



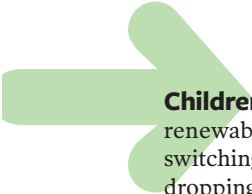
RD GREEN  
SPECIAL

## RD Green Challenge: Step 1

# You Have the Power

This painless switch could cut your  
carbon footprint by nearly 6%

BY JO MOULDS



**Children's author Susan Saville**, 42, had written stories about renewable energy but was dragging her feet when it came to switching to it herself. "It was always on my 'to do' list but it kept dropping off at the end of the day," she confesses. "Eventually, I had a word with myself and spent half a day researching the options on the Internet."

As a result, Susan, who lives in West Sussex with her husband Richard and five-and-a-half-year-old daughter Lilu, signed up with specialist green energy supplier Ecotricity last December. "I like the fact that they are building wind turbines," she says. "I feel I'm adding to the renewable energy infrastructure in the UK."

But, like many people, Susan wasn't keen to pay more. She opted for Ecotricity's New Energy Tariff, which matches the price charged by a customer's regional supplier, as long as they haven't already switched to another company.

"Green" electricity is electricity generated from renewable—or



supplier buys a specified amount from renewable sources.

### **Renewable energy**

currently makes up only 4.7 per cent of our energy mix. Take up is low as well. *Reader's Digest's* poll of Britons' green behaviour, showed that only seven per cent of us have signed up to a green tariff. Yet it's one of the easiest ways to make carbon savings, doesn't affect lifestyle and will encourage power companies to invest in renewable forms of energy. By making one phone call and giving a meter reading, the average UK consumer stands to save 0.7 tons of carbon dioxide a year, a reduction of 5.6 per cent in your individual carbon footprint.

natural—sources that give off zero or minimal carbon dioxide, the climate change baddie. These include wind, solar and tidal power—and even converting landfill gas to energy. Customers on a green tariff receive their electricity off the grid like anyone else. The key difference is that the

So why are consumers so slow to switch? “People are confused,” explains Patricia Ockenden of Energywatch. “There are so many green tariffs and people don't really know what they're getting. They're also worried that it will cost them more.”

OK, let's try to clarify things. There

are now three types of “green” tariff:

> **A green source electricity supply tariff:** this means all or part of the electricity supplied comes from renewable sources.

> **A green energy fund tariff:** this means the premium you pay goes into renewable energy or other environmental projects.

> **A carbon offset tariff:** this means the supplier offsets the carbon dioxide emitted by the energy supply by planting trees or investing in other projects that reduce emissions.

A green tariff may include one or more of these elements, but bear in

mind that suppliers are already legally obliged to provide a certain and increasing proportion of renewable electricity. A truly green tariff goes beyond this by investing in long-

term projects like wind farms and hydroelectric plants. Comparison sites such as [greenelectricity.org](http://greenelectricity.org) can help you find the best and later this year Ofgem, the gas and electricity regulator, plans to launch a new accreditation scheme, giving green suppliers

“energy-efficiency”-style ratings.

All the well-known names—British Gas, EDF Energy, npower, E.ON, Scottish and Southern Energy, and ScottishPower—offer

green tariffs. But for a really eco-friendly deal, consider a small specialist supplier, such as Ecotricity, Good Energy or Green Energy. They offer a higher than average proportion of renewable electricity in their fuel mix—100 per cent in Good Energy’s case—and tend to invest more heavily for the future.

As a rule of thumb, the greenest tariffs are more expensive, though, as Hugo House of Good Energy points out, the average customer is only paying an extra £1.60 a week. But even changing to green electricity that meets the Government’s Renewables Obligation will be creating demand.

And once you have made the switch, expect to feel an uncharacteristic warm glow on receiving your bill.

Susan Saville receives a free M&S eco-kettle worth £30 donated by [together.com](http://together.com), which is working with some of Britain’s leading brands to provide easy ways to fight climate change.

## Tip

Most electricity suppliers offer a free energy survey to help you cut your consumption, even when you’re not on their green tariff

## Where to find out more

- [energywatch.org.uk](http://energywatch.org.uk)
- [electricityinfo.org](http://electricityinfo.org)
- [greenelectricity.org](http://greenelectricity.org)
- [greenhelpline.com](http://greenhelpline.com)

To calculate your carbon footprint and find out how other readers are doing in the Green Challenge, go to [rdmag.co.uk](http://rdmag.co.uk). If you would like to share your tips for greener living, please email [green@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:green@readersdigest.co.uk) or visit our new forum at [rdmag.co.uk](http://rdmag.co.uk).

**Next month, Step Two:**  
**tackling our flying addiction**

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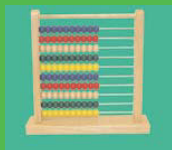
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