

# What's in a Water Bill?



## Low Income Household Water Assistance Program

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the average American uses 82 gallons of water a day in their home – that's almost 30,000 gallons a year. With the cost of water going up, it is important to understand how a bill is calculated. Whether you receive a water bill monthly, bi-monthly, or twice a year, most households see similar information on their bills.

### Fixed Charges

These are flat rates charged each period that do not change with water usage. They primarily cover operating costs for the utility. This can include categories such as customer services, repairs, meter reading, account maintenance, system infrastructure upgrades, and administrative costs. When looking at your bill, you might see charges with labels such as:

- Water Service Charge
- Base Facility Charge
- Infrastructure Investment Fee
- Base Charge
- Account Maintenance Fee
- Environment/Pollution Charge

### Variable Usage Charges

These are costs associated with the amount of water a household uses each billing period. These charges can change from bill to bill. This portion of the bill covers costs such as delivery, supply, and treatment of water. Utilities may charge per gallon, per 1,000 gallons, or per 100 cubic feet (748 gallons). Additionally, each unit of water may not be priced the same. Five types of usage pricing are explained below.



#### Flat Rate

All units of water cost the same.



#### Increasing Block Rate

Households are charged more per unit as water usage increases. For example, the first ten units used may cost \$5/unit, the next ten units consumed may cost \$7/unit, and any additional units consumed may cost \$9/unit.



#### Declining Block Rate

Households are charged less per unit as water usage increases. Declining block rates are common in areas where there are many commercial users and water is more plentiful.



#### Seasonal

The charge per unit of water used changes depending on the time of year. Some utilities opt to charge higher rates in the summer to encourage conservation, while others charge lower rates for wastewater in the summer because less of the water household use goes into the sewer system.



#### Water Budget

Households are given a water budget based on the size and type (single-family house, multi-family unit, apartment, etc.) of their home. The cost per unit of water increases if the household goes above the budget they are given.

**For more information and to get help paying your water bill, visit [waterhelp.info](http://waterhelp.info)**