

Sense in Switching?

At a time of rising energy prices on-line comparison can help you save money. Switching energy supplier on-line is easy. A switch usually takes effect within 6 weeks and can result in annual savings of up to £100 a year.

Switching supplier makes no difference to the actual gas or electricity you receive. The big six providers share the same supply infrastructure. However, customer service, payment options and price do vary significantly.

Comparison sites can help you compare customer satisfaction ratings, penalties for leaving contracts, capped price options and dual fuel discounts. A green electricity tariff is the best for the environment and usually costs extra.

To switch you need to know the name of your existing supplier(s) and either the cost of your energy for the last year or (for improved accuracy) the number of kWh used.

You won't be able to change suppliers if you are in debt to your present supplier. The Home Heat Helpline on 0800 33 66 99 can help in this situation.

Even if you are happy with your current supplier, you may still be able to save money by moving to direct debit and on-line account management.

For more information visit www.cocoonyourhome.co.uk/saving



Switching supplier, tariff, or payment method can cut bills

Photo courtesy of cocoonyourhome.co.uk

Notes for editors:

1. References:

Five of the big six UK energy providers (British Gas, Scottish and Southern, Scottish Power, Npower and E.On) had announced winter gas or electricity price rises of up to 9% before the writing of this article in January 2011.

<http://tinyurl.com/6bhmzxm>

In February 2010 Ofgem estimated that customers who switched could save up to £100 a year on standard tariffs.

<http://tinyurl.com/62bhwo4>

2. Points to consider when switching:

- a) What sort of service rating do the companies get?
- b) Do you want to have a 'green' electricity tariff?
- c) Do you get better deals taking both gas and electricity from the same company?
- d) What payment options are available – both how and where?
- e) Are there discounts for paying by Direct Debit or receiving bills by email?
- f) Is there a standing charge or do you pay extra for the first few thousand kWh?
- g) Are there any termination penalties for leaving contracts early?
- h) Is the fuel price fixed, or could it change after you switch?
- i) What happens if you can't pay a bill?
- j) How often are bills sent out?

Note: You cannot change suppliers if you are in debt to your present supplier. If you do ask to switch you will receive a letter asking you to take your meter readings on a certain date (which will be the last day with your old supplier and the first one with your new). Keep a note of those readings and ensure the bills you get use them. The change usually goes through very easily over the course of about 6 weeks. If your gas and electricity meters aren't read regularly, bills based on estimated readings mean you could end up paying for much more gas or electricity than you actually use.

4. This article was produced by United Sustainable Energy Agency (USEA).
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5. USEA (usea.org.uk) works in partnership with local authorities throughout Bucks, Berks, Beds, Herts, Oxon, Hants and the Isle of Wight. We operate an Energy Saving Trust advice centre for the South East and offer an insulation installer comparison service called Cocoon (cocoonyourhome.co.uk).
6. The information contained within this article is correct to the best of our knowledge, but is subject to change. USEA cannot in any way be held legally responsible for any advice given or any work carried out as a result of this information.