

Code of practice for accurate bills
Billing code scenarios

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Introduction

The billing code scenarios are a collection of frequently asked questions which many customers have about their energy bills and the Code of Practice for Accurate Bills (Billing Code). We have developed the scenarios with input from British Gas, EDF Energy, E.ON, RWE npower and ScottishPower. The scenarios are designed to explain the specific areas covered by the Billing Code.

1. Switching

Scenario	What the supplier and you can do to help
1. I've just moved in and I am not sure who the current supplier or suppliers are?	<p>The supplier (or suppliers) will be the same ones that the previous occupants were using. Ask the previous occupiers or the landlord, or look on the Energy UK website for help on finding out who your supplier is. Take a note of the meter readings when you move in and provide them when you let the supplier know you have moved in.</p> <p>If you have recently moved into the property, it is important to open post addressed to the occupier as your supplier (or suppliers) may not know your name.</p>
2. I'm moving out, what should I do?	<p>You must contact your supplier as soon as you reasonably can before your leaving date and tell them you are leaving the property. This applies to both credit and prepayment meters. You should take meter readings as you will be responsible for the energy used up until these readings and a final bill will be produced. Make sure you take an accurate note of the readings.</p>
3. I haven't received my final bill.	<p>If you have not received your final bill or a letter or call asking for more information, please call the supplier to make sure they have your correct forwarding address and contact details.</p>
4. I have recently switched supplier, how long will it take for the change to take place?	<p>It will usually take less than three weeks for the switching process to complete and for the change to take place, unless you have reached a different agreement with your new supplier. Your new supplier will give you details of the date when the change will take place.</p>

2. Meter reading

Scenario

What the supplier and you can do to help

1. How can I give my supplier a meter reading?

Your supplier will have a number of ways to give a reading including by phone or online.

2. I am never in when the meter reader comes round.

If your supplier cannot access your meter, the meter reader will leave a card explaining how to provide your own reading. If you cannot read your meter, let your supplier know.

3. Energy bills and statements

Scenario	What the supplier and you can do to help
1. How can I check that the charges on my bill are correct?	<p>Your supplier will have measures in place to make sure that your energy bill or statement has been worked out accurately using your current tariff. Your charges will be clearly shown on your bill or statement. If you are concerned that the charges are not correct, you should contact your supplier.</p> <p>Remember there are significant changes in energy usage between summer and winter, which can result in your bills being higher than expected as can a change in your circumstances. Check that the details on your bill are the same as the details on your meters and that you have accurate meter readings. If you are still concerned, contact your supplier.</p>
2. My supplier has changed their prices. How will they work out how much energy I used before and after the price changed?	<p>Your supplier uses a range of information such as the typical amount of energy you have used in the past to work out your energy use before and after a price change.</p>
3. How do I work out if my bill was based on estimated or actual meter readings?	<p>Usually, estimated readings have an 'E' or will say 'estimate' on the bill. Actual readings are shown by an 'A' on the bill. Customer readings have a 'C' on the bill. Some suppliers will say 'we read your meter', 'estimated meter read', 'you gave us your meter reading' or 'smart meter reading'.</p>
4. My supplier has sent me an estimated bill. What should I do?	<p>Check that the estimated meter reading (or readings) used is close to your actual readings, and if you want to update your readings, contact your supplier direct.</p>

3. Energy bills and statements (continued)

Scenario	What the supplier and you can do to help
5. How often will I receive an energy bill?	You will receive your energy bill or statement at regular intervals depending on how you pay for your energy. You can contact your supplier if you want to know more details about how often you will receive a bill or statement.
6. I have a letter explaining my bill date is going to change – do I need to do anything?	No, you will rarely need to do anything as a result of your billing date changing. If any action is needed, your supplier will tell you.
7. I have received an unusually high bill. What should I do?	<p>There are many reasons why your bill is higher than expected. This could be due to a change of use, or your supplier receiving actual readings which are higher than their previous estimated readings.</p> <p>Remember there are significant changes in energy usage between summer and winter, which can result in your bills being higher than expected as can a change in your circumstances. Check that the details on your bill are the same as the details on your meters and that you have accurate meter readings. If you are still concerned, contact your supplier.</p>
8. I have given my supplier a reading. Should I expect a bill?	Not all meter readings are used to prepare a bill. Bills are produced in line with the billing schedule you have agreed with your supplier. It's best to provide a meter reading when asked for one by your supplier as this is usually when a bill is being prepared. All valid readings, even if they are not used for billing will be used to improve the accuracy of estimated or future bills (or both).

4. Payments and refunds

Scenario	What the supplier and you can do to help
1. My regular payment amount has changed. Why?	There are many reasons why your payments change, such as a price rise, change in use, or receiving actual readings which are not in line with previous estimates.
2. I have received a final bill from my old supplier which shows that I am in credit. Will I receive a refund?	If the meter reading on the final bill is an actual meter reading, you are due a refund of the credit balance. Your old supplier will normally pay the refund within 10 working days but you need to make sure they have either your bank account details or your name and a forwarding address.
3. I am having difficulty paying my bills.	You must contact your supplier immediately if you are having problems paying your bills. They will be able to discuss your circumstances and offer the most appropriate payment plan for you.
4. I have been using the previous occupiers prepayment key or card as a new one has not arrived.	You must contact your supplier immediately who will send you the correct key or card for your meter (free of charge). By using this key or card, it will make sure your meter continues to be updated.

5. Back billing

A back bill is a 'catch-up' bill sent to you by your gas or electricity supplier when you haven't been correctly charged for your energy use (for periods of more than 12 months). Back bills can be for any amount but there is a principle in place setting out when and for how far back your supplier can bill you.

Find more information here:

www.energy-uk.org.uk/customers/energy-industry-codes/code-of-practice-for-accurate-bills.html

6. Support for vulnerable customers

Energy companies provide a significant amount of help and support for vulnerable customers, especially the elderly and those on certain benefits.

Find more information here:

www.energy-uk.org.uk/customers/help-with-your-energy-bills.html

7. Advice, enquiries, complaints and disputes

Scenario

What the supplier and you can do to help

1. I don't understand my bill, what should I do?

The supplier can help explain your bill and how they have worked it out. Please contact your supplier first – see your supplier's website.

There is also an interactive bill on the Energy Made Clear website which helps to explain each part of an energy bill. www.energymadeclear.com/energy-and-you/retail-market-review

Citizens Advice gives information and practical advice on energy and issues. Their website is: www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/consumer

2. What costs are included in my energy bill?

Energy bills are made up of lots of different items such as the cost of getting energy to your home.

Find more information here: www.energy-uk.org.uk/customers/about-your-energy-bill/the-breakdown-of-an-energy-bill.html

3. Who should I contact if I have a complaint about my supplier?

If you need to make a complaint, please contact your supplier first. When contacting them, make sure you have details of meter readings, and any relevant information from your bill, so that your query can be dealt with more easily.

There is more information on how to make a complaint on the Energy UK website. www.energy-uk.org.uk/customers/how-to-make-a-complaint.html



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