

meter by phone, online or through an app in addition to current methods.

9. There is a difference between a 'smart' and 'advanced' meter

Some suppliers have installed 'advanced' meters which, while providing some smart functionality (like remote meter readings) do not meet government specifications for smart meters. These meters were often described as 'smart' when they were installed but are likely to need to be replaced before 2020. If you want to know if this might happen start by asking your energy supplier what type of meter you have.

10. It's up to you!

It is up to you whether you choose to have a smart meter now and access the various benefits they offer immediately or wait until later when newer smart meter models are available that may eliminate the switching issues.

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Textphone: 18001 03454 04 05 06
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Ten things you need to know about smart meters



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1. Smart meters

Smart meters are a new type of meter for gas and electricity which will be offered to all British households over the next few years. Smart meters send meter readings directly to your energy supplier and will enable a range of new services like displays that show you exactly how much energy you're using and the cost of that energy. Smart meters should mean that manual meter readings, estimated and back bills will become a thing of the past. Smart meters will also allow you access to more detailed information about your personal energy usage which can help with deciding about switching and energy efficiency.

2. Many energy suppliers will start installing smart meters this year

Some energy suppliers have already begun installing smart (and advanced) meters in their customers' homes but the main phase of the rollout is due to begin in late 2016. Other energy suppliers are still trialling smart meters and are likely to wait until 2017 to begin offering them.

3. Smart meters are optional

While energy suppliers are obliged to offer smart meters to everyone by 2020 you don't have to accept one if you don't want one. In the future, smart meters will be the only option available to replace old meters.

However, you'll still be able to request that

your supplier not make use of the smart meter functionality, meaning that it will act like a standard meter.

4. You should be offered an 'In-Home Display'

Energy suppliers are required to offer an In-Home Display (IHD) with your smart meter. The display will show you how much energy you're using and an approximate cost of that energy. It can also show your past usage and many include a 'traffic light' system to tell you when your usage is particularly high or low. Different suppliers will offer different IHDs so you may want to ask what features yours will come with.

5. You can decide how often energy usage information is shared

You can choose how often energy usage information is sent via your smart meter to your energy supplier. By default, your supplier will be allowed to collect one meter reading per day and they need to tell you if they want to do this. Energy suppliers will have to ask for your consent to collect anything more detailed. You will also be able to choose to share as little as one meter reading a month and change your mind about how much you share at any time.

Your energy supplier isn't allowed to use your smart meter data for marketing purposes unless you give them permission. The detailed data shown on your In-Home Display will remain in your

home and your supplier won't be able to see it unless you give them permission.

6. You won't be charged for the installation of your smart meter

The costs of smart meters are going to be paid through everyone's energy bills, just as current meters are, so there should be no charges when it's installed. This also means that the cost of smart meters will be shared amongst everyone whether or not you agree to have a smart meter.

7. You may initially lose some 'smart services' if you switch supplier

Getting a smart meter in the early part of the rollout won't stop you from being able to switch supplier but you may lose some 'smart services' (for example remote meter reads) for a period of time. Newer models of smart meters that suppliers will start to install later in 2016 will resolve this problem so you should check with your supplier to confirm what impact switching may have on your particular meter. Eventually all compliant smart meters will be able to switch without any loss of functionality but ones installed earlier may take longer.

8. Smart meters can be credit or prepay

Smart meters will be able to work both in 'credit' and 'prepayment' modes. Because of this, prepayment tariffs should become cheaper in the future. Smart meters will also allow for new ways to top-up your