and lets you track your daily/weekly/monthly usage. You can then see where you may be using more energy than you need. If you can't get a smart meter, invest in an 'energy monitor'. These cost around £40 and show your electricity usage, but not your gas usage. Check the display before you leave home/go to bed, and it will warn you if you've left something on.

## 3) Reduce your energy demand

### Zero Cost Suggestions:

- Make sure your heating is never left on when you're out of the house, or asleep.
- Switch off appliances that are left on standby, especially old TVs.
- Make sure your boiler isn't set to heat your tap water over 60°C.
- Make sure your room thermostat isn't set higher than

21°C (or 23°C if somebody is vulnerable to the cold).

- Set your radiator thermostat valves differently in each room. You don't need the spare bedroom to be as warm as your living room. Also, keep all your internal doors closed to trap the heat in each room.
- Always ensure you only boil as much water in the kettle as you need right now.
- Only start the washing machine with a full load, and only at a low temperature.
- If you have a dishwasher, ensure it's full before starting it, and use any 'eco' modes it may have.
- If you have to wash dishes by hand, use a washing up bowl, rather than letting hot water flow freely down your plug hole.
- Take showers rather than baths, and get a shower timer from your water supplier, so you can limit how much hot water you're letting flow freely down your plug hole.
- It can be cheaper to run central heating than lighting a living flame gas fire.
- Wear warmer clothes around the house, such as slippers that cover your ankles (if your ankles feel cold, your whole body can feel cold).

### If you're able to, invest to save:

- LED bulbs use 90% less electricity to provide the same light as filament bulbs.
- Never block ventilation, but plug up any draughts, especially around windows, doors, and skirting boards.
- If working from home, alone, an oil-filled radiator under your desk can be cheaper than putting on the central heating.
- Read your EPC and follow any suggestions you can afford, e.g. insulating your loft and cavity walls pays for itself very quickly, especially with bills going up. If your property hasn't got an EPC, you can hire an assessor here: [www.epcregister.com](http://www.epcregister.com)



For further information call the  
Save Energy Advice Line:

**Freephone 0800 043 0151**  
**Email [advice@epplus.org](mailto:advice@epplus.org)**