

How to check your water usage 2011-2012

Advice for our metered household customers who believe their water consumption is higher or lower than normal.

We recommend that you regularly read your water meter to check that you agree with what we are billing you. The serial number on your water meter should be the same as the one that appears on your bill. Refer to the 'Reading your water meter' section for further details.

Please remember that, although you are charged for the amount of water that you use, standing charges are also included in your bill. Refer to the table at the bottom of the page for an explanation of how your household charges are calculated.

Frequently asked questions:

I recently moved into a property with a water meter and am paying more than I used to. Why?

If you have recently moved from a property which didn't have a water meter you would have been paying an unmeasured charge. This meant that no matter how much water you used, the charge remained the same.

If your new property has a water meter fitted you will now pay for all the water that you use. You may be using more water than you think.

You can check your water consumption by visiting our website at unitedutilities.com/meters or complete the daily water usage calculator at the back of this factsheet.

I've recently applied for a water meter and my bills are a lot more than I expected. What can I do?

If you have recently had a water meter installed remember that you are paying water and sewerage standing charges too. You may also be using more water than you think you are. You can check your consumption at unitedutilities.com/meters or by completing the daily water usage calculator at the back of this factsheet. If you live in an older house, your supply pipe may be prone to leakage, or your water supply may be shared with another property. You can check your supply pipe for leaks or whether you may be on a shared supply by following the guidelines in this factsheet.

I've lived in my property for a few years and the bills are always higher than I expect. Why is this?

If your bills have always been high, there are a number of checks you can do.

Check what your consumption should be at unitedutilities.com/meters or complete the daily water usage calculator at the back of this factsheet. You can check your supply pipe for leaks or whether you may be on a shared supply by following our guidelines on the next page. If you live in a property built after 1990, there is a slight possibility that your water supply pipe may be 'crossed' and the water meter you think is yours actually supplies one of your neighbours. You can carry out a supply check to establish this. It's unlikely your supply will be crossed if your meter is inside your home or in a wall mounted box on the side of your property.

My water bills have always been about right, but recently, they seem a lot higher or lower. What's wrong?

If your bills have suddenly gone up or down, there may be a number of reasons for this:

- Check your meter reading corresponds with the reading shown on your bill
- Your previous bills may have been based on estimated readings which were either too high or low
- The number of occupiers living at your property has increased or decreased
- You may have had some home improvement work recently undertaken that could increase how much water you use such as a new dishwasher or power shower etc
- You may have a leak on your pipework that has increased your water usage. To check, follow the guidelines on the next page
- You may have installed water efficiency devices that have reduced your water usage e.g. water butt or water efficient shower
- Your water meter may have stopped. To check, follow the guidelines on the next page

Household measured charges 2011 - 2012

Water		Sewerage		
Standing charge per annum (p.a.)	Volumetric charge per cubic metre (m ³)	Standing charge p.a.	Fixed charge p.a. (surface water and highway drainage)	Volumetric charge per m ³
£32	£1.457	£16	£66	£1.124

Reading your water meter

Your water meter will normally be located:

- Inside your property (normally where the water supply pipe enters your home, usually under the kitchen sink)
- In the footpath/garden outside your home (the water meter will be installed in a chamber under a small circular black plastic cover)
- In a small wall mounted box on the side of your property

There are a variety of water meters, which will have a combination of black/white and red/white digits or dials as shown below.



The black/white digits are full cubic metres of water. These are the digits we use to calculate your bill when your water meter has been read.

The red/white digits are parts of cubic metres we only bill you for full cubic metres used. It's important that you include these digits in any reading you take if you are going to do a **leakage check** or check if your water meter has stopped.

How to do a leakage check

If your bills are higher than you expect, or they have recently gone up, it's worth doing a leakage check. Even a dripping tap or overflow will cause your water bills to increase.

To do a leakage check:

- Make sure you check all fittings inside your property first for any signs of leaks
- Turn off all taps, and other appliances that use water such as washing machine or dishwasher
- Allow any cisterns to fill completely if they have been recently used e.g. toilet, hot water cistern
- Take a meter reading. Make sure you read all the black/white digits and the red/white digits or dials
- Wait at least one hour then take another reading
- Don't use any water for at least one hour. This includes flushing the toilet or using hot water
- Read the water meter again

If there is a difference in the readings, then you most likely have a leak.

If your meter is inside your property, or built into your property wall, the leak is somewhere on your internal pipework. Check all your taps and cisterns for signs of leakage. Remember to check overflows which may not be immediately visible. You may need a private plumber to help you to do this. All pipework inside your property is your responsibility to maintain and repair.

If you think you may have a leak and your meter is located outside, you need to establish if the leak is inside or outside your property. To do this, find your internal stop tap and turn off the water supply. Repeat the leakage test again. If there is no difference in the readings this time, then the leak is inside your property. Please follow the advice given above.

If the readings change again the leak is outside your property. Please refer to the 'What to do now' section.

How to check if my water meter has stopped

If your bill is a lot lower than you would expect, it's worth checking to see if your meter has stopped.

To do this check:

- Take a meter reading. Make sure that you read all the black/white digits and the red/white digits (or dials)
- Use your water as normal
- A few days later take another reading

If there is no difference in the readings and you have been using water as normal, then it's most likely that your meter has stopped. Please refer to the 'What to do now' section for further help.

How to do a supply check

If your bills have always been higher than you expect, or have suddenly gone up, there is a slight possibility that your water supply is crossed with a neighbouring property. If you live in an older (pre 1990) terraced or semi detached property, and have a water meter outside, it is possible that you have a shared or 'common' supply - i.e. your meter is installed on a supply pipe which supplies more than one property.

If you live in a property built after 1990, it may be possible that your supply is 'crossed' - i.e. the meter you think is yours actually supplies someone else. This will normally become apparent if someone has moved in or out of a neighbouring property.

It's unlikely that you will need to do a supply check if the water meter is installed inside your property. However, if you live in an apartment block and your meter is installed in a communal area with other water meters, you should still do this check.

To check if you are on a shared or common supply

It's easier to do this check with the help of another person.

- Make sure you can clearly see the the dials on your water meter
- Turn on a cold water tap inside your property (about half full), preferably the kitchen tap
- See if the digits/dials on the meter are turning. Look for the red/white digits turning fastest
- Turn off the tap. Check that the meter stops
- Repeat this process two or three times

If the meter stops and starts when you turn on your tap

then you know the meter supplies your house. Next, ask each of your neighbours to turn on a cold water tap. If the meter goes round when a neighbours tap is running, the meter is on a shared supply.

For advice on what to do next, refer to the section 'What if I have a shared supply?'

To check if you are on a 'crossed' supply.

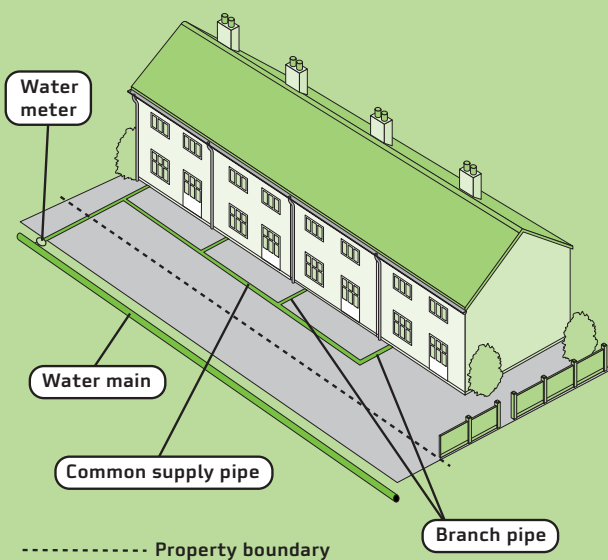
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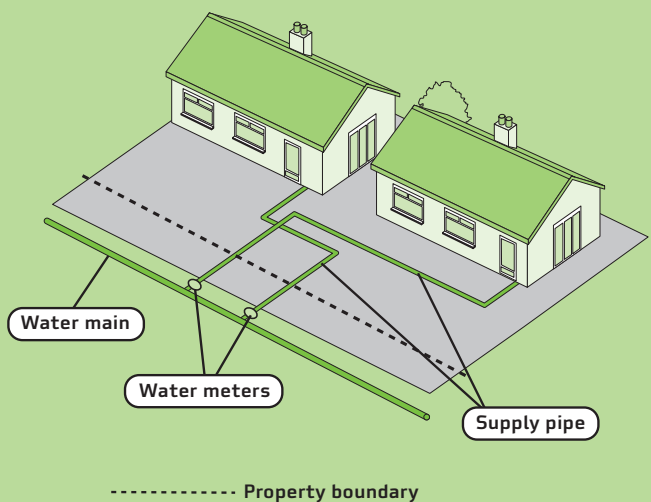
If the water meter stops and starts when you turn on your tap then you know the meter supplies your house. If it doesn't, you have a crossed meter. Ask your neighbours to turn on their tap to see which property the meter supplies.

For advice on what to do next, refer to the section 'What if I have a crossed supply?'

Shared/common supply



Crossed supply



(Diagram is for illustration purposes only)

What to do now

If you have found a leak

If you have identified that there is a leak on your supply, you should do the following:

For internal water meters or meters built into the property wall:

- Check all appliances in your home for leaks
- Check for dripping taps/leaking overflows on all hot and cold water cisterns
- **Remember – even a small leak or a drip running constantly will use a lot of water and increase your bill**

You may need help from your own plumber to do these checks. You are responsible for the repair and maintenance of all the pipework inside your home.

For water meters outside your home:

- Establish whether the leak is inside or outside your home (see the 'How to do a leakage check')
- If the leak is inside, follow the guidance for internal meters above
- If the leak is outside your home you may qualify for our private leak repair scheme.

Private leak repair scheme

For further information on our private leak repair scheme visit unitedutilities.com/bursthme or request a copy of our leakage code of practice by calling our automated leaflet line on **0845 303 7711**.

If you think your water meter has stopped

If you have carried out the necessary checks to establish that your meter may have stopped please call us on **0845 746 2222**. We will arrange to visit your property and exchange your meter if necessary.

You will need to provide the readings taken over the two day period, along with confirmation of your meter location and serial number.

If your water meter is crossed, or you are on a shared supply

If you think that your meter may be crossed with your neighbours, or that you may be on a shared supply please refer to the sections 'What if I have a crossed supply or 'What if I have a shared supply?'

We may arrange to visit your property and your neighbours to find out exactly what the cause of the problem is and how we can put it right.

If you have no leak, you are not on a shared supply and your water meter is not crossed

If you have done all the leakage checks and are sure that your meter is not on a shared supply or crossed with a neighbours meter, then it is likely that you are using all the water you are being billed for.

We suggest you use the Self audit checklist at the back of this factsheet to see just how much water you are using. You may be surprised!

For water saving tips our leaflet 'A guide to using water wisely' is available from our website at unitedutilities.com/leaflets or call our 24hour automated leaflet line on **0845 303 7711**. This leaflet provides lots of hints and tips on how to become water efficient in the home and garden – which will help to reduce your water bill.

What else can I do?

If you are still unhappy, you can ask for your water meter to be tested. It is extremely unlikely that there will be any fault with your water meter, but we will arrange to have it tested for you if you wish. The meter will be tested independently and not by United Utilities. **If the meter passes the test, you will be required to pay for the cost of the test.**

For more information on testing water meters, please visit unitedutilities.com/meters or call our 24 hour automated leaflet line on **0845 303 7711** to request your copy of 'Testing household water meters'.

Am I entitled to a refund for water lost through leakage?

I've found a leak and my water meter is located inside or built into the property wall

If you have had a leak on any internal appliance or pipework, unfortunately you are not entitled to any refund for water lost through leakage.

I have found a leak and my water meter is outside

If your water meter is located outside and the leak is on your supply pipe you may be entitled to a one off 'burst allowance', once we are satisfied that the leak has been repaired. If the leak is inside your property, you are not entitled to any allowance even if your meter is outside.

How do I apply for an refund if I have found a leak?

If you wish to claim a refund for a leak, please refer to our 'Leakage code of practice' factsheet which will explain who is responsible for leaks from your pipework and when we would adjust your water charges. It also tells you how to make a claim. The factsheet is on our website: unitedutilities.com/bursthome. Our 'Burst allowance claim form' is also there. Alternately call us on our 24-hour automated leaflet request line **0845 303 7711** to have them sent to your home address.

What if I have a crossed supply?

If you think you have a crossed supply please call us on **0845 746 2222** for this to be checked by one of our team. When calling it would help us to deal with your problem more efficiently if you could provide the following information:

- Your account number
- Your property address
- The serial number, meter readings and dates of the crossed meter

- The serial number of the meter you think may be yours
- The address you think the crossed meter supplies

When we have confirmed that you have a crossed meter, we will make the necessary adjustments to your account. We will also credit your account with any refund you may be owed.

If you have been undercharged, we won't ask for payment of any shortfall from previous bills, but you will be responsible for all future consumption on the meter supplying your property.

What if I have a shared supply?

If you think your water meter has been installed on a shared supply, please contact us on **0845 746 2222** for this to be checked by one of our teams. When calling it would help us if you could provide the following information:

- Your account number
- Your property address
- The location of your water meter
- The serial number of the water meter
- The property or properties you think may share the supply

If we confirm that the meter is installed on a shared supply we will arrange for your bill to be amended. You will also be offered one of the following three options:

- A meter installed inside your property if possible
- An assessed charge based on the type of property you live in. See our Assessed charges leaflet for more information on this
- Revert back to charges based on your rateable value

1. Self audit checklist

Fill in this table to see how much water you are using during the day. You will need a calculator to help you. You can then use these figures to calculate your daily water usage and your approximate yearly charge on the following page. Alternatively visit unitedutilities.com/meters to complete this form online.

To work out how many times you use different appliances each day, we recommend you make a note of the number of times you do this over a week, then use the average. You can use the following table to help you.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Average
No. of toilet flushes								
No. of showers								
No. of baths								
Sinks and taps*								
No. of washing machine loads								
No. of dishwasher loads								

*No. of times taps are used per day anywhere in the house

2. Daily water usage calculator

Take your calculations from the self audit checklist to calculate the water you are using during the day. You will need a calculator to help you. Alternatively visit unitedutilities.com/meters to complete this form online.

GENERAL USAGE

Tick one box only on each line

Daily total

<input type="text"/>	X	<input type="text" value="48.3"/>	or	<input type="text" value="40"/>	=	<input type="text"/>
No. of people in property		Occupied most of the day		Occupied evenings and weekends		

IN THE BATHROOM

<input type="text"/>	X	<input type="text" value="6"/>	or	<input type="text" value="6"/>	or	<input type="text" value="9"/>	or	<input type="text" value="8"/>	=	<input type="text"/>
Ave no. of toilet flushes/day		Modern toilet		Dual flush toilet		Standard toilet		Standard flush toilet with Water Saver device		
<input type="text"/>	X	<input type="text" value="35"/>	or	<input type="text" value="80"/>	=	<input type="text"/>				
Ave no. of showers/day		Standard shower		Power shower						
<input type="text"/>	X	<input type="text" value="80"/>	=	<input type="text"/>						
Ave no. of baths/day										

SINKS AND TAPS

<input type="text"/>	X	<input type="text" value="3"/>	=	<input type="text"/>
Ave no. times taps are used per day anywhere in the property		Standard hand basin/kitchen sink		

IN THE KITCHEN

<input type="text"/>	X	<input type="text" value="80"/>	or	<input type="text" value="60"/>	or	<input type="text" value="50"/>	or	<input type="text" value="45"/>	=	<input type="text"/>
Ave no. of washing machine loads per day		Standard		Standard 1/2 load		Water efficient		Twin tub		
<input type="text"/>	X	<input type="text" value="40"/>	or	<input type="text" value="18"/>	or	<input type="text" value="13"/>	or	<input type="text" value="10"/>	=	<input type="text"/>
Ave no. of dishwasher machine loads per day		Standard dishwasher		Water efficient dishwasher		Half size dishwasher		Wash by hand		

IN THE GARDEN

<input type="text"/>	X	<input type="text" value="1.3"/>	=	<input type="text"/>
Ave no. of hosepipe uses per week		Approx time used in minutes		

TOTAL LITRES PER DAY ¹

3. Approximate yearly charge

Using your calculation from above use this table to see how much your approximate yearly charge may be. You will need a calculator to help you. Alternatively visit unitedutilities.com/meters to complete this form online.

- Step 1.** Enter your total litres per day figure from box 1 ²
- Step 2.** Divide the figure entered in box 2 by 1,000. (E.g if you entered 500, then 500/1000 = 0.500) ³
This converts your litres per day figure into cubic metres, which is what we use to calculate your water services charges.
- Step 3.** Multiply the figure in box 3 by £2.581 (which is your total volumetric charge for both water and sewerage - see table on the front of this factsheet). This will give you the charge per day for your water usage. This includes both water and sewerage charges. ⁴
- Step 4.** Multiply your charge per day figure (box 4) by the number of days you are normally at your property in a year. Remember to take account of any holidays and there are 365 days in a year. Don't worry about leap years. ⁵

The amount in Box 5 is the approximate charge for what you use. Standing charges also need to be taken into account

<input type="text"/>	+	<input type="text" value="£32"/>	+	<input type="text" value="£16"/>	+	<input type="text" value="£66"/>	=	<input type="text"/>
Enter the amount from box 5		Water standing charge		Sewerage standing charge		Surface water and highway drainage charge		Your approx. yearly charge

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