

rica

# Choosing central heating controls and saving energy



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The more control you have over your heating, the easier it is to save energy while staying comfortable. You can cut your bills by using central heating controls to set when and how your house is heated – but you need to find controls that work for you.

Our research has found that many controls are not well-designed for people with sight loss. In this guide, we review some controls that you might find easier, and give advice on potential problems.

There are also tips on saving on your heating bills, as well as information on how to pay for energy-saving home improvements.

## OUR RESEARCH

The information in the reviews and buying guides is based on Rica's usability research. We selected and evaluated seven controls with features that we thought would be easy to use. The research involved:

- evaluation of the controls' accessibility by a usability expert
- usability testing with 12 participants who had sight loss
- a focus group with 8 of the above testers.

Our participants were aged between 21 and 64. Four had no useful sight and eight were partially sighted.

In 2004, we tested some other heating controls with people with sight and dexterity impairments. Some of those that are still on the market have been included in this guide.

## WHAT WE FOUND

The products we tested were far from perfect, even though some were aimed at people with sight loss. The main problems were hard-to-read text, tactile markings that were oddly placed or hard to understand and buttons and switches that were difficult to use. Our testers wanted to have more control over their heating, but not many of the products tested would work well for them.

## SCORES

This guide gives each product a score out of 5. The score reflects our testers' views on accessibility rather than any test of performance. The tests in 2013 and 2004 were carried out by different people looking at slightly different criteria, so the two can't be directly compared.

## PRICES

All prices listed are guide prices, and were accurate at the time of going to print (February 2014).

# HEATING CONTROLS: THE BASICS

Central heating controls should at least let you set the room temperature and turn the heating on and off. They could also give you:

- **Time control.** Setting different temperatures for different times (eg having a cooler house at night) or different days (eg keeping it on longer at the weekend).
- **Zone control.** Varying the temperature between rooms – useful if you have a spare room, for example.

When choosing new controls, think about how much you want to spend. Products in this guide cost from £15 to £200 but could pay for themselves eventually if they make your home more efficient. Think about how much control you want, too – do you want something you can adjust often, or would you rather set up a system and leave it?

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## TYPES OF CONTROL

Below is an overview of the main types of control and how they work. They are explained and reviewed in more detail on pages 7-17.

**Programmings** (see page 8) control the boiler. You can turn the boiler on or off, or have it follow a programme you've set on a timer.

**Thermostats** let you choose what temperature you want your house to be. They will only work when the boiler is switched on. There are a few different kinds:

- **TRVs** (thermostatic radiator valves, see page 7) attach to radiators. You set your chosen temperature and they meet it by controlling how much hot water gets into the radiator.

- **Room thermostats** (see page 10) attach to the wall. You set your chosen temperature, and the thermostat tells the boiler to turn on or off to meet it.

- **Programmable thermostats** (see page 12) act like a room thermostat, but also let you programme temperature settings by time and day. See page 14 for a version you can control online or using your smartphone.

## BUYING CONTROLS

If you get a new boiler or heating system (see page 18), new controls will be installed at the same time.

However, you can update your controls at any time. You can buy them yourself from DIY shops or online, but will usually need a professional to install them for you. Professional installers can advise on whether a control is compatible with your heating system. Manufacturers can supply catalogues and may recommend suppliers and installers (see page 17 for contact details).

To find controls that suit you, you should discuss your needs with the installer and make sure you get the opportunity to see and handle a range of products. Make sure controls are installed in an appropriate place – somewhere you can get to them and operate them easily.

## ADAPTING YOUR CONTROLS

You can add your own tactile markings to help you find the right settings on manual controls. Markers such as Bumpons (self-adhesive raised dots) and squeeze-on liquid markers are available from resource centres, equipment retailers and RNIB.

## LEARNING TO USE THEM

The instructions accompanying the controls we tested mostly had very small text and diagrams. Some manufacturers will supply instructions in accessible formats if you ask them (see page 17 for contact details).

When you get a new control, the installer should talk you through how to use it. It may help to go through the steps yourself and record the conversation so that you can refer back to it.



# CHECKLIST FOR CHOOSING CONTROLS

When choosing a control, ask yourself the following questions to help work out whether it will be easy for you to use.

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## **LABELLING**

Small, faint labelling on dials and buttons is common.

- ✓ Are all features labelled clearly?
- ✓ Is written information large, bold and high-contrast enough for you to see?
- ✓ Are tactile labels easy to understand? They aren't always self-explanatory.

## **BUTTONS AND SWITCHES**

- ✓ Are buttons and switches easy to see or find by touch?
- ✓ Do they give positive sound or tactile feedback when used?

## **SCREEN**

Digital displays can give more information and control, but only if you can read them.

- ✓ Can you read all of the information on the screen? Sometimes temperature is large, but other information is small and faint.
- ✓ Is there a backlight to help visibility, and does it stay on for long enough?
- ✓ Is all the information easy to find and understand?

## **DEXTERITY**

- ✓ Are dials easy to grip and turn?
- ✓ Are buttons, switches and tappets easy to move?

## **SETTING UP**

Position your control somewhere that's easy to get to. Some wireless controls can be detached and carried round the house.

- ✓ Can you position the control so that it's easy to see and reach? Go for well-lit areas.
- ✓ Will you be able to set up and adjust the control by yourself, or will you need help?
- ✓ Are instructions available in an accessible format and easy to understand?

# TRVs (THERMOSTATIC RADIATOR VALVES)

## BUYING GUIDE

A TRV attaches to your radiator to control the temperature in that room. It adjusts the amount of hot water flowing into the radiator based on whether the air around it is hotter or colder than your chosen setting. They only work when the boiler is already supplying hot water.

Most TRVs are manual – you turn a dial to adjust the valve to your chosen setting (see page 16 for examples). We have reviewed a new, digital type of TRV.

### HOW MUCH CONTROL?

TRVs are useful if you don't use all the rooms in your house regularly. With manual TRVs, you can adjust the level of heat you want but you can't choose an exact temperature.

### THINK ABOUT...

- Dials on manual TRVs. Some click into position, but others are continuous – so you may have to remember positions or add your own tactile markings. They can be stiff, but some models come with added gripping aids.

### REVIEW: PEGLER I-TEMP I30 (£25)

This is a new type of digital TRV. You can set the temperature you'd like the room to be, as well as setting times for it to come on and off each day.

- The screen is difficult to see. The temperature is in large figures, but other information is very small.
- The dial is continuous, so you can't feel what setting it's on.
- There is no sound feedback.
- It would require instructions and probably sighted help to programme it.
- Some testers liked the idea of having more control, but most would prefer a traditional manual TRV.

**Who is this suitable for?** People with some useful sight who want a lot of control over how each room is heated, and can get help with initial set-up.



**Score:  
2 out of 5**

# PROGRAMMERS

## BUYING GUIDE

Programmings let you set when you'd like your boiler to switch on and off. Many programmings will also let you override the timer to turn the boiler on or off directly and control the timings for your heating and hot water separately.

There are two main types:

- **Mechanical programmings** usually have a set of sliders (called 'tappets') which you move around a clock face. You can set the times of day you'd like the boiler to be on.
- **Digital programmings** display information on a screen. You can often set different time patterns for different days of the week.

## HOW MUCH CONTROL?

Some mechanical programmings only let you set the boiler to turn on and off once during the day. Others have an array of tappets so you can set multiple times. You will usually need a digital programmer if you want different settings for different days of the week.

A programmer can't regulate the temperature of your house – you will need a thermostat for this.

## THINK ABOUT...

- The clock face on mechanical programmings. You set the time by lining the clock face up with a marker, which isn't always clearly labelled. The clock usually spans 24 hours, so it's hard to judge the time by its position.
- The tappets. These can be small and fiddly to move. They may also be easier to see if they are brightly coloured.

## REVIEW: SIEMENS RWB 1007 (£35)

You can set a weekly programme. A switch lets you choose between timed mode, on or off.

- The digital screen is backlit, but some information is written in a small font.
- The buttons and switch are easy to feel. Labels are quite small.
- There is no sound feedback when you have completed an action.
- Switching mode is easy, but you'd need to be able to read everything on the screen to pre-program it.

**Who is this suitable for?** People with some useful sight who want their heating to change on a schedule.

**Score: 3 out of 5**



## REVIEW: DANFOSS 4033 (£86)

Has a clock timer and tappets that let you set on and off times for heating and hot water. There is a tactile dot on each hour of the clock. Two switches (one for hot water and one for heating) let you choose between timed mode, on or off.

- It's easy to feel and hear when you've used one of the switches.
- The Braille labels are fairly easy to understand.
- However, the labels on the clock face and switches have poor contrast.
- You can't tell what the time is set to using touch alone. The hours go anti-clockwise, which is counter-intuitive.

- The tappets can be hard to move.

**Who is this suitable for?** Braille readers who prefer to set their heating manually, and can get help with initial set-up.

**Score:  
2 out of 5**



# ROOM THERMOSTATS

## BUYING GUIDE

Room thermostats are normally fixed to the wall in one room of your house. You set the temperature that you want the room to be, and if it's too cold the thermostat sends a signal to the boiler to come on. Once the set temperature is reached, the thermostat tells the boiler to turn off again.

If you want your house to be a constant temperature, you shouldn't have to use it much. You will need to make more adjustments if you want to change the temperature frequently.

There are two types available:

- **Mechanical thermostats** have a dial which you adjust to your chosen temperature.
- **Digital thermostats** show your chosen temperature on a screen, sometimes alongside other information. You adjust them using buttons or a dial.

## HOW MUCH CONTROL?

Room thermostats can only sense the temperature of the room they are in – you can't use them to vary the temperature between rooms. Use them alongside a boiler programmer (see page 8) to change the temperature over time, or use a programmable thermostat (see page 12) instead.

## THINK ABOUT...

- The sound they make. Thermostats usually click when they start or stop 'calling for heat'. Hearing a click as you move the dial means you have passed the current room temperature. If you want to use this feedback, find one with a click you can hear or feel.
- The dial. Look for one you can easily grip and turn.

## REVIEW: SIEMENS RAA20-LDGB (£23)

This manual thermostat has no numbering – instead, there is a blue line (for colder) on the left of the dial and a red line (for warmer) on the right. A tactile mark on the outside of the dial shows the 20° point. The dial has a tactile pointer which you use to adjust the temperature.

- Blue and red markings have good contrast and are easy to understand.
- There are no temperature labels, so you can't tell exactly what you're setting it to.
- Tactile markings stand out, but their meaning isn't clear.
- Clicks, but not very loudly.

**Who is this suitable for?** People who want to make basic temperature changes – 'hotter' and 'colder' rather than an exact measurement.



**Score:**  
2 out of 5

## REVIEW: MYSON MRT1 BRAILLE (£9)

This manual thermostat has Braille labelling on the dial, showing the 15°, 20° and 25° points. To set the temperature, you line these points up with a tactile marker outside the dial.

- Some Braille readers liked the markings, but others found them too faint and difficult to understand.
- The markers are at five-degree intervals, so subtle changes are difficult.
- The visual labels are small with poor contrast.
- Clicks, but not very loudly.

**Who is this suitable for?** Braille readers who want to make fairly simple temperature changes.



**Score:**  
2 out of 5

# PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTATS

## BUYING GUIDE

A programmable thermostat acts like a programmer and a thermostat combined. It communicates with the boiler to maintain your chosen temperature, but you can also programme it to come on and off at different times. You may also be able to vary temperatures throughout the day, and set different profiles for each day of the week.

This section focuses on digital programmable thermostats. See page 14 for a review of a new type of programmable thermostat which you can use through the web or your smartphone.

### HOW MUCH CONTROL?

Programmable thermostats give timed temperature control. However, you can only set up a programme that suits your lifestyle if the control is accessible to you. Consider whether you want to do all the setting up yourself or whether you'd be happy to make only basic changes on your own.

### THINK ABOUT...

- Screen visibility. Make sure all the information is large enough for you to read comfortably. A backlight can help.



# PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTATS

## REVIEW: HORSTMANN AS2 (£63)

This control is aimed at people with sight loss. Profiles can be set up for a warm mode and a cool mode, which you can then switch between. Each mode has temperatures specified for times of day and days of the week, which are meant to be set at installation and not changed.

A central button lets you switch between the two modes, and large plus and minus buttons let you adjust the temperature (but only by a few degrees each way).

- The controls that let you switch modes and adjust temperature are accessible, but the programming controls are not.
  - The digital display is quite small. It lights up when you make an adjustment, but not for long.
  - The temperature adjustment buttons have good tactile labelling (embossed + and - signs).
  - The warm/cool button is difficult to find by touch. It's labelled in Braille, which doesn't suit everyone.
  - A light flashes and it beeps whenever you make a change, and it buzzes when you try to change the temperature too much. These are noticeable signals, but they need explanation.
- To set up the heating profiles, you need to be able to use smaller, unlabelled buttons and read the screen.

**Who is this suitable for?** People who want their heating to follow a schedule, but don't want to make many alterations.

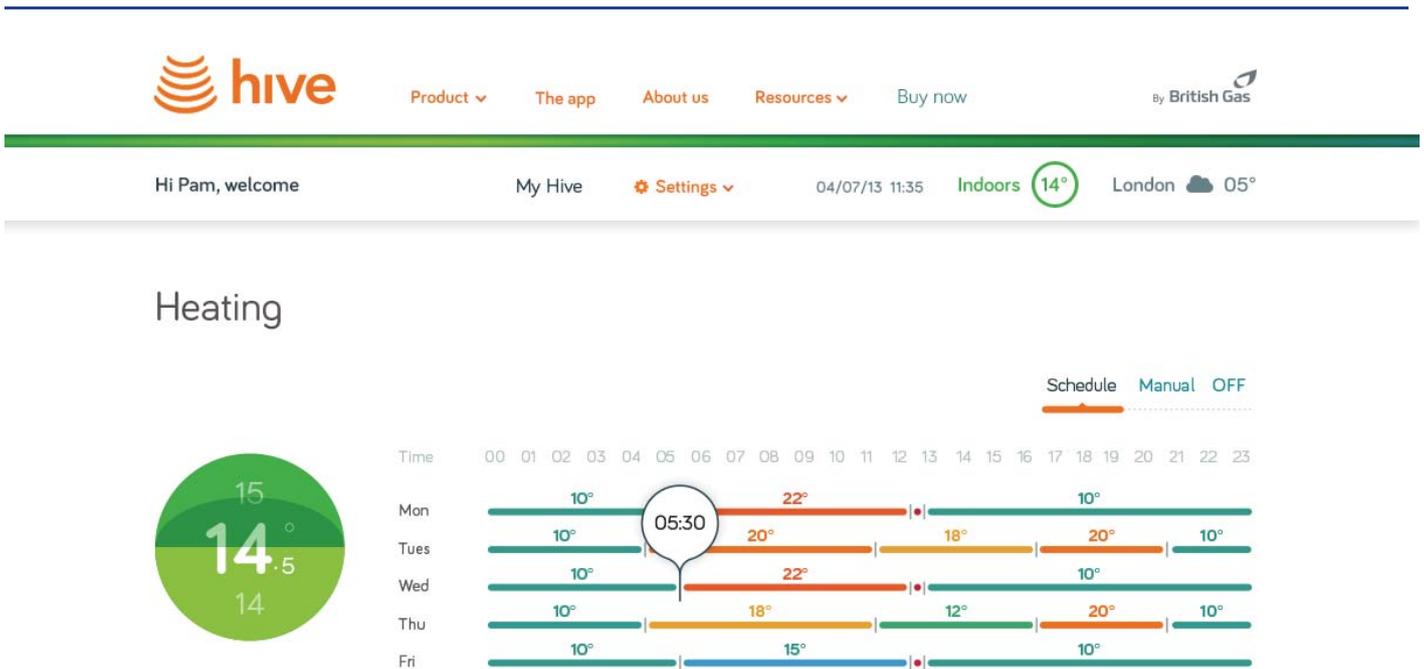
**Score: 3 out of 5**



# ONLINE PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT

## BUYING GUIDE

British Gas have recently launched Hive Active Heating – a control that works like a programmable thermostat (see page 12) but can be controlled from anywhere using a smartphone app or a website.



Hive Active Heating's website interface

An ordinary programmable thermostat is installed in your home and connected to your wi-fi. You are also given access to a website and an app. From these, you can:

- see the current temperature
- adjust the desired temperature
- set up temperature profiles for different times of day, and days of the week
- request alerts for when your home gets too hot or too cold
- control your hot water.

You can do this from inside your home or elsewhere. In theory, anyone who can use a computer or smartphone can get full use out of this product.



# ONLINE PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT

## WHAT DO I NEED?

**Technology:** You will need to have wireless broadband in your home. You will also need a computer with internet access (for the website) or a smartphone or tablet (for the app).

**Operating system:** The website will work with most standard browsers, as long as you have the latest version. The app is compatible with Android version 2.3 and up, and iOS version 6 and up.

**Accessibility software:** The app and website are designed to work with accessibility software, such as magnifiers or screenreaders. However, our testers found some flaws in how they interact with screenreaders (see review). British Gas have told us they are working to improve on these issues in future versions. If you purchase the control and find that it doesn't work with your screenreader, there is a 14 day returns period.

## REVIEW: HIVE ACTIVE HEATING (£199)

Note: We tested an earlier version of this product, the Remote Heating Control. It has since been updated and renamed. The functions are similar, but the layout has changed.

- Testers felt it could provide more control and independence than traditional products, because the information is intended to be accessible to all.
- However, some of the on-screen labelling had poor contrast and was difficult to align, particularly on the website. The new version has a different layout, but still appears to have these issues in some places.
- Users of screenreaders (on the website) and iOS' VoiceOver (on the iPad) found some tasks difficult or impossible to complete – there were problems with how on-screen items were labelled for the programs to read out.

**Who is this suitable for?** People who are comfortable using computers, smartphones or tablets and who want a lot of control over their heating.

**Website score: 3 out of 5**  
**iPad app score: 4 out of 5**

## ALSO TESTED

We last tested central heating controls in 2004. The following products were given fair or good ratings by testers with sight loss and are still on the market.

### PROGRAMMERS



#### Danfoss SET3E (digital)

£60

**Score:** 4 out of 5

Testers made few negative comments.



#### Honeywell ST799 (digital)

£70

**Score:** 3 out of 5



#### Danfoss 103 (mechanical)

£40

**Score:** 3 out of 5

Braille/tactile versions available. Tappets were stiff.



#### Horstmann 425 Diadem (mechanical)

£42

**Score:** 3 out of 5

Markings were small and unclear.



#### Siemens RWB2E (mechanical)

£60

**Score:** 3 out of 5

Small markings, but the tappets were easy to move.

### TRVs



#### Drayton ET30

£20

**Score:** 3 out of 5

Good colour contrast, numbers could be bigger.



#### Drayton ET40

£12

**Score:** 3 out of 5

Small markings, difficult to read when vertical.



#### Drayton TRV4

£20

**Score:** 3 out of 5

Clicked at each setting. Hard to read when vertical.



#### Myson 2way

£16

**Score:** 4 out of 5

Coloured markings stood out.

## ROOM THERMOSTATS



**Danfoss RET 230L**  
 £17  
**Score:** 3 out of 5  
 Small, faint markings.  
 Tactile markers available.



**Drayton RTS5  
 energy saver** £40  
**Score:** 3 out of 5  
 Labelling bold but small.  
 Dial was easy to turn



**Honeywell T6360**  
 £13  
**Score:** 3 out of 5  
 Small, faint markings.  
 Tactile marker available.



**Siemens RAA20**  
 £10  
**Score:** 3 out of 5  
 Bold markings, but still too  
 small for many.



**Sunvic TLX 2000 (series)**  
 £14  
**Score:** 3 out of 5  
 Small markings – difficult  
 to line up the arrow.

## MANUFACTURERS' CONTACT DETAILS

**DANFOSS**  
 Tel: 01234 320257  
[www.heating.danfoss.co.uk](http://www.heating.danfoss.co.uk)

**DRAYTON**  
 Tel: 0845 130 5522  
[www.draytoncontrols.co.uk](http://www.draytoncontrols.co.uk)

**HIVE ACTIVE HEATING**  
 Tel: 0800 980 0649  
[www.hivehome.com](http://www.hivehome.com)

**HONEYWELL**  
[www.honeywelluk.com](http://www.honeywelluk.com)

**HORSTMANN**  
 Tel: 0117 978 8700  
[www.horstmann.co.uk](http://www.horstmann.co.uk)

**MYSON**  
 Tel: 0845 402 3434  
[www.myson.co.uk](http://www.myson.co.uk)

**PEGLER YORKSHIRE**  
 Tel: 0800 156 0020  
[www.pegleryorkshire.co.uk](http://www.pegleryorkshire.co.uk)

**SIEMENS**  
 Tel: 0870 850 8468  
[www.siemens.co.uk](http://www.siemens.co.uk)

**SUNVIC**  
 Tel: 01698 812944  
[www.sunvic.co.uk](http://www.sunvic.co.uk)

# ENERGY-SAVING HOME IMPROVEMENTS

As well as heating controls, there are many other ways of making your home energy efficient.

- Condensing boilers are more efficient than the older kind.
- Loft or wall insulation prevents heat loss. Loft insulation could pay for itself in under 2 years.

The Energy Saving Trust and Which? (see page 23) both have information on how much you could save with these improvements.

Also, consider making some low-cost changes:

- Fit reflective foil behind radiators to reflect heat back into the room.
- Make sure your hot water cylinder has an insulating jacket.
- Draught-proof doors, letterboxes and loft hatches using self-adhesive foam or rubber seal.



## HELP PAYING FOR CHANGES

### ENERGY SAVING ADVICE SERVICE

The Energy Saving Advice Service is the first point of contact for several schemes described here. They can also provide impartial energy saving advice. The service is run by the Energy Saving Trust.

Tel: 0300 123 1234

(Mon-Fri 9am-8pm, Sat 10am-2pm)

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

### GREEN DEAL

The Green Deal offers a loan towards energy-saving home improvements including boilers, insulation and heating controls. You make repayments through your energy bills. A registered Green Deal assessor can give you a quote detailing the changes that can be made and estimated savings.

#### Is it good value?

Like any other loan, the Green Deal charges interest. Its value for money depends on your circumstances – a bank loan might be a better deal, for example.

In theory, your monthly repayments will be lower than the amount you will be saving on your bills. But this isn't guaranteed because the repayments are based on estimated rather than real savings. Which? magazine investigated the Green Deal soon after it had started. They found that some assessors were inaccurate in the savings they estimated for the house.

# ENERGY-SAVING HOME IMPROVEMENTS

For more information, contact the Energy Saving Advice Service or visit [www.gov.uk/green-deal-energy-saving-measures](http://www.gov.uk/green-deal-energy-saving-measures)

## ECO GRANTS

ECO grants cover a set of responsibilities which the government has given energy suppliers: the Affordable Warmth, Carbon Saving and Carbon Saving Communities obligations.

Your energy company may help pay for new insulation or a new boiler in your home if you live in a low-income area, need expensive solid wall insulation or are receiving certain benefits. The schemes are set to run until March 2017.

Contact the Energy Saving Advice Service for more information.

## NATIONAL GRANTS

### Energy Assistance Scheme (Scotland)

Grants of up to £6,500 are available for a range of improvements. You qualify if you are aged 60 or over with no central heating, or are receiving certain benefits and living in a home with a poor energy efficiency rating.

Tel: 0808 808 2282

(Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 9am-5pm)

[www.greenerscotland.org](http://www.greenerscotland.org)

Or contact the Energy Saving Advice Service for more information.

### Nyth/Nest (Wales)

This scheme is for people receiving certain benefits living in homes with poor energy efficiency ratings. It's not a grant – a heating system and/or insulation is installed directly, funded by the scheme.

Tel: 0808 808 2244 (Mon-Fri 9am-7pm)

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

### Warm Homes (Northern Ireland)

Grants are available of up to £1,500 (Warm Homes) or £6,500 (Warm Homes Plus).

Warm Homes provides grants for insulation. Warm Homes Plus is aimed at households that need complex insulation, or have an older central heating system or none at all. You must receive certain benefits in order to qualify.

Tel: 0800 988 0559

[www.warm-homes.com](http://www.warm-homes.com)

### Disabled Facilities Grants (UK)

Disabled Facilities Grants are administered by your local authority. If you need to make adaptations to your home to accommodate your disability – including a suitable heating system – you could get up to £30,000 towards the costs, depending on where you live. Visit [www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants) or contact your local authority for more information.

# SMART METERS

Smart meters help you monitor and save energy. The government wants all homes and businesses to have one by 2020.

## HOW DO THEY WORK?

Like ordinary meters, smart meters record how much gas and electricity you are using. They then send this information directly to the energy supplier, so you won't need a meter reading and should not need estimated bills.

You will be offered an in-home display with your smart meter. An in-home display sits in your home and shows you how much electricity or gas you're using. Some come with extra functions, but these will cost more.

## WHEN WILL I GET ONE?

The roll-out of smart meters is scheduled to begin in late 2015 and finish by late 2020. It's the energy suppliers' job to make sure that all their customers have a smart meter, and they will cover the costs.

Some suppliers are already offering smart meters, but these may need replacing when the roll-out happens or if you switch suppliers.

## WILL MY IN-HOME DISPLAY BE ACCESSIBLE?

Energy companies have to make sure that their in-home displays are



accessible to a wide range of people, including those with sight loss, without them paying extra. If you can't use yours, contact your energy company.

Some current in-home displays are suitable for partially sighted people, although 'talking' products for people with no sight are not yet available. If you are trying out an in-home display, ask yourself:

- Are text and icons large enough to be read?
- Does the screen have good contrast and lighting?
- If there is scrolling information, will you be able to read it before it disappears?
- Does it use coloured lights to show energy use? Can you tell them apart?

## ENERGY SAVING TIPS

- Clear space around your radiator to let cold air travel to the bottom and hot air escape from the top.
- Close doors and curtains to keep the heat in, but let sunlight in during the day – it's free heat.
- Read your meter regularly and update your supplier. Estimated bills can lead to overcharging.

## USING YOUR CONTROLS

### PROGRAMMERS

Use a programmer or programmable thermostat to turn off the heating when it's not needed. Think about when your household is at home and awake, and how long the house takes to heat up and cool down.

### THERMOSTATS

Turning down your thermostat by just 1°C could cut your heating bill by 10%, saving £55-65 a year on average. But don't turn it down too low. Ideally, most rooms should be 21°C during the day, and bedrooms should be 18°C at night.

Once you have found a good temperature, you shouldn't have to adjust the thermostat often. Turning it up won't make a cold room heat any faster!

### TRVs

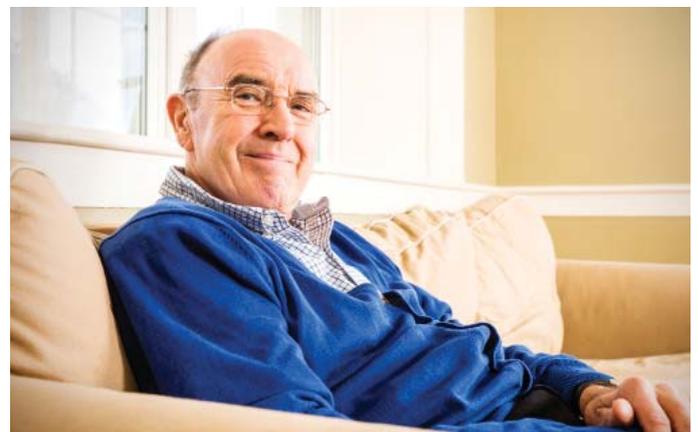
As with thermostats, start by putting your TRV on a low setting and then turn it up until you feel comfortable. You can also use them to keep the heating low in rooms you don't use.

## PRIORITY SERVICES REGISTERS

All energy suppliers have a Priority Services Register – older and disabled people can sign up for free to get extra help. You may be able to get benefits such as:

- bills and correspondence in accessible formats
- moving your meter to a more accessible position
- a password arranged so you can identify representatives when they call or visit.

Contact your supplier to find out what they offer and whether you are eligible.



# SAVING ENERGY AND MONEY

## HELP WITH PAYING BILLS

Contact your energy supplier as soon as possible if you are struggling to pay your bills. They have a responsibility to help you, and many give extra help to older and disabled customers.

Financial help from energy suppliers and the government is available to some people.

## WARM HOME DISCOUNT SCHEME

This scheme is running from 2011 to 2015. It provides energy bill discounts for certain households (£135 for winter 2013/14, but the amount changes annually). There are two eligibility groups:

- **The core group:** people receiving certain types of Pension Credit (the criteria change annually).
- **The broader group:** decided by each supplier. Disabled people who are receiving certain benefits or have a low income are often eligible.

The scheme is run by energy suppliers. If you are in the core group, you should automatically receive information about the scheme. Check with your supplier to find out whether you are in their broader group and how to apply.

Warm Home Discount Scheme Helpline:  
0845 603 9439 (Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4.30pm)  
[www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)

## WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

This is an annual grant given to help older people pay for heating. You could get £100-£300, depending on your circumstances. It should come automatically with your state pension or benefits. You are usually eligible if you were born on or before a certain date which changes each year (eg 5 January 1952 for 2013).

Winter Fuel Payments Helpline:  
08459 151515 (Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4.30pm)  
[www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment](http://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment)

## COLD WEATHER PAYMENTS

If you are receiving certain benefits, the government will give you £25 every time there's a seven-day period with temperatures of 0°C or under. It will be paid automatically with your benefits.

Contact your local Jobcentre Plus or Pension Centre, or visit  
[www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment](http://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment)



Rica provides independent research and information on products and services for older and disabled people.

Tel: 020 7427 2460

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

### Thomas Pocklington Trust



Housing and support for people with sight loss

Thomas Pocklington Trust offers a range of support and enablement services to visually impaired people. Its research identifies practical ways in which it, and others, can improve the lives of people with sight loss.

Tel: 020 8995 0880

Email: [info@pocklington-trust.org.uk](mailto:info@pocklington-trust.org.uk)

[www.pocklington-trust.org.uk](http://www.pocklington-trust.org.uk)



RNIB is a national organisation providing information and services for people with sight loss.

Tel: 0303 123 9999

Email: [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

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

### THE ENERGY SAVING TRUST

The Energy Saving Trust administer the Energy Saving Advice Service, which gives advice and information on saving energy and water.

Tel: 0300 123 1234

(Mon-Fri 9am-8pm, Sat 10am-2pm)

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

### HOME HEAT HELPLINE

Home Heat Helpline can advise you on financial help if you are worried about paying your energy bills or keeping warm.

Tel: 0800 33 66 99 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm)

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

### CONTROL YOUR HOME

This website from TACMA (the trade body for control manufacturers) has advice on using your controls and finding a good installer.

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



The Which? website has a range of free information including boiler reviews and information on saving energy, switching suppliers and getting a smart meter.

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

The information contained in this guide is correct at the time of going to print (February 2014). It will be reviewed every two years.

This leaflet is also available in audio or braille formats. To order a copy, please call 020 8995 0880 or email [research@pocklington-trust.org.uk](mailto:research@pocklington-trust.org.uk).



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## Thomas Pocklington Trust

 Housing and support for  
people with sight loss

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