



Reading Your Utility Meter

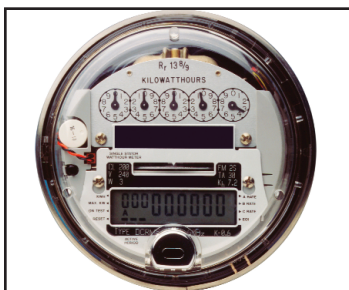
FACT SHEET

Keeping your energy bill low is important and so is staying comfortable. How can you get the best of both worlds? When you learn to read your utility meter you can track your usage, check the accuracy of your bills, lower your energy use, and increase your comfort. You can conserve energy and lower utility expenses without being uncomfortably cold in the winter months or overheated during the summer months. By understanding and tracking your home's energy consumption, you can uncover energy wasters and measure the effectiveness of your energy-saving efforts.

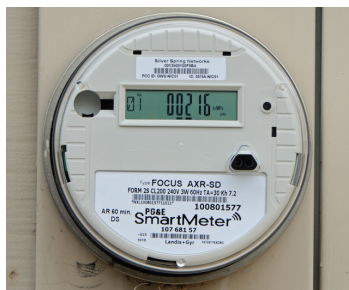
A CLOSER LOOK AT YOUR METER

Several types of utility meters exist, with the most common meters using dial or digital read-outs. Your meter will look similar to one of the examples below. Utility meters will be labeled as either electric or gas, measuring either kilowatts, or therms.

Electric Meters



Dial Meter



Digital Meter

Gas Meters



Dial Meter



Digital Meter

Note: If you heat with propane, fuel oil or wood you will only have an electric meter. Most heating systems need electricity to power a blower fan or pump.

WHAT DOES THE METER TELL YOU?

Utility meters are highly accurate. They measure how many kilowatt-hours of electricity or how many therms of natural gas have been used in your home during the previous month (or billing cycle).

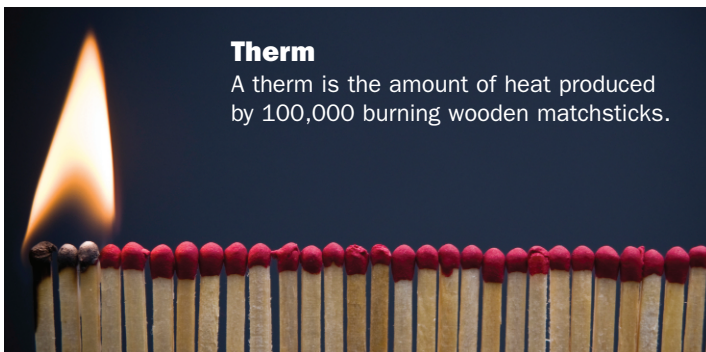
Kilowatt hour (kWh)

The amount of electricity one 100-watt Incandescent light bulb uses in 10 hours.



Therm

A therm is the amount of heat produced by 100,000 burning wooden matchsticks.



Utility companies determine usage by reading the meter each month and computing the difference from last month's bill.

One way to monitor energy consumption is to record the meter reading daily or weekly. Find the difference from the previous reading to determine the number of kilowatt hours or therms used in one day (or week). By noting high consumption activities such as air conditioning in the summer, you will know where you are spending your energy dollars. Reading your meter often, along with careful observation of weather conditions, appliance usage, and other changes in your household, can increase your understanding of how you use energy.

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A FEW THINGS THAT CAN AFFECT ENERGY USE:

Cold weather for more days than average will make your furnace run for longer periods. Using electric space heaters can significantly increase your costs.

High summer temperatures means fans or air conditioners are running more than average.

Guests or additional family members tend to increase energy use because of extra showers, additional cooking, and more electronic usage such as televisions, computers and video games.

Holidays and special occasions often mean more cooking, baking and cleaning. December holidays often include extra lighting.

Older model refrigerators and freezers use more energy than newer appliances or Energy Star rated models.

HOW TO READ DIAL METERS

The dials on the meters move both clockwise and counter-clockwise. Usually, each dial is labeled with a directional arrow. See example below.

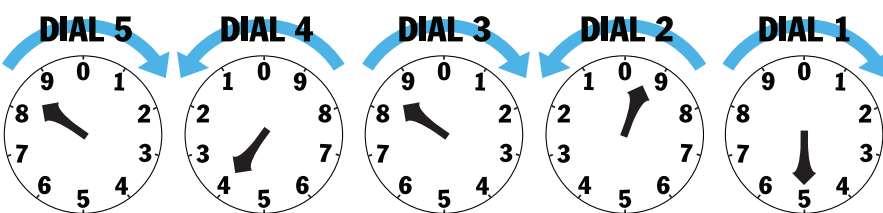


- Read the dials from right to left. Record the numbers from right to left, corresponding to the location of the dial.



- When the hand on any dial is between two numbers, record the smaller number.
- If the pointer appears to be exactly on a number, record the next lowest number, unless the pointer on the dial to its right has passed zero. If it has, record the number it is on.

Test your skills. What is this meter's reading?



Answer: 5 0 8 3 8

The correct reading for this meter is _____.

HOW CAN YOU REDUCE YOUR ENERGY USE AND LOWER YOUR BILLS?

The first step to lowering the bill is becoming aware of how you use energy. Estimates range, but typical single-family homes spend up to 45% of their utility expenditures on heating and cooling, 16% on water heating, and 13% on lighting. It is easy to see that small changes in those areas will affect your utility usage.

Once you know how your household uses energy, you are ready to start saving kilowatts and therms. Try turning out the lights when

you leave a room, or unplugging things that are not in use.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING HOW TO CONSERVE ENERGY AND SAVE MONEY

- Visit homeenergyplus.wi.gov. Enter "Fact Sheets" in the key word search. Click on "Home Energy Plus Program Information," and scroll down to "Fact Sheets."
- Check your utility web site for more information on reading your meter, energy saving, and other recommended practices.
- Visit your local library for recent publications and online resources that describe ways to save energy. The library may also have a watt meter device to measure the usage of individual appliances.
- Check the Focus on Energy web site, at www.focusonenergy.com.

Home Energy Plus is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Administration - Division of Energy Services through a network of county health and social service agencies, tribal governments, community action agencies, community based organizations and utilities. Home Energy Plus programs include the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance program and the Weatherization Assistance program which serves eligible households with heating and electric assistance and energy efficiency measures that reduce energy usage.

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