

A Practical Home Energy & Water Saving Guide

by TallOak Group Ltd

Straightforward advice for UK households who want to cut costs, reduce waste, and make home life easier.

1. Choosing Your Energy Supplier & Tariff

Switching supplier or tariff is one of the easiest ways to save money. Many households stay on the same deal for years without realising they're overpaying.

Where to compare tariffs (UK sites):

- Uswitch
- MoneySuperMarket
- Compare the Market
- Which? Switch
- EnergyHelpline

These let you compare:

- Fixed tariffs
- Variable tariffs
- Time-of-use tariffs (cheaper at certain hours)
- EV and flexible tariffs

Check exit fees:

- Look for exit fees on your current tariff
- Check if your fixed deal ends soon (you can switch penalty-free within 49 days of expiry)
- Compare standing charges and unit rates

What matters most:

- Standing charge (daily fee)
- Unit rate (price per kWh)
- Peak/off-peak times
- Discounts for direct debit or online billing

2. Understanding Your Electricity Usage

Every home uses electricity differently, but most households have clear “high-usage” times.

Typical high-usage times:

- Morning (6–9 am): kettle, toaster, showers, hairdryers and a heating boost
- Evening (5–9 pm): cooking, showers, hairdryers, TV, gaming and dishwashers
- Late evening: washing machines, tumble dryers and device charging

These patterns help you see where your biggest costs sit.

Smart meters: useful, but not perfect

Smart meters help you see:

- Rough spikes in usage
- Daily totals
- How much power something uses while it’s running

However, in-home displays can be confusing and may not be precise. Use them as a general guide rather than as a detailed analysis tool.

If you don’t have a smart meter

You can still understand your usage:

1. Take a meter reading before using a big appliance.
2. Take another reading after.
3. Repeat morning, afternoon, and evening.
4. Track readings for a week.

This gives you a simple picture of where your electricity goes.

3. Understanding Your Gas Usage

Gas is mainly used for:

- Heating
- Hot water
- Cooking (if you have a gas hob)

To understand your usage:

- Take a reading before heating comes on.
- Take another after heating has run for an hour.
- Compare readings on warm and cold days.

This helps you see how much your heating system costs to run.

4. Heating: Reducing Waste & Improving Efficiency

Heating is the biggest cost for most UK homes. Small changes make a big difference.

Simple manual adjustments

- Turn radiators down in rooms you rarely use
- Keep doors closed
- Move furniture away from radiators
- Use draught excluders
- Close curtains at night

Smart heating systems

Smart thermostats, such as Hive, Nest and Tado, can help you:

- Heat only when needed
- Set schedules around your work hours
- Avoid heating an empty home
- Control heating from your phone

Room-by-room control (smart radiator valves)

Smart thermostats do not give individual room control by themselves. To control rooms separately, you need smart radiator valves (SRVs) on each radiator you want to manage.

Smart thermostat only:

- Controls the whole house
- Good for basic scheduling and avoiding waste

Smart thermostat + smart radiator valves:

- Controls each room individually
- Reduces heating in unused rooms
- Keeps bedrooms cooler if you prefer
- Warms only the rooms you use

Room-by-room control can reduce heating costs by around 10–20% in some homes.

5. Using Cheaper Tariff Hours (If You Have Them)

If you're on a flexible or EV tariff, shifting usage can save a lot.

Avoid 4–7 pm

This is often the most expensive period on flexible tariffs.

Between 4 and 7 pm, try to avoid using:

- Washing machines
- Dishwashers
- Tumble dryers
- Hair dryers
- Electric heaters
- Charging devices

Cooking is harder to move, but everything else can usually be shifted.

Use cheaper overnight hours

If your tariff has cheap overnight electricity:

- Run appliances overnight
- Charge devices overnight
- Heat water early morning
- Preheat rooms if you have electric heating

6. How Agile & EV Tariffs Work

Agile tariffs (e.g., Octopus Agile)

Agile tariffs change price every 30 minutes based on wholesale costs.

You get:

- Cheap overnight electricity
- Higher prices during the 4–7 pm peak
- Occasional negative pricing (you're paid to use electricity)
- Daily price updates, usually at around 4 pm for the following day

These tariffs can suit households that are able to shift their electricity use to cheaper periods.

EV charging tariffs

Examples: Octopus Intelligent, EDF GoElectric, and similar EV-focused tariffs.

You get:

- Very cheap overnight electricity (often around 7p/kWh or less)
- Automatic EV charging schedules
- Cheaper rates for running appliances overnight

Even without an EV, some households benefit from these tariffs if the supplier allows it.

7. Water Saving & Leak Detection

Water bills can rise quietly, especially if there's a small leak.

Checking for leaks using your meter

1. Turn everything off – taps, appliances, toilets.
 2. Take a meter reading.
 3. Wait one hour without using any water.
 4. Take another reading.
- If the number has changed: you likely have a leak.
 - If the number hasn't changed: good news – no leak detected.

Finding the leak

If the meter moved, check:

- Toilets (very common source of leaks)
- Under sinks
- Outdoor taps
- Damp patches on walls or floors
- Pipe joints
- Listen for running water when everything is off

If you cannot find the source, contact a plumber or leak-detection specialist. We can also advise you on the next steps.

Reducing water waste

- Fix dripping taps
- Install low-flow showerheads
- Shorten showers slightly
- Use eco settings on appliances
- Collect “warm-up water” from the shower:
 - Place a container in the shower while it warms up
 - Use this water for houseplants or cleaning
 - Not for everyone, but it can save a few litres a day

8. Everyday Habits That Deliver Small but Meaningful Savings

Small changes across the week can reduce bills noticeably.

Examples:

- Turn lights off when leaving a room
- Unplug chargers when not in use
- Cook with lids on pans
- Wash clothes at 30°C
- Air-dry clothes when possible
- Keep fridge/freezer seals clean

Even a 5–10% reduction in usage is meaningful over a year.

9. Tracking Your Savings

To see if your changes are working:

- Compare monthly bills
- Track weekly smart meter usage (if you have one)
- Note down meter readings before and after changes
- Look for reduced peak-time usage
- Check if your heating runs less often or for shorter periods

10. Need More Help? TallOak Group Ltd Is Here for You

We're a small, family-run business specialising in:

- Energy efficiency
- Heating optimisation
- Water management
- Solar and battery systems
- Home resilience and cost-saving upgrades

If you want personalised advice, a home assessment, or help installing smart systems, you can reach us at:

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