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[Measuring your usage \(/households/guides-and-helpful-advice/being-more-energy-efficient/measuring-your-usage\)](#). > Using smart meters

Using smart meters

On this page

[Advantages of having a smart meter](#)

[Frequently asked questions](#)

[The process of installing a new smart meter](#)

[Installation scenarios](#)

[Electricity pricing and contracts](#)

[Concerns about smart meters](#)

A smart meter is a device with a digital two-way communication system that measures when you use electricity and how much.

It records your energy use in at least 30-minute intervals and transmits the information to your retailer daily. Your retailer can read the meter remotely.

In contrast, a traditional, manual read meter only records your total electricity use. You are typically sent a bill every three months or so.

Retailers are gradually replacing manual read meters with smart meters. Some retailers have an active meter replacement program in certain areas. If there is nothing wrong with your existing meter, it could be some time before it is replaced, unless you seek out a new meter. If your meter is faulty or stops working, your retailer must replace it with a smart meter.

Advantages of having a smart meter

You will see lower fees and charges:

[Skip to navigation](#)

- Smart meters send information to your retailer digitally. This type of meter does not need to be read manually. This cuts out meter reading fees and charges.
- Connections and disconnections are cheaper. A smart meter can be turned on and off remotely when you are moving in and out without the need for a technician to visit your property.

More accurate, transparent and reliable:

- Estimated meter readings are a thing of the past. With a smart meter, you are charged for the exact amount you use.
- You can access detailed, real-time information about how much electricity you use. This helps you work out how to save money on your bills. Many electricity retailers have online platforms and apps that show your usage in graphs and charts.
- Smart meters can quickly identify electricity supply outages and notify your electricity distributor. This means faster repairs.

Flexible pricing and monthly billing options:

- With a smart meter, you can get a plan which has different electricity prices for different times of the day. For example, you can save money if you use less energy in peak periods.
- Traditional meters are read every three months. This limits options for monthly billing.

Going solar:

- You need a smart meter to install solar panels and batteries.
- Make money by exporting excess electricity to the grid.

Frequently asked questions

[Expand all](#) [Collapse all](#)

How do I get a smart meter?



Contact your electricity retailer if you want a smart meter. They will tell you about whether they offer smart meter upgrades and any changes to your contract, prices and billing arrangements. Before getting a new smart meter, your electricity retailer will tell you:

- who will install it
- that it must be installed within 15 business days or a set date

[Skip to navigation](#)

- if it can't be installed on the agreed date, it will be rescheduled
- the installer will need to temporarily turn off your electricity supply
- the associated costs or changes to your energy contract.

Many retailers will install your meter for free or as part of your electricity contract, but you may need to shop around if your retailer does not offer smart meter upgrades.

Do I have to have a smart meter?

As of 1 December 2017, national rules require that all new and replacement meters are smart meters.

If your retailer is actively installing smart meters in your area, they will send you two notices telling you about their plans.

If you do not want a new meter, you have the right to refuse one if your meter is still in working order.

However, if your old meter is faulty or has reached the end of its life, it must be replaced with a smart meter.

Why is my retailer refusing to install a new meter?

If your manual read meter is not faulty or has not reached the end of its life, your retailer does not have to install a new smart meter.

If you want a smart meter, you can switch to another retailer. Several retailers offer smart meters free-of-charge with new contracts for certain customers.

What are my options if I cannot resolve a problem with my retailer?

Contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) on 1800 246 545 or use their webform at www.ewon.com.au (<https://www.ewon.com.au/>) if you feel the matter has still not been resolved with your retailer.

EWON is a free and independent energy dispute resolution body. EWON works with the customer and the retailer to resolve complaints.

Alternatively, you may wish to switch electricity retailers. Shop around for the best energy offer using [Energy Made Easy](https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/) (<https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/>), a free NSW Government service which helps consumers find better energy deals. By

[Skip to main content](#)

using your latest electricity bill, the website can show you the top three energy plans available. The webtool also displays features such as electricity rates and the details of a contract in a simple, easy-to-understand format.

Visit <https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/> (<https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/>) or call Service NSW on 13 77 88.

Refer to the Australian Energy Regulator fact sheet [Smart Meters and You](https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/AER%20factsheet%20-%20Smart%20meters%20and%20you_0.pdf) (https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/AER%20factsheet%20-%20Smart%20meters%20and%20you_0.pdf) for more information about national metering requirements.

The process of installing a new smart meter

[Expand all](#) [Collapse all](#)

What happens on the day a meter is installed?

Make sure the meter installer can access the meter on the day it is being put in. You may need to unlock your gate or contact your building manager to ensure access.

Your electricity will need to be turned off for between 30 minutes and two hours if no unexpected issues occur. Your retailer must give you four business days' notice of this power outage.

Once the meter has been installed and tested, the installer must give you a Certificate of Compliance for Electrical Work (CCeW) and submit this to NSW Fair Trading. This confirms the work has been done by a registered electrical contractor.

Contact your retailer immediately if you experience any issues or power outages after your meter has been installed.

The meter installer came and didn't install the meter. Why?

There may be several reasons why the meter installer did not put your meter in. They include:

- they could not access your premises or the meter board
- they identified a defect or safety concern on your meter board that needs to be fixed

[Skip to navigation](#)

- there was no isolation device to turn off the power while work was being done on the meter board.

Your retailer will contact you to reschedule another time for the meter to be installed.

If you have a defect or safety issue on the meter board, you will need to have it fixed before a meter can be installed. Contact your retailer to organise a time to get the meter installed once the electrical work is completed. Your retailer must install the new smart meter within 15 business days, or a later date if agreed by you.

What if additional electrical work is needed? ^

Occasionally the meter installer may identify additional electrical work or that a meter board needs to be upgraded before you can put in a smart meter.

Electrical work

If you need additional electrical work, the meter installer or retailer will advise you to contact an electrician or Accredited Service Provider (ASP). You will need to pay for electrical upgrade work to be done. Read more about [installing or altering your electricity service \(/node/906\)](#).

Meter board

A meter board may need to be replaced for various reasons such as old wiring, not having an isolation switch and not having enough space on the board. Meter boards do not typically need to be replaced if they have asbestos.

The board needs to be replaced to make sure it complies with current safety standards. You will need to pay for the upgrade.

Installation scenarios

[Expand all](#) [Collapse all](#)

I want to install solar panels. Do I need a smart meter? ^

Yes.

The solar panels must be paired with a smart meter that can support two-way electricity flows.

[Skip to navigation](#)

Many retailers will arrange for a smart meter to be installed for free or as part of your contract if the current meter is not a smart meter.

You can also get more information about connecting your solar PV system to the electricity network from your electricity distributor, which will be Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy or Essential Energy.

You must contact your retailer to arrange for a new smart meter if your current meter cannot support two-way electricity flows. Your solar panels must remain inactive until a new smart meter has been installed. Your retailer will advise you of any electrical safety issues that need to be met.

A new smart meter will allow you to use your own solar electricity first before purchasing electricity from your retailer. It will also measure the unused solar electricity that is fed back into the grid. This allows your retailer to pay you for your solar exports with a solar feed-in tariff.

Further information about solar panel installations is available in [solar and battery power \(/node/1471\)](#).

I live in a newly constructed home. How do I get a smart meter?

All residential buildings constructed after 1 December 2017 are required to have smart meters. If your home was built before this date, you can contact your retailer to get a smart meter installed.

The meter must be installed within six business days or an alternative date you agree to.

If the meter cannot be installed for any reason, your retailer will contact you and schedule another time to install the meter.

I live in an apartment or townhouse. Can I install a smart meter?

Yes. Residents in apartments and townhouses can install smart meters.

Before the meter can be installed your retailer may organise someone to inspect the meter board and isolation fuses.

The meter board will be inspected to make sure:

- it is big enough to fit your smart meter and potentially other meters down the track

[Skip to content](#) [the wiring is not degraded](#)

- it has an isolation fuse.

If the meter board needs to be upgraded, the building owner or owners corporation must arrange for it to be done before any new smart meters are installed.

If you have your own fuse

The meter board also needs to be inspected to see if your apartment or townhouse shares an isolation fuse with other dwellings in your building.

If you have your own fuse, and no other electrical works are needed, your neighbours will not lose power on the day your smart meter is installed.

Your retailer will organise for a meter to be installed within 15 business days, unless another date is agreed.

If you don't have your own fuse

Where your apartment or townhouse shares a fuse with other dwellings, the power will be turned off for all dwellings on a shared fuse when a new meter is installed. In these cases, your retailer will coordinate with your neighbours' retailers to plan a power supply interruption. Retailers must give their customers (customers without registered life support equipment) four business days' notice that their power will be interrupted for a short time.

Your retailer will organise for a meter to be installed within 30 business days, unless another date is agreed.

I live in an embedded network. How do I get a new smart meter?

An embedded network is a private electricity network with a single main electricity meter (parent meter) connection and many 'child' meter connections at individual sites. These are common set ups in shopping centres, retirement villages, caravan parks and some apartment buildings.

In some embedded networks, the electrical infrastructure in the network may need to be upgraded to support smart meters.

If you want to install a smart meter, you should contact the embedded network manager (if there is one) or the operator of the embedded network. You can ask the building owner or owners corporation who this is if you are unsure.

If your existing meter is not faulty, you may incur costs associated with the installation of a smart meter.

Most embedded networks are supplied by a specialist retailer who supplies the whole building or network. There may be challenges to change suppliers, but embedded network customers have the right to seek access to a retailer of choice. The AER has further information about embedded networks and accessing retail competition. For more information on embedded networks, refer to the [AER's website \(https://www.aer.gov.au/consumers/information-for-electricity-customers-in-embedded-networks\)](https://www.aer.gov.au/consumers/information-for-electricity-customers-in-embedded-networks) and the [Factsheet \(https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/AER%20Factsheet%20-%20Making%20offers%20to%20embedded%20network%20customers%20-%20The%20process%20and%20role%20of%20retailers%20-%20May%202018.pdf\)](https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/AER%20Factsheet%20-%20Making%20offers%20to%20embedded%20network%20customers%20-%20The%20process%20and%20role%20of%20retailers%20-%20May%202018.pdf).

Can I get a smart meter installed if I am a tenant? Who is responsible for paying for the electrical works to get it done?

It is usually possible to have a smart meter installed without your owner's permission if the existing meter board does not require any upgrades or electrical work.

If the meter board does not meet safety standards, requires an upgrade or other electrical works, the owner of the property must be consulted as they are responsible for paying the costs of these works.

Once the electrical work is complete, contact your retailer to schedule the installation. Depending on the circumstances, your retailer will arrange for the new meter to be installed within 15 or 30 business days, unless another date is agreed.

How do I get a faulty meter replaced?

Contact your retailer if you notice your meter is not working properly. They will arrange for it to be tested. The test may also involve short power outages. You may be required to pay a fee for this service if the meter is not faulty.

Depending on the circumstances for interrupting another retail customer, if the meter is faulty, your retailer must replace the meter within 15 or 30 business days or unless another date is agreed.

I already have a smart meter, but I want to switch to another retailer. Will I need a new meter?

You can use the one you've got.

The smart meter you have will meet minimum metering requirements, such as recording and transmitting data for billing purposes. It can be used by a new retailer.

Your new retailer may arrange for a new meter to be installed in some cases. They will let you know why this is needed, the process and any costs involved.

Can my electricity be remotely turned on and off by my retailer?

From 1 October 2020, your retailer may arrange for your power to be remotely switched off and on by a metering provider. Disconnecting and reconnecting using the smart meter will be much faster (hours instead of days) and cheaper.

How long does it take for my electricity to be remotely turned off?

If you are moving house or you are renovating, your request for disconnection must be completed within two business days from the date the metering provider is notified of your request to disconnect, unless another date is agreed. You will be notified when there is no power supply to the property.

Will I be remotely disconnected without my agreement?

You will not be remotely disconnected without your agreement unless the retailer has provided you with multiple warning notices and made attempts to contact you in line with the National Energy Retail Rules. You will not be remotely disconnected if you have registered life support equipment at the premise.

There are certain circumstances when a retailer can disconnect a customer without their agreement. The same rules and consumer protections apply regardless of whether the customer has a manual meter or a smart meter.

If you have been disconnected because you have not paid your electricity bill, call your retailer immediately to pay your bill and arrange for your electricity supply to be switched back on. Before your retailer can disconnect you, they must send notices for bill payment reminders and disconnection warning notices.

Call your retailer if you don't know why your electricity supply has been switched off. They can let you know the reason, including any planned or unplanned outages.

What must happen before my smart meter can be remotely turned on and how long will it take?

Your retailer will ask you a few questions to check that it is safe before remotely reconnecting your electricity. These questions may include:

- how long the electricity supply to your premises has been switched off
- if any electrical wiring work has been done.

You will be asked to get a safety inspection if your electricity has been switched off for more than six months. It is important that your premises are safe before the electricity supply is switched back on.

If wiring work has been done, your retailer will ask you for a copy of the Certificate of Compliance for Electrical Work (CCeW). Your electrician must give this to you when the wiring work has been completed. It indicates that it is safe to switch your electricity supply back on.

Once you have provided your retailer with the necessary documentation, your retailer must switch your electricity supply on within two business days, unless you have agreed to another date. However, it will typically be within a few hours, and it is usually much faster to have your electricity switched on remotely with a smart meter than a manual meter.

Your retailer will arrange a technician to attend you premises if the meter cannot be remotely switched on because of a meter fault. This call-out service may incur a charge depending on the situation.

Electricity pricing and contracts

[Expand all](#)

[Collapse all](#)

Will my electricity price change when a new meter is installed?

It depends.

When a new smart meter is installed, you may be asked to enter into a new contract with different electricity prices.

In some cases, your retailer may not make any changes to your existing plan and tariff rates until your contract term ends. Ask your retailer about the smart meter rates and pricing structures before entering into a new contract. This way you can

[Skip to navigation](#)

make sure you are getting the best deal.

Shop around. The NSW Government developed Energy Switch so you can quickly and easily compare energy plans for free.

Visit <https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au>

(<https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/>) for more information.

Do I need to go on to a time-of-use rate with a smart meter?

You do not have to, but you may want to.

If you have a smart meter, you can stay on a flat rate, which is where there are no price changes for different times of the day when you are using energy. You may need to shop around to find a retailer who provides flat rate tariff to customers with smart meters.

You can also choose to change to a time-of-use rate. This type of rate is where you are charged different electricity prices at different times of the day. You can save money by using your home appliances during off peak periods, which is typically between 10pm and 7am, or shoulder periods (between 7am and 2pm) when the prices are lower, rather than during the late afternoon and evening (2pm-8pm), when the prices are the highest.

If you want a time-of-use rate, you need a smart meter. This way, your retailer will be able to accurately track your electricity use throughout the day.

You need to work out if a time-of-use rate is beneficial for you because you can end up paying more for your electricity on this type of plan.

Shop around. The NSW Government developed Energy Switch to help you quickly and easily compare energy plans for free. Visit

<https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au> (<https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/>) for more information.

I have a smart meter that does not transmit data. Can I submit a self-meter reading to my retailer to avoid an estimated bill?

Yes.

Customers with either an older-style accumulation meter or a smart meter with communications features switched off (referred to as a Type 4A meter), can submit a self-meter read to their retailer. This allows you to avoid receiving an estimated bill.

[Skip to navigation](#)

Retailers must arrange for one actual meter read over the course of the year so that the usage and what you have paid for electricity is accurate.

This service may incur a charge depending on the situation.

Concerns about smart meters

[Expand all](#)

[Collapse all](#)

I have health concerns about my smart meter, what can I do?

There have been claims that the electromagnetic field emissions (EMFs) from smart meters can cause health problems. Many common devices, such as mobile phones, also emit EMFs. There is no established scientific evidence that the low levels of EMFs from smart meters cause any health effects. More information: [Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency \(https://www.arpana.gov.au/understanding-radiation/radiation-sources/more-radiation-sources/smart-meters\)](https://www.arpana.gov.au/understanding-radiation/radiation-sources/more-radiation-sources/smart-meters).

If you have concerns about EMFs from smart meters, you can ask your retailer for a smart meter with the communications feature turned off so that it does not transmit data remotely. These are commonly known as a Type 4A meter. However, a technician will need to turn off the communication feature if the smart meter has been installed, and do regular meter readings at your premises.

Your retailer will let you know the upfront costs to turn off the communications feature and the ongoing costs of meter reads which you will need to pay each time someone comes to your premises. These costs depend on your location.

I have privacy concerns about my meter data, what can I do?

Your energy data and personal information is classified as confidential information under the National Electricity Rules and the Privacy Act 1988.

There are safeguards in place to protect consumers from unauthorised access to metering data and its services. For example, data showing that your meter exports solar energy during the day is protected information.

Access to metering data is limited to registered energy market participants, such as retailers and meter providers.

[Skip to navigation](#)

I still don't want a smart meter. What can I do?



All new and replacement meters installed from 1 December 2017 must be smart meters.

If you don't want a smart meter, you can ask your retailer to have the 'smart' or remote telecommunications function turned off either before it is installed or after it has been installed.

A smart meter that does not transmit data remotely is known as a Type 4A meter. It effectively becomes the same as an accumulation meter. It will record your electricity usage and will need to be read manually by a technician.

You could be charged for meter readings. A meter reading must occur at least once a year.

Your retailer must let you know the upfront costs to turn off the communications feature and the ongoing service charges such as meter reads). These costs vary depending on your location.