

HOW TO SET AND ADJUST YOUR BOILER TIMER (AND USE IT EFFICIENTLY!)

One of the best things you can do to save energy at home is to only turn your heating on when you really need it. It's a win-win: you save money on your heating bills, and reduce emissions from your energy use too.

Most boilers come with a timer, which you can use to program your heating to switch on and off automatically at particular times of day. But how do you set a boiler timer?

If you're stumped by all the buttons and switches on your combi boiler, don't worry. A combi boiler is fairly modern and makes hot water and runs the central heating in one – hence the name Combination (Combi) boiler. Other boilers may have a hot water tank which stores the hot water away from the boiler for example in the airing cupboard or utility room.

In this guide, we'll take you through what mechanical and digital boiler timers look like, and how to set them.

What is a boiler timer?

A boiler timer, or boiler clock, allows you to control what time of day your heating and hot water turns on and off. If you have an older heating system, the timer might look like a small clock or dial on the front of your boiler. This is called a mechanical timer.

Or, it might look like a small digital screen. This is what's known as a digital timer.

How does a boiler timer work?

To give you a really in-depth answer to this question, you'd need to know exactly what brand and model of boiler you have. But there are some rules of thumb for most common boilers.

In general, boiler timers allow you to make sure your heating turns on at the same time every day.

Most combi boilers will have at least 3 settings: On, Off, and Auto or Timed (this one is sometimes represented by a clock symbol). These settings might be named differently on your boiler. The basic idea is that your heating is either on, off, or following the instructions you've set on your timer.

Here are some common settings you might see on your combi boiler timer:

24 hours or On	the heating will stay on all the time, until you manually turn it off
Off	this one is quite self-explanatory – the heating is off
Auto or Twice	the heating will turn on and off at the times of day you've programmed it to do so
All day or Once	this means the heating will switch on at the time of day you've programmed it to do so, and then will remain on until the end of the day (or the last Off setting of the day)
1 hour or Boost	this will give you a one hour boost of heating, on those extra cold days when you need a bit more warmth!
Advance	this setting moves the timer along to the next On or Off setting in its daily cycle.

How to set a boiler timer

Boilers come in lots of different shapes and sizes. To find out how to use your particular boiler timer, it's always best to refer to your boiler instruction manual. But we can give you a general overview of how most boiler timers work.

The first thing you need to figure out is whether you have a mechanical or digital timer.

Mechanical timers look like a dial, with a traditional clock in the centre. Digital timers have a small screen, like a digital clock.

How to set a mechanical boiler timer

First things first: make sure the time is right. There will be a small clock face on the inside of the dial. Make sure it's showing the correct, current time.

Remember, boiler timers usually use a 24-hour clock, rather than a usual clock face. So, for example, if it's 3.30pm, or 15.30, make sure the arrow is pointing halfway between the 15 and the 16.

Next, you need to tell the boiler what times you would like the heating to turn on. To do this, use the small plastic tabs that line the outside of the dial. These may look like little pins, or switches.

Each one of these tabs represents 15 minutes of time. Simply push the tabs in to align with the times you would like the heating to be on. Some boilers will need you to push the tabs, or pins, towards the clock face. On other boilers, you might need to push them the opposite way. Check your boiler manual, to be sure.

It's a good idea to choose times when everyone is likely to be home, and most in need of warmth. It's also wise to set the boiler to come on around 30 minutes before you will need hot water, as this gives it enough time to fully warm up. For example, you could push the tabs in between 7am and 9am, and then again between 6pm and 8pm.

Finally, make sure your boiler is not set to simply On or Off, but to a timed setting. On many boilers, this may be represented by a small clock face symbol.

So, to summarise: Set the boiler clock to the right time, Push in the tabs to mark the times of day when you want the heating to come on, Make sure the boiler is on a 'timed' setting.

That's it! It's not as complicated as it may seem.

How to set a digital boiler timer

With digital timers, as with mechanical timers, it's important to first check that your boiler is showing the correct time.

There should be an option on your timer that says Set time, Set clock, or similar. Use this and the arrow keys to make sure your digital timer is showing the correct time of day.

Next, there should be a button labelled Set, Program, or something similar, which will allow you to set when you want your heating to come on. Again, use the arrow keys to cycle through the days of the week and times.

Some boilers will need you to individually program each day of the week. Others allow you to add the same setting to every day, or to weekdays or weekends. Check your boiler manual for more specific guidance.

First you'll need to add the time you want the heating to turn on. Then, you'll be asked to add the time you want it to turn off. Some boilers will let you set multiple timings in a day. Check your boiler manual, to find out how to do this.

Finally, hit the button marked Set or Run, to confirm your changes.

So to summarise: Set your boiler clock to the correct time, Select Set time or Set clock (note: it may be called something different on your boiler), Choose when you'd like your heating to be on, by using the arrow keys to select days and times, Hit Set or Run to confirm your settings. Job done.