

www.consumerfocus.org.uk
Copyright: Consumer Focus

Published: January 2010
Design and production by: Lucas Fernleigh Ltd

If you require this publication in Braille, large print or on audio CD please contact us.

For the deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired, contact Consumer Focus via Text Relay:
From a textphone, call 18001 020 7799 7900
From a telephone, call 18002 0207 799 7900

Consumer Focus
4th Floor
Artillery House
Artillery Row
London SW1P 1RT

Tel: 020 7799 7900
Fax: 020 7799 7901
Media Team: 020 7799 8004 / 8005 / 8006



How to switch energy supplier



Who to contact

If you have an enquiry or if you need advice about a problem or switching your energy supplier please contact Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06 or visit the website: www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

How do I find the best deal for me?

Changing energy supplier can be one of the easiest ways to save money on your gas and electricity bills. However with so many different deals out there it can be difficult to find the best one for you. The information in this leaflet will help you to find the best way to switch energy and get the best deal.

Remember you may be also be able to get a cheaper energy tariff from your current supplier so it is worth contacting them to discuss if you are on the best tariff they offer.

What information do I need before I change tariff or supplier?

Before you decide to change supplier there is some useful information you need to have to hand to make sure you chose the best tariff:

- The name of the tariff you are currently on – this can be found on your latest energy bill
- How much you spent on energy in the last year – you can do this by looking at your bills for the past year. To make sure the comparison is accurate, try to use bills based on real meter readings, not on estimates. From June 2010 all energy suppliers will have to send you an 'annual statement' that will tell you how much you spent on energy in the last year
- How you currently pay for your energy – eg by cheque, Direct Debit, online or by prepayment meter
- How you would like to pay for your energy in the future – the cheapest tariffs are usually Direct Debit or online payment tariffs
- If you want to change both you gas and electricity supplier– if so a 'dual fuel' deal from the same supplier for both gas and electricity is often the cheapest option
- Your postcode

Where can I find out about the best deals?

There are a few different ways you can find out about better energy deals. You can visit the website of the supplier you would like to switch to or phone them to find out about their tariffs, you can use an internet comparison site or you may be approached by an energy supplier's sales person on your doorstep or public place such as your local shopping centre.

Consumer Focus publishes independent price factsheets that will help you see what prices the major energy companies charge, these can be downloaded for our website or you can phone Consumer Direct to request copies.

From energy suppliers

If you have a particular supplier in mind, you can find out their best deals from their website or by phoning for information. Remember they will only tell you about their deals so if you want to compare offers it will involve a lot of phoning around.

Internet price comparison sites

With energy companies now offering a bewildering range of deals, it is easy to become confused about what's on offer. To help you decide which is best for you, use one of the Internet price comparison services which are accredited to the Consumer Focus Confidence Code, to compare the different offerings from domestic gas and electricity suppliers, and to find out how much you could save by switching to a new supplier. These independent price comparison sites help thousands of households every month to compare prices and switch to better deals. They offer a comprehensive service that compares your current supplier's tariffs and usage with those of all the major suppliers. They help you find the best deal and provide you with a free and easy-to-use switching service. They also give detailed information on each tariff, including gas and electricity unit prices and any discounts.

The Consumer Focus Confidence Code is designed to help make the switching process easier, more reliable and provide reassurance for consumers. To find a copy of the Confidence Code and a list of the price comparison sites that have been awarded with Consumer Focus accreditation, please go to the following link www.consumerfocus.org.uk/energy-help-advice/helping-households/price-comparison-services. Look out for the Consumer Focus Confidence Code logo on these accredited sites.



www.confused.com
www.energyhelpline.com 0800 074 0745
www.fuelswitch.com
www.energylinx.co.uk 0800 849 7077
www.moneysupermarket.com 0845 345 1296
www.simplyswitch.com 0800 111 395
www.theenergyshop.com 0845 330 7247
www.ukpower.co.uk 0845 009 1780
www.unravelit.com 0800 279 4091
www.uswitch.com 0800 404 7908
www.whichswitch.co.uk
www.switchthenation.com 0845 434 8895

Door step (or 'face to face') sales

If you do not have access to the internet one of the most common ways you will find out about new energy deals will be through 'face to face' sales. This is where a representative of an energy company will knock on your door or have a stall in a public place such as your local shopping centre or supermarket.

It is important to remember that sales representatives, unlike price comparison websites, only work for one energy supplier so they will only be able to show you deals from that particular supplier.

When considering an energy deal offered by a sales agent, it is important you have access to the information mentioned above or at least a copy of your latest gas or electricity bill.

How can I be sure that I am being sold the right deal?

People that sell energy tariffs to you at your door step or in public places have to abide by certain rules to ensure that you have an opportunity to make an informed decision, these are:

- Information provided during the sales process should be complete and accurate, understandable, appropriate and not misleading
- Sales activity should be conducted in a fair and transparent manner

- Before you decide to sign up to a new deal the sales person has to give you a written estimate and, where possible, a written comparison with your current deal. This estimate should be expressed in terms of the projected cost per year in £'s and be based on you current energy use
- If you use a pre payment meter or the sales agent has promised the new deal will be cheaper than your current energy deal they will have to provide a written comparison
- If you do make the decision to switch, your future supplier is required to: provide you with a copy of the contract; an explanation of what happens next; remind you to check the product is right for you; explain your cancellation

In addition to these rules the six biggest energy companies (npower, EON, British Gas, SSE, Scottish Power and EDF) have signed up to the Energysure Code that sets out clear standards which energy sales agents must follow. rights to you, and; explain what you should do if you have any concerns.

What do I do if I change supplier and am unhappy about my decision?

Your new supplier has to contact you up to 24 hours following the sale to check that you are happy to proceed and to talk you through the contract you have signed. You also have seven working days following the sale to call your new company and cancel the contract if you are still not happy.

If you feel that you have not been given the right information or you felt harassed or intimidated by the sales agent you can complain either to the company concerned or to Consumer Direct.

I've chosen a new supplier – what happens next?

Once you have chosen your new supplier and signed a contract the following will happen:

- Your new supplier will ask for a meter reading to ensure that you are billed at the right time and for the correct amount
- Your new supplier will also make sure your old supplier has this reading. Your old supplier will then use this reading to send you a bill for any outstanding money you owe – it is important to note that if you owe money to your current supplier and do not pay it off they can refuse to let you leave until you pay the debt – this is called known as 'debt blocking'
- Your new supplier will inform you in advance of the date when your supply will change
- Both your new and old supplier will give you a telephone number to call if you have any questions
- There will be no interruptions to your electricity or gas supply while you are switching
- The switching process should be completed in six to eight weeks

If you experience any problems during the switching process you have rights that should make sure the problem is resolved quickly and easily. In order to protect consumers, a charter was drawn up to ensure energy companies resolve erroneous transfers as quickly as possible. Essentially the charter requires all suppliers involved to work together – regardless of who is at fault.

To resolve the problems you can either contact your old or new supplier and they will put it right or you contact Consumer Direct for help and advice.

