

Tenants' guide to switching energy supplier



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Do you rent your accommodation? Did you know that tenants who pay their energy bills directly are entitled to switch gas and electricity supplier?

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NB: This information is valid when switching is possible - given the current energy market conditions, it may not be possible to act on the advice given in this guide.

When it comes to switching energy suppliers, a number of urban myths continue to prevent tenants from finding a better deal. One of these is that tenants can't change their gas or electricity supplier.

This is simply not the case, and anyone who rents a property and pays their own bills has the right to switch to a **cheap energy provider**. Even if your landlord pays your gas and electricity bill, you have a right to understand what you can be charged for and how much you can be charged.

With this in mind, here's what you need to know about managing your energy costs as a renter.

Can I switch energy supplier if I'm a tenant?

The short answer is yes, if you pay your energy bills directly. If you're a tenant and would like to save on your energy bills then, unless your landlord pays the charges, you can change energy supplier. The fact that you don't own the property you live in does not affect your rights to switch.

In fact, energy regulator Ofgem set out to clear up any misconceptions surrounding this issue, and has previously issued guidance emphasising tenants' rights to switch. The underlying message was clear: renting does not relinquish your right to find a **cheap energy provider**.

What if there's a clause in my tenancy agreement about energy suppliers?

If you are directly responsible for paying your energy bills, there is no reason you should not be able to select a new energy supplier. Do, however, let your landlord know if you decide to change energy provider. This isn't mandatory but the gesture is often appreciated and may be written into your tenancy agreement.

What if my landlord pays my energy bills?

If your landlord covers your energy bills, either by paying them directly or as an intermediate, you do not have the right to switch. You need to have direct contact with your energy supplier if you are to be entitled to change. However, it is worth noting that many landlords are understanding and might agree to change your supplier if you ask, although they are not obliged to do so.

As a tenant, what charges am I exempt from paying?

You can only be charged for the cost of any gas or electricity that you consume. Any energy charges related to administration or communal lighting, need to be billed separately by your landlord. The latter are not subject to any price restrictions.

Can students switch energy supplier?

The same principle applies for students as it does to other tenants. If you pay for your energy directly, you are entitled to switch. For many, student life provides a first experience of renting a home. It also often represents a period in which funds can be particularly tight, so cutting your bills should be a priority.

When can my landlord charge me for gas and electricity?

Your landlord can charge you for energy if it is expressly stated in your tenancy agreement. If your contract says you must pay your energy bills to your landlord, then you are not required to pay anything to your energy supplier. This situation is common if you live in rented accommodation and pay for your energy consumption directly to your landlord.

It may also be the case if you live in a caravan park and pay the land owner for energy use or if you live in a houseboat and pay the moorings operator for energy. Occasionally, the landlord of a holiday home will also bill you directly for your energy use.

It is important to note that you cannot be charged more than the maximum resale price (see next section) for your energy bills.

How much can my landlord charge me for energy?

Don't worry, landlords can't charge you whatever they want! There is a maximum price that tenants can be charged and this is called the **maximum resale price**. This fee is set by law and depends on how your energy consumption is recorded. If your energy use is recorded by a gas or electric meter then you should be charged per unit and for your share of any relevant standing charges.

You should also be charged a domestic rate, regardless of whether your landlord has a business agreement with an energy supplier. If usage is determined by your landlord without the use of a meter, then your landlord must be able to show you how your costs have been estimated. Should your landlord be unable to demonstrate how this has been worked out, you might be in a position to ask for compensation.

Who is responsible for repairing the heating system?

As a tenant, you are not responsible for repairs to your central heating system. This is one of the landlord's obligations. They are also in charge of ensuring any appliances supplied are in line with current safety regulations.

I think my landlord is overcharging me, what can I do?

If you think your landlord is charging you unfairly for your gas and electric use, you should start by asking how they have calculated the figure they are billing you. If you disagree with their findings and are unable to resolve the matter informally, you can seek help from Citizens Advice.

What if I decide to move out?

If you decide to move out, you can have a look at our moving home gas and electricity guide for answers to any questions you might have.

How do I switch to a cheaper energy supplier?

The easiest way to find a [cheap energy provider](#) is to run an energy comparison. All you need to do is grab a recent energy bill and pop your postcode into the green box. The whole process is quick and easy. If you have problems switching, have a look at our guide to getting a better deal. For some more ideas on how to save on energy bills, check out our list of [energy saving tips](#).

Read more:



[When is the best time to switch my energy deal?](#)

You probably know it's a good idea to switch your energy, but do you know when is the best time to do it? Our guide explains how to avoid exit fees and get the best deal for you by switching at the right time.

[Learn more](#)



[Switching energy supplier for a cheaper deal - Uswitch](#)

Looking for a cheaper gas or electricity supplier but not sure where to start? Check out our step-by-step guide on how to find a better energy supplier.

[Learn more](#)



[Switching energy when moving house - Uswitch](#)

Set up a new gas and electricity supply when you move to ensure you're on the best energy deal and discover how to inform your energy provider before moving home.

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