

Household Bills Spring-Clean



How to give your household bills a cost-saving spring-clean, while still taking care of all your health and wellbeing needs. With tips on how to refresh household habits and bounce back from utility price hikes.

Dusting off your bills

- **Make a checklist** of all your bills including utilities (gas, electricity, water), broadband, subscriptions such as TV packages, and insurance cover. Cross-check against bank and credit card statements for the last 12 months so nothing gets overlooked.
- **Match your needs** by looking at each bill or direct debit to see if you can trim back on service extras, or find cheaper deals elsewhere by checking on comparison sites such as [Uswitch](#)
- **Drop unused products** by contacting provider to cancel future payments, or get bills reduced by amending or dropping a service. Make a note of end date if you are stuck in a contract or subscription for a while yet.

Cost-cutting tips for energy bills

Even in warmer weather energy bills are still high and standing charges keep increasing. Bills can be cut further, starting with these simple tips and hacks:

- **Don't leave appliances on standby** when you have finished using. For example, red light showing on TV or digital display lit up on washing machine indicates power is still on. So electricity is still being consumed even though you've switched off TV programme or washing machine programme has ended. Make sure power button switched off when not being used.
- **Avoid using electric fans and air-con in hot weather** instead leave curtains and windows closed during the day to keep heat out, and open windows in the evening to let in cooler night air.
- **Don't leave lights on** as its a myth that it uses power to flick the switch. Get into the habit of switching off lights when you are not using a room or not needing a lamp on.
- **Switch lightbulbs** to LED or CFL which use only ten percent of power compared with halogen bulbs, and choose a lower wattage.



Energy-saving cooking hacks

Ovens are expensive to use but instead of compromising on cooked meals, try these tips on how to halve the cooking cost per meal:

- **Batch cook food** to last two or more days so oven is used less frequently. Extra portions of most foods can be put in freezer for future meals.
- **Keep oven clean inside** as it uses less power to achieve temperature than a dirty oven.
- **Microwave.** For example, a baked potato takes just 15 minutes.
- **Air fryers use half the energy** of an oven or grill as they cook food in half the time. Experts advise using for small amounts of food, and avoid for family dinners as that can cost more than using oven. Prices start at £40 for compact and £110 for family size, from retailers including Argos and Boots. Check out comprehensive air fryer advice on [Which? guide to air fryers](#) which takes you through pros and cons of choosing one to suit your needs and budget.



TOP TIP

Dryer balls cut drying cost in half

Adding balls to wet laundry in tumble dryer separates the items so warm air circulates better to speed up drying. Use green tennis balls, 90p each from discount stores, or white wool dryer balls in packs of 5-6 from Amazon, around £7.00 per pack. Use 1-2 balls per sweatshirt, up to 5-6 for sheets and towels load. Avoid plastic dryer balls, they quickly break up and the broken bits can damage machine. TIP: don't use white wool balls with dark clothes as wool fluff transfers!

Energy-saving laundry hacks

- **Use machine with full load** whenever possible. Cuts energy usage instead of washing multiple small loads, and saves on water cost too.
- **Set cooler temperatures**, 30 degrees is hot enough unless laundry is very dirty. Cold wash cycle is fine for refreshing clothes.
- **Hand wash small items** that just need refreshing.
- **Air dry** if possible.

Cost-effective tumble drying

Tumble dryers are the most expensive household item to use. But often the most practical solution, especially if you don't have outside space, need work clothes or uniforms dried quickly, or don't have space to line dry sheets and towels. Try these tips to cut running cost of using tumble-dryer by up to half:

- **Extra spins.** After washing programme finished, set washing machine on spin programme a couple of times to reduce water in laundry before drying.
- **Divide wet laundry** into several small loads in tumble dryer, for example one double sheet with pillowcases as one load. Allows laundry to dry effectively and quicker, instead of having a full soggy load that runs for hours and still has wet patches.
- **Reduce drying time programme** instead of letting machine run on until pre-set time ends.





Cost-cutting tips for water bills

All water bills recently increased by around ten percent. Water is paid for twice, firstly when it comes into your home from mains pipe, and again when it goes down the drain. Try these tips for reducing water wastage and bills:

Get a water meter installed

For homes without a meter, water bills are calculated based on rateable value of your property instead of water usage. Use online calculator such as [Thames Water usage and saving calculator](#) to work out your usage. If your typical usage is less than the rateable figure, ask your water provider to install a water meter (this is free) then you'll only pay for what you use which should be a lot cheaper.

Half price water bills

Eligible for low income households. Contact your water provider.

Avoiding water wastage

- **Banish leaks** from dripping taps or leaking toilet cistern as this adds a lot extra to bills. For example, a toilet continually filling from the cistern adds around £20.00 to monthly bill. It's cost-effective to book a plumber and get leaks fixed. For tiny pipe leaks, you can DIY no-skills fix with silicone waterproof repair tape, price around £7.00 a roll from Amazon or local tradesmen retailer.
- **Install dual button toilet flush** as flushing the toilet accounts for 30 percent of household water usage. Dual button flush cuts water usage by half, provided you press just one of the buttons.
- **Turn off taps fully after use.** Children can help by getting into the habit of doing this.
- **Avoid running cold tap** until it's nice and cold to drink in warm weather. Instead fill a jug with tap water and keep in fridge to chill.
- **Full load in washing machine** where possible instead of multiple smaller loads.

Energy-saving tips for boiler

- **Check heating turned off** as weather gets warmer, turning off radiators and room thermostat.
- **Reduce hot water temperature** on boiler by turning dial to halfway, as fifty percent is enough for hot water. Most boilers have temperature dial especially to control hot water destined for taps.
- **Turn off pre-heat function.** Many combi-boilers (providing hot water for both taps and heating) have a pre-heat function. This kicks in at intervals day and night to ensure there is always hot water available the instant you turn on a hot tap. In warmer weather, mains water is not as cold so will warm up quickly in the boiler without the need for pre-heat function. Check to see if your boiler has this option, and switch off preheat during warmer months to save on unnecessary heat being generated by boiler.



Energy-saving tips for a warm home

See Cost of Living Tips article **Home Heating Hacks** for lots of advice, tips and hacks on reducing heating bills without impacting on health and wellbeing, and tips for achieving a warm home during the winter months.

Useful links

- [Citizens Advice electricity usage calculator](#)
- [Water usage calculator](#)
- www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities
- energysavingtrust.org.uk

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