

Your DIY Water Efficiency Audit

The starting point of your business water efficiency journey. Small changes can make a positive difference to your water usage.

Getting started

It's always best to begin with the proper preparation in place. Start with these simple steps:

1. Put someone in charge

Appoint someone to take charge of the plan and get staff involved in creating a water efficient workplace.

As with any business plan, full management and staff support is essential. Let your staff know what you're trying to achieve. Positive communication can win the support of your staff, which in turn helps you achieve your objectives.

2. Review your consumption and costs

Firstly, if you have meter and it's safe to read it, do so on a regular basis and keep a record. You'll see trends in your water usage and be able to identify potential leaks.

Secondly, review your bills too. This way you can compare your actual consumption against your charges and check that they're accurate.

3. Assess your business

Use this checklist to carry out a survey to find out how, where, when and why water is being used within your business.

We'll guide you towards common sources of water waste and highlight areas where businesses frequently find they can save.

Putting things in perspective

Before you get started, here are a few statistics to give you a frame of reference when you're assessing your water use.

- A running tap uses an average of 6 litres of water every minute.
- A single washing machine cycle with a full load uses roughly 45 litres of water.
- A single dishwasher load uses about 20 litres of water.
- A running hose will use about 9 litres of water a minute.
- Taking a shower uses roughly 35 litres.

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Here we go!

Let's get started with your audit. Work your way through this checklist, keeping a note of opportunities you spot to save.

1. If you have a water meter, use it to check for internal plumbing leaks.

Choose a time when the business is closed. Make sure that no water is being used. **With your internal stop valve open**, check your water meter. If the dial is turning, you could have a leak.

Sometimes it can be difficult to tell if the meter dial is turning. One way to make sure is to note your meter reading, then to leave it overnight or for a number of hours with everything switched off. If your meter reading has changed, you may have a leak.

Was your meter dial turning or did the reading change?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, great news! You don't have a leak. Skip to step 3

If yes, you might have a leak. Go to step 2 to determine where it is.

Notes/Comments

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2. Check for external leaks

This time, **close your building's internal stop valve** and check your meter again. You're looking to see if the dial is still turning. You may need to leave it turned off for a number of hours and check the reading again to be sure.

Was your meter dial turning or did the reading change?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, this means your leak is on your internal pipework. Call a plumber to come and remedy it straight away.

If yes, this means your leak is between your meter and the stop valve. Call a plumber to come and remedy it straight away.

Notes/Comments

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3. Compare your recent bills

Find as many recent water bills as you can. Compare the amount of each bill.

If your business has other similar premises, ask if you can compare your recent bills to those of a similar premises.



Your DIY Water Efficiency Audit

Are your recent bills much higher than your older bills or the bills from other similar properties?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, this suggests that your consumption is in pretty good shape. Proceed to the next step.

If yes, you should think carefully about what could be causing your bills to be higher.

If your consumption has risen recently, think about what could have changed. A new additional staff member? A new business practice? Make a note of anything you think of.

If your consumption is higher than similar premises, think of any significant differences between the sites. Any water-intensive practices or activities which might be driving your consumption up? Make a note of anything you can think of.

Consider how you might be able to test your theories about what might be driving up your consumption. Test things to find out if you're right, then investigate ways of remedying any issues you identify.

Notes/Comments

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4. Assess your plumbed water appliances

Plumbed water appliances, usually found in kitchens and bathrooms, are a common source of inefficiency. Run through the following list to consider the main offenders.

Are all your taps drip-free?

☐ Yes ☐ No

A dripping tap can waste as much as 90 litres of water a week. **Replace a tap's washer** as soon as a drip is noticed. You can also invest in **tap aerators** to reduce flow.

Notes/Comments

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Do staff sometimes leave taps running?

☐ Yes ☐ No

You can retro-fit **self-closing taps** to prevent waste. These switch off automatically after a specified time. Many models have in-built flow restrictors, which can further reduce waste. If not, you can add **tap aerators** to reduce flow.

A cheaper option is to place **stickers or posters** near the sink area to remind team members to turn taps off after use.

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Notes/Comments

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Are plugs fitted in the basins?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Replace missing or ill-fitting plugs. Captive plugs encourage users to fill the basin, rather than use running water. Again, **posters or stickers** are a good way of reminding staff about best practice.

Notes/Comments

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Is the flow of water from your taps excessive?

☐ Yes ☐ No

A flow of six litres per minute should be enough for hand washing purposes.

Notes/Comments

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Are the toilet cisterns operating effectively?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Make sure cisterns aren't leaking.

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If you don't have **dual-flush mechanisms** fitted, consider adding them. If you do have them fitted, consider how a **sticker or poster** could encourage staff to use the small flush whenever possible.

If you don't have dual flush cisterns and can't afford to fit them, consider adding displacement devices like **Hippos**, which reduce the volume of a standard flush.

Notes/Comments

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Are the urinals fitted with water efficient controls?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Urinals which constantly leak or flush too regularly can waste a huge volume of water. **Check for unwanted leaks or over-regular flushing**, and ensure that the **latest control mechanisms** are fitted. You could also consider **waterless urinals**.

Notes/Comments

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Are your showers operating efficiently?

☐ Yes ☐ No



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Many office spaces and workplaces offer showering facilities for their staff, and these can be a common source of inefficiency.

Check for leaking or dripping shower units.
Consider installing **push-button timer controls** and **low-flow heads** to reduce the opportunity for waste.

Low cost options include a shower timer and posters or stickers, aimed at reminding staff to keep shower time to a minimum.

Notes/Comments

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5. Check your water pressure

Is your water pressure at the minimum level for your needs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

High water pressure can cause pinhole leaks in your water system, which can lead to major leaks and wider issues including serious property damage. Try to ensure your water pressure is at the lowest level it can be for your needs.

Notes/Comments

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6. Consider how your business uses water

If your business uses water as part of its wider operations, consider how you might be able to reduce your consumption.

Can you minimise the water your business uses in its essential processes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are there any best-practices you can apply to your business processes to help reduce the water they use? When was the last time you carried out research into water efficiency in your industry?

Try **searching the internet or your industry press** for the latest in best practice, or visit **business-stream.co.uk/our-services** for help.

Notes/Comments

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Are all the ways in which your business uses water essential?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Consider all the ways your business uses water, from core processes, to wider building and ground maintenance. Are all of these activities essential and operating as efficiently as they could?

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If they are essential, consider if you **could do them less** without causing issues?

Notes/Comments

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Do you maintain grounds and outdoor spaces?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Maintenance of outside spaces can lead to excessive water use, especially in the summer months.

Avoid lawns if you can. If you have lawns, water only when essential. **Water substantially once a week** to encourage grass to root further down. In time they'll need less watering.

Fit trigger nozzles to hoses to prevent accidental leakages.

When landscaping, use **existing plants and native species**, both of which will require less water.

Notes/Comments

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Could you recycle water?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Rainwater harvesting: rainwater from roofs or large paved areas (e.g. car parks) can be recycled and used for toilet flushing, vehicle washing or watering plants.

Greywater recycling: Waste water from washroom basins and showers can be recycled and used for flushing toilets or watering grounds and gardens.

Notes/Comments

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7. Consult your team of staff

Your team of staff are key to the success of your programme. Getting their buy-in will increase the chances of your long-term success and asking their opinion will really help.

Talk to them about the highlights of what you've learned so far. **Ask them for their ideas** on how you could do things differently to use less water.

Notes/Comments

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Next steps

Digest

Now that you've completed your water audit, we hope you've identified a range of potential actions to help reduce your water use.

Now's the time to go back over what you've learned and noted. Consider which options might be quick and easy to implement and which might take more time and investment.

Plan

Having given some real thought to your options, put a plan together for implementing them. Think about...

1. Phases

Can you do the quick wins first, add the rest to later phases? Perhaps some stages depend on others being completed first? Breaking your list down into smaller chunks will help keep things manageable.

2. Timescales

How quickly can you start? When do you aim to complete each of your phases by?

3. Responsibilities

Who will be responsible for each part of your plan? Who else will need to be involved?

Implement

Once your plan is in place and you know who's doing what. It's time to get started on the fun part of making it all happen.

Communicate

Once you have your first efficiency measures in place, make sure that you tell your wider team about everything you've done and what else you've got planned.

Explain what you need them to do to help make it a success.

Review

After your programme of efficiency measures has been in place for a few months, review your consumption to check how much of an impact you've made.

Share

Make sure you share the successes you've had around your team. Thank them for their help and inspire them to keep it up.

Good luck!

If you have any questions or there's anything you don't understand, we'd be happy to help. Visit business-stream.co.uk/my-account to get in touch.

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