

Saving water

If you have a water meter, it pays to save water so you can reduce your bill. You may want to also save water to help the environment. These tips explain how to save water in the home by using less mains water.

Saving water in the bathroom

You can save water in the bathroom by:

- turning off the tap when brushing your teeth
- taking a short shower instead of a bath – but bear in mind that power showers use more water than other showers
- throwing cotton wool, sanitary products and other waste in the bin, not the toilet.

These devices will cut down your use of water:

- when buying a new toilet, choose a water-saving, **low-flush** or **dual-flush** version
- fit a **variable flushing** device to existing toilets - this will give you a choice of flush volumes to help save water
- fit a water saving device to your existing toilet cistern, to cut down the amount of water flushed – for example **save-a-flush** or **hippo**
- fit **aerator** devices that mix water with air to shower heads

You may be able to find out about water saving devices from your water company or from **Waterwise**.

Saving water in the kitchen and utility room

You can save water in the kitchen and utility room by:

- only boiling the amount of water you need for hot drinks
- not running the tap to get cold drinking water – keep a jug in the fridge
- washing fruit and vegetables in a washing up bowl instead of under a running tap
- fixing dripping taps
- fully loading your dishwasher and washing machine, and use economy settings where possible
- thinking before you throw used water down the drain, for example water in a pan after cooking. This could be reused for watering plants when cooled down
- if buying a new dishwasher or washing machine, look for one that has a high European (EU) energy label, which tells you how efficient the appliance is at using water and energy. A is most efficient and G is least efficient. You could also look for a washing machine that uses less than 50 litres a wash and for a dishwasher that uses less than 15 litres a wash.

Saving water throughout the house

You can save water in the home by:

- fixing dripping taps
- fitting aerator devices that mix water with air to taps
- fitting devices that reduce water flow to taps
- saving the cold water that comes through before a tap runs hot, and use it to water plants
- insulating water pipes.

Insulating water pipes

Insulating water pipes keeps hot water hot and cold water cold, so that you don't waste water running taps waiting for the water to get to the right temperature.

Reusing grey water

Grey water - rain water, bath and shower water - can be used to water the garden and flush the toilet, instead of using fresh drinking water from the mains.

Changing to a water meter

You either pay your water bill based on a fixed rate or on the actual amount of water you use, measured with a water meter. This hand-out explains your right to have a water meter and the pros and cons of switching to a meter.

You have a right to be charged for your water on the basis of what you use. This means you have a right to have a meter installed free of charge, unless it's not practical or is unreasonably expensive to do this. Tenants also have the right to ask for a meter if their tenancy agreement is for six months or longer.

If you're considering changing to a water meter, you should contact your water company. You could do this by phone, or you may be able to apply on their website.

If you can't have a water meter installed for any reason, your water company may be able to put you on a cheaper tariff to save money.

In some areas, the water company is introducing **universal water metering**, so everyone will be given a meter.

If you ask for a meter, a company should install it within three months. In areas where free meters are being offered for the first time, this period may be six months

When is it a good idea to consider changing to a water meter?

Changing to a water meter may benefit you if you don't use much water.

It may also be worth changing to a meter if your property has a **high rateable value**. This is because some water bills are based on the rateable value of the property. A good rule of thumb is that you could pay less if there are fewer people in your property than there are bedrooms.

What happens when I change to a water meter?

If you change to a water meter, the company will come to read your meter. You won't know exactly what you're going to be charged in every bill because the amount of water you use could increase if extra people come to live with you or if you buy any new water-using appliances.

You will be responsible for paying for any water that leaks. However, a water company won't normally charge for the first leak in an underground supply pipe.

Many water companies have water usage calculators on their website, to help you work out how much you are likely to pay if you have a meter. You can also use a calculator on the Consumer Council for Water website at www.ccwater.org.uk.

If you find you are not better off after changing to a meter, you can usually change back to how the bill was paid before within twelve months. You can't do this if you have moved into a property where a meter is already installed, or if universal metering has been introduced for everyone in your area.

If you are a tenant

If you're a tenant, you can still ask for a meter.

If you have a fixed-term tenancy agreement of less than six months, you must ask the landlord's permission. If your fixed-term tenancy agreement is longer than six months, you don't need your landlord's permission to have a meter but your tenancy agreement may require you to ask their permission for alterations to the property.

You may need advice if your landlord doesn't agree to you having a meter, as any disagreements could cause problems when renewing the tenancy.

Help with your water bills

Watersure is a scheme which helps some people with their water bills. To apply for the scheme, you must be on benefits and need to use a lot of water either for medical reasons or because your household has a certain number of school-age children. You also need to be on a water meter or be waiting to have one installed.

The Welsh Water Assist Scheme is a similar scheme for customers of Welsh Water, but you do not need to be on a water meter or having one installed.

Other useful information

- **The Energy Saving Trust's** website has a **water energy calculator**, which you can use to find out how much water you use and how you can save. Go to www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.
- See **Waterwise** for tips on saving water, including information on water saving devices at: www.waterwise.org.uk

Water leaks

If you pay for your water on a meter and suspect your bill is high, this might be because there is a water leak or overflow. You may be paying for water that's going to waste.

Find out what to do if you suspect you have a water leak and how to work out who's responsible for fixing it.

How to spot water leaks

It's possible you may have a water leak if:

- you hear the sound of running water
- you see running water or wet areas
- you see a lot of plants growing near pipe work, especially during dry weather
- the water pressure in your home falls.

Who's responsible for fixing a water leak?

All water companies have a code of practice on leaks. The responsibility for repairing the leak depends on where the leak is.

If there's a leak on **your side of the meter**, on the **public footpath** or **external stop valve**, it's your responsibility to fix the leak.

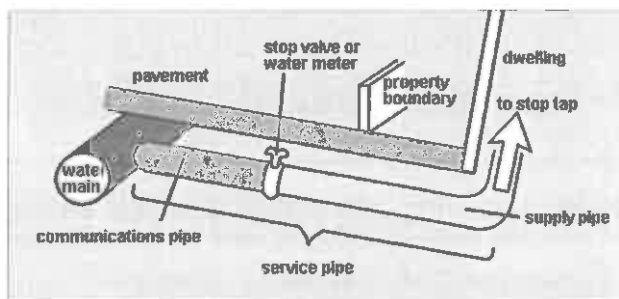
However, if it's the first time you've had a leak like this and it's not too expensive, your water company will usually repair it - although they don't have to. It's also possible they could ask you to pay, but offer you something towards the cost.

If there's a problem with the **water meter**, this is the water company's responsibility.

If the leak is due to a **damaged water pipe**, or if the pipe bursts, responsibility for fixing it depends on which section of the pipe is damaged.

Responsibility for damaged water pipes

The diagram shows how the water supply is connected to your property, what the different sections of the pipe supplying the water are called and who is responsible for them.



The pipe connecting the mains supply from the water company to your property is called the **service pipe**. The section of the service pipe running from the mains supply to the boundary of your property is the **communication pipe**. The rest of the service pipe from the property boundary into the property is known as the **supply pipe**. The property boundary is usually where the stop valve and water meter are located.

What is the water company responsible for?

The water company is responsible for the water mains in the ground and usually for the **communication pipe**. This is the part of the service pipe leading up to your property boundary from the mains.

Outside stop valves are usually the property of the water company and should be maintained by them. Unless there is an emergency leak at your property, the water company may charge you a fee to fix the outside stop valve if you insist on having it repaired quickly.

What are you responsible for?

In most cases, it's your responsibility to maintain the **supply pipe**. This is the section of the service pipe from the boundary of your property – usually where the water meter and stop valve are - into the property itself.

Even though it's your responsibility to repair the supply pipe, most water companies offer a one-off free repair or subsidised repairs to their customers. You should ask your water company what the conditions are for these repairs.

What if you rent your home or your supply pipe serves several properties?

If you rent your home, your landlord is responsible for maintaining the **supply pipe**.

If your supply pipe serves other properties, you may share the responsibility with others. Check the title deeds of your property for more information about responsibility for your supply pipe.

- To find out which water company supplies your area and for help with water issues, go to the **Consumer Council for Water's website** at: www.ccwater.org.uk

Their contact details are:

Customers in England	Tel: 0300 034 2222 Hours: 08.30-17.00, Mon-Fri
Customers in Wales	Tel: 0300 034 3333 Hours: 08.30-17.00, Mon-Fri

Email: enquiries@ccwater.org.uk

