

## How is my bill calculated?

Most households pay unmetered charges based on the rateable value of the property. The rateable value was set by the District Valuer to calculate household rates before they were replaced by the community charge and then council tax. There is no right of appeal if you think the rateable value is wrong.

For both water supply and sewerage there are two elements - a fixed standing charge and a variable charge based on the rateable value. In some areas sewerage is billed separately.

Most properties built since 1990 have a metered water supply.

## Do I receive all the services on my bill?

Your water bill covers the cost of supplying water to your premises, including collecting water from surface and ground sources, treatment and distribution. If you aren't connected to the public water supply, you may be entitled to a refund.

Your sewerage bill may cover all or some of the following services:

- Waste water - collecting, treating and disposing of used water from your premises. If all your waste water is collected in a cesspit or septic tank, you may be entitled to a refund.
- Surface water drainage - collecting, treating and disposing of rainwater run-off from your premises. If none of the surface water drains directly or

indirectly into a public sewer, you may be entitled to a rebate.

- Highway drainage - collecting, treating and disposing of rainwater run-off from public highways. You can't claim a rebate.

## Is there an alternative to unmetered charges?

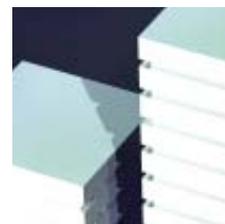
Property owners and most tenants can opt to have a water meter fitted. If the cost of installation is too high, the water company can refuse to fit a meter. You can appeal to the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat). In that case or where it isn't possible to fit one, you'll be offered an alternative assessed charge but not if it would be greater than your existing unmetered charges. Some water companies now require a water meter to be fitted when you move home.

## How much will I pay if I have a meter?

Contact your water company for an information pack. Alternatively many companies provide calculators on their websites so you can work out whether you are likely to save money by switching to metered charges. There is also a calculator on our website [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk) and you can get independent advice from your local Consumer Council for Water office.

## How are metered bills calculated?

For both water supply and sewerage there are two elements - a fixed standing charge based on the size of the meter or supply pipe and a variable charge



based on the volume used since the last reading. In some areas sewerage is billed separately.

The variable (or volume) charge is priced per cubic metre (1,000 litres or 220 gallons). Wastewater charges are either based on a proportion of the amount of water supplied (usually around 92.5%) or on the amount of water supplied but at a lower price per cubic metre.

### Can I change my mind about the meter?

You have 12 months from when the meter was fitted to decide whether to continue paying metered charges. To decide, you'll need to receive at least one bill based on an actual (not estimated) meter reading. Your water company should read the meter at least once a year. Ask for a bill based on your reading if you think an estimated bill is too high.

Even if you decide to go back to unmetered charges, the meter won't be removed. Future occupants will have to pay metered charges.

### How can I reduce my metered bill?

- **Read your meter regularly to monitor water usage.** This can help identify unexpected increases which may be due to a leak. If you receive a high estimated bill, ask the water company for a new bill based on your reading. If you can't read your meter, ask the water company to prove that you have used the water.

- **Claim an allowance for underground leaks.** If your meter is outside, any leakage from underground pipes (for which you are responsible) will be recorded on the meter. The water company should help you find and repair a leak if it is accessible. You can claim a one-off allowance for the cost of the leaked water. If your sewerage services are billed separately, contact them for an allowance on the sewerage charges.

- **Check if you are entitled to financial help.** Water and sewerage companies are required to offer help to customers who are receiving certain benefits or tax credits, and, either where there are three or more children under 19 in-full time education living

at home or where someone needs to use more water because of a medical condition. This scheme is called WaterSure. Eligible customer can have their metered bills capped at the average for households in the water company's area.

- **Look for ways of using water more wisely.** See our WaterFacts sheet *How to cut your water and sewerage bills by being water-efficient.*

- **Check if you are entitled to a surface water drainage rebate.** If all the rainwater from your roof and surrounding surfaces drains to a soakaway or directly into a stream, river or canal, you are entitled to a surface water drainage rebate.

- **Check if you may be entitled to a non-return to sewer allowance.** If you can show the water didn't return to the public sewer, claim a non-return to sewer allowance to reduce your sewerage bill.

### What you can do now

- If you have a septic tank or cesspit, you shouldn't be paying wastewater charges. Ask for a refund of any incorrectly paid charges.
- If you have one or more soakaways for rainwater drainage or it drains directly to a stream, river or canal, claim a surface water drainage rebate.
- Check whether you could save money by switching to a metered water supply.
- If you already have a metered supply, make sure your bills are no higher than you expect. High bills could indicate that you have a leak - check your meter regularly.

*You have a right to a clear, detailed and timely response to complaints and enquiries and a responsibility to talk to your local water company as soon as you have a problem.*

*You have a right to a clear, timely bill and a responsibility to pay the bill promptly.*

*You have a right to clear information about the different tariffs available and a responsibility to read the information sent with the bill.*

*You have a right to have a water meter installed free of charge and a responsibility to find out how to use water wisely and how a meter may help.*

*There is a range of printed fact sheets available from the Consumer Council for Water or visit [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk).*