

## Do I have to open an account?

If you have a standard Residential Tenancy Agreement, you will be responsible for electricity and gas charges, and you will need to open accounts.

If your lease specifically states that electricity, gas or water usage is included as part of your rent, you will not need to open accounts. The landlord will need to open the account/s, and they cannot charge you any additional fees for doing this.

You can only be charged for energy or water (as part of your lease agreement) if the rented premises are separately metered.

For more information on renting and tenancy agreements or leases, contact the Office of Fair Trading on 133 220 or visit [www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au)

## If you don't open an account

The company will contact you to ask you to open an account. If you still don't open an account the company may restrict or disconnect your supply. Even if the electricity or gas was already connected when you moved in, you can still be held responsible for what you use.

## Who pays the bills?

### Electricity and gas

In most cases you will be responsible for electricity and gas bills. If electricity and gas are included as part of your rent this will be written in your lease and your landlord is responsible for paying the bills.

### Water

Generally landlords are responsible for paying service charges for water and sewerage, however as a tenant you can be asked to pay for water usage. If you are responsible for paying for the water you use, this should be stated in your rental agreement before you sign.

You can only be charged for the metered amount of water which you use, so make sure the meter reading is noted on the Condition Report when you move in/out.

## Public housing tenants and water

Public housing tenants are required to pay for water and this charge is in addition to the rent. For more information phone Housing NSW on 1800 629 212 or visit [www.housing.nsw.gov.au](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au)

## What if my landlord fails to pay?

If your landlord fails to pay an account on time and you face disconnection or restriction, contact the Office of Fair Trading on 133 220 or the Tenants' Union on 1800 251 101.

## Opening an account

### How do I open an account?

In most cases you can open an account over the telephone by contacting your local supplier. You can also shop around for a negotiated energy contract. For a list of companies contact the Department of Water and Energy on 1300 136 888 or visit [www.dwe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dwe.nsw.gov.au)

## Security deposits for energy accounts

If you are a new customer the energy company may ask you to pay a security deposit. The company may refund the amount after one year of on time payments or when you close the account. If you are experiencing financial difficulty, ask them if there is a way you can avoid paying the security deposit.

If you are on a pension or benefit and enter a Centrepay arrangement to pay your bill, an energy company can waive the security deposit.

## Green energy options

When you open a new electricity account you will probably be asked if you want to take up a green energy option. This is because it is mandatory for electricity retailers to offer new customers accredited GreenPower products.

Renewable or green energy is produced from sources such as the sun, wind, water and waste.

In most cases, taking up a green energy option will cost you more. Remember, you don't have to take up the option of green energy if you can't afford it.



## Tips for resolving complaints

1. If you have any problems with your energy or water company, contact them first and explain your situation. Keep records of letters, names, times and dates.
2. If the call centre staff can't help you, ask to speak to a supervisor.
3. If the problem is not fixed, contact EWON by phone, fax, email, letter or visit [www.ewon.com.au](http://www.ewon.com.au) to make an online complaint.

## About EWON

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) provides an independent way of resolving customer complaints about all electricity and gas suppliers in New South Wales and some water suppliers. Our service is free, fair and independent. Our aim is to keep essential services within reach of everyone.

## Contact EWON

FRECALL	1800 246 545*
	Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm
FREEFAX	1800 812 291
FREEPOST	Reply Paid K1343 Haymarket NSW 1239
INTERPRETER	131 450
TTY/VOICE	133 677
EMAIL	<a href="mailto:omb@ewon.com.au">omb@ewon.com.au</a>
WEBSITE	<a href="http://www.ewon.com.au">www.ewon.com.au</a>

\*Calls from mobile phones may attract a fee, which will vary depending on your service provider. If you are calling from a mobile phone, let us know and EWON will call you back.

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### Closing an account

It can take a few days to close an account so you should contact the company as soon as you know when you are moving out. Most companies require at least three days notice of your intention to close your account.

If you do not close your account you may be charged for energy or water used after you leave.

### Do I need to read the meter?

It's a good idea to read your meter when you move in or out of a property, and keep records of readings, bills, letters and any contact with the company. This way you can be sure about the accuracy of your bills.

### Living in a share house

When you open an account in your name, you take responsibility for all future bills. If the account is in more than one name, each person can be held responsible.

If you are living in share accommodation, make sure the account holder details are kept up-to-date. You should ensure that everyone in your household agrees on who will be responsible for paying the bills.

When you close the account, make sure the company has refunded your security deposit (if it was charged).

For more information contact the Tenants' Union on 1800 251 101 or visit [www.tenants.org.au](http://www.tenants.org.au)

### What if I can't pay my bill?

If you have problems paying your bill or you think there is a mistake, contact the company as soon as possible.

By law, energy companies have to offer payment plans and most companies provide assistance programs to help people who are having difficulty paying their bills.

### Emergency financial assistance

You may be eligible for emergency assistance such as Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) for electricity and gas, or the Payment Assistance Scheme (PAS) for some water customers. EAPA and PAS are distributed by community organisations. Contact your energy or water company or EWON for a referral to an agency that distributes vouchers.

### Can EWON help tenants?

EWON can investigate a range of complaints about all electricity and gas companies in NSW and some water companies, including:

- problems with opening, closing or transferring an account
- disputed accounts and high bills
- debt and arrears
- disconnection or restriction of supply
- negotiated contracts
- electricity and gas marketing
- poor customer service

### Landlord/tenant issues

EWON cannot help sort out tenant/landlord problems. If you are in private rental and have a problem with the landlord or property manager, contact the Office of Fair Trading on 133 220 or visit [www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au)

You can also lodge a complaint with the Consumer, Trader & Tenancy Tribunal, contact 1300 135 399.

If you are living in community or public housing, contact the Housing Appeals Committee on 1800 629 794.

### Hot water systems and high bill disputes

If you have a dispute with your landlord over a high bill resulting from a faulty hot water service, contact the Consumer, Trader & Tenancy Tribunal on 1300 135 399 or the Tenants' Union on 1800 251 101.

### Useful contacts

#### Consumer, Trader & Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT)

[www.cttt.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cttt.nsw.gov.au)

☎ 1300 135 399

#### Department of Water and Energy

[www.dwe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dwe.nsw.gov.au)

General enquiries

☎ 8281 7777

Energy information line

☎ 1300 136 888

#### Greater Sydney Aboriginal Tenants Service

☎ 1800 772 721

#### Housing Appeals Committee

[www.hac.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hac.nsw.gov.au)

☎ 1800 629 794

#### Housing NSW

[www.housing.nsw.gov.au](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au)

Maintenance

☎ 131 571

General enquiries

☎ 1800 629 212

#### Office of Fair Trading (OFT)

[www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au)

Tenancy information

☎ 133 220

Aboriginal tenancy information

☎ 1800 500 330

#### Tenants' Union of NSW

[www.tenants.org.au](http://www.tenants.org.au)

☎ 1800 251 101

#### The Share Housing Survival Guide

[www.rlc.org.au/sharehousing](http://www.rlc.org.au/sharehousing)