

Boiler Not Working? Check This First

By Steven Duval — Retired Gas Safe Registered Engineer, 50 years' trade experience

Before you pick up the phone and call an engineer out, run through this checklist. In my 50 years in the trade, a surprising number of call-outs turned out to be one of these simple things — saving you the cost and wait of an engineer visit.

Stay within your limits

This checklist covers simple, safe checks only. Never remove your boiler's casing or attempt to work on any gas component yourself — that's illegal unless you're Gas Safe registered, and it can be dangerous.

Check the Power Supply First

- ☐ **Is the boiler getting power at all?**
Check for any lights or display on the boiler itself. No lights at all often means no power reaching it.
- ☐ **Check the isolation switch**
Most boilers have a power switch nearby, sometimes on the wall or under a worktop. Check it hasn't been knocked off by something as simple as an object placed in front of it.
- ☐ **Check the fuse**
If the boiler has a fused spur (a switch with a small fuse inside), check the fuse hasn't blown.
- ☐ **Check your consumer unit (fuse box)**
See if a breaker relating to the boiler has tripped, and if so, reset it once. If it trips again immediately, stop and call an engineer.

Check the Basics on the Boiler

- ☐ **Water pressure**
Most boilers have a pressure gauge, ideally reading between 1 and 1.5 bar when cold. Too low is a very common, simple cause of a boiler cutting out.
- ☐ **Thermostat setting**
Check the room thermostat and boiler temperature dial are both turned up enough to call for heat.
- ☐ **Timer or programmer**
Confirm the programmer is set to "on" for the current time, and the clock itself shows the correct time.
- ☐ **Frozen condensate pipe**
In freezing weather, the external condensate pipe can freeze and block, stopping the boiler from firing. If safe to reach, check if it's visibly frozen — this is common and often self-resolves once it thaws.

Signs You Should Call an Engineer Straight Away

- ☐ **Any smell of gas**
Do not investigate further. Turn off the gas supply if you can do so safely, ventilate the area, and call the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999.

**A lazy yellow or orange flame**

Rather than a crisp blue flame, this can indicate a dangerous combustion problem.

**Persistent fault codes**

If a fault code reappears after resetting the boiler once, don't keep resetting it repeatedly — call an engineer.

**Black marks or soot near the boiler or flue**

This can indicate incomplete combustion, which needs a professional inspection.

Worried about carbon monoxide?

If you or anyone in the property has headaches, dizziness, or nausea that seems linked to the boiler running, treat this seriously. See our separate Carbon Monoxide Checklist for exactly what to do.