

Writing Sample | Consumer Education

The Energy Savings I Almost Missed

Audience: Homeowners and consumers interested in sustainability, clean energy, and reducing household expenses.

Purpose: Translate a complex utility pricing program into an engaging, easy-to-understand story that helps readers make informed decisions and save money.

Role: Sole writer, editor, and publisher.

Outcome: Published as part of an ongoing editorial platform focused on sustainability, climate awareness, and consumer education.

The following is the complete article as originally published.

The Energy Savings I Almost Missed

How Time-of-Use Rates Helped Me Cut My Electric Bill

This summer has been brutally hot. For the past two months I've opened my electric bill with the same nervous look as all the men anxiously waiting to hear Maury Povich tell them they are NOT the father. I knew my electric usage had stayed about the same, but my bill kept going up. And not by a few dollars. I'm talking hundreds.

I couldn't understand it.

I'm an eco-warrior who turns off lights, buys Energy Star appliances, only runs them when they're full, and even unplugs things I'm not using to avoid phantom electricity. (Yes, phantom electricity is a real thing. Sometimes it's called vampire energy.)

So all kidding aside, if I wasn't using more electricity, why was my bill going through my solar panel-covered roof?

Well, my friends, after a little investigating, it turns out that, much like my dating failures in the '90s, the problem wasn't me...it was them.

Somewhere between my mailbox and inbox, my electric company announced a rate increase that I completely missed.

As you probably know by now, I'm a bit of a talker (or typer), so I called my electric company looking for answers. After patiently listening to my confused rant, the customer service representative, Donna, asked me a simple question:

"Have you ever heard of Time-of-Use rates?"

I hadn't.

Welcome to the wonderful world of Time-of-Use (TOU) pricing.

Here on Long Island, my electric company gives customers the option to pay a lower rate for electricity used between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Think of it like riding the train during peak and off-peak hours. When demand for electricity is lower, the price is lower too.

Since I already charge my electric vehicle overnight, I was immediately saving money. Then I started running the dishwasher and doing laundry during those same hours. I didn't buy new appliances. I didn't install new technology. I simply shifted when I used the electricity I was already consuming.

Your options will vary depending on where you live and which utility serves your area, but it's absolutely worth checking to see if a Time-of-Use plan is available. A quick phone call could end up saving you a surprising amount of money.

It also reminded me of something bigger.

We spend a lot of time looking for the next gadget that's going to lower our electric bill or shrink our carbon footprint. Sometimes the biggest savings don't come from buying something new. They come from understanding the system you're already part of.

One phone call changed the way I think about my electricity use, saved me money every month, and made better use of the energy I was already consuming.

Turns out the best money-saving tip I found all summer came from a 15-minute chat with Donna at the electric company.

Sometimes living a little cleaner isn't about doing more.
It's simply about knowing when.