How to read your gas or electricity meter

If you know how to read your meter you can check how much gas or electricity you have used, and therefore how much you should be paying your energy supplier.

If you don't have a smart meter, your supplier will send you estimated bills for your gas and electricity use. This might mean that you end up paying for more than you've really used. Or you may pay less than you should, in which case you'll have to pay the difference later.

Even if you so have a smart meter that automatically sends readings to your supplier, you may sometimes need to check the meter yourself.
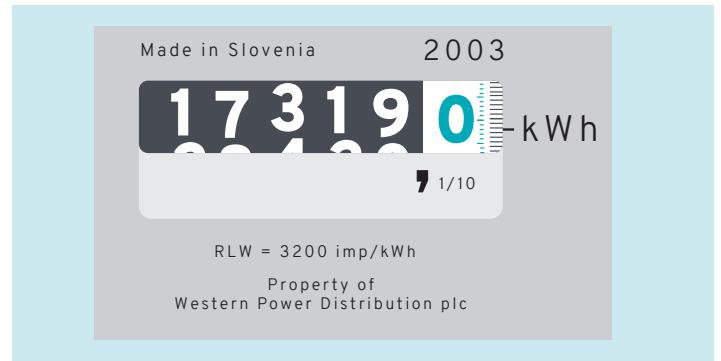
Electricity meters

Electricity meters measure in kilowatt hours (kWh) and it will say this after the numbers (see image, top right). Read the first five numbers, and ignore the red number if your meter has one. The meter below reads **17319**.

Economy 7

If you are on Economy 7 your electricity meter will display two readings. One is for on-peak hours (which could be marked as 'normal' or 'day') and one is for off-peak hours ('low' or 'night'). On digital displays and pre-payment meters you might have to toggle between two screens, marked Rate 1 and Rate 2 (or R1 and R2).

A red flashing light should indicate whether on-peak or off-peak is currently being recorded by the meter, and allows you to check that on-peak and off-peak hours are being recorded the right way round, or during the correct hours. If in doubt, contact your supplier.

Gas meters

Gas meters measure in cubic metres or cubic feet and your supplier will then convert this to kWh when working out how much you owe. Your bill should explain how they've calculated the conversion – see our factsheet 'Understanding your gas or electricity bill'.

Again read off the numbers, either four or five of them, ignoring any red numbers.

Dial meters

Some old meters - both electricity and gas - have a series of dials, like little clock faces. Here's how you read them …

The meter below is for electricity, so it has five dials and says 'Kilowatthours' underneath the dials.
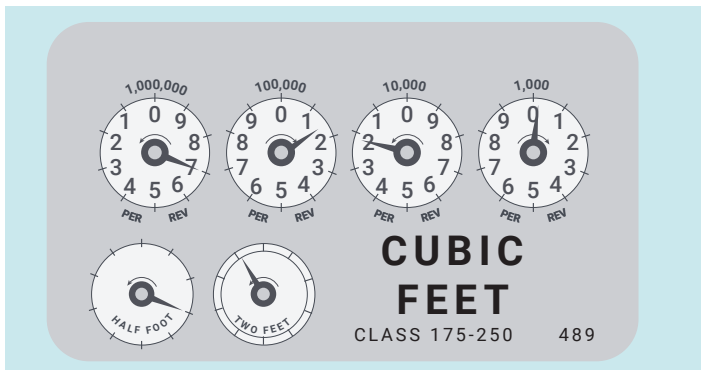
To read this kind of meter, start with the dial on the left. Write down the number that the pointer has just gone past, in this case 0, then move on to the next dial. Note that some dials in the row turn clockwise while others turn anti-clockwise – so the second dial is 5 as it has not yet reached 6. The full reading for this dial meter is **05846**.

Home energy advice

If a point is directly over a number, look at the next dial to the right. If it shows a high number (8 or 9), it means the pointer hasn't passed the digit that it is hovering above. But if it shows a low number (0 or 1), it has. See picture below for an example of a gas meter that shows this.

The first dial shows the pointer right above the number 7. Now look at the second dial. This is 1, so it means that the dial before has passed the 7. The full reading for this dial meter is **7120**.

Reading a smart meter

Millions of UK homes now have smart meters, which means that meter readings are sent to your supplier automatically. But some older smart meters can't send automatic meter readings if you switch to a different gas or electricity supplier. This was supposed to be fixed by a wireless update in 2022, but some problems may remain.

This means that you may have to take a reading from a smart meter. In most cases you'll be able to get the information you need on your energy monitor (also called an 'in-home display'). But if you do have to read your smart meter, begin by pressing 9 if your smart meter has a keypad. If you only have an A and B button, press A, and repeat until you reach the correct screen.

On your electricity smart meter, when you reach the correct screen it will flash or include the word IMP or IMPORT, and a number followed by kWh. This is your electricity reading (image left below). On your gas smart meter, the screen will flash or show the word VOLUME or METER INDEX, and a number followed by M3. This is your gas reading (image below).

If you are unsure, speak to your supplier.

Meter Serial Number

Your meters will also have their own unique Meter Serial Number (MSN). The MSN will also be written on your energy bills by the meter readings breakdown. You can use the MSN to make sure you are matching the right meter to the gas or electricity, or to make sure you are reading your meter and not your neighbour's (image below).

Prepayment meters

Households with pre-payment meters don't need to take meter readings to make sure they are billed accurately, but it can still be useful to keep track of your energy use. Your meter will usually have a button that allows you to cycle through various screens, including one telling you how much credit you have left, and one showing your kWh unit and standing charge costs. For an explanation of these, see our pre-payment advice leaflet, or contact your supplier.

If you are an Alliance Homes customer and need support reading or understanding your meters and billing, please contact our Home Energy Advice Service on **03000 120 120**.