

HOME ENERGY MOVING IN GUIDE

Moving to a student house in the private rented sector can feel like a step into adulthood for many reasons, and it's both exciting and nerve-wracking. With this guide, we hope to alleviate some of those stresses and help you get to grips with being an efficient and eco-friendly energy user in your university home.

Energy supply and bills

Things to do when you move in

- Find your existing energy supplier, these websites can help:
 - Gas - <https://www.findmysupplier.energy/webapp/index.html>
 - Electricity - <https://www.energynetworks.org/operating-the-networks/whos-my-network-operator>
- Take meter readings

Check to see if you are getting the best deal for your energy

You could save hundreds of pounds a year on your bills by switching supplier or changing tariffs with your current supplier. Use an Ofgem-accredited price comparison site listed on Ofgem's website (ofgem.gov.uk). These suppliers should all display the Ofgem Confidence Code logo.



Comparison sites often do not show you the whole market, only the tariffs for suppliers they can switch you to directly. To make sure the other (potentially cheaper) results are not being excluded, check the filter settings on the comparison results.

Your energy bill

Energy bills can be confusing, but understanding them can help you get to grips with your energy usage at home. [This video from Home Energy Scotland provides a helpful guide.](#)

If you receive a bill and it has an 'E' marked against the meter reading, then this means it is 'estimated' by your supplier and you may not be paying the right amount for your energy. Having several estimated readings can sometimes lead to large unexpected bills. Be sure to regularly submit accurate readings to your supplier to ensure you are being billed accurately for the energy you use and avoid this.

If you pay by direct debit, ensure your payments are set high enough throughout the year to spread the cost and still cover your winter heating energy use without issues.

If you fall behind on your energy bill payments, get advice as soon as possible. Suppliers should agree an affordable repayment plan with you. The "ability to pay" under this plan refers to what you, the customer, can afford - not what the supplier deems affordable. You can also get advice on energy debt from Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on **03454 040506** or your local Citizens Advice.

Get a smart meter

Smart meters automatically measure how much electricity or gas you're using, and show you what it means in pounds and pence on their handy in-home displays in near-real time. They also send the readings to your supplier without any extra work from you.

If you pay your bills directly, you are automatically entitled to get a smart meter - just request one from your supplier. [Find out more about smart meters from Smart Energy GB.](#)

Get to know your heating system and use it well

- Find out where your **thermostat** and/or boiler are, and how to set them, including timers. Familiarise yourself with the **user manual** for the boiler - if your house doesn't have a copy, look it up online! This will also help you find out about any potential faults in the system.
- **Set the thermostat to between 18-21 °C**
 - o The best temperature for rooms in your home varies between rooms, but generally sits between **18-22 °C**. The exact temperature depends on the room: 18°C is best for a bedroom (that's just a bedroom), living room or study should be around 20°C, and bathroom is best slightly warmer.
 - o It's best to **set the thermostat** to a temperature that falls within these boundaries. Every degree warmer than this can increase your energy usage by 10 per cent.
 - o **Turning the thermostat up won't heat your house up faster!**
- **Don't keep the heating on 24/7**
 - o Programme the heating to **switch off when you're out** of the house (i.e. at university or work if you don't WFH) **or tucked up in bed**, and back on about half an hour before you get home or get up. This way you will keep the house warm when it needs to be, and won't pay for the heat you're not using.
- **Make your radiators work for you**
 - o Make sure radiators work properly. Your radiators **may have air trapped inside them**, which would prevent them from heating up all around. Get in touch with your landlord or agent to bleed the radiators if that's the case.
 - o **Keep radiators clear**. Furniture or other items in front of or on the radiators block the heat from getting around the room - move it away and the room will heat up faster.
 - o Put "**radiator reflectors**" behind radiators on external walls - this prevents heat loss to the outside by reflecting it back into the room.

Energy and money saving tips

- **Use your curtains effectively**
 - o **Open them in the morning** to let the sun in during the day, or when outside is warmer than the inside of your home.
 - o **Close when it gets dark** to create a layer of insulating air between the windows and the inside of your home. **Look out for the gaps** in curtains and make sure no cold air can seep through!
 - o **Heavy or thermal** curtains are the best for this purpose - you could also make or buy additional lining to attach to the curtains you have already.

- **Draught proof your windows and doors (where possible)**
 - If there are gaps in the sealant around the windows, ask the landlord/agency to **reseal** them. Request **installation of draught-proofing** strips and door sweeps to the windows and doors, keyhole covers, and a draught excluder to the letterbox.
 - Put up **window insulation film** (just bear in mind that you won't be able to open the window without removing the film).
 - Put **draught snakes** at the bottom of draughty doors to the outside (substitute with rolled up blankets or towels).
 - **Close doors** to rooms which you don't heat, or rooms where you're leaving the window open. To keep the heat downstairs, close the doors to the hallway/staircase. You can also hang blankets over exterior doors or to close off the staircase.
- **Use residual heat in the kitchen**
 - Both the oven and stove generate a lot of heat. Cooking from scratch is not only a top food budgeting tip - it's a two in one with saving energy needed for heating! **Leave the oven open** after baking/roasting, so the residual heat can dissipate around the kitchen.
- **Lighting**
 - Switch any old incandescent light bulbs or halogen spotlights to **LED** - you can take the new energy efficient bulbs with you when you move out. Swapping to LED lighting can save around £30 per year on electricity bills.
 - **Switch lights off** when not in use
- **Use appliances efficiently**
 - **Turn off appliances** when not in use and **avoid using the stand-by** facility as this wastes energy. The small surge in energy created when any electrical product is turned on is much smaller than the energy used in standby when it's not needed, especially with older devices.
 - **Only boil the water you need** in your kettle.
 - A **microwave uses less energy than an electric oven** on full power, but don't use it unnecessarily - plan your meals so you can **defrost food throughout the day** ready for your tea and not have to use a microwave to defrost food.
 - **Defrost your freezer regularly**, as ice makes it less efficient. If your fridge freezer is not filled with food, keep containers filled with water in it to help it run efficiently.
 - When you are replacing appliances look for the highest energy rating you can afford; further information can be found at <https://energylabel.org.uk/>.
 - Reduce the temperature of your washing machine - many detergents now **work well at 30°C**.
 - **Cut back your dishwasher and washing machine use** by just one cycle per week and save £8 worth of energy a year on each appliance. Make sure to **only run them when full**.

Ventilation and condensation

Inadequate ventilation can lead to poor indoor air quality, condensation and mould growth, which in turn can affect occupants' health and damage your belongings, or even the building itself.

During the colder months condensation becomes a major problem in many British homes. It appears when warm moist air hits a cold surface such as a window or external wall and condenses, forming water droplets. Kitchens and bathrooms are areas most prone to it. It is exacerbated by poor air movement in areas such as the corners of rooms and behind wardrobes and furnishings.

Condensation can cause peeling wallpaper and stained wall surfaces, rotting window frames, and can damage furniture and clothing. It can also encourage mould growth and dust mites and increase the risk of illnesses like asthma and bronchitis. It is important to remember that as a tenant you are responsible for any damage you cause to a property you are renting. Any repair costs could be taken from your security deposit - this could include damage caused by inadequate ventilation or heating.

Tips and advice for condensation and damp reduction

- **Reduce the moisture**
 - o Keep bathroom and kitchen **doors closed** when cooking and bathing, to stop moisture spreading to the rest of the house.
 - o **Dry laundry outside** if possible. If drying clothes indoors **use an airer, close the door and open a window**. If you have space, it's worth looking at resell/zero waste websites and groups to get a **dehumidifier**. If you have one, it's best to put all the laundry in one room, run the dehumidifier and close the window and door. **Avoid putting wet items directly on radiators** as it prevents the heat from circulating, making the boiler work harder and increasing energy costs.
 - o Keep lids on saucepans while cooking.
- **Let the moisture out**
 - o Leave **'trickle' vents open** at all times - these are small vents built into the frames of modern windows.
 - o **Air rooms** that people use regularly, especially bedrooms, by opening your windows wide for 10 mins per day. A lot of moisture is produced by breathing.
 - o **Use extractor fans** in bathrooms and kitchens when cooking or drying laundry, and **open windows** when they steam up.
 - o **Air cupboards and wardrobes**, and avoid putting too much in them as this stops air circulating.
 - o Move furniture away from the walls and **leave a gap**.
- **Heat your home**
 - o Try to keep temperatures in all rooms above 15°C. This will cut down the risk of condensation forming on walls and fabrics (it may still form on windows).