

Tip #3 Look out for new types of 'smart' off-peak tariffs

Smart meters can record how much energy you are using in half-hourly intervals. This will make it easier for energy suppliers to offer new types of off-peak tariffs (sometimes called 'time of use' tariffs) that charge you different rates for your electricity depending on the time of day.

Why might smart off-peak tariffs be particularly beneficial for electric vehicle drivers?

Firstly, because it may be easier to avoid charging an electric vehicle during the expensive peak times on these tariffs than to avoid cooking dinner or watching TV at peak times.

Secondly, by charging your vehicle during the cheaper off-peak times, you could stand to save money on your energy bill. These tariffs may also give you the option to get your supplier to charge your car at the cheapest possible time in the day, for guaranteed savings.

If you have or if you buy a [home charging point](#), you can put your vehicle on a timer so that it charges overnight during the cheap hours, ready in time for when you need it in the morning, which would make it relatively easy to avoid the peak hours and make savings.

What's the difference between 'smart' off-peak tariffs and Economy 7 tariffs?

Economy 7 tariffs charge you less for electricity used overnight (usually after midnight-7am) than for electricity used during the day. Economy 7 tariffs require special electricity meters which can record your night time electricity use separately from your day-time use.

Smart electricity tariffs work with smart meters – the smart meter knows how much electricity you are using in half hourly intervals which means that suppliers could offer 'smart' tariffs which have two, three or even more different electricity prices depending on the time of day (rather than just two rates, like Economy 7).

Suppliers could also offer 'smart' off-peak tariffs in which the price of electricity drops in real-time if they expect a sudden surge of wind – you might get a text message the day before this happens, which means you could plan ahead to charge your electric vehicle the following day, to take advantage of the wind energy. Or, you might be able to ask your supplier to charge your vehicle overnight during the windiest times.

How can I switch to a 'smart' off-peak tariff?

A number of energy suppliers have already started to trial these tariffs. For example, last year, one supplier tested out an off-peak tariff for electric vehicle users.

If you haven't been invited to participate in a trial by your supplier, you could contact your existing supplier to ask if they are planning any tariff trials so that you could be added to a waiting list, if you are eligible for participation.

Some, although not all, of these tariff trials will come with an offer of bill protection which means you would get refunded if you spent more on the trial tariff than you would have done if you had stayed on your existing tariff.