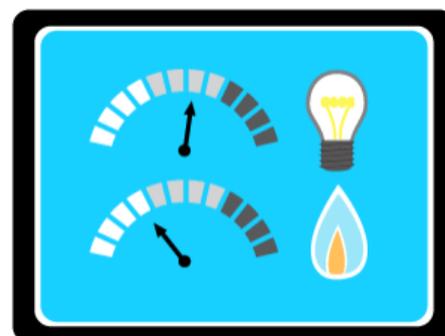


Smart Meters – your questions answered

Smart meters are next-generation gas and electricity meters, and as well as being available at no upfront cost, they offer a number of benefits over traditional meters:

- **Automatic meter readings.** You get one meter for gas and one for electric – they'll usually go where your existing meters are. They then send your usage information automatically to suppliers, so no more scrabbling around in dark cupboards or garages to read them.



- **No more estimated bills.** As your meters send your usage directly to your supplier, you should only pay for what you use. With a standard meter, you're often charged monthly based on estimated use and you send in a meter reading every few months to get an exact bill.
- **In-home display in pounds and pence.** Everyone who gets smart meters will also be offered an 'in-home display'. It's a small gadget that communicates wirelessly with your smart meters, monitoring what energy you're using and showing you how much it costs, in near real time.

It gives readings in pounds and pence, and kilowatt hours (kWh). So if you're looking to reduce what you use and save on your bills, the meters can help you figure out where and when you're using most energy and where you can cut back.

Though smart meters may help you get accurate bills and cut down your usage, the best way to save on energy is to switch supplier – many can slash £100+/year off their bills.

Do I have to get smart meters?

No. Whether you get one now, in the future or not at all is up to you.

All suppliers will eventually be required to offer you them, but smart meters are NOT mandatory – you're free to say no. You can always change your mind if you decide you want one at a later date; simply contact your supplier to ask.

Can my energy be cut off remotely?

While it's possible, there are protections to stop providers disconnecting customers' supply – as there are for standard meters.

There are strict regulations against your supplier switching off or disconnecting your gas or electricity, and providers are required to help customers struggling to pay their bills.

Am I eligible for a smart meter?

The main decider – though there are others – is whether your supplier (or one you switch to) is installing them in your area yet.

They're being rolled out area by area so you may be in luck, but if not you may have to wait a few months or even years. However, currently some smaller firms don't offer them at all.

Suppliers don't publish lists of which areas they've installed smart meters in so far, nor a timetable for future roll-outs. The best you can do is to check if they're available in your area now is contact your supplier to ask about its plans.

Can I get smart meters if I'm renting?

Yes. If you pay the bills and they're addressed to you, you don't need your landlord's permission to get smart meters fitted – though it's a good idea to let them know.

Can I get them if I'm a prepay customer?

If you've got a prepay plan – where you pay in advance and top up using a key or card – there's nothing stopping you in theory from having smart meters installed. However, it's dependent on your supplier offering prepay smart meters – and currently not all suppliers do.

That all said, for most people it's best to switch to a credit meter, where you pay once you've received a bill.

If you'll stick with a prepay plan, there is an additional benefit of having one on a smart meter. **It's easy to switch to a credit meter.** It just takes a software update, rather than a new meter. This is crucial as energy is cheaper on a normal credit meter, plus there's more choice of tariffs.

I'm on Economy 7 or 10 – can I get a smart meter?

Economy 7 and 10 are tariffs which charge different amounts at different times of day. A few suppliers have now started offering smart meters capable of handling these 'two-rate tariffs', but not all – most are concentrating on standard gas and elec-supplied homes. Always check before agreeing to have one installed.

With smart meters, it'll eventually be easier to switch between these tariffs and standard deals – you'll no longer need to have a new meter installed, which suppliers often charge for.

If you're on one of these two-rate tariffs, your smart meter should automatically send meter readings for the low and high-rate periods, but it's always worth double-checking your tariff is set up correctly once the meters are installed.

Do I need an internet connection?

No, smart meters use mobile phone signals to transmit meter readings to your supplier and to talk to the in-home display. You don't need an internet connection or Wi-Fi to get one.

Some suppliers are offering in-home displays that can connect to your Wi-Fi so you can access all your data whenever and wherever you are online or via an app – though this is optional.

What exactly happens to most smart meters after switching?

The current version of smart meters is known by the catchy moniker SMETS 1 (it stands for 'Smart Metering Equipment Technical Specifications', the technical standards the first-generation meters need to meet). If you've got these meters, they communicate with your supplier over the 3G network.



When you switch, it's unlikely your new supplier will be able to pick up that communication, so while they'll work as basic meters, they'll go 'dumb', and you'll need to start taking manual meter readings again. The in-home display should still work – giving you your usage in kWh, though it might not be able to tell you how much you're spending in pounds and pence, as that's supplier-specific.

If you're one of few people with a second-generation SMETS 2 meter, these use their own communications systems via a central data network to which all suppliers have (or will have) access. So when you switch, your new supplier should be able to see your usage and meter readings, and your in-home display should show you your usage with the new supplier's costs.

However, of the 12 million-plus smart meters installed across the country, just 250,000 are SMETS 2 meters.

When is my supplier installing SMETS 2 meters?

Technically, the deadline for suppliers to stop installing SMETS 1 meters and only install SMETS 2 was 5 December 2018 – though this has passed and suppliers still appear to be installing SMETS 1. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy says some suppliers have been granted an extension until 15 March 2019 to ensure that the roll-out "remains smooth".

All suppliers have different approaches to rolling out smart meters, though only 250,000 SMETS 2 have been installed to date.

You can still switch with a smart meter – but it might go 'dumb'

On the face of it, there's no reason why you wouldn't get smart meters. They make sending readings easy, and also give you assistance in seeing what you're spending and cutting that down.

However, in most cases, the current smart meters come with a snag:

Switch energy supplier (which is a good thing if it'll save you £100+/yr) and your smart meters may go 'dumb', meaning you lose some functionality. They'll still work as basic meters though.

Don't let this put you off or hold you back from switching – do an online comparison to see what you could save. After all, if you get one now for the first time and then switch to a better deal and lose full functionality, you're back in the same position as before, only having saved heaps of cash.

How do I get a 'free' smart meter?

If your home is eligible and you've made the decision to get smart meters, here are your options:

- As many suppliers are rolling them out area by area you can wait till it's your turn but that could take months or years.

Money Saving Expert have compiled a list of what the biggest companies are doing – all say they're installing nationwide, but there are some people who won't be able to get one yet. The table shows this, plus tells you how to get smart meters from these suppliers, if you want them. For a few smaller companies you can check [Smart Energy GB's smart meter page](https://www.smartenergygb.org/en/get-a-smart-meter) <https://www.smartenergygb.org/en/get-a-smart-meter> or if it's not there, simply call your supplier.

Will my energy supplier install a smart meter for me now?

Last updated Feb 2019

SUPPLIER	YOU CAN'T GET ONE IF...	HOW AND WHEN CAN I GET ONE IF I'M ELIGIBLE? (1)
British Gas	<p>You're on Economy 7 and use storage heaters</p> <p>You only have gas supplied by British Gas</p> <p>You're in an area with poor signal strength</p>	You can request one and you'll usually get an installation date within two weeks
EDF	<p>You're on prepay</p> <p>You're in an area with poor signal strength</p>	Log in to your EDF account and you can book installation online – it'll show available dates for up to 30 days ahead
E.on	You're in an area with poor signal strength	You can request one and E.on will aim to get you an installation date within 28 days
Shell Energy	<p>You're on Economy 7</p> <p>You're in an area with poor signal strength</p>	You can request one by phone or email – First Utility will aim to get you an installation date within two weeks
Npower	<p>You're on prepay</p> <p>You're on Economy 7</p> <p>You're in an area with poor signal strength</p>	Npower will offer one. It'll send you a letter with your installation date about three weeks beforehand. You can't book, though you can register your interest
Ovo Energy	- You're in an area with poor signal strength	You can request one online or over the phone
Scottish Power	<p>You're on prepay - You're on Economy 7</p> <p>You're in an area with poor signal strength</p>	You can request one and Scottish Power will usually arrange installation within two weeks
SSE	<p>You're on Economy 7</p> <p>You're in an area with poor signal strength</p>	You can request one online or over the phone