



◀ Energenie's electronic thermostatic radiator valve (TRV) gives you complete control over individual room heat. £59.99 (0844 412 7923; energenie4u.co.uk)

CENTRAL SYSTEMS

Most UK properties have mains gas central heating, with a gas-fired boiler heating water for radiators and hot-water taps. Modern condensing boilers can achieve 90 per cent efficiency and electric storage heaters use cheaper night-time rates to warm up special heat-store radiators, which then slowly release heat over the following day. Their popularity is fading, however, as they cannot produce instant heat, and unit costs of electricity are four times that of gas.

Which hot-water system?

COMBI BOILER Best suited to small/medium-sized homes. Doesn't require a separate hot-water cylinder and provides hot water on demand.

GRAVITY-FED SYSTEM Requires a large storage tank of cold water in the loft, which feeds into a hot-water cylinder heated by a boiler. Cheap to install and good for busy homes with multiple bathrooms, but water pressure can disappoint. Can be used with renewable heat sources.

MAINS PRESSURE TANK Water is stored under pressure in a cylinder and pumped around the system at mains pressure – great for showering. Can be used with renewable heat sources.

Installation

Since April 2005, all new and replacement gas and oil-fired domestic boilers must be condensing boilers of SEDBUK band A or B, ensuring a high-efficiency rating. Always use a Gas Safe Register installer (0800 408 5500; gassaferegister.co.uk) and remember your new boiler comes under Building Control and must be registered. 'Invest in a magnetic filter (Magnaclean) that catches rust particles before they return to the boiler and cause damage,' recommends Cliff Bassett, from mybuilder.com.

Take control

Save up to 30 per cent on your bill

- Upgrade your thermostat to a fully controllable electronic design – try Honeywell (01403 211 888; honeywell.com) or Danfoss (01234 364 621; danfoss.com).
- Adding thermostatic radiator valves (TRV) allows individual temperature control so you don't heat rooms you rarely use. Don't fit a TRV in the same room as the main thermostat as it can mislead the main thermostat.
- Advanced electronic programmers with sensors work out how warm your home is and turn the heating on only when it is needed. They even monitor outside conditions and pre-empt internal temperature changes.



TOP TIP A well-insulated property will need a smaller boiler than one with inadequate insulation

▲ An Ariston Evo boiler can manage three temperature zones around the house. Price on application. (0333 240 8777; ariston.com)

► British Gas energy monitor and home heating controls start from £149, or are free with a new boiler. (0800 294 9650; britishgas.co.uk)

