

Economy 7

For heating and hot water

Economy 7 is an electricity tariff that means you pay a different price for your electricity at different times of day, a bit like on-peak and off-peak phone calls.

With Economy 7, the electricity you use at night costs about a third of the price of the electricity you use during the day – a big difference. The hours of cheap electricity are normally from midnight until 07.00 in winter, and from 01.00 to 08.00 in summer, although this can vary between suppliers.

Economy 7 tariffs use a different kind of electricity meter, which, unlike a standard meter, can record the electricity you use during the day and at night separately.

Is Economy 7 right for me?

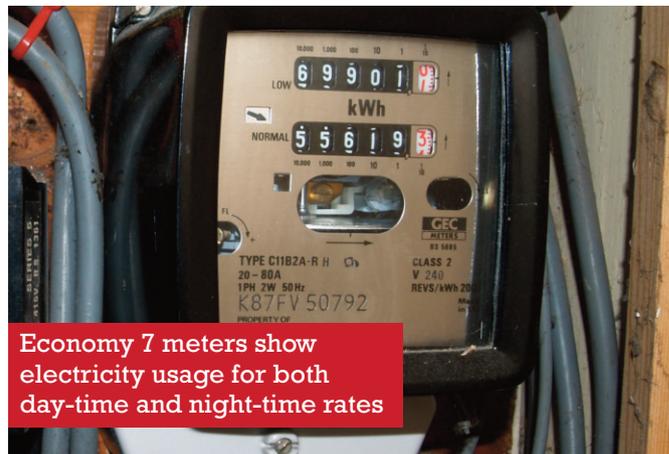
Whilst Economy 7 gives you seven hours of cheap electricity at night, the downside is that for the other 17 hours the electricity costs more than normal – higher than the standard tariff rate. This suits certain customers, but not others. If your day-time electricity is more expensive, you should consider running appliances like your washing machine and dishwasher at night.

Tips for saving money if you're on an Economy 7 electricity tariff

- Use appliances like dishwashers, washing machines and tumble dryers at night when electricity is cheaper. You could buy timers for them if this helps.
- If possible, set the timer on your hot water tank so that the immersion heater comes on during the night, even if you use the hot water during the day.
- Consider investing in a 'slow cooker'; they use far less electricity than an oven.
- Use a microwave instead of the electric hob where possible.
- Fit energy-saving light bulbs where possible.



Main image Alex Foster/flickr.com; above, Paul Groom



Economy 7 meters show electricity usage for both day-time and night-time rates

Photo: NiteLUX

As a rule of thumb, Economy 7 will be cost-effective if you use electricity (not gas, which is a much cheaper heating fuel) for your heating and hot water, and if you use more than 80% of your electricity at night.

For this to be the case, you're almost certainly using electric **storage heaters** (inset picture) for warming the house and have a hot water tank that is heated by electricity. This is because both storage heaters and hot water tanks can be timed to use cheap, night-time electricity and store this as heat until needed during the day.



If you heat your home and water with electricity, but don't have storage heaters or a hot water tank, Economy 7 probably won't be cost effective for you.

If you are on an Economy 7 tariff, your electricity bill will show a day-rate and a night-rate.

Your electricity meter will also show two sets of numbers, one marked 'low' and one marked 'normal', or there may be a set of figures marked 'day rate' and a red button, which you press to get your night reading.

If you are in any doubt whether you are on Economy 7, call your electricity supplier.



A few ways to cut your electricity and gas use, and save money ...

When you're cooking, only open the oven door when absolutely necessary; every time you open it, nearly a quarter of the heat escapes.



Give your clothes a day in the sun; and give your tumble drier a break. Clothes dried in the fresh air feel great, and there are drying days in winter, too.

Don't leave your phone on charge all night. It only needs an hour or so. And try not to leave the TV and other kit on stand-by.

Catch 'em young! Encourage your children to switch off electric toys and lights that they're not using. They'll soon get the hang of saving energy.



Dodge the draught! Fit draught-excluders to your front door, letter box and key hole, and draw your curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.

Only fill the kettle with as much water as you actually need (but make sure you cover the metal element).



Buying a new appliance? Look out for the Energy Saving Trust 'recommended' logo.



Wait until you have a full load in your dishwasher or washing machine before doing a wash. Two half-loads use more energy than one full load.

Sleep tight. Make sure all the lights are turned off when you go to bed. You can get low-wattage night lights for children's rooms or landings.



Turn your heating down by 1 degree. You'll hardly notice the change in temperature, but it'll make a big difference to your heating bill.

Be a friend to your freezer. Defrost it regularly to help it run more efficiently.

Put your fridge in a good spot, not next to a cooker or radiator, but where air can circulate behind it.

More energy-saving advice at www.cse.org.uk/advice

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