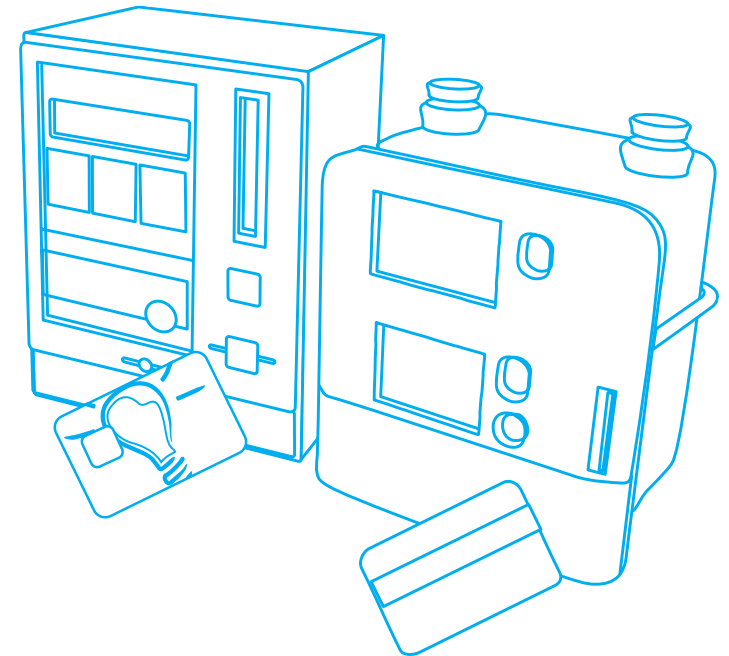


Prepayment meters

Useful information
and guidance
Our code of practice



A Centrica business
British Gas Trading Limited
Registered in England No. 3078711
Registered Office:
Millstream
Maidenhead Road
Windsor
Berkshire SL4 5GD



[house.co.uk](https://www.house.co.uk)





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If you have any questions about the contents of this leaflet, please call our Prepayment Lines on

Gas
0800 587 6567

Electricity
0800 555 700

If you are hard of hearing or speech impaired, and use a textphone, please call 180010845 955 5502

Introduction

This leaflet informs you all about a Prepayment Meter, how it works and the circumstances in which one will be installed. It also explains how to use this type of meter.

This Code of Practice has been approved by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), the industry regulatory body, following consultation with energywatch, an independent consumer organisation created by Parliament.



How to contact us

Our automated helpline is open 24-hours a day and answers the most commonly asked questions.

Gas Prepayment Customers

If you have any questions about your gas account, call our Gas Customers Prepayment Line on **0800 587 6567**.

Electricity Prepayment Customers

If you have any questions about your electricity account, call our Electricity Customers Prepayment Line on **0800 555 700**.

Gas and Electricity customers can also write to us at: **British Gas, ADMAIL AA3361, Edinburgh EH1 3WL**

Your needs

If you are hard of hearing or speech impaired and use a textphone, please call **180010845 955 5502**



If you would like to receive this information in another format such as large print, Braille or audio, call our British Gas Home Energy Care team on **0845 955 5404**.



If you speak a language other than English, tell us when you call, and we will arrange for an interpreter to help you.

For security purposes and to improve our customer service, we may monitor and/or record your calls.

What is a Prepayment Meter?



Example Electricity Prepayment Meter



Example Gas Prepayment Meter

A Prepayment Meter is an easy way to pay for your gas and electricity. It allows you to pay for your energy supply before you use it.

If you would like to pay for your gas and electricity in this way, it can be easily fitted into your home, providing it is safe and practicable to do so.

A Prepayment meter will charge for any gas or electricity as you use it. It may also be used to recover any outstanding debt from you at an agreed weekly rate. Some electricity Prepayment Meters may also take a weekly amount to cover fixed unit charges as part of our two-tier pricing structure. When we install a Prepayment Meter, we will provide you with details of our gas or electricity charges.

Where there are any additional charges in connection with your Prepayment Meter, we will always tell you what they are beforehand.

When we will install a Prepayment Meter

We will offer and install a Prepayment Meter if you ask us, or if we think it is the best method of payment to manage your supply. We may also install a Prepayment Meter to help you repay any outstanding debt and to manage your payments better. In this situation, we always take into account your ability to pay when agreeing the most suitable weekly recovery rate with you. If you receive benefits, let us know and we will take this into account.

We may also install a Prepayment Meter for debt prevention if a customer fails a credit check and a security deposit is not paid or not acceptable.

Sometimes we install a Prepayment Meter instead of disconnecting your gas or electricity supply. If you are unhappy with our decision to do this, you should contact us to discuss an alternative payment arrangement.

We always aim to offer advice on a payment option appropriate to your individual needs. We will not fit a Prepayment Meter if you find it physically difficult to reach a payment outlet and charge your meter. We make every effort to ensure the Prepayment Meter is installed in a safe and convenient location.

If you are interested in having a Gas Prepayment Meter fitted call us on **0845 955 5512**, and to have an Electricity Prepayment Meter fitted call us on **0845 788 8500**.

How a prepayment meter can help you

Prepayment Meters can help give you financial control because you have to make regular payments to charge them. If you are paying off any outstanding amounts, your meter may be set to take regular weekly payments at a rate that will be agreed between you and us.

Once any outstanding amounts have been paid, you may be able to transfer onto a Credit Meter. In this case, any credit remaining on your Prepayment Meter may be refunded.

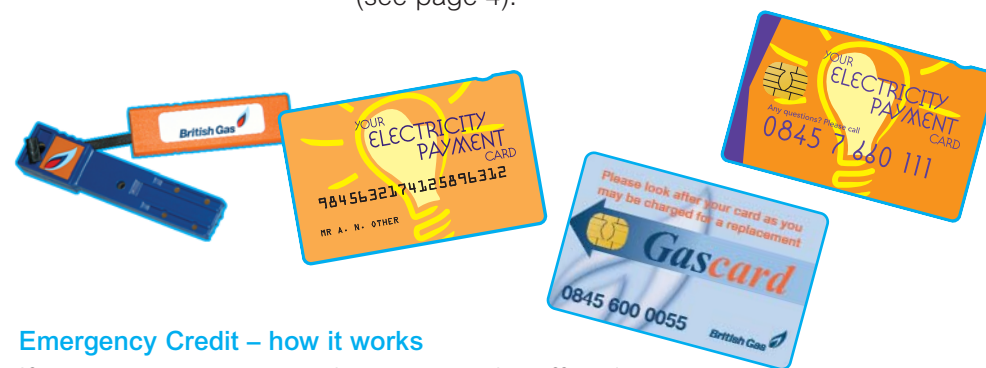
Because you need to go to a vending outlet to charge your Smartcard or Key, or to buy Tokens to use your Prepayment Meter, there is no cash involved and no risk of money being stolen from the meter.

When your Prepayment Meter is fitted, you will be given instructions on how to use it.

Remember to purchase enough credit when you are away from home. This is to cover the cost of running appliances left on standby, as well as any weekly amount to cover fixed unit charges, and any outstanding debt that you have agreed to pay through the meter.

Purchasing credit

We will provide you with a list of outlets where you can buy credit for your Prepayment Meter when it is installed. Alternatively, call our Prepayment Line (see page 4).



Emergency Credit – how it works

If your meter starts to run low, you may be offered Emergency Credit. Where Emergency Credit is provided, it is usually enough to last you three days, depending on your daily use.

For gas meter customers, £2 of Emergency Credit is available when you have £1 or less left for your gas. For electricity meter customers, typically £5 of Emergency Credit is available when you have £1 or less left for your electricity. This may vary depending on where you live.

The next time you put credit into the meter, the meter will recover the amount of Emergency Credit you've used, including any agreed repayments for outstanding amounts you owe which should have been collected.

You must pay all Emergency Credit back before you can borrow any more. Try to use it only if you accidentally run out of credit. You'll need to pay it back as soon as possible.

What happens after your debt is paid

The meter has a weekly debt recovery rate. This is an amount agreed with you, at a rate you can afford. Once you have repaid any outstanding debt, your meter will only take payment for your ongoing supply. In some instances this may require a visit to your home to reset the meter depending on the Prepayment Meter type.

Changing supplier

If you are changing supplier to British Gas we will either send, or visit you to deliver your British Gas Key or Card. For gas customers, we must have access to reset the meter. If you are changing supplier to British Gas, it is important that you do not use your previous supplier's Key or Card, as any payments made would not be credited against your British Gas account.

Moving home?

If you are moving into a home where a Prepayment Meter is installed, call our Prepayment Meter line at least three days beforehand so that we can update our records and, if necessary, send you a new Key or Card to purchase credit for the meter. If you are moving out of a home where a gas Prepayment Meter is installed, do not leave your Key or Card for the new occupier. You can however leave your British Gas electricity Prepayment Key or Card behind for the new occupier when you move.

Removing a Prepayment Meter

If you have a Prepayment Meter and want it removed and exchanged for a Credit Meter, we may do so in the following circumstances:

- If you have cleared any outstanding amounts.
- If you are a new customer moving into a property where a Prepayment Meter is fitted.

In both cases you will be offered a choice of payment methods subject to status. You may be required to pay a security deposit subject to being credit vetted.

Gas and electricity prepayment meters

Gas

For our gas customers who choose to have a Prepayment Meter, an Electronic Token Meter will be fitted. With this option, payments are made on a GasCard at any one of a number of national outlets, which is then used to charge the meter.

For more information on Gas Prepayment Meters, call our information line on **0845 600 0055**.

Electricity

For our electricity customers, there are different types of Prepayment Meters depending on where you live. The meter types include Token, Key and Smartcard.

If you want more information on the Electricity Prepayment Meter options in your area, or have a question about your existing Prepayment Meter, call our Electricity Prepayment Line on **0845 766 0111**.

Comparing prices

If you would like to compare prices on a Prepayment Meter with other forms of payment for your gas and electricity supply, call our Prepayment Line on **0845 600 0055** for a free 'Schedule of Charges' leaflet.

Information that we provide



We want to ensure you have all the information you need to use your Prepayment Meter effectively. When we install a Prepayment Meter, we give you the following information:

- **How your meter works** – when you first become a Prepayment customer we give you instructions with all you need to know about your Prepayment Meter and how it works.
- **Charges for your supply** – we provide you with details on how much your gas/electricity supply will cost you.

- **Installation** – we will agree the installation date with you. There is no charge to install a Prepayment Meter unless it's on a debt visit, in which case we will let you know what the charges are before installation.
- **Debt recovery rate** – we will inform you of the debt recovery rate that has been set and how long it will take you to clear your debt. This rate will be agreed with you, taking into account your ability to pay. This depends on you making regular weekly payments. We will confirm how much debt has been added to your meter and how we arrived at that figure.
- **Calibrating your meter** – in circumstances where your meter needs re-calibrating because of, for example, price changes:
 - For Smartcard and Key meters, we will automatically update your meter.
 - For Token meters, your meter will be manually updated during the next routine meter reading.
- **Emergency telephone numbers** – gives you emergency telephone numbers for gas and electricity. You can also find these numbers on page 19.
- **Statements and Bills** – as a Prepayment Meter customer paying for your gas or electricity in advance, or to recover any outstanding debt, you will receive an annual statement of your consumption and payment information.
- **Outlets and charging facilities** – details are provided of your nearest outlets e.g. PayPoint, and charging facilities where you can purchase credit for your gas and electricity supply.

What to do if you are having difficulty in paying for your gas or electricity supply



If you are having difficulty in paying for your gas or electricity supply, please contact us as soon as possible. The sooner we hear from you, the sooner we can help. To call or write to us, see the section on *How to contact us* on page 4.

There are a number of independent agencies that can also help and with your written consent, we can ask an appropriate agency to contact you. If you have multiple debts you can contact an independent agency such as a money advice agency, National Debtline, Citizens Advice Bureaux and Citizens Advice Scotland for helpful advice. Please see the section on *Numbers you can call for help and advice* on page 19.

If you want energy saving advice

We can offer you advice on how to reduce your gas and electricity consumption, and use energy more efficiently. Our Energy Efficiency leaflet (D03) offers energy efficiency tips such as draught proofing, and insulation. For your free copy, call our Energy Efficiency Advice Line on **0845 965 0650**.

Assessing your ability to pay

At all times we take into account your ability to pay when agreeing the most suitable recovery rate to collect any outstanding debt. If you receive benefits we normally agree to set the recovery amount at the current Fuel Direct rate, depending on your ability to pay (in electricity we may round up to the nearest £ as some meters only accept £s). We always take into account any information given to us including that from independent sources such as a money advice agency, Department for Work and Pensions, Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Citizens Advice Scotland.

Other help and advice

On page 19 you will find details of local and national advisory organisations that can help you manage your gas or electricity supply.

Helping customers with specific needs

If you are elderly, disabled or chronically sick, we can provide you with a range of services free of charge. These services are detailed in our leaflet Meeting your needs (C01). If you would like a copy of this leaflet, call **0845 955 5404**.

If you are elderly, disabled or chronically sick and would like your meter moved to a more convenient position, we may be able to arrange for it to be moved free of charge provided that it is safe and practicable to do so. We can move meters for our other customers, but may make a charge for this service.

If a Prepayment Meter is unsuitable for your individual circumstances, we will discuss alternatives with you to help you to manage your gas and electricity supply.

The British Gas Standards of Service

At British Gas, we are committed to providing the best possible service and are continually improving our standards to meet your requirements and expectations. If you are not satisfied with the standard of service you receive, contact us and we will do our best to put things right. If you receive a poor level of service, you may be entitled to compensation, for example if we miss an appointment. Our leaflet, Standards of Performance for our gas and electricity customers (C16) explains this and can be sent to you on request.

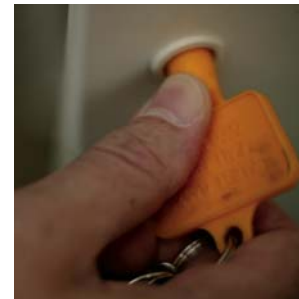
If you think there is a fault with your Card, Key or Token, Gas customers can call us on **0800 587 6567** and Electricity customers can call us on **0845 766 0111**. We will discuss the fault and make any necessary arrangements to fix it. If you ask for a new replacement Card, Key or Token, we will normally send you a new one within three days.

- **Lost or damaged GasCards, Smartcards, Magnetic Token Payment Cards or Keys** – please look after your Card or Key and keep it in a safe place, it will only work in your meter. If it gets lost or damaged, contact us. You may be charged for a replacement.

General levels of service

- **Location of Token vending/Key and Card charging outlets** – we take into account the distance to your nearest vending outlets. In most cases, charging facilities are located within one mile of your home in urban areas and two miles in rural areas. When you register as a Prepayment Meter customer, we give you details of your nearest charging outlets.

- **Repairing your meter** – If you report a fault with your gas or electricity Prepayment Meter, an engineer will attend within three hours (electricity) or four hours (gas) on working days or within four hours for either meter on any other day. If we don't, we'll give you compensation. Again, you may be entitled to compensation in circumstances where the fault has affected your gas or electricity for a longer period of time. If, when we visit, we find that the meter is working properly, we may charge you for the visit.
- **Self disconnection** – if we become aware that you are not using gas or electricity, we may contact you to discuss your circumstances and agree the most suitable way for you to continue using your gas or electricity supply if you wish. If the supply is no longer required, you will need to pay any outstanding amounts you may owe us.



Independent advice

If you have a problem, please contact us first and we will try to help you. If we can't resolve your problem, or if you would like independent advice, contact energywatch, which offers free impartial advice and support to gas and electricity consumers.

Telephone 0845 906 0708
Textphone 180010845 758 1401
Email enquiries@energywatch.org.uk
Website www.energywatch.org.uk

Or, you can write to your local energywatch office:

energywatch Scotland

National Director
1st Floor, Delta House
50 West Nile Street
Glasgow G1 2NP

energywatch North East

Regional Director
8th Floor, Percy House
Percy Street
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PW

energywatch North West

Regional Director
Boulton House, Chorlton Street
Manchester M1 3HY

energywatch Central

Regional Director
9th Floor, Civic House
156 Great Charles Street
Birmingham B3 3HN

energywatch Wales

National Director
5th Floor, St David's House
(West Wing), Wood Street
Cardiff CF10 1ER

energywatch South East

Regional Director
3rd Floor, Artillery House
Artillery Row
London SW1P 1RT

energywatch South

Regional Director
5th Floor, Herron House
8-10 Christchurch Road
Bournemouth BH1 3NA

In some circumstances, energywatch may refer your complaint to Ofgem whose address is:

Office of Gas and Electricity Markets,
9 Millbank,
London SW1P 3GE

Numbers you can call for help and advice

British Gas Prepayment Line

Gas Customers
0800 587 6567
Electricity Customers
0800 555 700

For customers who are blind or partially sighted

0845 955 5404

or partially sighted

For customers who have hearing difficulties

180010845 955 5502

(Textphone)

British Gas Energy Efficiency

0845 965 0650

Advice Line

(lines open Monday – Friday
8am to 5pm)

Transco –

0800 111 999

If you suspect a gas leak, Transco (freephone) runs a 24-hour emergency service. There is no charge for coming out and making a gas leak safe.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

020 7833 2181

Citizens Advice Scotland

0131 550 1000

You can get money advice from the following organisations who provide free, confidential, independent and impartial advice:

National Debtline

National Debtline provides a free, confidential and independent phone service
0808 808 4000

Federation of Information & Advice Centres

F.I.A.C. is a trade association for over 900 independent advice and law centres throughout the United Kingdom. All F.I.A.C. members provide free and confidential advice, but not all provide money advice. To find out where your nearest centre is you can call F.I.A.C.
020 7489 1800

Payplan

Payplan provide free debt management plans. They are funded by contributions from banks and the credit industry
0800 085 4298

Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS)

CCCS is a registered charity. It offers a more structured programme on how to manage your money
0800 138 1111

Local Authorities

The Trading Standards Department (also known as the Consumer Protection Department) can give you basic advice on dealing with your debts. Your local authority may also provide a specialist money advice service, which will be free and confidential. See your local telephone directory for details