



# Your Guide to Signing Up for Utility Service

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Signing up for utility service can be easy. Knowing what information you need to sign up and what questions to ask before you call is essential. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) provides information on all that is required to sign up for utility service and gives you a starting point to ask questions of the provider.

## **Q. What do I need to sign up for utilities?**

A. Consumers should have on hand the following information before calling to connect their electric, natural gas, telephone or water services:

- the name of the person the service will be listed under
- the address to which the service will be provided
- a telephone number of the person the service will be listed under

If possible, customers also should review previous bills to observe prior usage and determine what type of new service, if any, is needed.

## **Q. Do I need a social security number to establish service?**

A. No. A utility company cannot require disclosure of a social security number to establish service. There are several other options available when signing up for new service.

Customers establishing electric service have the option of paying a deposit or securing a guarantor who is already a customer of the company. Other considerations include whether a customer is creditworthy, a property owner or has held a prior account - for the same class of service - with the utility within the last two years.

For natural gas, telecommunications, or water and sewer services the sign-up process is similar to establishing electric service. Customers may opt to establish their credit with the utility company, secure a guarantor of service or pay a deposit.

## **Q. What questions should I ask prior to establishing service?**

A. There are several questions to consider asking the customer service representative before signing up for the utility. A few to consider are:

- Do I have to pay a deposit? How much is it?
- Can I pay the deposit over several months?
- When will my service start?
- When will I get my first bill?
- Who do I call if there are problems?

## **Q. Who do I call?**

A. Below are the major utility companies serving Ohio.

### **Electric:**

- American Electric Power
  - Columbus Southern Power: 1-800-277-0077
  - Ohio Power: 1-800-672-2231
- Duke Energy: 1-800-544-6900
- Dayton Power & Light: 1-800-433-8500
- FirstEnergy: 1-800-646-0400
  - Cleveland Electric Illuminating: 1-800-589-3101
  - Ohio Edison: 1-800-633-4766
  - Toledo Edison: 1-800-447-3333

### **Natural Gas:**

- Duke Energy: 1-800-544-6900

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- Columbia Gas of Ohio: 1-800-344-4077
- Dominion East Ohio: 1-800-362-7557
- Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio: 1-800-909-7668

**Telephone:**

- AT&T (formerly SBC): 1-800-660-1000
- CenturyTel: 1-800-201-4099
- Cincinnati Bell Telephone: 513-565-6005
- Embarq: 1-800-407-5411
- Verizon: 1-800-483-7988
- Windstream: 1-800-347-1991

**Q. How can utility bills be managed?**

A. Utility bill management plans are available for electric, natural gas and telephone service. Electric

and natural gas companies have a program called budget billing, which allows consumers to spread the utility expenses throughout the year. For telephone, Lifeline programs are available to help low-income consumers maintain their telephone service. This assistance program helps pay part of the telephone bill and the fee to establish service is waived. Customers may learn more about these plans by referencing the OCC's fact sheets "The Facts about Electric Budget Billing," "The Facts about Natural Gas Budget Billing," and "Telephone Lifeline Programs in Ohio."

For more in-depth information about utility services, consumers may want to read the OCC's fact sheets "Gas Choice 101" and "Choosing a Local Telephone Provider." These publications may be viewed online at [www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org) or received for free by calling the OCC toll-free at 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622).

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 and resolves complaints from individuals. To receive utility information, brochures, schedule a presentation or file a utility complaint, residential consumers may call 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622) toll free in Ohio or visit the OCC website at [www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org).

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**For additional information from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel:**

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