# Electricity Bills

The Australian Energy Regulator has created guidelines that energy retailers must follow for their bills. Electricity and gas bills must show information to help households understand their bills. There are also ways to keep track of your energy usage, so you don’t have to wait for the bill to find out how much you are using. Both of these will be explored in this document.

## How to Read Your Bill?

Understanding what information is on your bill helps make it easier to read and understand. Energy retailers are only required to use specific wording in certain places. They are not required to use the same format in their bills when talking about their plans and services. We have provided a list of common phrases retailers may use to describe what they are specifically billing you for. Energy providers also have documents on how to read their bills available.

### Bill Information Layout

Energy bills are unique depending on the retailer, however where information must be shown is controlled and monitored by regulatory bodies.

* The first section of information is called Area 1 and is either the first or front page of a bill. This section includes identifying information such as customer details and key contact information. It will also include financial details such as amount due, due date and available payment methods. Lastly, this section also includes links to the state's Energy and Water Ombudsman, the Energy Made Easy website and the Better Offer Message.
* An energy retailer can also include information relating to natural disasters, pandemics, and emergencies in Area 1.

The second section is called Area 2, and this appears immediately after, or on the next page from Area 1.

* This section includes information on the energy plan such as tariffs and usage charges for the billing period. There will also be contact information for the customer to access additional support such as interpreter services, or the retailer's hardship policy. This section may include information about energy use for previous periods for comparison, usually in the form of graphs.

Retailers can add any additional information after Areas 1 and 2.

### “How to Read Your Bill” Examples

Energy retailers might offer a document to help you read and understand your bill. These are generally titled “how to read your bill” or “assisting you reading your bill”. Your retailer may also have an Easy English version. This version is written specifically for people with Low English Literacy and persons from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds. If you are unable to find these documents online, you can contact your energy retailer to request them to be sent to you in either mail or electronic format.

## Keeping track of your energy

Knowing your past and present energy usage is the first step to reducing your inefficient energy use. There are two easy ways to find your energy use, if you want to know sooner than your next bill.

* The energy star rating on your appliances.
* Using a Home Energy Management System (HEMS).

The Energy Rating System is a simple way to find your estimated energy use and running costs. Please remember that these are just estimates, with factors such as appliance condition may create disparity between estimated and actual energy use. For precise energy usage measurements, a HEMs will be able to assist. HEMs are either software, hardware, or both that can be used to remotely control electrical appliances in your home and/or monitor their energy use.

### Energy Ratings

The Energy Rating Label is a government program that grades a product's energy efficiency, with more efficiency awarded by more stars. The label will also include the estimated energy consumption for the products average use in a year. This is a legal requirement on the products listed below that are sold in Australian stores (online and overseas stores are exempt but may have them):

* Non-ducted air conditioners.
* Washing machines.
* Clothes dryers.
* Computer monitors.
* Dishwashers.
* Fridges and freezers.
* TVs.
* Pool pumps.

### Using the Energy Rating Scale

The energy rating scale gives two valuable pieces of information for consumers: the energy rating, and the energy consumption of an appliance. The star rating of an appliance only shows how energy efficient that appliance is. It cannot be used to compare appliances unless they are similar. While a 4 star large fridge is more energy efficient than a 3 star large fridge, it may have considerably more consumption than a 4 or 3 star small fridge, or even a 2 star small fridge.

The energy consumption number shows the total energy use of the appliance for its average use each year. If desired, you can manually work out the estimated running cost of the appliance by applying the following formula (with kWh representing Kilowatt Hours):

Annual running cost = Total energy consumption kWh × Electricity Tariff (dollars per kWh)

For example, if a fridge has a yearly energy consumption of 318 kWh and the average tariff in your area is $0.307 per kWh — then the estimated annual running cost per year is $97.63 (318 kWh x $0.307).

### Home Energy Management Systems (HEMs) /Usage Tracking Apps

HEMs systems can be used to control when appliances turn on and off to benefit from cheaper time of use tariffs. They can also be used to control connected devices remotely, improving their accessibility and ease of access. Some HEMs can also be programmed to be ‘set and forget’ type systems. They can even be connected to smart home devices to allow for energy management via voice control. HEMs can be small scale, like power point adaptors, to large scale whole house systems used with household batteries. Please keep in mind some HEMs and Usage Tracking apps may not be accessible or have accessibility features.

Alternatively, many energy retailers offer real time or daily /weekly /monthly tracking of energy use. Log on to your retailer’s website or app to see if they offer this service. If your retailer does not, there are numerous third-party apps or software that can help you track your energy usage. Below are some of the common apps and software used in Australia to monitor energy usage.

Energy Cost Calculator and Energy Rating Calculator are popular apps used to help calculate running costs of appliances to better budget energy use.  Apps like Consumptions, Energy Consumption Analyzer, Meter Readings, and Energy Tracker all monitor your energy meters and provide its information in an easier and more accessible format. Apps such as Energy Saver can also assist in all areas mentioned.