gentoo

Ready for Winter



Simple steps and checks to keep your home warm, safe and comfortable this winter

Ready for winter

As the weather begins to turn colder, there are a few simple checks you can do to help keep your home warm and running smoothly throughout winter.

In this guide, you'll find tips on:

- Heating your home efficiently
- Checking your boiler and radiators
- Preventing damp and condensation
- Staying safe during storms
- Getting support with energy costs



Heating and hot water checks

It's a good idea to regularly check your heating and hot water is working as it should.

You can do this by:

- Checking your boiler pressure
- Testing your heating before the cold weather arrives
- Bleeding your radiators if they have cold spots
- Know how to reset a tripped switch if your heating stops working.

Checking your boiler pressure

Make sure your boiler's pressure gauge is between 1 and 1.5 bar. If it is lower than 1 bar or in the red, your boiler pressure is too low.

Some boilers have a pressure gauge dial whereas others may have a digital screen. If the screen is displaying an error code, such as E118, F1 or F2, this commonly means your boiler pressure is low.



How to top up your boiler pressure

How you increase your boiler pressure depends on your type of boiler. Below, we have listed steps for the most common boilers in our customer's homes.

To top up the pressure:

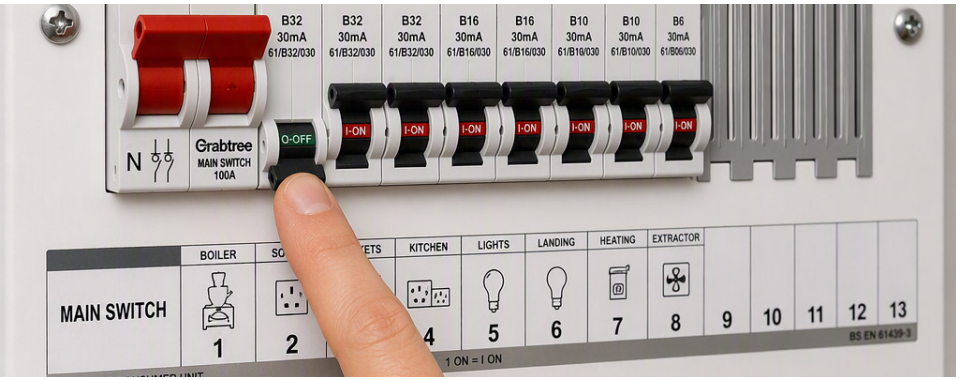
- Remove any covers so you can access under your boiler. Under your boiler there will be a filling loop. This may be a flexible hose or rigid hose or pipe that connects 2 water pipes. There will be 1 or 2 taps at either end. These may be grey, blue or black. If there are no taps, there may be a white oval-shaped handle.
- Turn the handle or taps to the left so they are in the same direction of the hose. You will hear water running and see the boiler pressure gauge increasing.
- When the pressure is at 1.5 bar, turn the handle or taps to the right so they are back in their original position, 90 degrees to the hose or pipe.
- If the pressure stays up and there are no obvious leaks, make sure your boiler is turned on and test your heating and hot water to check they are working properly again.



If you would like to watch a video guide on how to top up your boiler, please use the camera on your phone to hover over this QR code and click the link that pops up.

Resetting your boiler switch

If your boiler stops working and the display screen is blank, the switch for your boiler may have tripped.



To check this:

- Locate your consumer unit, this is often in a cupboard.
- Lift the cover on the unit and locate the central heating or boiler switch.
- If the switch is down and displaying OFF, the switch has tripped.
- Simply click the switch back ON.
- Check your boiler, if the display is back on, this has resolved the issue.

If you're having any issues with your boiler and these checks have not solved the problem, please give us a call.

Checking your radiators

If you haven't used your heating much during summer, now is the perfect time to check your radiators.



Signs a radiator may need bleeding:

- The top feels cold but the bottom is warm
- It takes a long time to heat up
- Rooms aren't warming up properly

How to bleed a radiator

Bleeding radiators to release trapped air can help your heating system work more efficiently. To do this, you'll need a radiator key and a dry cloth or something to catch water.

- Switch off your central heating and let the system cool.
- When the system is cool, find the square bleed screw at one end of your radiator.
- Place the dry cloth under the bleed screw to soak up the small amount of water that comes out.
- Put the radiator key into the screw and turn it carefully and slowly to the left until you hear a hissing sound as the trapped air escapes.
- Only turn the key 2 times so the screw stays in the radiator.
- When the hissing stops, carefully and slowly turn the screw to the right but avoid tightening it too much.

If you would like to watch a video guide on how to bleed your radiators, please use the camera on your phone to hover over this QR code and click the link that pops up.

How to reset a tripped switch

Winter nights can be dark and if you're using a lot of appliances and electric in your home at once, it can sometimes trip the electricity supply. Always keep a torch handy during the winter months and know where your consumer unit is in case the electricity trips.

If the electricity supply goes off in your home, it often means your RCD has tripped and resetting the switch is often a simple fix:

- Locate your consumer unit, this is often in a cupboard.
- Lift the cover and locate the main switch. This is often the large, red switch on the far left.
- If the switch is down and in the OFF position, simply flick the switch back up.

If you're having any issues with your radiators or electricity and these checks have not solved the problem, please give us a call.

Reducing damp and condensation

Condensation happens when warm, moist air meets a cold surface and is most common during the winter months.

Simple ways to reduce condensation:

- Open a window when cooking
- Check all your extractor fans are working and turned on when needed
- Avoid blocking radiators with furniture
- Keep your home at a steady temperature
- Keep doors closed to reduce draughts
- open your blinds and curtains when the sun is shining to allow the natural sunlight to warm up a room

Worried about damp or mould?

If you're worried about damp and mould in your home and have followed steps to reduce it, please contact us as soon as possible to report this by calling 0191 525 5000.



For further advice and support with damp and mould, you can use your phone to scan the QR code and click the link to visit our website.

Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

As heating systems are used more often in winter, it's important to test your smoke alarms regularly. We check your alarms during your annual gas safety check, but if your alarm is within reach and its safe for you to do so, we recommend you check your alarms every week.

You can test alarms in 3 easy steps:

- Press and hold the test button.
- Wait for the alarm to sound.
- Release the button.

Its important to remember never remove batteries from smoke or carbon monoxide alarms. If your alarm is beeping or not working properly, please report this to us as soon as possible.

Preparing the outside of your home for a storm

During the winter months, there is a higher chance of weather warnings and storms. If the MET office announce a storm or wet, windy weather, there are a few ways you can prepare your home for a storm to reduce damage.

- Secure garden furniture and put away any loose items
- Secure sheds and fences
- Remove any loose or weak branches from trees in your garden
- Unblock gutters and drains
- Park your vehicle somewhere safe and make sure there are no loose items around it

Tips to keep your home warm

Keeping your home warm during winter doesn't always mean turning the heating up higher. Small changes around your home can help you make the most of the heat you already have, stay comfortable during colder weather, and potentially reduce your energy use.

Here are some simple steps you can take to keep the warmth in and the cold out.

- Tuck long curtains behind the radiators
- Keep inside and outside doors closed
- Use draught excluders around gaps in doors
- Open the curtains and blinds during sunny days to let natural light heat up the room
- Keep your home at a steady temperature to avoid getting too cold and having to heat the room up quickly
- Avoid placing large furniture in front of radiators
- Make sure your loft hatch is closed properly at all times

If you're worried about cold temperatures in your home and these tips don't help, please contact us by calling 0191 525 5000 and we can look into the cause for you.



Help with energy costs

We understand that keeping your home warm during winter can put extra pressure on your finances. If you're worried about energy costs, you're not alone. No one should have to choose between staying warm and managing their finances.

It's worth checking that you're receiving all the help and support you're entitled to. Depending on your circumstances, you may be eligible for:

- Cold Weather Payments
- Warm Home Discount
- Winter Fuel Payments

Our Money Matters Team can provide free, confidential advice and support to help you explore the assistance available to you.

If you'd like help or want to find out more, call 0191 525 5000 and select option 3, or email money.matters@gentoogroup.com.

Need our help this winter?

Taking a few simple steps before the cold weather hits can help you keep on top of things this winter. If you need us, we're still here to help.

Our phone lines are often busy during the colder months. If you need to report a repair, alongside calling us you can also:

- report a repair on our website or My Gentoo
- send us a message on Facebook

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