



How to set up your **gas & electricity contract**

How to **read your meters**

How to operate your **heating & hot water**

Tips for **energy saving**

Setting up your **gas & electricity** contract

Electricity and gas* (*assuming your property has a gas supply and is not electric-only: this will be outlined in the meter reading email we sent you at the start of the tenancy) will be connected and running when you arrive and will be with the same provider that has been providing the utilities previously. On the first day of the lease we will take the opening meter readings and email these to you with 48 hours together with a note of the utility provider. We ask that you use these readings to contact the supplier to open your account. Use the start date of the lease as the opening date, NOT the actual date you moved in to the property.

SETTING UP YOUR ACCOUNT

Have the following information to hand before contacting the utility provider to open your account:

- **Full property address & lease start date** (lease start date NOT the date you actually moved in);
- **Opening meter readings we sent you via email within 48 hours of the lease start date.**
- **Your bank details for setting up a payment method** – we recommend signed up for e-billing and paying by direct debit.

Where there are multiple tenants living at a property, one tenant usually takes responsibility for the payment of the bills and collects the funds from the remaining tenants. Some students decide to open a bank account (in all the tenant names) for payment of the shared household bills.

CHOOSING A PRICE PLAN

Our recommendation is to stick with the standard variable rate tariff (with no fixed term) offered by your utility provider as this is subject to the energy price cap and generally seen as the cheapest option available currently. But the choice is yours – we encourage you to do your own research before deciding.

Paying by direct debit is usually the cheapest method. The provider may ask you to pay by:

- **fixed monthly direct debit** – this is where the supplier will estimate the monthly amount you should be paying. Sometimes they do this accurately, however sometimes they have grossly over or under estimated the monthly amount. Things will only become clear the longer you live in the property. As long as you take regular monthly meter readings and send these readings to your supplier, they will adjust how much you are paying to reflect ACTUAL rather than estimated usage.

- **variable directly debit based on actual invoices received** – this is our recommended option as you will pay whatever the amount is listed on the quarterly invoice. Assuming you take regular monthly meter readings and send these to your provider, they will be able to send you an invoice every quarter for the ACTUAL amount of energy used. Many find this method more straightforward.

Both of the above options do not alter how much you pay overall, they are just two different ways of paying. If you happen to overpay (say the provider over-estimates the bill, or sets the monthly amount too high) you will get any credit back when the lease ends and your account is closed.

How to read your meters

TAKE ACTUAL METER READINGS REGULARLY: It is important you take actual meter readings of BOTH the electricity and gas meters on a MONTHLY basis and forward these to your utility provider to ensure you are receiving accurate bills. Fail to do this and the utility provider will estimate your readings, which might lead to a large bill at the end of the tenancy should the estimated readings be less than actual.

LOCATION OF ELECTRICITY & GAS METERS: The location of your electricity and gas meters can be found on the emergency sheet of your noticeboard under 'POWER CUT' and 'GAS LEAK' respectively.

HOW TO READ YOUR METER

Electricity 'old-style' analogue meter: read the big numbers, ignoring anything after a comma or decimal point and any numbers in red or surrounded by red.

Electricity Smart / Digital Meter: these are more difficult to read without knowing what to press. See guide here: <https://tinyurl.com/5b88nkyc>

Gas 'old-style' analogue meter: read the big numbers, ignoring any after a comma or decimal point and any numbers in red or surrounded by red.

Gas Smart / Digital Meter: these are more difficult to read without knowing what to press. See guide here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc87tfsr>

DON'T KNOW WHO YOUR GAS SUPPLIER IS? Visit: <https://www.findmysupplier.energy/>
DON'T KNOW WHO YOUR ELECTRICITY SUPPLIER IS? Visit: <https://tinyurl.com/jc9d3nsj>

SWITCHING PROVIDERS: You are not obliged to remain with the same utility company, you can switch if you wish. Though if your property only has electricity (with no gas), we strongly recommend you remain with the same utility provider as costs can increase if you switch if the new provider is not compatible with the meter in the property. Please contact us for more information in this case. Typically accounts are with SSE, and we recommend tenants stay with SSE as they have proven themselves to be good on the customer service front and are generally competitive price wise. Also, if your property is fitted with a smart meter, it may lose this functionality if you switch.

How to operate your **heating & hot water**

Please take time to learn how to use the central heating and hot water when you move in, including how to set a time schedule to ensure the system only comes on when you want it to.

There will usually be an instruction manual in the property, but many people find watching a video a bit easier! YouTube is a great resource – simply search for the make and model of the control panel followed by 'instructions' and 9 times out of 10 there will be a guided video how to set the time schedule.

If you are having difficulty operating the system, or would like any further advice, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are happy to visit the property in person to provide instruction if required or do it over Facetime.

Tips for **energy saving**

heating & hot water

- **Turn down wall thermostat (if present)** – if you have a wall thermostat (typically these are found in hallways) turning this down by 1°C (for example from 20.5 to 19.5 degrees Celsius) can save hundreds of pounds per year on your energy bill.
- **Set a timed schedule** for the heating and hot water to come on when you need it to, and off when everyone tends to be out. Typically householders set it to come on an hour before they wake up and keep it running for a few hours. And then again from early evening when they get home until they go to bed. Please note, if your property has a combination 'combi' boiler, you don't need to worry about setting a timer for the hot water as it heats only when you turn on a tap / run the shower!
- **Get cosy.** Wearing more jumpers, socks and slippers around the house, and putting an extra blanket on the bed means you won't be tempted to turn the heating up.
- **Reduce time in shower:** you'd be surprised how much water showers use... sometimes even more than a bath for a long shower.

cooking

- **Save time and stock up.** If you're going to use the oven, bake a few meals at a time to get the most out of having your oven on.

- **Heat your home with cooking.** Leave the oven door open after cooking to let the heat warm your kitchen. The oven might give off enough heat for you to adjust your thermostat.

washing

- **Shrink your bills, not your clothes.** 90% of a washing machine's energy expenditure is spent on heating the water, so if you wash your clothes at 30-40°C, you're saving significant amounts of energy.
- **Hang up your laundry outside (where possible)** - Air-drying your laundry rather than tumble drying saves money. But be careful when air-drying clothes inside the property when the heating is off as the moisture from this often forms as condensation on walls which leads to condensation & mould.
- **Fill your dishwasher** – run it with a full load rather than half loads.

turn off lights & open the blinds

- **Switch it off and save.** Turn off lights and other electronic equipment when not in use.
- **Let the sunshine in.** On a sunny day, opening your curtains and blinds will let warmth into your home heating it naturally – even in winter. At night, close them again to retain the heat in the property.

Turn on heating to **avoid condensation and mould**

Living in a cold property without making use of the central heating greatly increases the likelihood of condensation and mould occurring - particularly in bedrooms. This applies to all properties regardless of age. Mould can damage the fabric of the property (such as blackness around windows, mould spots on curtains, mould on walls) as well as not being good for one's health if it is allowed to build up to a significant enough level.

Condensation and mould are frequently mistaken for building defects, but in the vast majority of cases there is no issue with the building and it can be completely remedied by adjustments in tenant behaviour. This includes sufficiently heating the property, being mindful of where you dry your laundry and ensuring good ventilation.

We have created a factsheet how to tackle condensation and mould, and prevent it from occurring in the first place here: <https://www.lawsonthompson.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/condensation.pdf>