

Plug in: to energy monitoring



We want to know more about our energy usage than ever before. How can we reduce our usage, bills and impact on the planet? Energy monitoring systems help us to better see and understand our energy usage. Find out if installing a system is right for you.

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Home energy monitoring

What is home energy monitoring?

Home energy monitoring products are apps or devices that record and display your energy usage in real time so you have better information about how you use energy and what it costs you. They are sometimes called 'In-Home Displays' because they originally were small standalone devices with a display screen, though these days they are more likely to be phone apps or websites.



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What are the benefits of home energy monitoring?

Save money and decrease carbon emissions by reducing your energy use

- Energy usage is largely invisible. An energy monitor lets you see it, and this can make you more aware of how much electricity different appliances use, and help you figure out if you are wasting energy anywhere. By seeing which appliances use a lot of energy and which use only a little, you can decide where it's worth changing your appliance usage and where it doesn't matter.
- It can also help you see if you've accidentally left a high usage appliance on, like a bathroom heater or an oven.
- Some energy monitors have an alert to let you know when your usage is higher than usual.

Predict your next bill

- Energy monitors can calculate the cost of your electricity usage (if you enter your rates in the settings) as you go along – this can help you figure out what your next bill is likely to be. Some energy monitors have a specific feature that estimates your next bill.

Find a better electricity deal

- Some energy monitors have a feature where they use your actual energy usage to calculate what your bill would be with different energy retailers. This can help you see if there's a better deal out there for you. Because it uses its own record of your usage it can be more accurate and easier than using online energy comparison websites.

Better understand your energy usage

- You might simply want learn more about your own energy usage. Energy monitoring is a great way to do this.
- Understanding your energy usage can help your make better use of it and identify the best time to use appliances.

How do energy monitors work?

Energy monitors read your energy usage as it's happening, and store the data so they can use it to show your hourly, daily, monthly usage, cost, and so on. They measure your usage by connecting wirelessly to either your electricity meter, a sensor that's attached to your meter, or a device attached to the wires in your switchboard.

Most energy monitors send the info to your phone, but there are a few that have a separate display device that you can stick on the wall or sit on a benchtop.



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Finding and choosing an energy monitoring provider

You can search for an 'energy monitor' or 'in-home display' online, to find providers in your area. The best way to get recommendations is to ask people you know who have an energy monitor to show you how theirs works and whether they're happy with its performance. You can then contact providers who advertise energy monitors and ask them for more information. Another option is to ask your energy retailer if they provide them.



Some states have schemes that pay providers to install energy monitors for free. In these states you are likely to see online ads for free energy monitors, or people going door to door offering them. Never feel pressured to sign up for an offer that you do not feel comfortable with or feel forced to take up. There are also often cooling off periods if you change your mind.

- Before responding to an online ad, search for information about the company and product.
- If doorknocked, ask for identifying information and evidence that they are approved under the state government scheme.
- The state government website about their scheme should have a list of approved or accredited providers. You can use this list to check if a provider who has approached you is accredited, or to find an accredited provider you can contact to ask about energy monitoring.

If your state doesn't have such a scheme, most energy monitoring systems will cost you a one-off installation fee.

- Many are relatively cheap because installation is quite simple.
- Some systems have more features and need to be wired into your switchboard by an electrician – these will be more expensive to install.
- Some systems might offer more features in the app or on the web and have an ongoing annual or monthly subscription cost.



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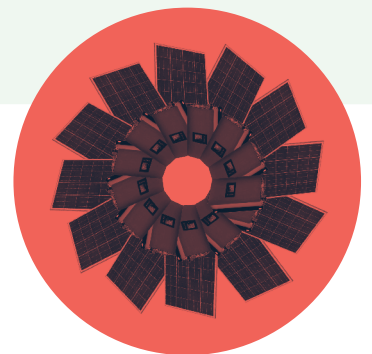
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If you are paying for an energy monitoring set-up, consider carefully your reasons for having it and whether the cost is worth it for you. Shop around and compare the features of a few different ones to help you decide which features you want and what you'll be getting for your money.

- If you're hoping to save money by reducing your usage or using the information to help you find a better energy retail deal, how does your expected saving compare to the cost? If the cost is just for installation, remember that ongoing savings add up over time; but if you have an ongoing subscription cost, your savings would need to be more.
- If you have other reasons for getting energy monitoring – to reduce your emissions, to support new technologies, to better understand your energy usage – then the question is more about the value of those benefits to you. If it's worth the cost to you, it's a good deal.
- If your only reason for getting an energy monitoring system is to find a better energy deal, it may be cheaper and simpler to use the free government comparison [site](#).

If you are paying an ongoing cost, you will need to sign a contract. A good installer must:

- Give you a contract that is clearly written and not full of technical language.
- Explain the contract to you and point out any specifics you should be aware of.
- Detail the payment process to you.
- Explain how you or they can exit the contract.



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Installation

If you're getting it for free

Once you're happy with the provider, you can arrange installation – it's usually a quick and simple process. You will probably be asked to sign a form to verify that installation happened and to allocate energy efficiency certificates to the installer; this is so they can get paid through the state government scheme.

If you are paying for energy monitoring

Make sure the cost is confirmed beforehand and you understand what's required for installation.

A good installer should:

- Show you how to connect it to your phone or other display, how to enter your electricity rates, and how to use it.
- Leave some product information for you with usage instructions and directions for connecting your phone or display to the device if you need to do it again. (Keep it in a safe place).
- Give you warranty information and contact information for if there's a problem.
- (If it's being installed to your switchboard) tell you of any inconveniences during installation such as if the electricity needs to be turned off for a time.



A good installer should explain to you how to use the app, and help you understand how to get the benefits you're after. Take some time to familiarise yourself with it, how to use the different features, and over time you'll figure out which features or display formats best meet your needs.

It's up to you how much or how little you use your energy monitoring system – some people like to check it a few times a day to see how they're going, others just check in from time to time to check their progress or see if anything's changed.



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