



## Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

# CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

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# How to Read an ELECTRIC METER

Knowing how to read an electric meter is easy to learn and a valuable skill to have as an educated utility consumer. Consumers who can read their meter can effectively monitor their usage, and avoid being overcharged or undercharged for their electric usage.

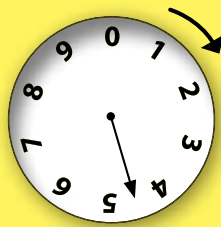
The glass-enclosed electric meter is almost always round in shape and found outside the home. The electric meter has four round clock-like dials with digits 0-9 displayed on each one and a spinning disk beneath them which speeds up

and slows down as usage increases and decreases. Newer digital meters also are becoming increasingly used by electric utilities to track electricity usage and are easier for consumers to read.

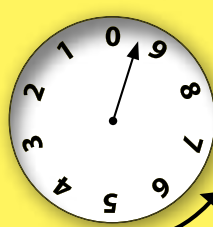
### Consumers can figure out how to read an electric meter by using the following steps:

1. Locate the four dials and always remember to read them from left to right. The pointer on the first dial of an electric meter circles clockwise, the second dial turns

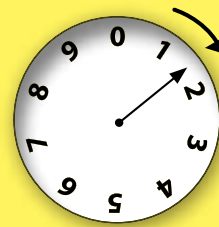
## Electric Meter Reading Lesson



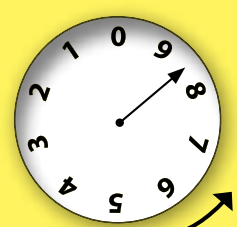
Reading: 4  
Clockwise



Reading: 9  
Counterclockwise



Reading: 1  
Clockwise



Reading: 8  
Counterclockwise

The meter above reads 4918. For the purposes of this example, the previous electricity bill recorded a meter reading of 4218. **The Current Reading (4918) minus the Previous Reading (4218) equals 700. So, in this example, 700 kilowatt hours of power have been used since the last electric meter reading.**

## How to Read an ELECTRIC METER

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at [www.occ.ohio.gov](http://www.occ.ohio.gov).



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counterclockwise, the third moves clockwise and the fourth travels counterclockwise.

2. Notice the pointer in each dial and write down the number indicated by its position. When the pointer is between two numbers, the reading for the dial is the smaller of the two numbers.
3. If the pointer is directly on a number, that number is the reading. When it is difficult to tell if a pointer is directly on a number, look at the dial directly to the right. If the pointer on that dial has not passed zero, record the smaller number of the two.
4. To discover how much electricity has been used since the last meter reading, subtract the actual reading indicated from the last utility bill from the consumer's manual reading. After this first reading consumers can track their own electricity usage and compare them against the monthly bill sent by the utility. Electricity is measured in kilowatt hours (kWh).
5. To monitor electricity usage on a daily or weekly basis schedule a time to do a reading then return at the same time the next day or next week to read the meter again. Determine the usage by subtracting the previous reading from the latest reading.

Remember, utilities are required by law to provide one electric meter reading per year but usually provide actual reading more frequently. Consumers also should be aware that an actual meter reading is required to begin or end electric service if the meter was not read in the previous 60 days prior to the initiation or termination of service.

If consumers know their meter has not been read in the last 12 months, contact the company to schedule a reading date and remember to take an independent reading on that day as well. While you may be required to pay for usage that was not previously billed, consumers have rights to special payment plans.

If there is a sizable difference when comparing the readings, this could result in an overcharge or undercharge on the next billing statement. In either case, report the discrepancy to the utility. You might inquire about having the meter tested.

***NOTE:** Learning how to read your utility meters gives you a good indication of what your bill will be, rather than the precise amount you will pay. Remember that there are other components of a utility bill in addition to the basic rate which might affect the amount you are required to pay.*