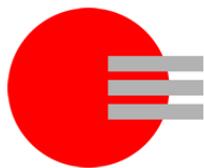


# Oxfordshire Community Groups & Volunteers

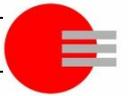
## Top Tips



Working in partnership with  
**THE NATIONAL  
ENERGY FOUNDATION**



*Compiled by Dale Hoyland,  
Strategic Development Manager,  
NEF*



## Central Heating Systems



### **Boiler**

- ✓ The higher this is set, the quicker and more effectively the system will heat the home. If this is not set high enough when the outside temperature is very cold then the home may never reach your desired temperature.
- ✓ As long as you have a room thermostat then it is reasonable to set the boiler thermostat on a high level.



### **Timer and Programmer**

- ✓ Check that the clock is telling the right time.
- ✓ Heating your home for half an hour more than is needed could add 6% to your heating bills.
- ✓ Set your system to come on about half an hour before you want the house to be warm, and off at least half an hour before you no longer require heating.

### **Room Thermostat**

- ✓ It is recommended that the thermostat be set between 18°C and 21°C.
- ✓ You should set it as near to 18°C as is comfortable. Each 1°C reduction in setting within the 18 - 21°C range can save you up to 10% on annual heating costs.



### **Radiator & TRV**

- ✓ If your radiators never get hot enough to heat your home adequately when turned on full and the temperature across each radiator is even, then your boiler thermostat is probably set too low.
- ✓ If your radiators are cold at the top then there is probably air trapped in them and you should 'bleed' them. Cold at the bottom could mean sludge in the system...



### **Domestic Hot Water**

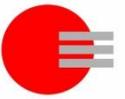
- ✓ Most hot water cylinders have a thermostat; this is recommended to be set at 60°C;
- ✓ To retain as much heat as possible the cylinder should have at least 75 mm of insulation.

## Storage Heaters

- ✓ Turn down the "output" control before you go to bed to stop heat being given out when you don't want it.
- ✓ If your room is cold, turn up the "output" control until the room warms up.
- ✓ When the room is warm, turn down the "output" control to save heat for later in the day.
- ✓ As the weather gets warmer and you need less heat, turn down the "input" control to store less in the heater.
- ✓ If your house is warm enough in the summer, turn the heaters off at the wall – and back on again when it starts to get cold.
- ✓ It should cost less to heat your home with storage heaters than by electric fires, as storage heaters use cheaper off-peak electricity, assuming you have an economy 7 or economy 10 tariff.

## Room Heaters

- ✓ The least efficient heating system: portable electric heaters!
- ✓ Portable heaters/fans are usually used in addition to central heating control.
- ✓ Recommended only when no other form of heating is available or if temperatures pose a risk to health.



**Use appliances efficiently** – Turn off appliances when not in use and avoid using the stand-by facility as this wastes energy. Only boil what water is needed in your kettle. A microwave uses less energy than an electric oven on full power. Defrost your freezer regularly.

**Use energy saving light bulbs.** CFL technology can last up to 10 times longer than ordinary bulbs, LED technology over 25 times, and using one can save you around £40 over the lifetime of the bulb.



**Turn your thermostat down.** Reducing your room temperature by 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10% and typically saves around £55 per year. If you have a programmer, set your heating and hot water to come on only when required rather than all the time, to reduce internal room temperatures and save up to 10% of your energy consumption, but remember that it is always important to stay warm in your home. Ideally living rooms should be 21°C and bedrooms 18°C in colder weather.



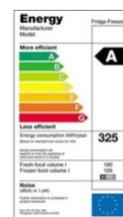
**Is your water too hot?** If you have hot water controls then use them. Avoid leaving immersion heaters on for a long time as they are expensive to use. If your hot water cylinder doesn't have a jacket purchase one for around £10 and you can save up to £20 a year on your energy bills. Your cylinder thermostat should be set at 60°C/140°F.

**Fill up the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher:** one full load uses less energy than two half loads, even if you have an half-load/eco setting.



**Monitor your energy use** – make sure you supply meter readings to your energy supplier, to help you manage your energy use and spend. Why not try using an energy monitor to monitor the energy used by **your appliances**? You'll be able to see which household goods use more energy and where you can save money.

**When replacing any appliance look out for the energy labels**





### TARIFFS

Electricity and gas are supplied to domestic customers under a number of tariffs<sup>1</sup>. The most common are described below:

#### Online Tariffs

Almost all energy providers now offer paperless, online-only tariffs. Instead of a paper bill each month, you receive an email when your payment is due. If you pay by direct debit you won't need to do anything, if not you can log into your account online to pay your bill.

**Managing your account online enables you to edit payment details and even enter your own meter readings.**

#### Single fuel tariffs

Getting your gas and electricity from separate suppliers. Substantial savings are more likely to be made by switching supplier and moving on to a dual fuel plan, but a full comparison for your postcode is suggested to be sure.

#### Dual fuel tariffs

In a bid to encourage customer loyalty, most suppliers offer a dual fuel tariff with price reductions and discounts available to customers who take both their gas and electricity from the same company. Dual fuel tariffs also allow clients to have just one bill and sometimes just one direct debit to deal with each month, going out to the same company. **Because of the discounts offered dual fuel tariffs are usually the cheapest option for many customers.**

#### Economy 7

Economy 7 tariffs use a two-tier meter - one to measure energy use at a higher rate during the day, and one to measure use during the cheaper "economy" hours at night.

Economy 7 customers pay a lower rate for their energy over seven night time hours to ease pressure on the national grid during the day when energy demand is far higher. This helps to smooth energy demand.

#### Economy 10

Follows the same principle of the traditional economy 7 tariff but provides 10 hours of off peak electricity usage.

The hours for the economy 10 tariff are split on usage into three tariff periods (rather than 2 with economy 7) as follows: 3 hours in the afternoon, 2 hours in the evening, 5 hours over night.

#### Capped / fixed prices

Capped or fixed price tariffs work by guaranteeing that your monthly or quarterly bills won't rise for a set amount of time. However, your price guarantee will cost you since capped tariffs cost more per unit of energy than other plans that could fluctuate. **Capped prices can be cost effective in the long run if prices go up.**

### FUEL PAYMENT METHODS

The two main ways to pay for electricity and gas are Credit and Prepayment.

- **Credit** – this is how most people pay for fuel. The amount of fuel used is measured by a meter as it enters the home and the householder receives a bill which can be paid in variety of ways (online direct debit, standard direct debit, paying by cash or cheque).
- **Prepayment** – by means of tokens, smart cards or keys, topped up in advance. The fuel is paid for as it enters and is used in the home.

**Prepayment** meters and **standard credit** are the most expensive ways to pay for energy, while paying by **direct debit** often accesses the cheapest rates and is also the most convenient as it allows residents to budget more effectively and spread the payments over the year, rather than ending up with high bills in the winter.

**Energy companies often offer discounts to customers who can manage their account online, so online direct debit is proving even cheaper than standard direct debits.**

<sup>1</sup> Energy Advice Handbook, Energy Inform Ltd 2004



### SWITCHING SUPPLIERS

#### Key points:

1. Use a free, impartial comparison service, online/phone.
2. Will be required to give a few details about the property and current usage
3. Use old bills to make the results more accurate
4. Look for a gas and electricity tariff if possible
5. But can help those using storage heaters obtain better deals

Using an impartial comparison service will provide you with a comprehensive list of suppliers in your resident's area. When you do this they will ask for a few details about your property, e.g. how is it heated? and they will also ask about current energy use (you can use old bills to get this information). Look for a gas and electricity tariff if possible as it is more likely to offer discounts.

#### The switching process

1. Choose a new supplier
2. The paperwork is handled by the new and old supplier
3. The transfer can take up to six weeks
4. The new supplier will keep the resident updated and confirm the switch date
5. The old supplier will send a final bill – pay this and cancel any direct debits
6. Take a meter reading on the switch date and give it to both suppliers

#### Useful to know:

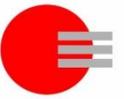
1. Fixed term tariffs Charges – some companies may charge to end a contract early, particularly with a fixed rate tariff.
2. Cost of changing to a standard meter – Some companies charge for changing from a prepayment meter to a standard meter.
3. You are not able to switch suppliers if you owe the energy company money. You would have to clear the debt before switching suppliers.

### Green Suppliers

Most energy suppliers offer 'green' electricity tariffs. These seek to support renewable energy. The two main types of offering are green supply tariffs and green funds.

**Green tariffs:** A green tariff means that some or all of the electricity you buy is 'matched' by purchases of renewable energy that your energy supplier makes on your behalf. These could come from a variety of renewable energy sources such as wind farms and hydroelectric power stations. Your supplier should let you know what sources are included in the mixture, and also what proportion of your supply is renewable.

**Green funds:** A green fund usually involves paying a premium to contribute to a fund that will be used to support new renewable energy developments. Under this option, the existing electricity supply continues as normal, but your involvement could help to alter the mixture of energy sources in future toward renewable sources (depending on the type of tariff).



### Check your tyre pressure

Under-inflated tyres are dangerous, increase fuel consumption and wear out more quickly. Check your tyre pressure once a week. Remember to look in your car manual to find out the correct tyre pressure for your car.

### Check your revs

When you accelerate change gear between 2000rpm and 2500rpm

### Watch your speed

The most efficient speed is around 45 – 50mph. Faster speeds will greatly increase your fuel consumption.



### Step off the accelerator

Stay in gear but take your foot off the accelerator as early as possible when approaching a red light or roundabout. This cuts the fuel flow to the engine to almost zero.

### Read the road

Anticipate road conditions and drive smoothly. Avoid last minute braking and sharp acceleration.

### Switch it off

Modern cars use hardly any extra fuel when they're restarted. So if you're stationary for more than a minute or two turn off your engine. Never turn your engine off when your car is moving.

### Reduce drag

Drive only with the accessories you need. Roof racks, bike carriers and roof boxes have a big effect on your car's aerodynamics and reduce fuel efficiency.

### Plan your journey

Only use your car for long journeys and when you do, plan your journeys to avoid congestion, road works and getting lost.

### Drive off from cold

Modern cars are designed to be started, and driven off straight away. Warming up the engine just wastes fuel.

### Air conditioning

Use air conditioning only when needed as it makes a big difference to fuel consumption. But at fast speeds air conditioning is better than opening a window as this increases wind resistance.





**Switching to Public Transport:** If you're not sure you can use public transport for every trip you undertake, why not start small by taking public transport at least one day a week, until you figure out the system. Before you know it, you'll be making friends and riding along with everyone else.



**Try the bus or train for longer trips:** Buses, trains, light rail and ferries generally have dedicated travel paths that are quicker than sitting alone in your car, which can cut down travel times.

**The bike:** Check if there is a public bike service in your area. If not, there should be a second-hand bike store or a place where you could buy a second-hand or a brand new bike.



**Catch a taxi:** Taxis are a form of public transport because you don't own them (unless you are a taxi driver!), and when you don't need the service they are made available for others to use.



**Plan your trip:** Obtain timetable and route-maps for your journey to know what to expect in advance. Many municipal public transport systems now have free online databases that will take your starting point and destination and calculate the fastest times and best route for your trip. This can take the uncertainty out of public transport travel. When using the bike, check the route you would have to do to the place you want to go.

**Buy fare saver tickets:** Return, weekly/monthly, or off-peak bus/train tickets are often significantly cheaper than single ride tickets, which will encourage you to use said bus/train more often.

**Telecommute:** Don't drive to the office, or fly to that conference, if you can arrange to complete your work/presentation electronically, or via video conferencing. Video conferencing can reduce 99% of the energy used for a trans-continental flight.

**Fly:** Aircraft flight carbon dioxide emission per-mile are significantly affected by the length of the flight because a high percentage of fuel use and emissions are expended on take-off. Try to reduce the number of plane trips you take and try not to use a plane for any trips under 1000km (620 miles)



**Be a Change Agent:** Encourage other people to use public transport. Things won't change, until you show people how to...lead by example!