

Should I switch my utility provider?

Emergency energy crisis update October 2021 - switching will not work for most people.

The following update has been taken from www.moneysavingexpert.co.uk - check the website for the latest updates

The energy market is in extreme crisis. Wholesale gas prices (those firms pay) have risen to many times the level of last year. Much of the UK's electricity is generated by gas too. This means both gas and electricity prices for consumers have rocketed to previously unimaginable levels. For energy switching, the situation is catastrophic. Many energy firms have gone bust, and more are almost certain to follow. There are no decent tariffs left to switch to - in fact, there are few tariffs at all for new customers. Feel free to do a comparison, but expect to see that you will pay more to switch. In some cases, such as if you want a very green tariff or you want to lock into a fix for certainty, you may feel it's worth it. But if you're looking to cut bills now, that's unlikely to happen and you would be better off sticking with a default price-capped tariff.

Switching your energy supplier

Because many energy companies are struggling, you won't find as many tariffs as normal. If you don't find a better tariff than the one you're on it's probably better to wait until deals are available again.

Before switching - check:

- whether you have a fixed-term contract that lets your supplier charge you a fee to leave - this is called an exit fee and you can check it on your energy bill
- what the customer service rating is like for the potential new supplier
- whether your current supplier offers a cheaper tariff - it will save you the effort of switching

You might not be able to switch if you're in debt to your supplier or you're a tenant.

If you get the Warm Home Discount (a benefit for pensioners and people on a low income), check whether the new supplier offers it - you'll lose it if they don't

Steps to switch energy supplier:

1. Compare tariffs from different suppliers.
2. Once you've found one, call the supplier - they'll set up the switch and tell your old supplier. Alternatively, you can switch online.
3. Take a meter reading on the day of the transfer to give to your new supplier - this means they won't charge you for energy used before the switch.
4. Pay your old supplier's final bill or get a refund if you're in credit.

Once the switch has started, you'll also need to give the new supplier your energy meter reference numbers, known as 'MPRN' or 'MPAN' numbers. You can find these numbers on your energy bill.

Top Tips

- Give regular meter readings to your supplier
- Opt to buy your gas and electricity from the same supplier - you will get a saving
- Manage your account on-line if you can - you will get a small saving
- If you can get a Warm Home Discount - check that your new supplier will also offer this before switching.
- If you rent and pay the energy bill - you have the right to switch.

For more information go to www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Energy Comparison sites

<https://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

<https://clubs.moneysavingexpert.com/cheapenergyclub> - can set up an email alert to notify you when you can save money by switching

www.uswitch.com - can undertake the switch on your behalf

Essex Energy Switch

<https://essex.ichoosr.com/uttlesford/home>

Energy Switch uses group buying power to negotiate a cheaper price. Energy companies bid against each other to offer the lowest rates. You will receive an email containing a new gas and electricity offer, valid for one month, which is calculated using your existing energy usage and costs. Only when you receive the offer will you need to decide whether or not to accept.

Anyone who pays an energy bill can take part. As well as homeowners this includes tenants and customers on pre-payment meters.

If you need help, contact the helpline on 0800 048 8285.

The team of energy specialists at Uttlesford Citizens Advice can check your benefit entitlements and offer advice on energy efficiency measures and home improvement grants. They can also compare deals and help you switch to a lower tariff; provide support to manage fuel related or any other debts and access emergency funds on your behalf, if needed.

Last year the team helped more than 200 families cut their bills, securing over £53,000 in additional benefits and grants.

It is important to know that **you don't have to be on benefits to access this support** - absolutely anyone can give them a call on 01799 618858 or email warmhomes@uttlesfordca.org.uk . Advice is always completely free and confidential.

Uttlesford Citizens Advice

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