

Why Should I Learn to Read My Meter?

You should learn to read your gas and electric meter so you can monitor your energy use and double check your bill for accuracy.

How is Electricity and Gas Measured?

The basic unit of measure of electric power is the watt. One thousand watts are called a kilowatt. If you use one thousand watts of power in one hour, you have used one kilowatt-hour (kWh). Your electric utility bills you by the kWh.

Natural gas is commonly measured by the cubic foot, and you are billed by the thousands of cubic feet (MCF) or the hundreds of cubic feet (CCF). You may also be billed by the Therm, which is about the same as a CCF or 100 cubic feet.

To measure the amount of electricity or gas that you use, the utility installs a meter between the incoming electric power or gas lines and the point of distribution at your house. The meter monitors your daily power or gas usage, and the utility will send out a meter reader to record your usage.

How Does The Meter Work?

The standard electric meter is a clock-like device that records the amount of electricity you use. As your home draws electricity from the power lines, a set of small gears inside the meter move. The number of revolutions are recorded by the dials that you see when you look at your meter. The speed of the revolutions is determined by the amount of power that is consumed.

A gas meter works by measuring the force of the moving gas in the pipeline. The dials turn faster as the flow of gas increases.

How Do I Read My Meter?

Although many think that meter reading is complicated, it is actually easy.

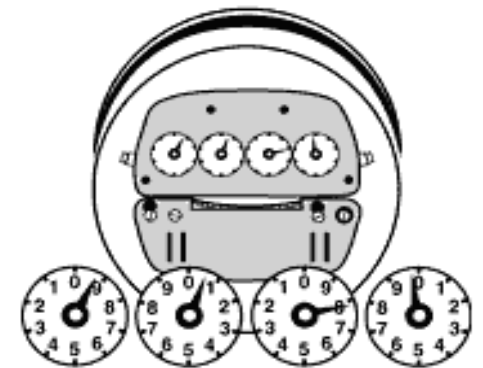
There are two types of meters: *digital* and *dial*. To read a digital meter, simply read the meter like you would a digital clock. Below is an example of a digital meter.



The reading would be 8304.

Reading your dial meter is much like reading a clock: you look to where the hand is pointing on the dial.

When reading your dial meter, stand directly in front of the meter to record the numbers. When the hand is directly on the number, look at the dial to the right. If the hand on the dial to the right has passed zero, write down the number the hand is on for the dial in question. If the hand has not passed zero, use the lower number. If the needle falls between two numbers, use the smaller of the two. Below is an example of a dial meter.



The reading would be 9079.

Here is another example:



The reading would be 1935.

You will notice that some of the dials move clockwise while other dials move counter clockwise. The first dial moves one way, and the next dial moves the opposite way.

Meters are not reset each month. The readings increase from month to month. The difference between one month's reading and the next is the amount of energy units or CCFs that have been used for that billing period. For example:

Electric Meter

Current Reading	9653
Previous Reading	<u>9630</u>
	23 kWh used
—OR—	

Gas Meter

Current Reading	1750
Previous Reading	<u>1725</u>
	25 CCF used

If you decide to track your daily usage, be sure to check your meter at the same time each day. Daily tracking can help you to understand your usage patterns better.

Who Is Responsible for the Meter?

The utility company is responsible for setting the meters and for the gas and electric lines leading up to the meter. The customer is responsible for the lines from the meter to his house. If your meter is damaged or shows signs of vandalism, please contact your gas or electric utility. Tampering with a meter is illegal and may lead to discontinuance of service, criminal prosecution, or both.

How Often is My Meter Read?

The Public Service Commission requires utilities to read customer meters at least quarterly unless the meter is a customer-read meter. If the meter is customer-read, then the utility is required to read the meter at least once during each year. Most utilities try to read their customer's meters every other month. If the meter is not read, the utility may send an estimated bill based upon prior service delivered.

In order to help the meter reader, please keep shrubs and plants away from the meter and provide access to the meter reader if your meter is located inside your house. As a safety precaution, all utilities require their meter readers to have an employee ID. If an employee doesn't have an ID, do not let the meter reader into your home.

Who Do I Contact If I Have a Complaint?

If you have a complaint about your gas or electric company, contact the company first.

If you are unable to resolve the complaint with the company, you can contact us:

Kentucky Public Service Commission
P.O. Box 615
Frankfort, KY 40602
1-800-772-4636
www.psc.state.ky.us

A Consumer's Guide to Reading Electric & Gas Meters

