

Fact sheet

Getting the best from your solar panels

Your solar panels produce electricity by absorbing energy from sunlight and turning it into energy for your home. This electricity your panels generate is free, and is used instead of electricity from the grid.

But it's important to use it correctly as your solar panels won't produce enough energy to power your whole house alone. This short guide is aimed to help you make the most of your solar panels.

Use your free electricity during the day

Solar panels generate the most electricity when the sun is shining, particularly around the middle of the day and during the summer.

To make the most of your free electricity, try to use appliances such as your:

- washing machine
- tumble dryer
- dishwasher
- electric oven

during daylight hours, rather than in the evening.

If you have several appliances to use, try to run them one at a time. This means you're more likely to use the electricity your panels are generating, rather than buying extra electricity from the grid.

What happens when it's cloudy?

Your solar panels still generate electricity on cloudy or cold days, although they'll produce less than they would on a bright, sunny day.

They don't generate electricity at night because there's no sunlight.



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How much can I save?

Your solar panels can reduce the amount of electricity you need to buy from the national grid during daylight hours.

The saving won't appear as a separate amount on your electricity bill. Instead, you'll simply be using less electricity from your supplier – the more electricity you use while your panels are generating power, the more you can save.

Any electricity you generate but don't use in your home is automatically exported to the national grid.

How do I know my solar panels are working?

Your solar panel system has a SIM card, a bit like the one in a mobile phone. It communicates with a monitoring system and lets us know automatically if there's a problem with your panels - you don't need to do anything to monitor them yourself.

What if I'm out during the day?

You can still make the most of your solar panels even if you're out at work or away from home.

Anything that's switched on or plugged in at home can use the electricity your panels are generating. You could also use timers to run appliances during daylight hours.

You can also charge things such as:

- mobile phones
- laptops
- cordless phones
- electric shavers and hair clippers

during the day – just remember to unplug chargers when they're no longer needed.

Slow cookers can also be a good way to use your free electricity during the day, rather than using electricity to cook your evening meal.

Why are my electricity bills going up?

Using the electricity generated by your solar panels should reduce the amount of electricity you need to buy from your supplier. However, we can't guarantee that your electricity bills won't increase. Your bill will also depend on how much electricity you use, your energy tariff and other changes to your energy costs.

For example, your solar panels can produce up to 3 kilowatts of energy on a sunny day. The average washing machine uses 2.25 kilowatts on a 30 minute cycle, as does the average tumble dryer. If both are running at the same time, 4.50 kilowatts is being used. This means that although 3 kilowatts will come from solar energy, the remaining 1.50 kilowatts will come from the grid at a cost to you. However, if you run the machines separately, less grid energy will be needed.

If you're worried about your energy bills or would like some advice, we can help.

Call us on **0115 915 2222** or email energyteam@nottinghamcity.gov.uk.



Can I get a cheaper tariff or payments for my solar electricity?

The solar panels installed on your home are owned and managed by Nottingham City Council. This means any payments generated by the panels, including Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) or other export payments, go to the council. These payments help us cover the ongoing monitoring, operation and maintenance of the solar panel systems.

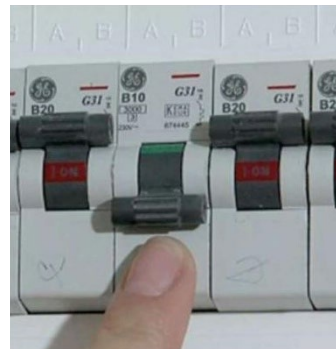
Your benefit is the free electricity your home can use while the panels are generating power.

What if I'm on a pre-payment meter?

If you have a pre-payment meter and your credit runs out, the fuse for your solar panels can trip and switch the system off. You can check this by looking at your fuse box. This is usually near your front door, under the stairs or in a utility room cupboard.

The fuse for your solar panels will usually be labelled. It should be in the ON position.

If it's tripped, switch it back to ON. If it continues to trip and you haven't run out of credit, please call us on **0115 915 2222**.



A few things to remember:

- Use electricity during the day when your panels are generating power.
- Use appliances one at a time where possible.
- Solar panels still work on cloudy days – they just generate less electricity.
- Solar panels don't generate electricity at night.
- The more of your solar electricity you use, the more you can reduce the amount you buy from your supplier.

Your solar panels are there to help you make the most of the free electricity generated by the sun. A few small changes to when you use your appliances can help you get the greatest benefit from them.

