



Your local supply, on tap

# Tips for reducing your water bill



A guide for  
high users  
of water

# The necessity to save water

There is increasing pressure on the water supply in our area and the Secretary of State for the Environment has designated it as being under serious water stress.

Less predictable rainfall, and reductions in the amount of water we can take from underground sources (abstraction), coupled with predicted population growth and development of new homes, will affect the amount of available water.

We have also committed to reducing the amount of water we take from our underground sources, to leave more water in the environment for sensitive habitats and local rivers.



## Save water, save energy, save money

We offer free practical advice and water saving devices to help our customers reduce their water use.

**If you use less water you are likely to save on your energy bills too!**

According to the Energy Saving Trust, approximately 21% of household heating bills relate to heating water for showers, baths and hot water taps. This does not include kettles, washing machines and dishwashers, which use additional energy.

For advice and free water saving devices please visit:

[www.affinitywater.co.uk/savewater](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk/savewater)



## Tips for reducing your water bill

Your water bill is based on the amount of water you use. We have sent you this booklet because you are using more water than we would normally expect from a property like yours.

You may already be aware that your water usage is high and that there are good reasons for it. But it's also possible that water is being used or lost unnecessarily. This booklet will help you to understand and detect where your water is going. It also provides tips for reducing your water usage – and your bill.



## My water bill seems very high – what could be causing this?

Your bill is based on cubic metres of water supplied; one cubic metre is equal to 1,000 litres (or 220 gallons). In our experience, the usual reasons for using a lot of water are:

- High use of water-intensive appliances like power showers or hosepipes
- Faulty plumbing or appliances – please note that the plumbing and pipework in your property are your responsibility
- Household members using more water than you realise.



We strongly recommend that you investigate your water use by following the step-by-step guide detailed in this booklet.

# How can I investigate my water use?

## Check that your internal stop tap is working

You will not be able to complete all the necessary checks unless your internal stop tap is working. This is also important if you should need to shut off your main water supply in an emergency.

Step  
1



Your stop tap is usually located under the kitchen sink or in a connecting garage. It is important to know where it is and to check that it is working properly, in case you ever have to shut off your water in an emergency. If it is not working, we recommend that you call a plumber.

Turn the stop tap on and off a few times to check if it is fully operational. If it is, the water supply at your kitchen tap should stop after a short time. Make sure you return the stop tap to its normal (open) position and check that water flows at the usual pressure from the kitchen tap.

To view a video of how to find your internal stop tap, and other common issues, visit:

[www.affinitywater.co.uk/howtoguides](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk/howtoguides)

## Locate your water meter and take a reading

Your water meter can usually be found near the boundary of your property, in your front garden or in the footpath immediately in front of your property. In some circumstances, a meter may have been fitted inside your property. If so, it is usually fitted under the sink or near to the stop tap.

Step  
2

- The meter is usually located inside a chamber and is connected to your water supply pipe at the bottom of the chamber
- Lift the outer lid using a wide screwdriver if necessary (internal meters don't have lids)
- Remove the polystyrene frost cover (if there is one) and pull up the inner meter lid (if fitted) so that you can see the meter face
- Each water meter has its own unique serial number, which is also shown on your bill. Please ensure that you have located the correct meter
- If you can see water in the chamber, don't worry – it's usually the result of heavy rainfall. However, if the water is still there after a prolonged dry spell, this could indicate a leak and may have to be checked.



## How to take a reading

To complete the following steps in this booklet you will need to be able to accurately read the meter. Always read and record all the dials (seven or eight in total).

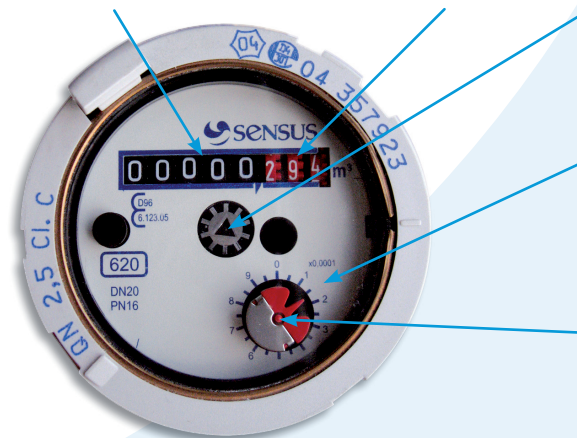
To take a reading, look at the meter face. The black/white numbers indicate how many cubic metres of water you have used. Each cubic metre is 1,000 litres.

The numbers that are either white on a red background or red on a white background indicate how many litres you have used.

The 'spinner' moves rapidly when water is used, which will be helpful when you get to Steps 4 and 5. The spinner could be an arrow, however do not confuse this with the arrow that is sometimes used to record tenths of a litre.

The red/white dials will move quickly when water is being used. There are normally three or four red dials, although sometimes the fourth one is located separately on the meter face.

The fourth dial indicates how many tenths of a litre you use.



## Step 3

### Check for unexpected overnight usage

During the night your water consumption should be very low, and possibly even zero.

Make sure that no appliances are operating during the night, turning them off if necessary. Take a meter reading just before you go to bed and then in the morning before any water is used. Compare the two readings. If they are different by more than 10 litres, you should investigate:



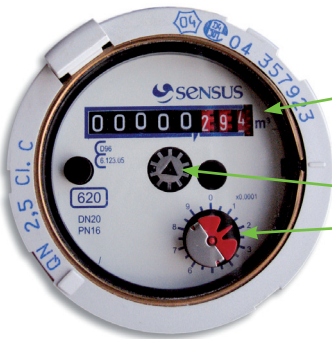
- A leak on your supply pipe or within your property (see step 4)
- Faulty appliances
- Appliances you may have not switched off, such as a water softener.

If your overnight meter reading check does not indicate a problem, please follow **STEP 6** to see if you can detect other reasons for your high water use.

## Step 4

### Conduct a leak test

Confirming that there are no leaks on your property is a very simple process. Make sure no water is being used inside your home and observe your meter for two minutes.



- If you detect any movement of the dials during this time, you should take a reading and observe the meter for a further 12 minutes before taking another reading
- If any water is flowing you will detect movement on the meter 'spinner' or dial measuring tenths of a litre. Some meters do not have these, so just observe changes in the meter reading numbers.

## Step 5

### A) Check your supply pipe for leaks

If the two readings from **STEP 4** are different, follow these instructions to determine whether water is being lost from your supply pipe.

**Note: This test is not applicable if you have an internal meter. In which case go to STEP 5 B**

To check for a leak between your meter and your internal stop tap, you need to shut off all your indoor taps and your internal stop tap. To check your internal stop tap is working - turn on your kitchen tap and let it run for a few minutes, until it stops. If water continues to flow, you may not have fully shut off the internal stop tap, or it may be faulty, in which case you'll need to call a plumber to replace it.

- **Take a further meter reading and make a note of it**
- **Exactly 12 minutes later, re-read the meter and make a note of it**
- **Subtract the lower reading from the higher reading.**

**If the two readings are identical, go to STEP 5 B**

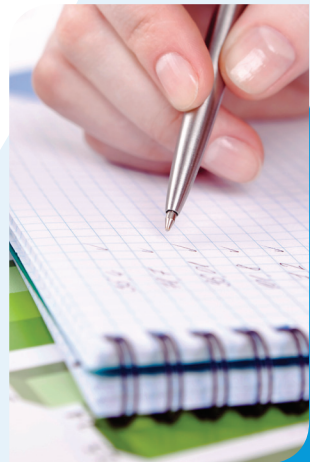
If they are different, after completing the test, turn your internal stop tap back on. You'll need to arrange a repair of your supply pipe, which is your responsibility to maintain. Please contact us for further information – you may be able to submit a claim for the cost of lost water.

### B) Carry out more tests

If the two readings from **STEP 5 A** are identical, follow these instructions to test your internal plumbing:

- **Turn your internal stop tap back on and wait a few minutes. Make sure to check no appliances are being used**
- **Take another meter reading and make a note of it**
- **After 12 minutes, take a further meter reading and make a note of it**
- **Subtract the lower reading from the higher reading to work out how much water has been used in this period.**

If you are concerned by this usage, you should call a plumber to investigate and repair. Before doing so, make sure there are no obvious problems with dripping taps or other internal leaks.



# Work out how much water your appliances use

Reduce your household bills by measuring and managing your consumption with your meter.



## Gardens

A garden hose or sprinkler can use 1,000 litres (one tonne) of water an hour.

TIP – Use a water butt to collect rainwater, which can be used to water your garden or wash your car.



## Power Showers

To work out how much your shower uses take a meter reading before and after you take your shower. Make sure no other appliances are being used during this time. Conduct this test with others in your household. Power showers use more water than mains fed showers.

TIP – Install a water efficient shower head (on mains fed only showers) and take a short four minute shower which will use around 35 litres.



## Toilets

Toilets use eight or more litres per flush and account for 20% of your home's water usage. This may be higher if you spend most of your time at home.

TIP – Install a 'Save a Flush' device if you have a single flush toilet.



## Baths

An average bath uses about 85 litres of water. Use your meter to determine how much water you use in your bath by taking a reading before and after you have run it.

TIP – Instead of a bath, why not take a short four minute shower?



## Dripping taps

A dripping tap can waste 5,000 litres of water a year.

TIP – Check all your taps to ensure they shut off. Change the washers on taps that do not shut off properly.



## Washing machines and dishwasher

Consider how often you use your washing machine and dishwasher.

TIP – only use your washing machine and dishwasher when full. You will save on your energy bills too.

For more water saving tips and free devices, please visit:

[www.affinitywater.co.uk/savewater](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk/savewater)



# Do one last check

Did you carry out Steps 4 and 5?

Step  
7

**YES** You will need to arrange a repair, but please refer to our 'Leaks on supply pipes' booklet first. It provides additional information – including options on claiming a contribution towards the cost of lost water through your insurance company or Affinity Water. Please visit:

[www.affinitywater.co.uk/supplypipeleaks](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk/supplypipeleaks)

**NO** Do you suspect an internal leak or wish to better understand how you are using water?

**YES** Choose from the following options:

Call a plumber and ask them to investigate. We have a list of approved plumbers but you will need to pay for the plumber yourself. Please call **0345 357 2407**.

Need an approved plumber?



[www.watersafe.org.uk](http://www.watersafe.org.uk)

Use our logger service, which will provide you with a detailed report of the times when water is being used during a period of about two weeks. You will need to establish the reason for the use of water. Please note that we do charge for this service. For more information on this service, please call **0345 357 2401**.

**NO** Further action is not needed. Please pay your bill, if you have not done so already, at [www.affinitywater.co.uk/payonline](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk/payonline) or call our automated payment line on **0345 357 2400**.

Your high water usage may have come about because a member of your household has a medical condition that means you use more water than the average household. Or it may be because you have a large family.

If this is the case you could be entitled to a cap on your water charges.

For more information on our schemes and tariffs and how to apply, please visit:

[www.affinitywater.co.uk/lowincome](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk/lowincome)

## Bogus callers. Be aware!

If someone knocks on your door claiming to be from Affinity Water, please take the time to check if they are a genuine caller. Don't let anyone in unless they are in uniform and can show you an Affinity Water identity card.

If you are in any doubt, ask them to wait outside while you call our Operational Enquiries Team on **0345 357 2407** – don't worry about causing offence, if they are genuinely from Affinity Water, they won't mind waiting.



## Other factors that can affect your water consumption:

### Inefficient overflows

Overflows can waste a lot of water. It is not always obvious an overflow has malfunctioned, especially if the overflow pipe is plumbed into bath overflows or the toilet flush pipe.

Some modern toilets overflow down the back of the pan, so a build-up of limescale could indicate that it's not working correctly. Check any other appliances that have an overflow.

### Extra visitors

The more people in your home, the higher the water consumption will be.

### Summer

Most people use more water in summer because of watering their gardens and taking extra showers.

### Water softeners

Check that the softener is set correctly for the local water conditions by referring to the manufacturer's manual. If possible, turn it off for a week, taking a meter reading before and after to see if there is a noticeable difference. A faulty water softener can waste huge volumes of water without being noticed.

### Swimming pools and ponds

Topping up swimming pools and ponds from a hosepipe can use up to 1,000 litres of water per hour.

Some pools automatically refill when the level is low. Assess how much water you use by taking a meter reading before and after you top up your pool or pond.



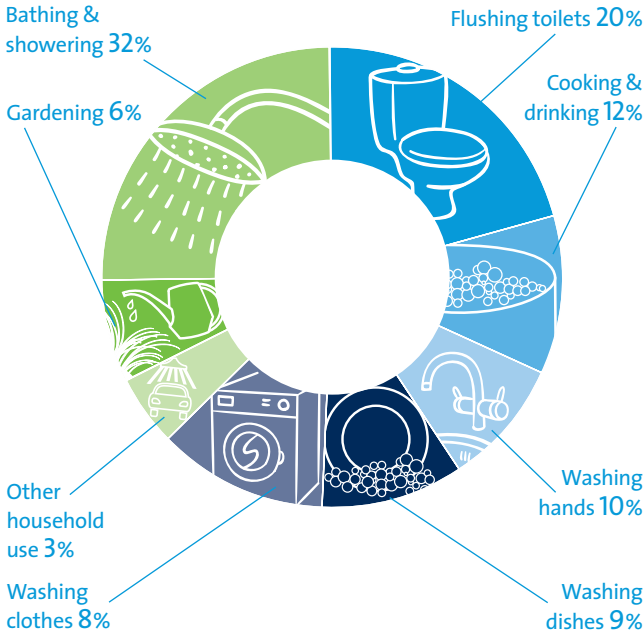
### Combination boilers

Correct installation is essential for combination boilers, which should be serviced regularly to ensure they are still operating efficiently. A common problem is that the pipe running to the kitchen tap is too long; this pipe should be as short as possible, to reduce the time needed to run the tap before you get hot water.

**For more water efficiency advice or for free water efficiency devices, please visit:**

[www.affinitywater.co.uk/savewater](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk/savewater)

# Water use in the average home



Source: Affinity Water Customer Usage Study

## See how much you could reduce your household bills with our Water and Energy Calculator

Developed by the Energy Saving Trust, answer some quick and easy questions to find out how much water and energy your household uses and how to make potential savings.

For more information, visit:

[www.affinitywater.co.uk/calculator](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk/calculator)

Water (l) Energy (kWh)

834710 442960



# How to get in touch

Please keep as a handy reminder

 **Website:**  
[www.affinitywater.co.uk](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk)

[www.affinitywater.co.uk/savewater](http://www.affinitywater.co.uk/savewater)



 **Telephone:** *(your call may be recorded for training or monitoring purposes)*

## Operational enquiries

(Water supply, quality and emergencies)

**0345 357 2407**

Mon - Fri 7am to 8pm

Sat - Sun 8am to 8pm

Emergency service operates outside these hours.

## Billing enquiries

(Account, billing and moving home)

### Metered

**0345 357 2401**

### Non-metered

**0345 357 2402**

Mon - Fri 8am to 5pm

Translation service on request.

## Leakspotter:

**0800 376 5325 or**

**0345 357 2404**

Calls to 0800 numbers are free to call from UK landlines and mobile phones.

## Post:

Affinity Water Ltd, Tamblin Way, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 9EZ

## Sewerage emergencies and general enquiries:

*Check your bill or check online for your sewerage provider.*

Anglian Water  
**0345 714 5145**

[www.anglianwater.co.uk](http://www.anglianwater.co.uk)

Southern Water  
**0330 303 0368**

[www.southernwater.co.uk](http://www.southernwater.co.uk)

Thames Water  
**0800 316 9800**

[www.thameswater.co.uk](http://www.thameswater.co.uk)

## Easier reading

To receive this leaflet in large print, audio or Braille, please call **0345 357 2406**



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[Youtube.com/AffinityWater](http://Youtube.com/AffinityWater)

Need an approved plumber?



[www.watersafe.org.uk](http://www.watersafe.org.uk)