



My Account

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SCENARIO

You go to your utility's website to access your account information and find out what you can accomplish through the secure portion of the site. If you have login access, log in.

The My Account feature—the landing page for a website's secure self-service offerings—is often the first page that customers see after logging in. This page gives customers access to their account information and available online transactions. For customers who have registered with their utility's site (about half of the residential customers who have visited it), this page is often the first content page they look at.

Our reviewers logged in to utility websites for which we had account access and looked for a landing page that consolidated available self-service tasks. They reviewed the ease of navigating to and around the secure portion of the website as well as the extent of information and services that each site offered.

Key findings	
Percentage of sites supporting	71
Average time to find (seconds)	13
Median time to find (seconds)	6
Average usability rating	3.0

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BEST EXAMPLES

The best My Account features we found are shown here. Click each company name to see a screenshot of its feature.

Georgia Power

Home | Site Map | Contact Us

GEORGIA POWER
A SOUTHERN COMPANY

Welcome [redacted]

Service Address: [redacted]

User ID: [redacted] [Help](#) | [Log Out](#)

Available Accounts: [Edit](#)
[redacted] - Home Test

Residential
Inside My Account
[My Account Home](#)
[My Account List](#)
[My Contact Information](#)
Payments
[Pay Bill](#)
[Auto Pay](#)
[Payment History](#)
[My Payment Accounts](#)
[Payment Arrangements](#)
[Payment Options](#)
Billing

Pay Bill [View/Print Bill](#)

Pay on Account	16149-17048
Service Period	11/17/2010 - 12/16/2010
Total Amount Billed(Bill Details)	\$32.94
Payment(s)	-\$32.94
Total Due (pending)	\$0.00
PLEASE PAY BY	01/05/2011

Current Account Settings

Billing & Payment Settings
Bill Delivery: Paperless w/ Reminder - [Edit](#)
Payment Method: Standard Payment
Billing Program: Standard Billing

Available Services
[Auto Pay](#) [Budget Billing](#)
[FlatBill](#) [Senior Citizen Discount](#)

[View entire image](#)

KCP&L

KCP&L
energizing life

Log Out [redacted] [edit] [edit]

My Account Info
Welcome back, [redacted] Wednesday Jan 19, 2011

AccountLink

- My Account Info
- Pay My Bill
- My Energy
- Energy Analyzer
- Personal Profile
- Email Options
- Contact Us

Account Status

[redacted] [Add Account](#)
[Pay Bill](#) [Go Paperless!](#)

Account Summary

Amount Due by Due Date	\$0.00	Pay Bill
kWH Usage	1617	My Usage
Date Due	01/13/11	View Bill
Service Period	11/17/10 - 12/22/10	View Detail
Last Payment	01/05/11 - \$138.30	View Transactions

Payments

- Payment History
- Update Bank Info
- Enroll in Auto Pay

Service Options

- Stop Service
- Start Service

Energy Tools

- Compare Bills
- Daily Usage
- Energy Analyzer
- Energy Efficiency

Billing

- View Bills
- View Bill Inserts
- Paperless Billing
- Transaction History
- View Bill Details

[View entire image](#)

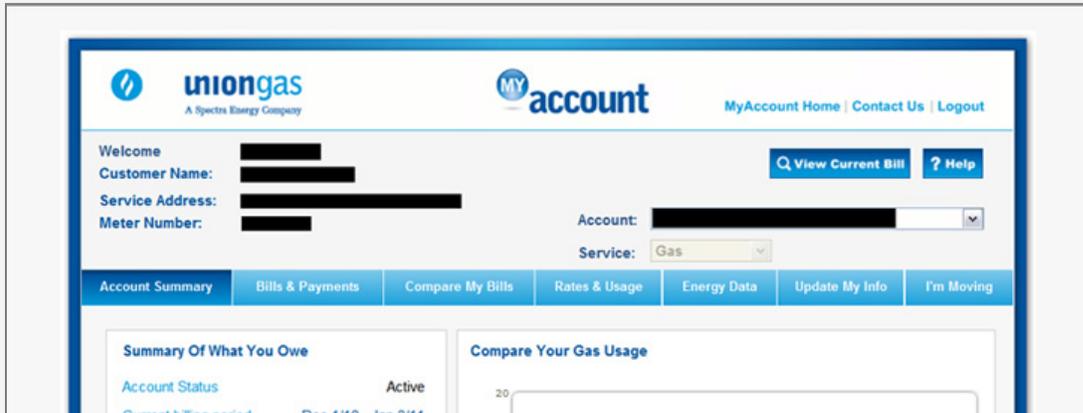
Peoples Gas (Illinois)

The screenshot shows the Peoples Gas website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with "Contact Us", "Welcome, [redacted]", and "Log out" buttons. The main header includes the Peoples Gas logo and the tagline "Delivering safe, clean and reliable natural gas to the City of Chicago". Below this, there are tabs for "My Account", "For Homes", "For Businesses", and "Company & Community". The "My Account" tab is active, leading to the "Account Summary" page. The page features a left sidebar with various account management options like "View Payment History", "View Bill History", and "Update My Billing Address". The main content area displays the "Account Summary" for a specific account, showing a bill for 01/11/2011 for \$66.00 and a current amount due of \$66.00 by 02/02/2011. A "My Profile" section on the right shows fields for Name, Username, E-mail, and Phone, with options to update the profile or change the password. A "View entire image" button is located at the bottom right of the screenshot.

TXU Energy

The screenshot shows the TXU Energy website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with "English", "Español", and "Sign Out" buttons. The main header includes the TXU Energy logo and the tagline "Delivering safe, clean and reliable natural gas to the City of Chicago". Below this, there are tabs for "Manage MyAccount", "Plans & Offers", "Energy Savings Solutions", and "Get Help". The "Manage MyAccount" tab is active, leading to the "Account Summary" page. The page features a top navigation bar with "English", "Español", and "Sign Out" buttons. The main content area displays the "Account Summary" for a specific account, showing a bill for 01/29/11 for \$540.38 and a current amount due of \$540.38 by 02/02/2011. A "My Plans and Products" section on the right shows the "MarketEdge" plan. A "View entire image" button is located at the bottom right of the screenshot.

Union Gas Limited



[View entire image](#)

ANALYSIS

Two of the primary reasons customers log in to their online utility account are to find out their account balance and to pay their bill. Yet self-service on the web has moved beyond allowing customers to conduct only these simple, straightforward transactions. Customers now expect to view an electronic version of their bill, their billing and payment history, and a graphical display of their energy consumption over time. They want to be able to update their account information and sign up for programs. And they want this online experience to be user-friendly and functional. Many utilities have risen to this challenge and have designed a My Account feature that is easy to get to, that offers a variety of self-service functions and helpful information, and that presents all of it in an appealing format that customers want to use.

Our reviewers were able to find the My Account feature at all but one of the 72 sites for which we had account access. They were happy when they could log in from a Google sitelink or from the utility's home page. The average time to find the My Account feature was a mere 13 seconds, which is fairly fast to navigate to a secure portion of a website. One possible explanation for this speed is that reviewers increasingly were able to find a login link directly from the Google sitelinks or from the utility's home page. Sites that lacked a clear navigation path to the secure portion of the site received lower ratings. Reviewers' navigation paths to this feature varied, but generally were:

Google sitelinks > Login > My Account

Google > Home Page > Login > My Account

Once they had logged in, reviewers expected to find a landing page that was personalized and welcoming. At a minimum, they also wanted to see their account balance, bill due date, and a link to pay their bill on this first page. Seeing information presented in an organized and interesting layout that's not "boring"—that is, not dated-looking and static—was also important to the reviewers. Sites that offered relevant graphics and charts showing account trends or other analyzer tools were well-regarded. The reviewers were excited when sites offered a broad range of online services through the My Account feature; sites that offered minimal information were perceived as poor or average at best.

Reviewers were frustrated when the navigation on the secure portion of the site was confusing, when they couldn't tell if they were logged in, or when they were inadvertently logged out. Utilities can overcome these issues by ensuring that there are clear paths for customers to explore all the sections of the secure site, breadcrumbs to let them know where they are, and a link to log out on each page.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Here are some do's and don'ts to consider, based on our reviewers' findings.

How to Excel

- Allow customers to log in directly from the Google sitelinks or the home page
- Show the account balance and bill due date on a landing page immediately after login
- Ensure that your site appears secure, allowing customers to feel comfortable conducting transactions
- Personalize the page; welcome the user by his or her first name
- Use colorful graphs or charts to convey meaningful energy use and billing history information
- Keep layout organized and modern-looking
- Be sure that a logout function is available on all pages of the secure site
- Provide links to a variety of online services beyond payment and billing options, such as service requests or energy-saving tips and tools

Pitfalls to Avoid

- Forcing customers to click several links to find the information they're looking for because the page immediately after login shows only minimal information
- Using confusing or dead-end navigation that forces customers to use the Back button
- Not establishing a clear path to log in and access My Account from the Home Page
- A cluttered or dated and uninspired layout
- Offering few or no online services beyond an account balance

You can also download a [checklist](#) (PDF) that combines all of our Design Guide advice on How to Excel and Pitfalls to Avoid into one comprehensive list.

REVIEWERS' COMMENTS

Positive comments

- The most important information, such as how much I owe and when it is due, is clearly marked. The breakdown of how my home uses energy is pretty nifty.
- I especially liked that the site was so personalized and welcomed me by name.
- The coolest feature of this main page was a comparison chart showing how the customer's use compared to other, similar homes in their area as well as if they had decreased or increased certain energy uses from the past bill.
- One unique feature I had never seen before was that today's and tomorrow's weather was presented on the My Account page. Touches like this made the page seem much more personal and made what could have been a boring power website into something informative and current.

Negative comments

- I wish I could have done and seen more, all from one central page, without having to guess what clicking a link would allow you to do. The layout could be consolidated and give more details immediately after logging in to make the account section much better.
- I can't find anything on my usage history or payment history without opening up each bill individually. I would rather not pore over PDF files, so I feel like more information should be available directly on the website.
- This is not a page I would visit often because it wasn't engaging or dynamic. I would only use this page to pay or view my bill.

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