

Room heaters

What's the best option for extra heat?

Room heaters are used to heat a small space and are normally portable or fitted to a wall. Most room heaters use gas or electricity.

Room heaters are convenient appliances that provide focused and localised heat which is particularly suitable in a room for people that are elderly, ill or with limited mobility. But they can be expensive.

They consume a lot of gas or electricity if used to heat up a space quickly, and it's not a good idea to use room heaters instead of a central heating system as it is likely to cost a lot more.

Ideally, room heaters should only be used as a secondary or supplementary source of heat. Even then, you should firstly use the right heater for the space you want to heat, and carefully control the temperature and the time you have the heater on.

Electric room heaters

These include 'radiant' bar fires (**below, picture 1**), warm air heaters (**2**), fan heaters (**3**) and oil-filled radiators (**4**). They are all expensive to run and not appropriate as a main heat source.

Electric room heaters: running costs

Type of heater (with typical power rating)	Average cost to run
Radiant bar fire (2 kW)	31p per hour
Halogen heater (1.2 kW)	19p per hour
Convactor heater (2 kW)	31p per hour
Fan heater (2 kW)	31p per hour
Oil-filled radiator (1.5 kW)	23p per hour

NB These costs will vary as electricity prices change.



Hot parade (electric) 1 radiant bar fire, **2** convector heater, **3** fan heater, **4** oil-filled radiator. For halogen heater, see main picture, above



An electric halogen room heater is relatively cheap to run

They are all considered to be 100% efficient (i.e. they turn all the electrical energy they use into heat), but some cost more to run than others. The higher the power rating (in watts) the more it will cost to run. The cheapest to run are halogen heaters and oil-filled radiators, whilst bar fires and fan heaters are the most expensive. If you have to use an electric room heater, use it only when necessary and consider the following:

- Use a timer if it has one, if not, you can buy a timeswitch for the plug from a hardware shop.
- If the heater has a thermostat make sure it's not turned up too high.
- If you are on Economy 7, avoid using electric room heaters during peak hours if you can. Better to use night storage heaters that are charged at night.

Gas room heaters

These include traditional gas fires (5), convector heaters (6), open gas fires (7) and bottled-gas heaters (8). All can be run on mains gas or liquid petroleum gas (LPG). Bottled gas heaters, gas convector heaters and paraffin stoves don't need flues (chimneys). However, the water vapour they produce can cause condensation which will lead to damp and mould problems if the room is poorly ventilated.

If you are on mains gas, then gas central heating is the best way to heat your home. If you have to use electricity then the best way is with night storage heaters on an Economy 7 tariff.



Gas room heaters: running costs

Type of heater	Average cost per hour (mains gas)	Average cost per hour (LPG)
Radiant gas fire (on full)	28p	53p
Radiant gas fire (on low)	6p	11p
Gas convector heater	9p	32p
Open gas fire	32p	85p
Bottled gas fire	n/a	48p

NB These costs will vary as gas prices change.



Radiant gas fires are much less efficient than gas convector heaters



Hot parade (gas) 5) radiant gas fire, 6) gas convector heater, 7) open gas fire, 8) bottled gas fire

Happy paying more for your electricity and gas than you need to? **Course not.** So here's how you can cut your bills:



Give your clothes a day in the sun and give your tumble drier a break. Clothes dried in the fresh air feel great, and there are drying days in winter, too.



Catch 'em young. Encourage your children to switch off electric toys and lights that they're not using. They'll soon get the hang of saving energy.



Dodge the draught! Fit draught-excluders to your front door, letter box and key hole, and draw your curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.



Sleep tight. Make sure all the lights are turned off when you go to bed. If you want to light a child's room or a landing, use a low-wattage night light.

The Centre for Sustainable Energy is a national charity that helps people change the way they think and act on energy.

Our Home Energy Team offers free advice on domestic energy use to householders in Bristol and Somerset (including the unitary authorities of North Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset).

Call free: 0800 082 2234 or 0117 934 1957
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The figures in this leaflet are correct as of January 2014