How To Read Your Water Meter And Use It To Measure Leaks

If you have a water meter you can check your plumbing system for undetected leaks by following these easy steps:

- Find the water meter. They're often located in the front yard near the street.
- Turn off all running water and water-using appliances, and don't flush the toilet.
- Read the dial(s) and record the reading.
- After 15 to 20 minutes, recheck the meter.
- If no water has been turned on or used and the reading has changed, a leak is occurring. The rate (gallons per minute) of the leak can be determined by dividing the number of gallons by the elapsed time. Check all toilets for silent leaks by testing them with food coloring. If the leak can't be found and fixed, you should call a plumber.

Water meters aren't all alike. The Type A Meter shown below is the most common type in use:

Reading A Type A Meter

A Type A Meter should be read like the odometer (mileage counter) on a car. The example meter reads 765400 (add 0 because each unit = 10 gallons). If the reading were recorded and a week later the meter read 766500, then 1,100 gallons of water would have been used during the week. Based on the example meter, the reading on the monthly bill should show 765 if the utility company charges to the nearest thousand gallons used.

A lot more water comes out of a faucet than we realize:

- A tiny drop of water can add up to 15 gallons a day;
- A stream 1/32nd of an inch loses 25 gallons a day;
- A stream 1/16th of an inch loses 100 gallons a day;
- A stream 1/8th of an inch loses 400 gallons a day;
- A stream 1/4th of an inch loses 1,600 gallons a day;
- A stream 1/2 of an inch loses 6,400 gallons a day.

Water Leak Conversion Table

Amount leaked in 30 minutes	= Gallons per month
1 cup	= 90 gallons
1 pint	= 180 gallons
1 quart	= 360 gallons
1/2 gallon	= 720 gallons
1 gallon	= 1,440 gallons