

Understand your electricity pricing plan

When you open an account for electricity supply, you are put on a pricing plan. The electricity company uses the pricing plan to work out your electricity bill.

The pricing plan is part of your contract with the electricity company. The contract will say how much notice the company has to give you if it wants to change the pricing plan you are on.

Some companies talk about pricing tariffs instead of pricing plans. No matter what it is called, you should be able to understand how the company is working out your bill.

Meters at the property

The pricing plan depends on the meters at the property.

There are three main types of electricity meters. They are:

Uncontrolled All the electricity supplied to your house 24 hours a day is metered and charged at the same rate for each unit of electricity.

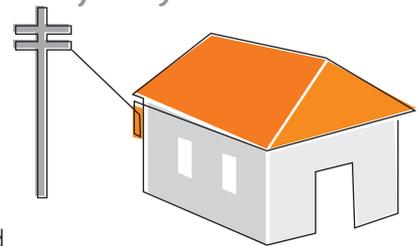
Controlled or ripple control This is when the electricity supply to your house is controlled. The controlled supply is to certain appliances, usually the hot water cylinder. This means the electricity to those appliances may be turned off for short periods, usually at times of high demand. Some companies talk about using 'ripple control' or 'ripple relay'. You may have more than one meter if you have controlled or ripple control. The company will charge you less per unit of electricity in exchange for being able to turn off supply to the controlled appliances, whether or not this happens.



Time-of-use The amount you pay for each unit of electricity will change depending on when you use electricity. There are many time-of-use rates. The company may offer cheaper rates for your whole house at certain times, or cheaper rates at night for separately wired appliances, usually the hot water cylinder.

Your pricing plan may be a combination of two or three plans. For example, you might have time-of-use metering and have a hot water cylinder on a controlled meter.

You could have one, two, or more electricity meters. Some meters can be set to record the way you use electricity on different plans. Ask your company what kind of meter, or meters, you have.



Common names for pricing plans or tariffs

Electricity companies use different names for pricing plans or tariffs. This table shows some common names.

	Common names
One meter controlled	Single Meter Managed, Combined, Composite, All Inclusive, All Day Economy, Economy 24, Anytime
Two meter controlled	Controlled, Controlled xx hours, Economy, Interrupted, Off peak, Kiwi Power, Night Boost, Night Plus, Night Only, Night Owl, Night xx
Time-of-use	Day/Night, Peak/Off Peak, Triple Saver

Pre-pay meters

Some electricity companies offer pre-pay meters that supply electricity paid for in advance. You need to 'top up' the meter for continuous supply of electricity. Some pre-pay meters include a power management system which allows you to monitor how much electricity you are using. Some pre-pay meters allow users to pay off debt with the electricity company at the same time they 'top up'.

Low user plan

All electricity companies have to offer a low user pricing plan for customers whose electricity use at their home is below certain levels.

If your household uses less than 8,000 kWh per year (less than 9,000 kWh in the lower South Island), you may benefit from being on a low user plan. This means your fixed daily charge is lower, but you pay a higher variable rate for each unit of electricity you use.

Talk to your company to check whether a low user pricing plan would benefit you.

Your electricity company can explain your pricing plan

Your electricity company can explain your pricing plan. Contact the company and ask if the pricing plan you are on is the best one for you.

What can I do if I'm having problems paying my bill?

Contact your company as soon as possible if you're having problems paying your power bill. Tell your company if you are vulnerable or need electricity for medical reasons. All electricity companies have to follow the same guidelines for dealing with customers who are medically dependent on electricity or have circumstances that make them vulnerable.

The Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner cannot look into complaints about the price of electricity. The Commissioner can check the company has given you good information about the charges, and can check your bills are correct. You can call free on 0800 22 33 40, or email info@egcomplaints.co.nz to ask about our service.

