A guide to

BUYING AND USING APPLIANCES

severn wye

We use more technology at home than ever before, so they play a huge role in living an energy efficient lifestyle.

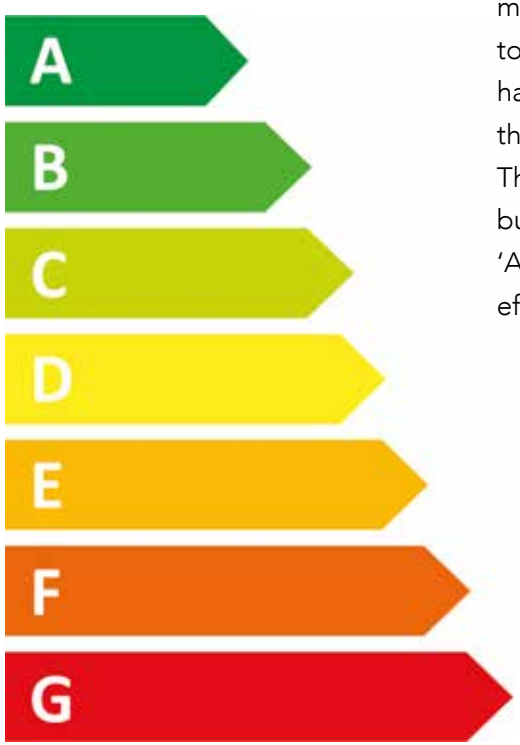
There are many ways to buy, use and dispose of electrical appliances more sustainably. This guide will help you buy it right, use it well and dispose of old appliances to save money, save energy and look after the environment.

Finally, we've included some 'Tips for the pros' for those who want to get the best energy efficiency from their appliances.

Buying

Purchasing electrical appliances

The best way to get energy efficiency from your electrical appliances is to 'Buy it right' in the first place. When choosing a new appliance, shop with energy efficiency in mind by paying close attention to the energy label on each product.



It's important to keep in mind that energy efficiency labels underwent a change in 2021. Under the old system, appliances were rated A+++ to G, but the increase in energy efficient appliances available meant the top end of this rating grew and grew, making it outdated and difficult to understand. The new system has removed all ratings higher than 'A,' so 'A+' no longer exists. The colour scale hasn't changed, but the letters now go from 'A–G' (with 'A' still being the most efficient).

The energy label explained

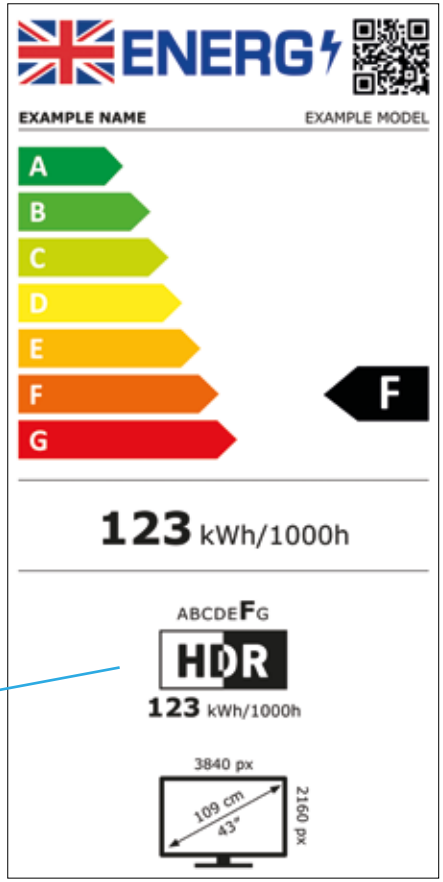
There are a few important things to look out for on the new energy labels. Knowing what each part of the label means will take the stress out of buying the most energy efficient appliances for your budget.

Grading system

All products will have a rating somewhere on the A–G scale. The colour scale makes it easy to spot whether a product is 'green' or not. Remember that if in doubt, A is best.

Icons

The icons on the label will demonstrate the energy efficiency of different features of the product, for example the efficiency of a washing machine's spin cycle or of a TV when it's in HDR mode.



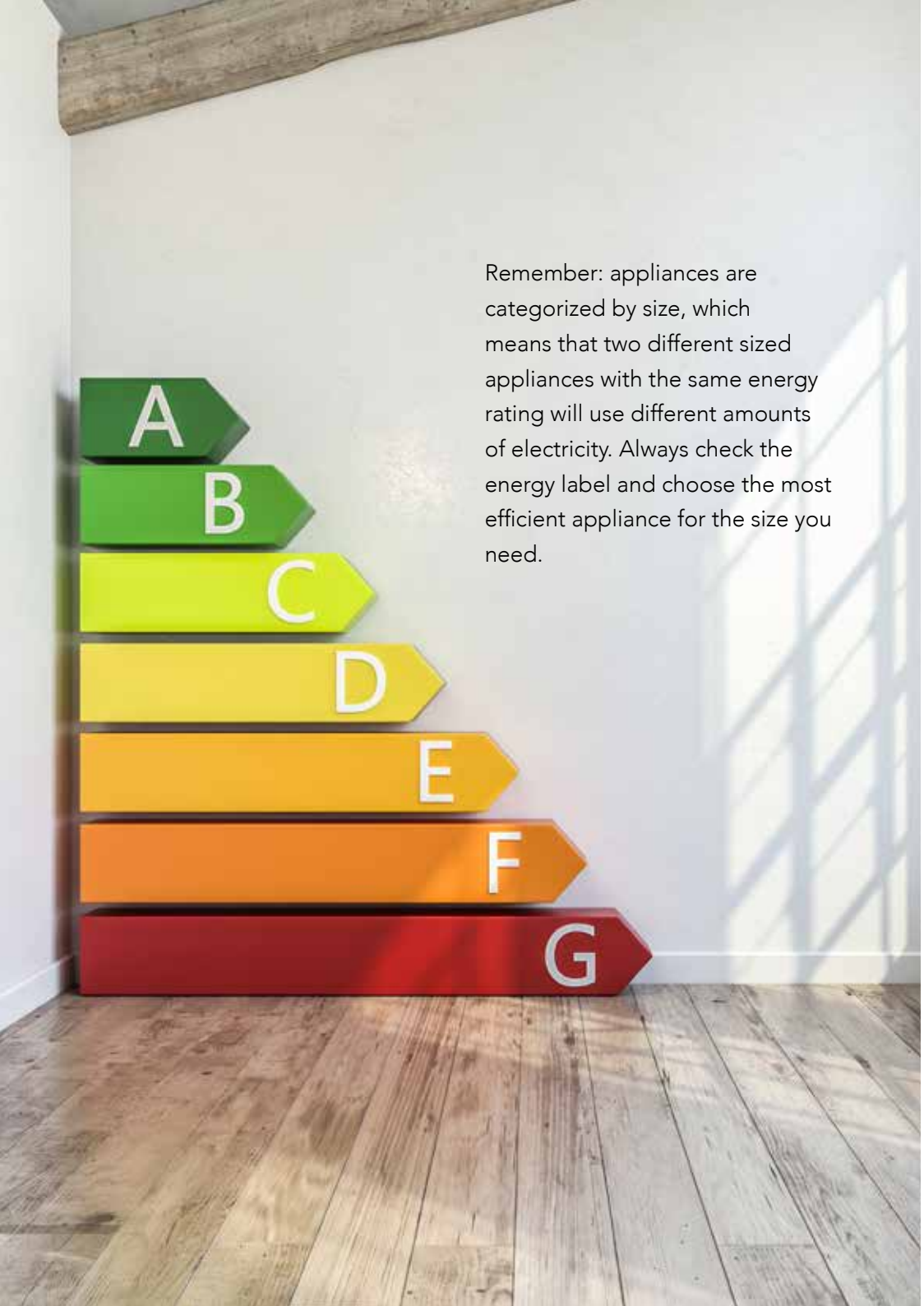
QR code

The label will include a QR code that links to further information online, where you can learn more about the product using your smartphone.

Energy consumption

How much energy each product uses to run will be displayed in kilowatts in the middle of the label. Consumption is presented either as kWh per year, kWh per 1,000 hours or kWh per 100 cycles, depending on the product group.

The labels for different product groups will include different features that are relevant to the energy efficiency of that particular appliance. For example, the labels on dishwashers also include information on the duration of that model's eco-programme and the capacity at which it will run most efficiently. For more information on the features of different product labels, check out this handy guide: www.energylabel.org.uk/the-new-label/in-a-nutshell



Remember: appliances are categorized by size, which means that two different sized appliances with the same energy rating will use different amounts of electricity. Always check the energy label and choose the most efficient appliance for the size you need.

It's worth remembering that energy labels don't apply to all the electricals you'll find in your home. Laptops, PCs, mobile phones and tablets all have different energy efficiency standards and different levels of energy consumption that make the standard label difficult to apply. If you're thinking about buying a new laptop or PC, it's important to take time to do some research into the most energy efficient device for your needs and budget. For some handy hints on how to use your electronics efficiently, check out Uswitch's energy-saving tips at www.uswitch.com/energy-saving/guides/tvs-computers-laptops

Pro tip: *The Energy Saving Trust have a searchable online register that you can use to look up the energy efficiency of a wide range of appliances. The information on this register is independently verified and endorsed by the Energy Saving Trust themselves. Find out more at energysavingtrust.org.uk*

energy saving trust verified by

Using

Getting the best from your appliances

If you're not currently thinking about changing your electrical appliances, there are ways to save energy by using your existing appliances more efficiently. The savings might appear small, but they can soon add up.

Goodbye standby

The average UK household spends £40 a year keeping appliances on standby, so it's worth thinking about whether you can reduce your standby energy.

Standby is the energy used by certain appliances when not in use and not switched off at the plug. As well as standby power, other new additions to the average household's collection of electrical goods, such as broadband modems, routers and smart speakers use low levels of electricity when not in use. Most appliances can be turned off at the plug without upsetting their programming.

Pro tip: *Buy standby saver devices that allow you to turn off all your devices in one go.*

Charging gadgets

Chargers consume energy even when the appliance is fully charged. Try to charge gadgets at a time that you can turn them off once they're full (rather than overnight).

Pro tip: *Invest in some saver sockets that cut the power to the charger as soon as it's charged.*

Fridges and freezers

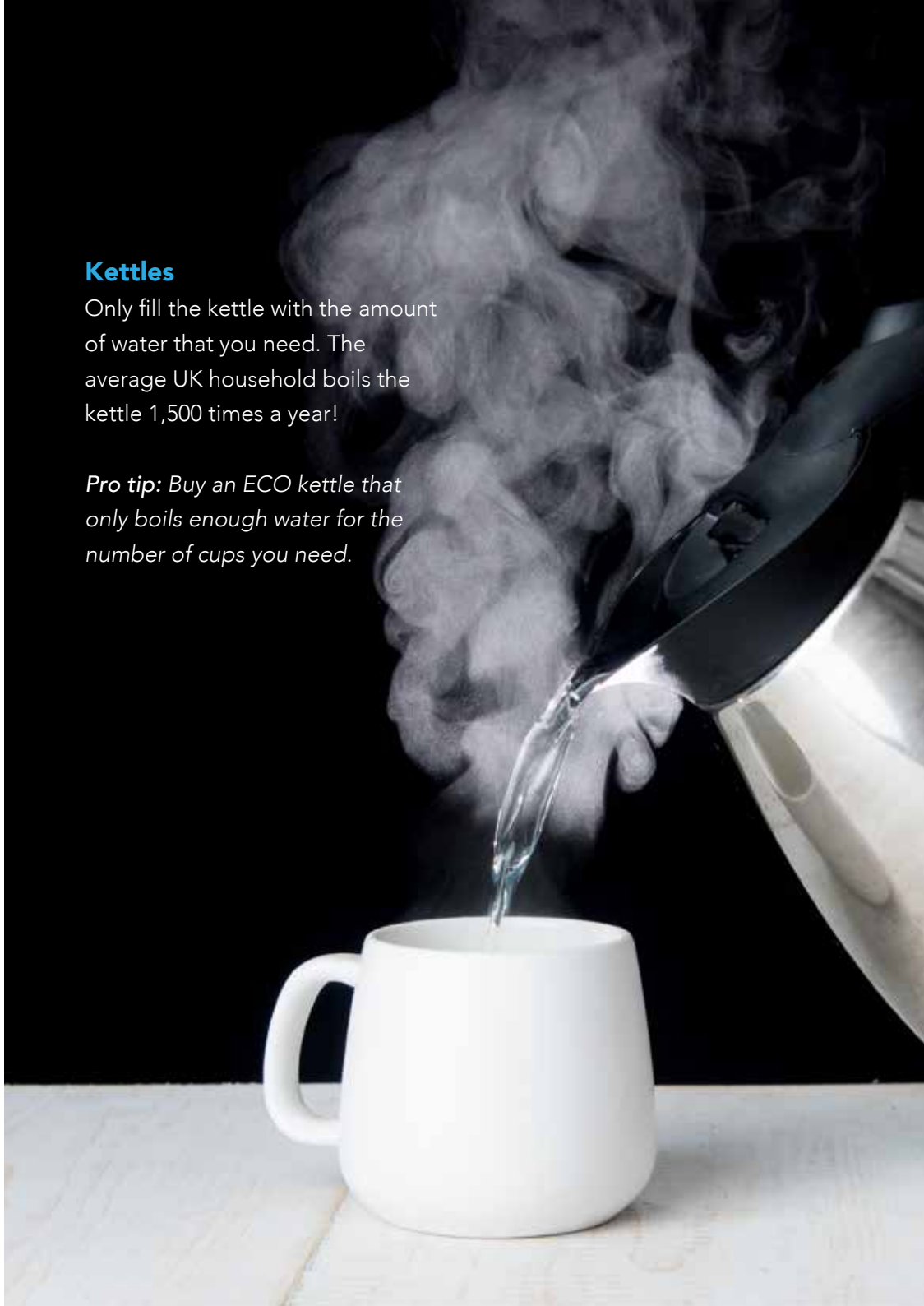
- Keep your fridge reasonably full – it takes more energy to keep empty space cold!
- Defrost fridges and freezers regularly. Frost build-up increases the amount of energy needed to keep them cool.
- Don't leave the doors open for too long.
- Make sure the seals on the doors are still working effectively.
- Your fridge should be kept between 1 and 5 degrees Celsius. If yours doesn't have a thermometer installed, it's worth investing in one.

Pro tip: *Think about where you put your food – the temperature is lower at the back and the bottom of the fridge.*

Kettles

Only fill the kettle with the amount of water that you need. The average UK household boils the kettle 1,500 times a year!

Pro tip: *Buy an ECO kettle that only boils enough water for the number of cups you need.*



Dishwashers

- Wait until you have a full load before turning on the dishwasher
- Use the shortest cycle possible that still cleans effectively.
- Only use high temperature programs if absolutely necessary

Pro tip: *Use the air power or overnight dry setting. This automatically turns the dishwasher off after the rinse cycle and can save up to 10% of dishwashing energy costs.*

Cooking

- Use a microwave if it's appropriate for what you're cooking. Microwaves use less energy than ovens because they directly heat your food, whereas ovens also heat the air surrounding the food.
- Slow cookers are also a very efficient way of cooking, so if you have one make use of it!
- On the hob, use the correct size ring. Don't use a small pan on a large ring, as much of the heat will be wasted as it escapes around the sides of the pan.
- Keep the lids on pans when you're cooking
- Avoid opening the oven door to check food while it cooks, as this allows heat to escape.
- Don't preheat the oven unless absolutely necessary and then for no more than 10 minutes.
- Thaw frozen foods thoroughly before cooking.

Pro tip: *If you're using the oven, batch cook several meals or portions at a time to make best use of the energy you're using.*

Laundry

- Wait until you have a full load before turning on the washing machine (or use a half-load setting if you have to wash a smaller amount).
- Dry clothes outdoors on a washing line whenever possible.
- If it's not dirty, wash at 30°C. Up to 90% of a washing machine's energy use comes from heating the water.

Pro tip: *Take your clothes out of the dryer before they're completely dry – as well as saving energy, they'll also iron much easier.*

Home entertainment

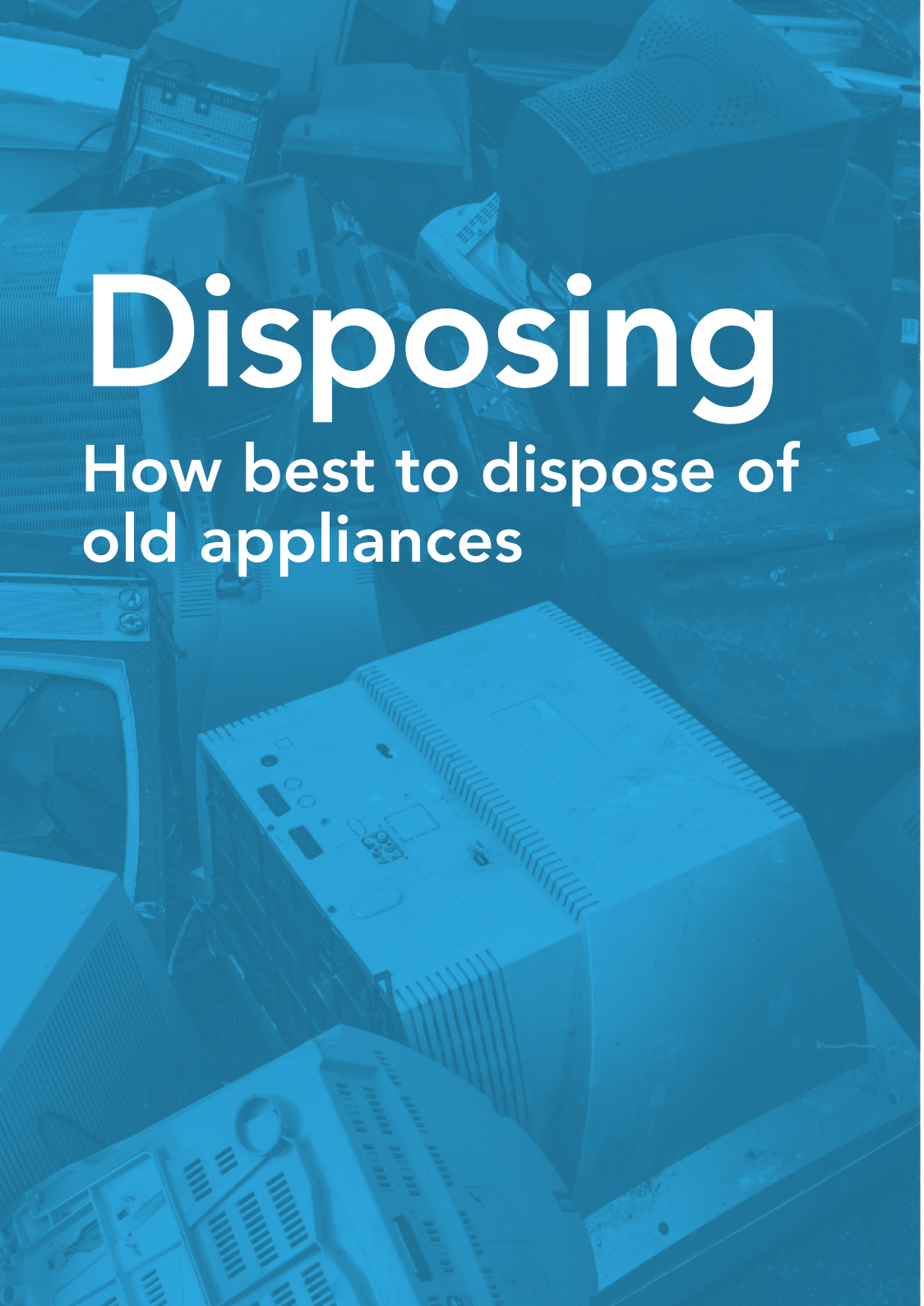
In most homes, entertainment equipment accounts for about ten per cent of the electricity bill, so there are plenty of opportunities to save:

- Put computers to sleep or hibernate if they're not being used for short periods of time. This will leave all your programmes as they are, so you can carry on when you return. You can set computers to automatically hibernate after a set period of inactivity.
- Shut computers down when they are not being used for longer periods.

Pro tip: *Check to see if appliances such as TVs and stereos have low power settings that you can use.*

Using a smart meter

Many people find that installing an energy meter is helpful as it enables them to see which appliances are using the most energy and where the biggest savings can be made. Some energy companies are currently giving these away free, so check with your energy company to see if you might be able to get hold of one.



Disposing

How best to dispose of old appliances

Electrical items should be disposed of carefully, not in general household waste. You can easily identify these items by looking out for a symbol of a wheelie bin with a cross over the top of it. This includes everything from large white goods to energy saving lightbulbs. By keeping waste electrical equipment separate from other waste, the hazardous substances can be removed, and other parts can be recycled rather than sent to landfill.

In many areas, you can recycle old appliances and electricals at your local recycling centre. Some small appliances can now be recycled from the kerbside, along with your cardboard, plastic and other recyclables, depending on which local authority area you live in. For bulky items, you can often arrange collection from your home via your local council, usually for a small fee. All of this will depend on where you live, so make sure you're up to date with the rules in your area.

Pro Tip: *If the appliances you're recycling have removable parts made of glass or china (for example, the bowl of a kitchen blender) then make sure these are removed as they won't be recycled.*

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For a full range of advice, check out our website.

Accessible guides are online:

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