ENERGY
SAVER

ENERGY FACTS FOR

FIRST—TIME RENTERS

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There is plenty to learn when you're starting out as a renter – finding the 'right' property is only the starting point. This fact sheet is to help you understand the basics around how to get a good deal and how to manage your energy bills.

For many renters energy bills are their second biggest expense (after paying the rent) so it's useful to know how you can reduce your energy costs with simple changes.

You might be surprised at how easy it is to save money and still make your home more comfortable to live in – all year round.

STEP 1: Get a good deal

It can be confusing for all of us to know what is the best deal, so it definitely pays to spend some time working it out.

The size of your energy bills depends on the type of property you're living in, which state you live in, who you're living with and what type of heating/cooling systems you use.

Unless your energy is paid for by the landlord, you can choose which energy retailer you want to go with.

The important things to look out for are:

- The unit cost – normally stated as cents per kilowatt hour (kWh)
- The daily charge
- Whether you can pay monthly instead of longer term – this might be a better option if you are in a shared rental property.

There is a video at **energymadeeasy.gov.au** that can help you compare different plans and make sure you are getting the best one.

HOT TIP
Ask to be sent your bills every month instead of every quarter – it's a lot easier than paying three month's worth of energy bills all at once.

Compare energy deals

Use a government website like **energymadeeasy.gov.au** to see what energy plans are available in your area.

For Victorians, go to **compare.energy.vic.gov.au** In NSW go to **energyswitch.service.nsw.gov.au**

These government sites are better than some of the commercial energy comparison websites because they don't take commissions from energy companies to advertise their plans, and they also include ALL offers in the market.

HOT TIP
Check if anybody in your house has a concession card, and list them as the account holder so you can get a discount on the energy bills.

STEP 2: Identify where and when your costs are highest

Once you get your first bill you will have some idea of how much energy your household uses each month. The biggest costs are usually heating and cooling, so your bill will be highest when it's super cold or super hot – and is unlikely to be the same every month of the year.

Once you've been in the rental property for over a year you can compare your monthly usage against the same time last year. Your energy bill should also include information on how your energy use compares to other households in the area. This can be a good guide to whether you could do more to better manage your bills.

STEP 3: Make changes where it counts

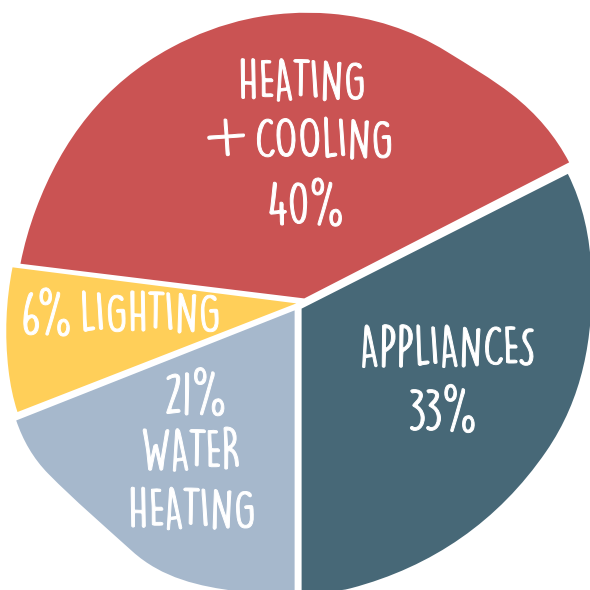Even though you're renting, there are still ways that you can manage your energy use.

- Use draught stoppers (door snakes) to stop the air flow around doors and windows.

- Use rugs on old floorboards if there are gaps.

- Ask your landlord for permission to use weather seals (you can buy these at any hardware store) to use on door frames.

- Use curtains/blinds to keep the sun out in summer and the warmth in during winter.

- Choose newer, more energy efficient appliances. Look for the highest stars rating.

Ask your landlord to make repairs

Make a note of everything that needs fixing in your rental property, including gaps or cracks which would let warmth escape from your home.

Check if your landlord is required to replace old appliances (like hot water systems) with more energy efficient models (ask your landlord, property agent or check with the Tenants Association in your state or territory).

It's in your landlord's interest to allow you to make the property more energy efficient, and if they do agree to let you make changes, make sure you get it in writing.

Use less peak power

Depending on where you live, you might be able to get a 'time of use' rate that provides discounts at certain times of the day. Usually it's cheaper overnight and more expensive at peak times – like early morning and evening when everyone is using power.

Once you get discounts for off-peak times, use appliances like washing machines overnight to save money (unless it wakes up your housemates). Ask your energy company or visit **energymadeeasy.gov.au** to see what's available in your postcode.

For Cooling ($ per hour)
- Portable or ceiling fan   2 - 5c
- Portable evaporative   8c
- Split system   60c
- Ducted air conditioning $3.00

For Heating (cost per hour)
- Split system   25c
- Electric radiator   36c
- Gas heater   47c
- Ducted reverse cycle $1.45 - $2.12

Cheap to run (cost per hour)
- Computers, printers, phones <1c
- TVs*   1 - 14c
- Dishwasher   12 - 56c
- Microwaves   28 - 53c

Expensive to run (cost per hour)
- Ovens   63c - $1.33
- Stovetop**   42 - 84c
- Irons and vacuums   41 - 82c
- Clothes dryer   50c - $3.14

HEATING + COOLING 40%

6% LIGHTING

21% WATER HEATING

APPLIANCES 33%

ABOVE: A TYPICAL HOUSEHOLD USE OF ENERGY

* TV running costs depend on type/size

** Cost per element

Energy Facts for First Time Renters was developed by Energy Consumers Australia.

More information on how to save money and energy can be found at the websites below:

www.energymadeeasy.gov.au

www.energy.gov.au

www.energyrating.gov.au

www.compare.energy.vic.gov.au

www.energyswitch.service.nsw.gov.au

www.nils.com.au

www.positivecharge.com.au

State and Territory tenant advice sites:

VIC: **www.tuv.org.au**

WA: **www.tenancywa.org.au**

TAS: **www.tutas.gov.au**

QLD: **www.tenantsqld.org.au**

NSW: **www.tenants.org.au**

NT: **www.dcls.org.au**

SA: **www.sheltersa.asn.au**

ACT: **www.tenantsact.org.au**