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The Luxury Look for Less

► Best & worst kitchen counters, flooring, ranges, refrigerators, dishwashers, sinks & more

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What you'll save

\$2,900 Buy a Frigidaire Gallery **gas range** instead of one from Blue Star to save this much and get better performance.

\$240 Check your **credit reports** with free services rather than pay a service and you would save this much each year.

\$101 Book a **hotel room** through Hotwire instead of a regular travel site and you could save this much on a night's stay.

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Coming in August

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Who we are

Consumer Reports

is the world's largest independent consumer-product-testing organization. We also survey millions of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We're based in Yonkers, N.Y., and are a nonprofit organization.

What we do We buy all the products we rate.

What we don't do We don't accept paid advertising; we get our money mainly through subscriptions and donations. We don't accept free test samples from manufacturers. And we don't allow our name or content to be used for any promotional purposes.

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- To send a letter to the editor, go to ConsumerReports.org/lettertoeditor.
- For news tips and story ideas, go to ConsumerReports.org/tips.
- E-mail submissions for Selling It to SellingIt@cro.consumer.org.
- For subscription information, go to ConsumerReports.org/magazine or call 800-666-5261. See page 65 for more details.

Ratings We rate products using these symbols:

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

✓ CR Best Buy Products with this icon offer the best combination of performance and price.

✓ Recommended product Models with this designation perform well and stand out for reasons we note.

✓ Recommended car These tested well, are reliable, and performed adequately if crash-tested or included in a federal rollover test.

✗ Don't Buy We label products with this icon when we judge them to be safety risks or to have serious performance problems.

ON YOUR MIND

Food for thought

In "Best & Worst Supermarkets" (May 2012), you should have pointed out that freshness dates for dairy and baked goods can vary hugely—often by days and sometimes weeks. You have to read the dates and be prepared to reach to the back, where you'll usually find the fresher goods.

—Deborah Russell Scarsdale, NY

Cost of college

"Student Debt: Your Threat" (May 2012) begs the question, Why are college tuition and fees skyrocketing? The once-revered degree is now merely an invoice for outrageous salaries and benefits. Hopefully your focus on the true ramifications of this will spark the dialogue needed to change things.

—Robert Pfeiffer Buffalo, NY



Under pressure

Thank you for writing "Keep Up the Pressure" (May 2012). I didn't realize that tire pressure gauges could go bad. You should mention to use the tire pressure decal located on most vehicle doorjamb for correct pressure, rather than that which is noted on the side of the tire.

—Frank Gleason Fort Myers, FL

Finding Fido

Your review of Tagg Pet Tracker ("How to Track a Lost Pet," Up Front, May 2012) omitted a drawback in its design: The device requires developed land—street names and house numbers—to pinpoint your pet's location.

—Linda Ballon Alpharetta, GA

Editor's note That is true for the text messages and for the text displayed in the description field of the e-mail, Web, and smart-phone apps. But all except text messages pinpoint the location visually using satellite images or maps. The bottom line for those services is that you need a smart phone to use the Tagg or Garmin devices to their fullest, especially if you intend to go into the field to track down your pet.

Don't go the extra yard

"The Slacker's Guide to a Great Lawn" (May 2012) left out one of the best options for homeowners: Reduce the size of your lawn and the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

—Frances Cerra Whittelsey Huntington, NY

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO

ConsumerReports.org/lettertoeeditor.

Ask our experts

Q Though I carry complete auto coverage, including a million-dollar umbrella rider, my insurance company requires me to carry uninsured-motorist coverage. Do all insurers require this, and if not, can I opt out of this extra charge?

—Bob Adams Portland, OR

Roughly one in seven drivers on the road are uninsured, according to a 2011 study by the Insurance Research Council. If you're hurt in an accident with an uninsured driver, this coverage pays expenses that would normally be paid by the other person's insurer. Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia require auto policyholders to carry uninsured- or underinsured-motorist coverage. In Oregon uninsured-motorist coverage of \$25,000 per person and \$50,000 per accident for bodily injury to you and your passengers is mandatory.

Q Are built-in tire pressure gauges on cars reliable?

—John Essay New York

Almost all built-in systems use wheel sensors to directly measure tire pressure. When the pressure drops below 25 percent of the recommended cold pressure, you'll see a warning light. It's a reliable system for alerting you to pressure losses, but it's no substitute for doing a monthly tire pressure check.

Q I use an acrylic cutting board to chop food, and I put it in the dishwasher to clean it. Can food particles or bacteria stay on the board even after that?

—Jon Sitton Sugar Land, TX

The dishwasher is a good place to clean acrylic



CLEAN SLICE

Cutting boards should occasionally be disinfected.

cutting boards, especially after raw meat preparation, because the heat of the dishwasher water can kill most microorganisms. Although acrylic isn't porous, cut marks can make grooves where bacteria can hide. Consider occasionally disinfecting your cutting boards with hydrogen peroxide or 10 percent bleach solution (leave on for at least 10 minutes), rinse thoroughly, and dry.

Q I have a home equity line of credit.

How is my credit affected if my balance is zero for a long or even a short period of time?

—Andy Pretz Middleburg, PA

The amount of time your balance has been \$0 is meaningless to your credit score, says John Ulzheimer, president of consumer education at Smartcredit.com. Credit scores do not have a memory and can't see how long your balance has been \$0 or any other amount. The

good news for you is that having no balance on your credit line means you're not paying interest. And it might mean that the entire line is still intact. You should confirm that with your lender.

Q My husband recently passed away. Should I contact the three credit reporting agencies or is it enough to let just the credit cards, banks, etc., know?

—Phyllis Koson Brook Park, OH

The risk of identity theft doesn't end with death. The Identity Theft Resource Center recommends that you contact the three major credit reporting bureaus. And you should request a copy of your husband's credit report from each to help you find any active credit accounts that you need to close.

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO

ConsumerReports.org/askourexperts.

This page highlights efforts of Consumers Union, the policy and action arm of Consumer Reports, to improve the marketplace.

Web watch

Feeling cyber-insecure? Protect your gigabytes with help found at onguardonline.gov.

The new website, managed by the Federal Trade Commission, is a one-stop resource for online security, with practical advice and tools to avoid Internet scams, secure your computer, and protect your kids online. Tutorials include turning on your router's encryption and restricting access to your wireless network.



ON THE RECORD

'We are turning cows into cannibals, the practice that started the mad cow problem in the first place.'

—MICHAEL HANSEN, senior scientist at Consumer Reports, on giving cows feed that contains poultry litter, cattle brains, and blood. A cow in California tested positive for mad cow disease in April.

8.2%

That's the frighteningly low percentage of adults 19 to 64 in the U.S. who have had the recommended Tdap vaccine for tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (whooping cough). The national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults get a Tdap vaccine no matter when they got their last tetanus shot.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The real money deal

Having a choice is great, but making a choice can be a bear, especially when the wrong decision can jolt your finances. When you research a mortgage, a credit card, or a college loan, for example, you need to know that the information you find is straightforward.

When the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau opened a year ago, things got a great deal easier for consumers. Here are a few ways the agency is helping us:

Know before you owe

The CFPB starts with the belief that people deserve clear, honest information. Its "Know Before You Owe" project aims to present the true costs and risks of a variety of types of loans.

The agency has asked the public for its opinion of proposed versions of mortgage-disclosure forms, credit-card agreements, and most recently, student-loan information. Tens of thousands of consumers and industry reps have weighed in and are helping to shape the final forms.

Military disservice

It's not only the cost of college that interests the CFPB but also the value, so the agency is looking at questionable practices at for-profit colleges. They're the ones that run misleading and manipulative marketing campaigns on late-night TV and elsewhere.

The 15 largest publicly traded companies that own those colleges spend \$13 billion a year wooing students, especially military men and women and their GI Bill and Armed Forces Tuition Assistance benefits.

But the colleges' graduation rates are depressingly low, and for those students who get a degree, the likelihood of landing a good job is smaller than it is for graduates of less expensive, better public colleges.

That's especially galling because \$3.7 billion of taxpayer money in 2009 went to for-profit colleges in the form of military education benefits. The abuses have led to investigations by the Senate and the Government Accountability Office. Submit complaints about financial products at consumerfinance.gov.



Jim Guest
JIM GUEST
President

WHERE WE STAND

Overfilling the bill

THE ISSUE New regulations that help protect landline-phone customers from unauthorized charges don't cover wireless or Internet phones.

OUR TAKE Slipping unauthorized third-party charges onto your telephone bill, or "cramming," costs Americans millions of dollars each year, the Federal Communications Commission says. But the charges are small and confusing, so only 5 percent of customers catch them.

The FCC recently passed rules requiring telephone companies

to give landline customers more information about third-party charges on their bills. But those protections don't apply to wireless or Internet (VoIP) services.

Consumers are rapidly dropping traditional wired phones for wireless and online options, so telecom companies have plenty of opportunity to keep slipping unauthorized charges onto our bills.

The FCC has left the door open for stronger rules but has yet to act. We believe all consumers should be protected from cramming, regardless of what kind of phone they use.



Up front

Tips, trends, everyday products



Fees skim big bucks from 401(k)s

Mutual fund fees in 401(k) plans can look tiny—a median of 1 percent of assets per year, says financial-data provider Morningstar. But over a lifetime of saving, they can really scramble your nest egg. A recent study by Demos, a research and advocacy group, found that an American household of two median-income earners will pay, on average, almost \$155,000 in 401(k) fees over 40 years. Yes, you read that right.

“This household could have bought a house with the amount they paid in fees,” the report notes. And because mutual funds in 401(k)s take fees off the top before reporting rates of return and share prices, “account holders generally have no inkling how much all of this costs them.”

Compare, for example, the net expense ratios—operating costs—of ING Thornburg Value Portfolio Advisor Class with those of Nationwide S&P Index Institutional Class. Morningstar says both funds benchmark the same financial index. But the ING fund charges \$13.90 per \$1,000 invested annually while Nationwide charges \$2. Growing

at 9 percent annually over 20 years, \$10,000 invested with Nationwide would grow to \$53,847, compared with just \$42,358 with ING, a difference of \$11,489.

Net expense ratios are only part of the picture. Trading fees could add 1 percent to what you pay, Demos says.

High expenses can weaken even funds with above-average returns. A 2010 Morningstar study found that low-cost mutual funds consistently performed better than high-cost funds, regardless of asset class or time period.

What to look for

If you have a 401(k) plan, look this summer for correspondence spelling out mutual fund expenses. By Aug. 30, thanks to a new Department of Labor rule, all 401(k) plans must give participants an easy-to-follow explanation of each fund’s average annual returns over one, five, and 10 years; the comparable returns of a benchmark fund; and average annual operating costs as a percentage of assets and as a dollar figure per \$1,000 invested. The goal of providing that uniform data is to permit apples-to-apples comparisons. Check your quarterly statements, too. Other tips:

- Within each asset class (large-cap, small-cap, international), replace higher-

cost funds with lower-cost funds that have comparable portfolios. Consider index funds, which simply mirror the portfolios of broad market indices such as the Standard and Poor’s 500. Managers don’t need to do a lot of research to pick index portfolios, so costs are low.

- If you want more low-cost 401(k) funds in your plan, arm yourself with comparisons and join other plan participants in asking trustees to offer those choices.

- Agitate for your plan to switch to a less costly share class of the same fund. Differences can be significant: Pimco Total Return bond fund, for instance, has an expense ratio of 0.46 percent for its institutional shares, compared with 1.15 percent for its retirement-class shares.

- If your plan’s choices are pricey and unlikely to change, invest the minimum needed for the full company match (typically 6 percent of your gross income, for a 3 percent match). Then put other savings in a Roth IRA composed of low-cost funds or in a traditional IRA.

- If you’re 59½ or older, you may be able to apply through your employer for an “in service nonhardship withdrawal” and roll over part of your 401(k) balance to a traditional IRA with more choices. Read the fine print for restrictions and penalties.

■ DID YOU KNOW?

You can compare how expenses of two or more funds affect long-term performance with the free Fund Analyzer sponsored by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority at apps.finra.org/fundanalyzer/1/fa.aspx.



Just desserts: Best frozen treats

“**Good Humor**” may conjure happy memories of summer days when you were a kid. But that was then. Our latest tests of frozen treats found that the dark-chocolate Good Humor bars sold in stores have a thin, waxy, crumbly coating over ice cream with flavors of artificial vanilla and a hint of wooden stick. Our trained tasters found a bunch of better options among 21 strawberry fruit bars, chocolate-covered ice cream bars, and ice cream sandwiches.

Taste. The best have the flavors of real fruit, vanilla, or chocolate. The lower-rated have drawbacks such as artificial-tasting flavors and gummy or chalky texture.

• **Fruit bars.** 365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods) is excellent, with large chunks of fruit and a big, fresh-strawberry flavor. Whole Fruit, Dreyer's/Edy's, and Blue Bell are very good, with a nice fruit flavor, though they're slightly gummy.

How did dairy-free fare?

So Delicious Dairy Free Vanilla Minis sandwiches aren't so delicious. The innards (organic soy milk is the first ingredient) have a mild artificial-vanilla flavor, and the wafers are soft and sticky. Tofutti Dairy Free Cuties Vanilla sandwiches consist of gummy, artificially flavored innards (corn syrup solids, soy, and tofu) between sticky wafers that taste a little stale.

• **Ice cream bars.** Häagen Dazs and Dove are rich, with strong dairy and vanilla tastes and a flavorful dark-chocolate coating. The Häagen-Dazs ice cream is especially dense; Dove has a thicker chocolate coating. The coating of Julie's Organic has a cocoa note and is slightly chalky.

• **Ice cream sandwiches.** Walgreens Old Fashioned is the only tested sandwich that doesn't taste of artificial flavors or have a gummy texture. Its wafers are soft and cakelike, with a big cocoa flavor.

Nutrition. The fruit bars have 70 to 110 calories and are fat free. (FYI, ice pops we looked at—Popsicle Air Heads—have similar calories ounce for ounce but no fruit.) The sandwiches have 100 to 180 calories and about 1 to 6 grams of fat; the bars top out at 280 calories and 20 grams of fat. The treats have about 10 to 25 grams of sugars. Some sugars, including fructose and lactose (from fruit and milk), are naturally occurring; others are added and make for empty calories. The products with dietetic names—Skinny Cow and Weight Watchers—didn't necessarily have fewer calories and scored lower than most.

Bottom line. Try one of the eight excellent or very good frozen treats. Ice cream bars generally cost slightly more than the other types. Some bars and sandwiches look bigger than others, but most weigh 2 to 3 ounces.



Häagen-Dazs

Walgreens
Old Fashioned

Ratings

☒ Recommended

All tested products In taste order.

Rec.	Product	Per serving		
		Cost	Calories	Fat (g)
STRAWBERRY FRUIT BARS				
EXCELLENT				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods)	\$0.68	110	0
VERY GOOD				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Whole Fruit	0.55	70	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dreyer's/Edy's	0.63	80	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Blue Bell	0.46	70	0
GOOD				
	Weight Watchers	0.87	70	0
	Dole	0.53	90	0
ICE CREAM BARS (dark chocolate over vanilla ice cream)				
EXCELLENT				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Häagen-Dazs	1.27	280	20
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dove	1.28	250	17
VERY GOOD				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Julie's Organic	1.50	260	18
GOOD				
	Klondike	0.53	240	14
	Magnum	1.20	240	17
	Good Humor Dark & Milk*	0.58	170	11
ICE CREAM SANDWICHES (vanilla ice cream inside chocolate wafers)				
VERY GOOD				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Walgreens Old Fashioned	0.50	170	6
GOOD				
	Klondike Classic	0.60	180	4.5
	Great Value (Walmart)	0.25	160	5
	Blue Bunny	0.35	140	3
	Weight Watchers	0.83	140	2
	Klondike 100 Calorie	0.60	100	1.5
	Skinny Cow	0.83	140	1.5

*Has both dark and milk chocolate ice cream bars. We tasted only dark.

TALK THE TALK

Bottled water

▣ **Artesian.** Water obtained from a well that taps a confined aquifer, an underground layer of rock or sand that contains water. Example: Fiji Natural Artesian Water.

▣ **Distilled.** Water that has been boiled and then recondensed from the steam that the boiling produces. Distillation kills microbes and removes minerals, giving water a flat taste. Example: Glacéau Smartwater.

▣ **Mineral.** Groundwater that naturally contains at least 250 parts per million of dissolved solids. All minerals and other trace elements must be present in the water when it emerges at the source. Example: Calistoga.

▣ **P.W.S.** Public water source, also known as municipal water supply, or tap water. Fun fact: Aquafina, one of the top 10 selling domestic brands, used to say "P.W.S." on its label—but changed that in 2007 under pressure from Corporate Accountability International to make clear that the water came from a public supply and not some pristine mountain spring called P.W.S.

▣ **Purified.** Water from any source that has been treated to remove chemicals and pathogens according to standards set by the U.S. Pharmacopoeia. Must contain no more than 10 parts per million of dissolved solids. Distillation, deionization, and reverse



CONSIDER THE SOURCE Artesian, spring, purified, and sparkling waters may be treated differently or come from different places.

osmosis are all purification methods. Examples: Aquafina, Dasani.

▣ **Sparkling.** Water that contains carbon dioxide at an amount equal to what it contained when it emerged from its source. Carbon dioxide lost during the treatment process may be added back. (Carbonated waters such as soda water and seltzer are considered soft drinks, not bottled waters.) Example: Perrier.

▣ **Spring.** Water derived from an underground formation from which water flows naturally to the Earth's surface. Spring water must be collected at the spring or through a borehole tapping the underground formation (aquifer) feeding the spring. Examples: Arrowhead Mountain Spring Water (Nestlé), Evian.

▣ **Other terms.** You may see "glacier water" and "mountain water," but they have no standard definitions.

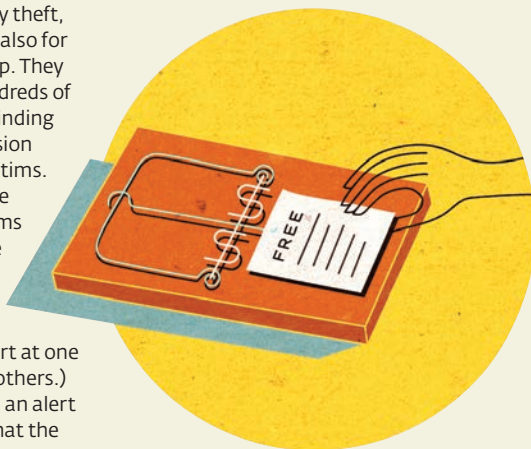
Gotcha! Wanna pay for a 'free' credit report?

If you've been the victim of identity theft, watch out—not just for the thief but also for the credit bureaus you turn to for help. They might use your bad luck to pitch hundreds of dollars a year in services. That's one finding from a recent Federal Trade Commission study of almost 700 identity-theft victims.

Under the federal Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003, victims of identity theft may ask one or more of the three major credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) to place a free fraud alert on their credit report. (When you place an alert at one bureau, it must be forwarded to the others.) Lenders who pull a credit report with an alert typically take extra steps to ensure that the credit applicant is not an imposter.

When victims file a fraud alert, they can also request a free copy of their full credit report to check for fraudulent accounts. (That report is in addition to the free report to which consumers are entitled each year, available at annualcreditreport.com.)

But some victims in the FTC study said



that credit-bureau representatives pressured them to pay for a credit report or additional services such as credit monitoring and identity-theft protection. The cost: about \$130 to \$240 a year. In recent years the commission has punished some purveyors of ID-protection services, including Experian's

FreeCreditReport.com, for deceptive sales practices and misleading claims.

The agency found other gotchas, though it cautioned that it hasn't verified the merit of individual complaints:

- Six percent of victims who requested a fraud alert stated that at least one credit bureau didn't place it.
- Only half of those who asked for a free fraud-alert-related credit report said that they received it.
- About a third of victims disputed information in their credit report, but 29 percent of those said the information was not corrected. Among victims whose erroneous information was corrected, 51 percent said it took two to five tries.
- Just one in five victims invoked their right to block false credit information related to ID theft. Generally, if a person tells authorities about fraudulent info on his or her credit report, credit bureaus must stop showing it. But 27 percent of the victims who tried to have such data blocked said one or more credit bureaus didn't comply.



A CLEAR ISSUE In our tough test in very hard water, some products left glass covered with white film.

Dishwasher detergents: A tarnished reputation?

Our latest Ratings of nonphosphate gels, liquids, packs, pods, powders, and tablets show that a few left dishware sparkling. Many of the rest left food stuck to plates or pots, or caused aluminum to discolor. And if your home is among the more than 50 percent with hard water, take note: In just 20 washes using very hard water, several products allowed glassware to be covered with a

frosty-white film (a residue of minerals) to varying degrees.

Readers started to notice a white buildup on glassware after phosphates were banned from dishwasher detergents two summers ago. (Phosphates helped to control water hardness, according to the American Cleaning Institute, a trade group.) So we added hard-water performance to our Ratings, which changed the rankings of some prod-

ucts. Finish Quantum, top-rated in our last tests, slipped to third place.

There were even differences in removing our cooked-on goo (pudding, peanut butter, cream cheese, and 14 other ingredients painted on dishes in our tough tests). The best detergents left no leftovers; the worst, including eight products rated fair overall, left varying amounts of our mix.

No type of product was best overall, but liquids and gels tended to fall toward the bottom of the Ratings. Most dishwasher detergents now contain enzymes to aid in cleaning, and some have bleach, which may help remove stains like those made by tea. A Design for the Environment (DfE) label identifies products that have been assessed for potential human health and environmental effects.

Bottom line. Finish Powerball Tabs and Cascade Complete All In 1 ActionPacs clean dishes and pots very well and don't leave water spots, white film, or discolored aluminum. Finish Tabs are also a CR Best



SEE OUR TESTS OF DETERGENTS

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for video.



White wines: A lucky 13 make the grade

In search of values for summer sipping, our expert tasters sampled 38 pinot grigios and rieslings, winnowed the field, and wound up with 13 recommended wines, including seven CR Best Buys, one a box from Target. Prices are for a 750-ml bottle or its equivalent.

Pinot grigio

The grape is the same whether called pinot grigio or pinot gris. Pinot is less complex than other varietals, so a higher price is especially unlikely to get a better wine.

The recommended wines are dry, balanced, and light-bodied, with refreshing acidity. They come from all over: Black Swan from Australia, Wine Cube from California, Livio from Italy, Hogue from Washington. The also-rans, under the charts, lack the balance, fruit intensity, or crispness of the best.

Pinots are a good aperitif and pair with many foods, especially goat cheese, veggies and dip, light pasta dishes, poached seafood, sushi and sashimi, and raw oysters.

All the recommended pinots are 2010 except Wine Cube (sold at some Target stores), which lists no vintage.

Bottom line. Black Swan is dry and tart but still ripe and full flavored, with floral and apple notes; Wine Cube has big fruit flavors, including banana and pear. Cavit has ripe fruit and floral notes plus refreshing acidity.

Riesling

Expect varying sweetness plus intense fruit, especially in the sweeter rieslings, whose grapes have spent more time on the vine.

The recommended wines are generally well balanced and moderately complex. The also-rans are less intense or have off-notes. Saint M and Clean Slate are from Germany; the rest, from Washington. All are 2010.

Rieslings can be an aperitif or dessert wine and go well with sweet-and-sour food, rich meats and seafood, and spicy Asian food.

Bottom line. Of the riesling CR Best Buys, Hogue has a mix of intense, ripe, honeyed fruit and is more complex than most; Saint M is a bit sweet, with good acidity and ripe fruit; Chateau Ste. Michelle Harvest Select has nice tropical-fruit notes but could use more acidity; and Clean Slate has crisp acidity with fruit, floral, and herbaceous notes.





Finish Powerball Tabs



Cascade Complete All in 1 ActionPacs

Buy. A detergent sold in a hefty size will probably be cheaper, but those products (including Great Value and Kirkland Signature) didn't clean very well.

Whatever the detergent, you can get cleaner dishes by adding a rinse agent, making sure the water is hot (120° F), separating flatware, and facing dishes' dirty side toward the water jets.

▶ DID YOU KNOW?

It pays to start with the right detergent because getting rid of white film takes some effort. Directions from the American Cleaning Institute: Put 2 cups of white vinegar in a bowl and place it on the dishwasher's bottom rack. Run the machine without detergent, then rerun it with detergent to remove residual vinegar.

Ratings

All tested products In performance order.

☒ CR Best Buy
☒ Recommended

● Excellent
 ● Very good
 ○ Good
 ○ Fair
 ● Poor

Rec.	Product	Cost per load	Type	Overall score	Cleans		Resists		
					Dishes	Pots	Food deposit	Water spots	Film/discoloring
				0 100 P F G V E					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Finish Powerball Tabs	21¢	tablets	78	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cascade Complete All In 1 ActionPacs	29	packs	78	●	○	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Finish Quantum	30	tablets	76	●	●	●	●	○
	Finish Gelpacs	20	gel packs	59	○	●	●	●	●
	Cascade with Dawn ActionPacs	23	packs	57	●	●	●	●	●
	Citra Dish	31	powder	52	○	●	○	●	○
	Great Value (Walmart)	8	powder	50	●	○	○	●	●
	Biokleen	27	powder	48	○	●	○	●	○
	GrabGreen	33	pods	44	●	●	○	●	●
	Method Smarty Dish	26	tablets	44	●	○	○	●	●
	Seventh Generation	21	powder	44	●	○	●	●	●
	Trader Joe's	13	powder	42	●	●	○	●	●
	Finish Powder	10	powder	38	●	●	●	●	○
	Wave 2X Ultra High Performance	22	gel	37	●	○	●	●	●
	Palmolive Eco	5	liquid	36	●	●	●	●	○
	DuoDish	23	gel	36	●	●	●	○	●
	Finish Gel	12	gel	35	●	○	●	○	●
	Sun Light OxiAction	6	powder	35	●	●	●	●	●
	Kirkland Signature (Costco)	7	gel	34	●	●	●	○	●
	The Laundress	15	liquid	28	●	●	●	○	●

Ratings

Very Good products only From 38 tested.

☒ CR Best Buy
☒ Recommended

Rec.	Product	Price
PINOT GRIGIO		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Black Swan Vineyards	\$ 8.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wine Cube (Target)	4.50
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Livio Felluga	24.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hogue	10.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	St. Michael-Eppan	14.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cavit	8.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Banfi San Angelo	17.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tiefenbrunner	14.00

Rated Good: Adelsheim Pinot Gris, \$17; Yellow Tail, \$6; King Estate Signature Pinot Gris, \$16; Ca Montini, \$15.

Rec.	Product	Price
RIESLING		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hogue Late Harvest	\$10.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Saint M	11.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chateau Ste. Michelle & Dr. Loosen Eroica	19.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chateau Ste. Michelle Harvest Select	10.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Clean Slate	10.00

Rated Good: Pacific Rim Organic, \$13; Kung Fu Girl, \$13; Columbia Crest Two Vines, \$8.



▶ CLAIM CHECK

A new way to chill wine?

The claim. "Perfectly chilled wine, every time," says the maker of Corkcicle, a reusable, gel-filled plastic bottle stopper you freeze, then insert in a wine bottle to keep wine tasting its best. (A bucket of ice overchills most wines, damping their flavor.) It costs \$23.

The check. We put Corkcicles in bottles of chilled white wine and unchilled red. In a 68° F room we then charted their temperatures against those of non-Corkcycled wines for 4 hours. We also checked wine temperatures high, low, and in the middle of each bottle.

Bottom line. Perfect? No, but Corkcicles might be useful at a picnic. They were easy to insert and remove, and 20 minutes after insertion, the average white-wine temperature had indeed fallen, by about 2 degrees. (Temperature of the reds had fallen by about 7 degrees.) Temps then began a gradual rise, and they differed from the bottom of bottles to the top, by 4 degrees in white wine. At home, it may be easier to store a bottle in a bucket of cold water and add a little ice as the water warms.



Doctor, businessperson, or both?



John Santa, M.D., M.P.H., an internist, is director of the Consumer Reports Health Ratings Center.

Doctors, like everyone else, have to make money. But how they handle that end of the job says a lot about whether they see themselves mainly as a medical professional, a businessperson, or both. And it can affect the kind of care you get. There's not necessarily a right or a wrong way, but you should be comfortable with your doctor's business practices. Here's what to consider.

1 Is there a drug rep in the waiting room?

The simplest sign that your doctor might have a relationship with a drug company is the presence of a representative in the waiting room. He or she might be toting a suitcase of samples and other freebies, chatting up the office staff, even ordering lunch for everyone—and competing with you for your doctor's time and attention. In some cases, it might go no further than that. (And to be fair, some

doctors allow the visits because they give the free samples to low-income patients.) But to find out whether the relationship goes deeper—a company has paid your doctor for speaking engagements or consulting, for example, go to [Dollars for Docs](http://Dollars-for-docs) (propublica.org/series/dollars-for-docs). It's a project of ProPublica, a nonprofit investigative journalism group that collects publicly reported data on payments from 12 drug companies.

Some health-care systems, including Kaiser Permanente and Veterans Affairs, make it easier for you: They prohibit doctors altogether from having financial relationships with companies that make drugs or medical devices.

2 Are there testing machines on-site?

Having a bone-density scanner or CT, MRI, or X-ray machine in the office could make it more likely that a doctor will order unnecessary tests, since he or she makes money on each one. That's different from testing done at an independent center with a radiologist who has no relationship to your doctor, because there

may be less financial incentive for excessive testing. And prices vary significantly depending on where tests are done, so it makes sense to find out whether you could save money by going to an imaging facility. (For advice on shopping around for lower prices, see our report "That CT Scan Costs How Much?" on page 20.)

3 Does your doctor work for a hospital?

If so, keep an eye on the hospital services he or she orders. They might be priced higher than those elsewhere. And there could be an incentive for excessive or unwarranted testing if, say, the hospital expects your doctor to bring in a certain amount of revenue or order a certain number of tests per year to help cover his or her salary. You should also feel confident that your doctor would refer you to another hospital if it would be in your best interest.

4 Do the charges seem fair?

In the past, people with health insurance often weren't concerned about the cost of the medical care they received. But rising health-care costs have forced many employers to revise their plans, shifting a larger portion of the cost to employees in the form of higher deductibles and co-payments. What's more, prices for doctors' services can vary considerably, even within an insurance company's group of providers. To compare your doctor's fees to others in your region, go to healthcarebluebook.com, which analyzes the payments that providers in the same area accept from insurance companies.

5 How does insurance pay your doctor?

Most use a "fee for service" plan: The more tests and treatments doctors do, the more they're paid. Others, like Kaiser, pay doctors a salary. Newer arrangements offer a "fixed fee" for care provided for a specific illness. Your doctor should be able to explain how your plan pays, which can give you some insight into whether it encourages too much, too little, or just the right amount of care.

DID YOU KNOW?

Drugs to prevent migraines are underused

Many treatments can help prevent migraine headaches, but few people who could benefit from them are actually taking advantage of them. That's according to information from the American Academy of Neurology released in April 2012.

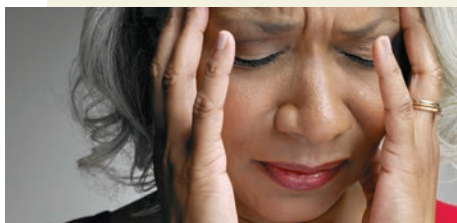
Warding off attacks

Unlike acute treatments, which people take to relieve pain and other symptoms when a migraine strikes, preventive treatments are usually taken daily to reduce the frequency of attacks and lessen their severity and duration. Research

suggests that the drugs could help prevent migraines in about 38 percent of those with the condition. But less than a third take them, the academy says.

Prescription options include the beta-blockers propranolol (Inderal and generic) and timolol (Blocadren and generic), and the antiepileptic drugs topiramate (Topamax and generic) and valproate (Depakote and generic). The academy also says there's good evidence that the herb butterbur can help prevent migraines.

Of course, it's best to prevent migraines without drugs if you can. Effective strategies include avoiding such triggers as alcohol, caffeine, chocolate, and emotional stress. It also helps to stay hydrated. Acupuncture and massage might also provide relief, some research suggests. But if nondrug measures don't help, talk with your doctor about trying preventive medication.



How safe is your pension?

IF YOU'RE COUNTING on a traditional defined-benefit pension, there's reason to worry that you might not get everything you've earned. About 80 percent of the 29,000 private-sector defined-benefit plans insured by the federal Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. have been underfunded by \$740 billion. State and local public employee pensions were recently in a \$1 trillion hole.

Instead of beefing up plan assets, many companies have cut benefits. Employers can change their pension rules going forward using a variety of tactics, including tinkering with benefit formulas so that your eventual payout will be reduced, "freezing" the plan to stop further accruals, or terminating an underfunded plan.

"Vested" pension assets—those that legally become your property after a period of time—are generally safe thanks to federal law. But if the plan is terminated, the PBGC, which itself is \$26 billion in the red, is required to pay vested benefits only up to a certain amount, which varies by the employee's age and the year in which the plan is terminated.

Pensions of government workers aren't covered by the agency but are often protected by state constitutions or laws. Still, 26 states have squeezed benefits for new hires, some other workers, and retirees.

Be prepared for changes

Your retirement planning could be upended by these trends, especially if you're a mid-career or higher-earning employee. Here's how to prepare yourself.

Conduct a pension checkup. Study the summary plan description and annual benefit and funding notices, which your employer should send or make available to you, and its federal 5500 Form, available at freerisa.com. It's a good sign if assets are at least 80 percent of liabilities; below that

is a red flag for potential problems. Also review your company's financial strength, its position in the field, and the outlook for your industry overall.

Assess specific threats. They can range widely depending on your age, how many years until your retirement, and exactly how your benefits are altered. For example, a so-called hard pension freeze, which stops benefit accruals based on job tenure and compensation growth, is worse for mid-career workers, who are denied the added pension kick that late-tenure accruals tend to provide.

Earlier this year, American Airlines said it would freeze the plans of most of its 130,000 employees and retirees after threatening to terminate its pension (underfunded by \$10 billion) and letting the PBGC take it over. Both options ultimately create a freeze, but a takeover would put into effect payout limits that could short-change higher-income beneficiaries. For

plans ended this year, PBGC maximum monthly benefit are \$2,094 for 55-year-old workers and \$4,653 for 65-year-olds.

Get help with gotchas. If you run into trouble collecting your pension from a former employer, get legal help from the U.S. Administration on Aging's Pension Counseling and Information Program (aoa.gov).

Save more now

You can make up for pension cuts by putting more money into a 401(k) plan if your company offers one. Contribute at least what's required to get the maximum employer match, typically 5 or 6 percent of your salary. Many companies provide a more generous match to late-career workers who are affected by pension changes.

You might also consider funding an IRA—either the traditional tax-deductible type or a Roth IRA, which is funded with after-tax money (withdrawals are tax-free if all the conditions are met).



No safety net for retiree health benefits

Though federal law provides some level of protection for your pension, retiree health benefits are a different story. "You have next to no consumer rights," says Paul Fronstin, director of the Health Research and Education Program at the Employee Benefit Research Institute. Employers can reduce or eliminate those benefits if their plan contract allows

such changes, and many employers inserted such language two decades ago.

Costly coverage. Early retirees are usually not eligible for Medicare until 65. Retiree health benefits often fill that void, but if they dry up, you'll have to go without coverage or buy a pricey individual policy, which you might not get if you have a pre-existing

condition and the U.S. Supreme Court finds the Affordable Care Act unconstitutional.

Even if you plan to retire at 65, you should boost savings to cover Medicare premiums, deductibles, co-pays, limits, and exclusions. How much? A married couple should expect to pay \$158,000 to \$271,000 in out-of-pocket health costs after age 65, the EBRI says.



Best rooms, best rates

More than 22,000 readers rate 44 of the nation's biggest hotel chains

I F YOU'RE STAYING at a hotel this summer, you might find that the welcome mat is out. Chains are catching up on long-delayed improvements, freshening rooms, replacing worn mattresses and tattered wallpaper, and updating furnishings. Groceries delivered to your door? Try an upscale Residence Inn. An indoor pool? Even the budget-level Red Roof Inn has them. A butler to draw your bath? OK, that's over the top, but you'll find one at the Ritz-Carlton (and the tub is marble). At more and more hotels, lobbies look a bit like cozy living rooms, wireless Internet is in public areas, and hot breakfasts and evening munchies are on offer. Most hotels even say you can stay free if you have a problem they can't resolve.

But the wooing of guests stops at the price tag. This year, an overnight stay is expected to cost an average of \$107, up 5 percent from 2011, according to lodging analyst PricewaterhouseCoopers. You'll probably have to work harder to land a deal; asking the desk clerk for the best available rate no longer does the trick.

That's where we can help. Through reporting, dickering with clerks, and visiting hotels, we've identified techniques that stretch your lodging dollar. And through our survey of 22,481 subscribers who spent a collective 94,981 nights at 44 chains, we've identified America's best and worst hotels. Among our findings:

- Overall, hotels have improved. In our current survey, 53 percent of readers called

Readers said most budget hotels are no bargain.

check-in and checkout excellent, up from 42 percent in 2006. The numbers for service rose from 37 percent to 44 percent; for upkeep, from 36 percent to 43 percent.

- No hotel chain matched the scores (or price) of the Ritz-Carlton, but satisfaction depends on what you're seeking. Microtel Inn & Suites, an unassuming chain with an average daily rate one-third of what

guests paid at the Ritz, was also outstanding at pleasing its customers. Among the duds: Motel 6, which scored lower than all others for comfort, and Days Inn, Econo Lodge and Americas Best Value Inn, which were among the worst for value.

- Upscale and moderate hotels give a lot of bang for the buck, but most budget hotels earned low scores for value, comfort, service, and upkeep. Some readers thought the bathrooms at the Red Roof Inn, which calls its accommodations "cozy," were a tad too intimate: 13 percent described bathrooms as cramped. Microtel, which topped our Ratings of budget chains for the third time, proves that a budget hotel needn't be second rate. Unlike most hotels in its class, Microtel usually builds new hotels instead of buying and converting old properties from other chains. See page 16 for tales of our reporters' stays at the top- and bottom-rated budget hotels.

- At all price levels, you'll find more suites. Many suite hotels include hot breakfasts and evening socials in the price, along with laundry facilities and a

workout room open around the clock.

• You'll see more boasts about beds: Hyatt has its Grand Bed, Westin its Heavenly Bed, and DoubleTree its Sweet Dreams Sleep Experience. Some hotels sell their bedding and linen collections to the public. A comfy bed is good for business: 10 percent of respondents cited a luxurious bed and linens as an important factor in choosing a hotel.

Hotel hierarchy

The lines between hotel types have blurred because of "amenities creep," the trickle-down of niceties from expensive chains to cheaper ones, but there are basic differences.

At **budget** hotels, expect a hair dryer, radio, safe, TV with a few premium channels, and exercise room. Furnishings tend to be more functional than fashionable. Sample perks: Local calls are free at Motel 6, most Days Inns have free copies of USA Today, and many budget hotels accept pets.

Selecting a **moderate** hotel usually gets you fluffier bedding, more stylish furnishings, better-equipped fitness and business centers, and a free hot breakfast. Internet service is often free—worth noting because Internet service was the second-most-used amenity in our survey, behind parking. Drury Inn offers free long-distance calls, even to Canada and Mexico. Hampton Inn advertises a choice of feather or foam pillows.

Business travelers tend to favor **upscale** hotels, where many rooms have ergonomic chairs and large desks. Crowne Plaza offers "quiet zones" that ban housekeeping and other worker activity Sunday through Thursday from 9 p.m. to 10 a.m. Courtyard by Marriott has fire pits outdoors and workstations in the lobby.

Luxury hotels, usually in big cities and exotic locales, have round-the-clock white-glove service. Expect spas, personal trainers, massage therapists, baby-sitting, and expensive restaurants. Oddly, luxury hotels are most likely to nickel-and-dime guests on basics such as Internet access (usually \$10 to \$20 per day).

Once you've picked a price level, consider whether you've liked the chain before (63 percent of survey respondents said a good previous experience was important in deciding where to stay). And go to the hotel's website, not only to research rates and availability but also to see photos of rooms and amenities, get directions, and scope out local attractions. Check online travel sites such as Travelocity and Expedia or ag-

A surefire way to save

Ads for Priceline's Name Your Own Price option, Hotwire's Hot Rates, and Travelocity's Top Secret Hotels promise discounts of as much as 60 percent off regular room rates. They're called opaque or blind websites: You don't learn the identity of your hotel until after your bid has been accepted (Priceline) or you've agreed to the site's price (Hotwire and Travelocity). The savings are substantial because hoteliers consider the rooms "distressed," meaning that they'd otherwise go unoccupied that night.

To see how much we could save using one of the services, we requested a room at a high-end hotel near Chicago's Magnificent Mile. One of Hotwire's selections seemed good, based on the description, a rating of four and a half out of five stars, its general location, its standard amenities, user reviews (they don't identify the hotel, though Sherlock Holmes might figure it out), and the price: \$133 per night before tax. It turned out to be the boutique James Hotel.

We then backtracked to find a better deal, using every trick in our arsenal. We started by searching BookIt.com, Expedia, and Hotels.com. We also revisited Priceline and Travelocity to see what they charged for rooms at the James on the side of the sites that lets shoppers search for hotels by name. Next, we sniffed out discount and promo codes, contacted AAA, and

► CLOSE-UP

Priceline is unusual because you set your own price. You bid on a hotel in one or more categories in one or more areas and wait a few seconds to see whether you've won. If you don't, you must wait 24 hours to rebid unless you alter your search to include another area or a different level of hotel.



looked for discounts through other affiliations. Whatever we tried, the price was far higher than Hotwire's—about \$230—and didn't budge. We thought we'd hit pay dirt with a rate of \$125 through Affinia Hotels, a chain that has a business affiliation with the James. But the rate was a promotion for travel agents.

We called the hotel's corporate toll-free number, then contacted the hotel itself. The price remained about \$230. Might we get free parking (a \$52 add-on for valet service), a room upgrade for the same price, or a free breakfast? Nope. And if we wanted a \$20 AAA discount, it would be deducted from the standard rate of \$259. The clerk said our \$234 rate was already a discounted price; that rate required payment up front and was nonrefundable.

Bottom line. If you're not loyal to a particular hotel chain and are willing to choose from among a number of brands at a certain price level, consider an opaque site. We've discovered through years of experimenting that they offer some of the lowest rates around, along with enough information about location, amenities, services, and guest feedback for you to make an informed decision. Remember, though, you can't cancel or change a reservation. Opaque travel-site users share strategies, advice, and experiences on several websites. Consult BetterBidding.com, BiddingForTravel.com, and BidLessTravel.com.

gregator sites such as TripAdvisor (it lists accommodations and prices from many travel agencies), along with travel guides.

User reviews can be helpful, and 21 percent of readers consulted them, up from 17 percent in 2009. "They're highly influential and a really important way for travelers to determine how well a hotel performs relative to expectations," says Carroll Rheem, research director at travel-research firm PhoCus Wright. But parse them carefully: A recent Wall Street Journal article noted that some hotels have offered guests incentives to write raves. Consider the number of reviews, Rheem says. The more there are,

the smaller the impact of an oddball review. Check a site's fine print or contact the company to find out who's allowed to write a review. Some sites let anyone comment, whether they've stayed at the hotel or not. Focus on comments about what matters to you, such as the pool or restaurant.

Sneaky fees

Consumers shelled out an estimated \$1.8 billion in hotel fees and surcharges last year, according to Bjorn Hanson, divisional dean of New York University's Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Management. That's the highest amount

since 2008. It's not that hotels are finding new ways to lard on extras; rather, more hotels are using existing ways. "The chains have discovered which ones are most acceptable and what they can get away with," Hanson says. The fancier the hotel, the more likely it is to add fees beyond room occupancy and sales tax. The most common:

Resort. Charged by hotels with hiking trails, golf courses, or tennis courts, the resort fee usually ranges from about \$20 to \$50 per day. It applies whether you use the amenities or not and is very difficult to have removed from your bill. Most resorts automatically add staff tips.

Minibar. Guests expect to pay princely sums for chips, nuts, and candy bars but might be startled to see a minibar "re-stocking" fee of \$2.50 to \$6. Hotels are also doing away with locked minibars, instead displaying overpriced items in an unlocked fridge or in baskets in the open, where they're more difficult to resist.

Early check-in/late departure. Time was, you might talk your way out of paying extra if you arrived early or left late. Then many chains started charging a \$50 penalty or imposed a "day" rate of about 60 percent of the nightly rate. Now more chains charge for a full extra night. To encourage guests to join loyalty programs (usually free), hotels might waive the fee and offer members other perks such as a dedicated, faster check-in/check-out line.

Bag storage. Figure on paying \$1 to \$2 per bag if you arrive early or need to stow luggage after checkout. Joining a loyalty club might let you avoid that fee, too.

Cancellation. Chains routinely require 48 to 72 hours' notice to avoid a charge equal to one night's stay. If you cancel a prepaid stay during a peak period, you could forfeit the entire amount.

Room service. Ten dollars for a croissant is just the start. There might also be a

Cheapest of all: opaque sites such as Hotwire and Priceline.

mandatory tip, often 18 percent, and a \$2.50 to \$5 service, or tray, charge.

Assorted extras. You might pay to use an in-room safe, send a fax, or have a package delivered to your room.

Guide to a great rate

Because 40 percent of hotel rooms are vacant on any given night, bargains remain, whether you're seeking a spa or a no-frills place to crash for the night.

People who plan ahead and don't mind a little uncertainty can take advantage of the cheapest option of all: an opaque site such

as Hotwire or Priceline, where you inquire about a type of room in a certain area and either say how much you're willing to pay or are given a price—and don't find out the hotel's name until you've paid.

But opaque sites aren't everyone's cup of tea. People who like more control over where they stay can call the hotel directly, book through the hotel's website, or use a travel website such as Expedia, Orbitz, or Travelocity. Those sites are less likely to undercut hotel prices now that most major hotels guarantee a rock-bottom rate if you book directly. But there might be other reasons to consider a travel site. "Consumers come to us for a quick and easy way to comparison shop within their price range, read reviews across brands, and check out smaller and independent hotels that we give exposure to," says Joel Frey, a spokesman for Travelocity. In addition, travel sites let you book a hotel along with a flight and a rental car, often at substantial savings over the cost of booking separately.

Whatever way you make your reservation, you'll get the best deal by being flexible. Hotels set rates based on projected demand, and rates rise or fall based on any number of factors: weather, school holidays, the threat of terrorism, higher gas prices, a canceled convention, and when a major sports team qualifies for the playoffs, sending fans scrambling for rooms. Start looking far ahead and nab a room if the price is right. If

Battle of the budget hotels: Microtel vs. Americas Best Value Inn

Our survey found a big gap between the best budget hotel, Microtel Inn & Suites, and cellar-dwellers such as Americas Best Value Inn. To see the differences, we sent one staffer to a Microtel outside of Baltimore and another to the Americas Best Value Inn in Stamford, Conn. Both hotels provided free Internet, an ATM, and continental breakfast. Both rooms were small but well lit and had an iron and an ironing board, a hair dryer, a microwave oven, and a mini fridge.

Microtel Inn & Suites

Price \$66 including tax.

Check-in. The front desk, a narrow counter, is just inside the entrance. No one else is around on a stormy Saturday evening, and check-in takes less than a minute.

Common grounds. The property seems well maintained. The parking lot is full, yet I neither see nor hear anyone. The lobby does



UNDERCOVER GUESTS Reporter Tod Marks visited Microtel; editor Leslie Ware, Americas Best Value.

double duty as the continental breakfast room (bagels, cereal, juice, muffins, and coffee). Three TV sets are tuned to different channels, and there's a computer terminal for guests to print out airline boarding passes. The carpeted corridors are rather dim.

Bedroom. The queen-size bed is topped

with a duvet and a crisp sheet (no spread), and three pillows, two of them lumpy. The room has a single equestrian print on the faux-stucco walls, one swivel chair, and no freestanding furniture. A pressboard armoire built into the wall has hangers inside and a flat-screen TV on top, forcing viewers to look



possible, avoid high-demand times. Change your stay dates by a day or two, book a few miles out of town, or choose from among several chains instead of one. Other tips:

Haggle. Only 28 percent of survey respondents tried bargaining, yet 78 percent of those who did won an upgrade or a lower rate. (Success rates were higher for people who haggled over the phone than for those who did in person.) When we challenged 16 students at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism to get hotel rates reduced, all succeeded, scoring discounts of 5 to 32 percent. Ask about non-advertised specials, and use free parking or a different bed size as a bargaining chip.

Find Internet-only offers. Terms such as “best available” and “corporate” used to indicate an unbeatable rate. Today the cheapest rates tend to be on the Internet. But they come with strings: full payment when booking, no cancellations, and no changes. Wyndham offers discounts of up to 25 percent off the otherwise best available rate for advance purchases; Participating Country Inn & Suites offer 15 to 25 percent off the “standard” if you book 14 days ahead.

Other Internet specials come and go, so check often. Starwood Hotels (Sheraton and Westin) features weekly “Starpicks” destinations, giving 20 to 40 percent off to guests who stay between Tuesday and Friday.

Get in touch if you find a better deal.



BY THE NUMBERS

5%

Percent of survey respondents who consider pet-friendliness an important criterion for choosing a hotel.

Almost every chain and online travel site makes the same boast: If you’ve already booked but find a cheaper advertised price on the same date at the same hotel for the same type of room, submit an online claim within 24 hours of booking and you’ll get a refund of the difference plus a bonus. Hilton offers a \$50 bonus; Best Western, a \$100 gift card. But chains won’t match prices from opaque sites.

Be loyal. Frequent guests earn free nights, future discounts, room upgrades,

airline miles, and rental-car savings. Among other perks: access to hotel club lounges (Hyatt Gold Passport) and weekend discounts, fast check-in, and late checkout (Marriott Rewards). And you generally accrue points at any of a chain’s brands. Thus, if you belong to Hilton HHonors, you get points and receive benefits at the flagship Hilton nameplate or at DoubleTree, Embassy Suites, Garden Inn, Hampton Inn, or Homewood Suites.

Show your age or affiliation. A 10 percent discount is the norm for older guests, particularly at lower-priced hotels. The discount might require an AARP affiliation. At Best Western, you need only prove you’re at least 55. Similar discounts often apply to those in the military, government employees, and members of groups such as AAA. Try mentioning other affiliations. At Ramada, for example, members of B.A.S.S., the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, land 20 percent off the best available rate.

Take a gamble. Hoteliers quietly maintain a “fade” rate, the minimum they’ll accept per room for walk-in guests. A few years ago, it applied when occupancy was less than 30 percent, but Bjorn Hanson says some hotels may invoke the rate even if at 60 percent. If you’re ready to walk after hearing the lowest rate, the clerk may use the fade rate to earn at least some revenue from a vacant room. You could score a great rate, but be prepared for disappointment.

skyward. Among the channels are two from HBO. Two night stands jut from the wall, and there’s a matching wall-mounted desk. Narcissists might enjoy the two large mirrors, one about 3x10 feet. Atop the heater/AC is a bench seat; next to it are two drawers. A stiff, plasticlike curtain covers the lone window.

Bathroom. It’s stocked with three sets of unremarkable white towels. Generic toiletries are simple: two bars of soap (one smaller than a Saltine), shower cap, and shampoo. The tub/shower’s cottony curtain absorbs water easily. Caulking around the tub is sloppy, and there’s no soap dish or shelf where guests could stow a cloth or toiletries. Two floor tiles are cracked, the room’s only obvious flaw. A sign offers extra toiletries at the front desk. The clerk cheerfully hands me a toothbrush because I forgot to pack mine.

Bottom line. It’s a good value: a bright, clean room with a comfy bed and all the basics in working order.

Americas Best Value Inn

Price \$75.89 including tax (before dog).

Check-in. The clerk stands behind a glass wall with a small opening for a credit card and addresses me promptly. I ask whether the rate I was quoted over the phone (\$88 including tax) can be lowered. She takes a minute and rakes about \$12 off the total. My English setter costs an extra \$15.

Common grounds. The hotel is just off Interstate 95, and traffic is noisy at rush hour. The grounds contain an empty swimming pool in disrepair. A large blue tarp covers something in the parking lot near a row of rooms. Out back are open garbage bins. The hotel has a Peruvian restaurant I don’t try, but off the small lobby is a breakfast room. In the morning, I find a waffle iron and batter dispenser, cereals in plastic bins, bagels and white bread, a juice dispenser, and coffee. There’s no TV. Counters are dotted with crumbs and drippings.

Bedroom. My room is reached via two fairly

dark staircases. I need to draw the curtain so that passersby on the walkway outside can’t see into the room. There’s a king-size bed with a nice-looking bold-print spread, a four-drawer bureau, a safe, one bedside table, a round table with two chairs (the room’s only seating), and an old-style TV that gets some cable channels but no HBO. An open-area closet has seven hangers. The two framed prints are crooked, there’s unpainted spackling along the ceiling edges, the round table wobbles when I write on it, and the bed’s blanket has two little holes. In the morning, a crumpled white tissue sits on the floor outside my door.

Bathroom. The night light is a nice touch, but the bathroom door won’t stay closed. Towels (two sets) are flimsy and the bathtub lacks a stopper. The cloth shower curtain and toilet lid have small stains.

Bottom line. It’s the little flaws that make Americas Best Value a dubious value.

Ratings Hotels

In order of reader score, within categories.

Better \longleftrightarrow Worse



Hotel	Price	Reader score	Survey results				
			Value	Upkeep	Comfort	Service	Check-in
		0					
		100					

LUXURY

Brand	Room Type	Score	Overall Rating
Ritz-Carlton	\$189-\$350	93	A++
Westin	119-200	87	A+
Embassy Suites Hotels	100-150	87	A+
Hyatt	110-200	85	A
Marriott	100-160	85	A
Hilton	100-179	83	B+
DoubleTree by Hilton	99-150	81	B+
Sheraton	99-170	80	B

UPSCALE

Hotel	Phone	Score	1	2	3	4	5
Harrah's	109-219	88	●	●	●	●	●
Walt Disney Resorts	109-219	87	●	●	●	●	●
Residence Inn by Marriott	91-135	86	●	●	●	●	●
SpringHill Suites	85-119	86	●	●	●	●	●
Hyatt Place	82-120	86	●	●	●	●	●
Homewood Suites	90-130	86	●	●	●	●	●
Hilton Garden Inn	99-130	85	●	●	●	●	●
Courtyard by Marriott	90-129	84	●	●	●	●	●
Wyndham Resort	75-150	84	●	●	●	●	●
Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts	90-145	78	○	●	●	●	●
Radisson	90-135	77	○	○	○	●	●
Wyndham Hotel	88-140	77	○	○	●	○	●

MODERATE

ROBUSTNESS					
Hotel	Score	Robustness Score	Avg	Min	Max
Wingate by Wyndham	79-100	88	<div></div>	●	●
Drury Inn & Suites	80-105	88	<div></div>	●	●
Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton	90-115	86	<div></div>	●	●
Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott	80-100	82	<div></div>	●	●
Country Inn & Suites by Carlson	79-100	82	<div></div>	●	●
Comfort Suites	75-100	82	<div></div>	●	●
Holiday Inn Express	85-110	82	<div></div>	○	●
Sleep Inn	62-80	81	<div></div>	○	●
La Quinta Inns & Suites	65-90	79	<div></div>	○	●
AmericInn	75-100	79	<div></div>	○	●
Best Western	74-100	77	<div></div>	○	●
Holiday Inn	85-120	77	<div></div>	○	●
Comfort Inn	70-90	77	<div></div>	○	●
Baymont Inn & Suites	60-89	76	<div></div>	○	●
Quality	67-90	73	<div></div>	●	○
Clarion	70-100	73	<div></div>	●	○
Ramada Worldwide	64-100	67	<div></div>	●	○

BUDGET

Hotel	Price	Value	Service	Location	Room	Breakfast
Microtel Inn & Suites by Wyndham	59-80	78	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	●		
Red Roof Inn	50-70	71	● ● ● ● ●		○	
Super 8	57-75	69	● ● ● ● ●		○	
Days Inn	57-80	67	● ● ● ● ●		○	
Motel 6	41-60	66	● ● ● ● ●		○	
Econo Lodge	50-75	64	● ● ● ● ●		○	
Americas Best Value Inn	50-78	64	● ● ● ● ●			

¹ Almost one-third of readers who stayed at Harrah's, operated by casino manager Caesars Entertainment, received complimentary stays at gambling destinations such as Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe, Atlantic City, and Biloxi, Miss. ² Includes perks such as extended theme-park hours.



THE RITZ-CARLTON®

Luxury



Upscale



Moderate



Budget

▶ **CLOSE-UP**

Problem areas

A hotel with an uncomfortable bed is like a diner that can't make a decent omelet. Yet that was a problem readers encountered. Overall, 27 percent had at least one complaint during their stay. Across all hotels, an average of 3 to 6 percent of readers complained about each problem below, but at some hotels, levels were far higher.

Uncomfortable bed.

Ten percent of guests at Americas Best Value Inn, Econo Lodge, and Motel 6.

at Americas Best Value Inn
and Red Roof Inn.

Noise. Fifteen percent of guests at Motel 6.

Outdated décor. Twenty-two percent of guests at Econo Lodge.

Poor heating or air-conditioning. Ten percent of guests at Motel 6.

Outdated décor. Twenty-two percent of guests at Econo Lodge.

Cramped bathroom. Thirteen percent of guests

Lousy lighting. Ten percent of guests at all budget hotels except Microtel.

Smoke smell. Twelve percent of guests at Americas Best Value Inn.

Guide to the Ratings

Ratings are based on the experiences of 22,481 readers during 34,352 hotel stays at 44 hotel chains, from January 2010 to June 2011. Each chain received at least 150 evaluations. Survey results might not reflect the U.S. population. Except for Walt Disney Resorts (in Florida and California), the chains are nationwide or in many regions. Four companies, Hilton, Marriott, Sheraton, and Wyndham, operate more than half of the hotel brands in the Ratings. All chains have websites where you can obtain rates, reserve a room, see photos, get directions, and learn about the latest promotions. **Price** is the typical range per night paid by readers. **Reader score** reflects overall satisfaction. A score of 100 would mean that all readers were completely satisfied; 80 means they were very satisfied on average; 60, fairly well satisfied. Differences of less than 6 points are not meaningful. **Survey results** for value, upkeep (condition and cleanliness of the rooms, grounds, and public spaces), service (staff courtesy and helpfulness), comfort (quality of the bed and linens), and check-in (speed and efficiency) are relative and reflect how each hotel fared against the rest.

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OUCH. AGAIN. Rachel Collier, of San Jose, Calif., visited an emergency room for abdominal pain that went away without treatment. The bill: \$14,638, including \$9,038 for a CT scan that would have cost \$318 at a nearby imaging center in her health plan's network.

That CT scan costs how much?

Health-care prices are all over the map, even within your plan's network

F GAS STATIONS worked like health care, you wouldn't find out until the pump switched off whether you paid \$3 or \$30 a gallon. If clothes shopping worked like health care, you might pay \$80 for a pair of jeans at your local boutique and \$400 for the identical pair at the

nearest department store—and the clothes wouldn't have price tags on them.

"Why can't you or I as a consumer ask what it's going to cost and be met with something other than a blank stare?" asks Will Fox, a principal with Milliman, a national health actuarial consulting firm.

The answer, he says, is that neither providers nor health insurers really want consumers to have that information.

Here's why: The contracted prices that health plans negotiate with providers in their networks have little or nothing to do with the actual quality of services provided and everything to do with the relative bargaining power of the providers.

Here's what this system means for consumers:

- Not even staying within your plan's network will guarantee you low prices. Providers who have a lot of market clout, such as a prestigious university hospital, may command prices several times higher than providers who don't.

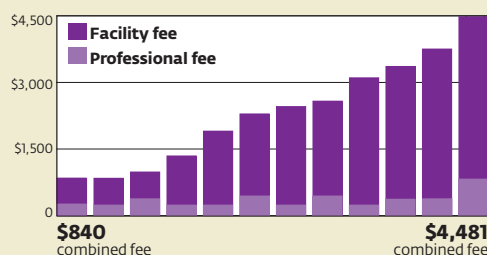
- It may be difficult, if not impossible, to find out the price of health care ahead of time, especially for complex services such as elective surgery. That's a special problem for people with high-deductible

DID YOU KNOW?

Medical costs can vary substantially

In one Midwestern city the in-network price of a colonoscopy ranged from \$840 at a freestanding medical practice to more than five times that amount at the local academic medical center. Big variations in the facility fee (dark purple) account for most of the difference. The light purple represents professional fees for the gastroenterologist.

Source: Healthcare Blue Book



plans, who may be responsible for the first \$5,000 or even \$10,000 of their health expenses every year.

- If you go out of network, whether on purpose or involuntarily, you may be hit with a five-figure bill that your insurance company isn't obligated to pay.

- There are ways to protect yourself against being blindsided by a huge bill. But they're often not easy and don't always work.

The \$4,400 colonoscopy

Consumers often have no clue that prices can vary so much within a network, says Jeffrey Rice, M.D., chief executive officer of Healthcare Blue Book, a Nashville-based company that collects prices paid by large group health plans. "It's as if some employees went out to fill up the company cars and half came back with receipts for \$4-a-gallon gas, the rest for \$20 a gallon, and no one asked why," he says.

In one Midwestern city, Healthcare Blue Book found that prices paid by members in managed-care networks for a colonoscopy ranged from \$840 at a freestanding office run by a gastroenterology group to \$4,481 at the local academic medical center. (See chart on the facing page.)

In Hartford, Conn., an Aetna PPO negotiated a network price of \$5,249 for an uncomplicated vaginal delivery at one hospital and \$8,941 at another just a few miles away. A member with a typical coinsurance of 20 percent would save \$738 in out-of-pocket expenses by choosing the cheaper hospital.

Rachel Collier, 41, a sales executive from San Jose, Calif., got a harsh education in medical pricing in August 2011, when she was stricken with pain in her back, which then moved to her abdomen. Her employer had recently switched its health plan to a Cigna PPO with a \$5,000 deductible, and Collier had not yet selected a doctor or hospital to replace the providers at her former plan, a Kaiser HMO.

She went to the emergency room of a hospital in the Cigna network and was given blood tests, a CT scan, and an IV. She went home with a couple of medications, and the pain let up after a few hours.

"A few days later, I got a call from the hospital billing office," she recalls. "They said, 'Your total bill is \$14,600, including \$9,000 for the CT scan, and with your insurance you'll owe \$6,500. But if you want to pay the uninsured rate in cash right now, you can have a discount and it will be a little more than \$3,000.' So I gave them

How to avoid unwelcome surprises

1 Understand your health insurance. OK, it's not a fun read, but it pays to familiarize yourself with the rules and cost-sharing features of your health plan. How much is the deductible? What out-of-pocket costs apply toward it? Is there an extra copay for the emergency room? Do you need advance approval for tests, elective procedures, or specialist visits? Does the plan allow you to go out of network at all? Many HMOs don't, except for emergencies when you are outside the plan's service area or for hard-to-find treatments for rare conditions.

2 Stay in network if you can. Network providers have agreed to accept the negotiated health-plan price as payment in full. Even if you haven't met your annual deductible, you'll still pay the in-network price, and if you have met it, you'll only be on the hook for your copay or coinsurance.

3 Compare network prices. Many health plans now post some price information online. Take advantage if you can. If you can't, call your health-plan customer-service number. If that fails, call providers directly, but be aware that some of them truly might not know your network's price. Jeffrey Rice, M.D., chief executive officer of Healthcare Blue Book, used this tactic a few years ago to save big when his son needed outpatient foot surgery. The hospital quoted a price of \$15,000 to \$25,000. But having the procedure in an outpatient center, with the same surgeon, cost just \$1,515.

4 Don't pay until all bills are in. You may receive a hospital bill with scary-looking high "charges" on it. Don't panic, and don't write a check. They're list prices, typically much higher than the network price you'll actually owe. Save all provider bills and compare them with the explanation of benefit (EOB) forms that you'll eventually get from your health plan. You will generally owe only the "patient responsibility" amount indicated on those forms for in-network care.

5 Fight back against stealth out-of-network bills. If you get blindsided by a bill from a non-network doctor after surgery or an emergency-room visit in a network hospital, you might be able to get it reduced if you make enough noise. First, ask the doctor to discount the fee. If that fails, complain to the hospital, your insurer, your employer (especially if you work for a large company), and your

state insurance department or state health insurance consumer advocate.

6 For elective out-of-network care, find out about your plan's reimbursement policy. That information should be in your health-plan documents, but if not, call the plan and ask. Some set their own "allowed amount," some use the Fair Health pricing database, and some pay a set percentage of Medicare's fee schedule. Typically a plan will pay a portion, such as 60 percent, of that agreed-upon price. You'll be obligated to pay the rest plus the balance of whatever your out-of-network provider decides to charge. So if a non-network doctor charges \$2,000 for a treatment and the insurance company says the allowed price is \$1,000, it will reimburse you \$600 and you'll owe the doctor \$1,400.

7 Negotiate prices with the out-of-network provider in advance. Start by looking up the "fair" prices in your geographical area for your test, procedure, or operation on FairHealthConsumer.org, HealthcareBlueBook.com, or both. Fair Health also has a sliding tool that shows what your reimbursement will be if your plan pays a percentage of Medicare's fee schedule for out-of-network services. Use those results as a basis for negotiating a price agreement with the out-of-network provider, and get it in writing. Healthcare Blue Book has a printable standard contract you can use for that purpose. Failure to agree on a price in advance could leave you liable for a very, very large balance bill.

8 For complex out-of-network procedures, prepare for lots of homework. If your procedure or surgery isn't included on either HealthcareBlueBook.com or FairHealthConsumer.org, ask the out-of-network provider for the CPT codes (standard medical billing codes) for each service to be performed. Also get the provider's tax identification number and the ZIP code of the location where the service will be performed. "Call the insurance company with this information, and they are absolutely obligated to tell you what they will pay," says Jennifer Jaff, executive director of the nonprofit group Advocacy for Patients with Chronic Illness. "This is not information they're going to have at their fingertips. Chances are it's going to take days." Once you have that information, negotiate with your provider as above.

my bank account number and they pulled out the money right away. All I could think was, ‘What the heck just happened?’”

What the heck happened remains unclear; as we went to press, Cigna was still investigating why the hospital didn’t charge Collier the lower network price or submit a claim to the health plan.

What’s not in doubt is that Collier paid much more for that CT scan than she needed to. Cigna allows plan members to look up some cost information online, and it turns out that an in-network freestanding imaging center near her home offers the same type of CT scan that she had in the hospital, but for a mere \$318.

Dialing for dollars

If the price for a treatment or test you need is not on your health plan’s website, getting a price quote from a network provider may be difficult if not impossible.

Stephen Griffing, 58, a manufacturer’s representative from Danbury, Conn., ran into the problem when he signed up for an individual Aetna health plan with a \$5,000 in-network annual deductible. He needs two common blood tests every six months to monitor the safety of a cholesterol-lowering medication that he takes.

None of the three local network labs he called was able to supply his in-network price for the tests. They weren’t available on Aetna’s member price lookup site and an Aetna customer service representative didn’t have the information, either. “Surely I am not the first person to want to know exactly what something will cost, out of my pocket, before purchase,” Griffing says.

Jerry Diffley, who was then director of billing compliance for Quest Diagnostics, one of the labs involved, says that it had contracts with 75 Aetna plans. “There may

be a specific fee schedule for his plan,” he says. “Insurance companies may only pay for the tests for certain conditions, or so many times a year, and without knowing those details, we don’t know what he may pay out of pocket.”

Out-of-network price traps

Few consumers understand the severe limitations on the out-of-network benefit that PPOs and similar plans tout as an advantage over HMOs (which typically don’t pay for any out-of-network care except in rare emergency situations).

“The PPO says it will pay 60 or 70 percent of the allowable amount for out-of-network providers,” says Jennifer Jaff, executive director of Advocacy for Patients with Chronic Illness, a nonprofit consumer group in Farmington, Conn. “People think that means 60 or 70 percent of whatever the out-of-network provider charges. That’s not what happens. It’s a fixed percentage of whatever the insurer decides is the right amount.”

And that amount, what’s often called the UCR (“usual, customary, and reasonable”) price, is often much less than the bills that come from the non-network providers. That can leave patients on the hook for the balance—the amount not reimbursed by their plan.

Julie Lindgren, 47, a nuclear-medicine technologist from Seattle, chose an out-of-network doctor and hospital in 2005 when she was facing a risky surgery to treat kidney cancer.

The surgery was a success, but the bills that came afterward were a shock. Lindgren recalls that the total came to some \$28,000, of which insurance paid about \$5,000. Ultimately, the hospital wrote off a portion of its bill, but the sur-



SURGERY SHOPPING Jeffrey Rice, M.D., used his own service, Healthcare Blue Book, to save 90 percent on foot surgery for his son, Jack.

geon and the anesthesiologist demanded their full fee of \$9,000, which she paid in part by borrowing from family.

What’s a reasonable price?

Traditionally, insurers have based UCR prices on what providers charge. Some rely on proprietary internal numbers, and some use national data collected and analyzed by Fair Health, a nonprofit organization based in New York City.

But that’s changing, as more insurers have begun setting their out-of-network price as a percentage of what Medicare pays for the service. A March 2012 investigation by the New York State Department of Financial Services found that most plans that use this method pay between 110 percent and 150 percent of what Medicare pays. “It sounds like a lot but it’s extraordinarily low,” says Robin Gelburd, Fair Health’s president.

Because of Medicare’s size—it pays a bigger portion of the nation’s health-care bill than any other single entity—and ability to set prices without negotiating with doctors, its fee schedule “does not come close to reimbursing what providers actually charge” non-Medicare patients, says Connecticut State Healthcare Advocate Victoria Veltri.

■ DID YOU KNOW?

Don’t let this happen to you

A patient in a Northeastern state hired an out-of-network back surgeon to correct severe scoliosis, expecting her PPO to pay 80 percent of his bill. But the insurer, like most, paid only 80 percent of what it

considered an appropriate fee for the service, leaving her legally liable to pay the balance—a heart-stopping \$480,000. The patient is working with her state’s consumer advocate in hopes of negotiating a settlement.

INS PENDING	PATIENT BAL	TOTAL BAL	
111875.00	480000.00	591875.00	
			PATIENT BALANCE PAY THIS AMOUNT 480000.00

We used an online calculator at fairhealthconsumer.org to determine that the “fair,” or typical, price for a laparoscopic gallbladder removal in Consumer Reports’ Yonkers, N.Y., ZIP code is \$6,700. A plan that reimbursed 60 percent of the fair price would leave patients owing a balance of \$2,680. But Medicare pays only \$855 for the procedure in our neck of the woods. So a plan that based its 60 percent reimbursement on 140 percent of Medicare would leave patients with a balance bill more than twice as high: \$5,981.

Of course, the financial damage can be even worse when, as frequently happens, the out-of-network hospital or doctor charges more than the fair price—sometimes a lot more.

We spoke with a man in a Northeastern state whose wife chose an out-of-network neurosurgeon for a complex procedure to correct a severe case of scoliosis. The insurer said the UCR was \$111,875, but the surgeon charged \$591,875, leaving the patient with a bill of \$480,000. She asked not to be identified because she is working with a state consumer advocate to negotiate a settlement.

Bills out of the blue

An obvious way to avoid getting hit with stratospheric out-of-network bills is not to use out-of-network providers.

But that’s not always possible: Some-

What price an MRI: \$504 or \$2,520?

These are actual prices paid by large employers nationwide, as collected by the Healthcare Blue Book. The low prices represent the 10th percentile, and the high prices the 90th percentile. The “fair” price is based on Healthcare Blue Book’s own evaluation.

Test or treatment	Low	Fair	High
Brain MRI	\$ 504	\$ 560	\$ 2,520
Chest X-ray	40	44	255
Colonoscopy	800	1,110	3,160
Complete blood count	15	23	105
Hip replacement	19,500	21,148	43,875
Hysterectomy	8,000	8,546	16,480
Knee replacement	17,800	19,791	42,750
Knee arthroscopy	3,000	3,675	7,350
Laminectomy (spine surgery)	8,150	11,744	25,760
Laparoscopic gallbladder removal	5,000	6,459	12,480
Tubal ligation	2,865	3,183	5,729
Transurethral prostate removal	4,000	4,409	8,875
Ultrasound, fetal	120	169	480
Vasectomy	700	1,003	2,100

times, especially in the hospital, you can be seen by an out-of-network provider without even knowing it. Annmarie Bragdon, 41, from Farmington Hills, Mich., used a network hospital and doctor when her infant needed surgery for a congenital

kidney problem. “But we got a bill of about \$10,000 for the anesthesiologist, who was out of network,” she says.

The company Bragdon worked for intervened and arranged for her to pay the same rates as for an in-network anesthesiologist. But not everyone is so lucky, as documented in the report by the New York State Department of Financial Services.

It cited some jaw-dropping bills that patients received from out-of-network doctors who treated them in emergencies: \$31,700 for surgery for a brain hemorrhage, \$83,000 for reattaching a finger severed in a table-saw accident. “These hospital-based specialists have insurers completely over a barrel,” Will Fox of Milliman says. “They say, ‘If you don’t pay us our full billed charges, we won’t play.’”

Why don’t hospitals force doctors to participate in networks? “An individual hospital could have 50 different plans,” says Caroline Steinberg, a vice president of the American Hospital Association. The hospital might not know “which plan a physician has negotiated a contract with.”

Or as patient advocate Jennifer Jaff puts it: “Nobody in this drama has an interest in helping you. The provider knows you’re on the hook, no matter what. And the insurance company knows they’re going to pay what they’re going to pay.”



COSTLY CANCER CARE Julie Lindgren, of Seattle, was hit with more than \$20,000 in balance bills after going out of network for risky cancer surgery.

The luxury look for less

GOT A BOTTOMLESS BUDGET for your dream kitchen? You could pay for the sleekest pro-style appliances, the most luxurious stone countertop, and the trendiest hardwood flooring, and still end up paying again to fix things that break down, crack, or dent. Or you could use our 26-page guide to make every dollar count by sidestepping high-priced pitfalls in the first place.

And if your budget is more in the \$15,000-to-\$30,000 range that most homeowners spend on a renovation, relax: You can have a beautiful kitchen that's functional and efficient, and only looks expensive, like the example here. It combines semi-custom cabinets, quartz countertops, and vinyl flooring to achieve an urban sophistication befitting its city setting. Our product Ratings, reliability reports, and planning advice will help you create your own oasis.

Appliances

HIGH END A pro-style, 36-inch range with high-Btu burners; a built-in refrigerator with panels that match the surrounding cabinetry; and whisper-quiet dishwashers are expected in today's luxury homes. "If buyers walk into a high-end home and see apartment-grade or even midrange appliances, they're going to wonder what else is missing from their wish list," says Jim Hamilton, regional vice president of the National Association of Realtors.

Separate steam ovens, which can cost several thousand dollars and are pitched as a healthful way to prepare vegetables, fish, and even desserts, are a popular trend in high-end appliances. "Restaurants have been steaming food for years. Now the technology is finally coming to the residential market," says Laurie Haefele, a designer-architect in Santa Monica, Calif. Some models combine steam and convection cooking to lock in moisture while browning foods that require it.

But not all high-end appliances deliver. Though we recommend KitchenAid dual-fuel ranges, its electric and gas models have been repair-prone, as have Jenn-Air's electric ranges, wall ovens, and cooktops. And some of Viking's Professional-series built-in refrigerators are at the bottom of our Ratings.



**HIGH
END**

■ **KitchenAid KDRU763V, \$6,000** Our top-rated 36-inch, pro-style, dual-fuel range comes with a steam-assist oven, which turned out fine cheesecake and bread.

FOR LESS Many mainstream brands have upped their styling with "faux pro" features, including beefy controls and a stainless-steel finish. And they equal or surpass their pricey counterparts when it comes to cooking and reliability. GE's \$1,500 Profile PGB910SEM has sleek styling, and it's our top-performing gas range. Or consider an induction range or cooktop, which uses electromagnetism to deliver pinpoint heating and control. Among refrigerators, cabinet-depth models offer the streamlined look of built-ins for thousands less.



**FOR
LESS**

■ **Samsung FTQ307NWGX, \$1,700** This 30-inch range with an induction top was excellent across all performance criteria except for oven cleaning, where it scored Very Good.

Floors

HIGH END Wood has warmth and elegance and can be used in adjacent rooms, creating a seamless flow between the spaces. "Plus if you drop a teacup on a wood floor, the cup has a fighting chance," says Kelly Stewart, a National Kitchen & Bath Association-certified kitchen designer in Stamford, Conn.

Antique wood floors, milled from timbers reclaimed from centuries-old buildings, have character, but they've been particularly prone to wear and tear in our tests. Performance-wise, you're better off with solid wood flooring with a factory finish, which costs more up front than unfinished flooring but lasts longer and eliminates the mess of on-site finishing.

Even the most durable wood floors are no match for heavy traffic, especially if it includes sandy shoes and dog's claws. Durable stones such as granite and quartzite offer more

protection and a sense of permanence. "People subconsciously associate stone with stability underfoot, so it's a natural choice for flooring," says New York City architect Leonard Kady.

FOR LESS Engineered wood flooring, which has a veneer of real wood over a substrate, can be floated over the subfloor, saving on installation costs. The downside is that most can be refinished only once, whereas solid flooring can be refinished multiple times.

Tile is an all-natural option that realistically mimics costly materials. "Antique limestone floors from a mansion in France are marvelous, but you can use ceramic tile to achieve a similar look for a fraction of the cost, and they're a lot easier to maintain," Kady says. Vinyl flooring is another less expensive option with some very convincing faux patterns, including wood and natural stone.

■ **Mullican St. Andrews Solid Oak Strip 10930, \$6.30/square foot**

This handsome prefinished oak flooring in 2¼-inch-wide strips resisted scratches and stains in our tests and was better than most at fending off dents.

**HIGH
END**

**FOR
LESS**

Will this new finish dethrone stainless steel?

Stainless steel has dominated appliances for decades, but some experts say its reign may be coming to an end. "Our customers are ready for something new," says Bob Baird, Home Depot's vice president of merchandising for kitchens and appliances. "It's just a question what's going to take stainless steel's place." Daring alternatives such as oil-rubbed bronze and cobalt blue

haven't caught on, suggesting that the next finish will be more neutral in nature. One possibility: Whirlpool's White Ice, a fresh take on classic white that's being rolled out across refrigerators, dishwashers, ranges, and microwave ovens throughout the year. Though it is metal, the finish has a glossy white sheen that mimics the elegance of frosted glass.



■ **Quick-Step Perspectives Ansel Oak UF1259, \$4/square foot** This laminated flooring mimics real oak right down to the simulated knots, and it offers superb resistance to scratches, stains, and fading in sunlight, though it dented easily in our tests.

HIGH
END

❑ **Exotic stone countertops**, such as this white Carrera marble from Italy, cost up to \$150 per square foot installed, but their uniqueness is priceless.

FOR
LESS

❑ **Formica's IdealEdge laminate countertop** costs about \$16 per square foot installed, has no black line along its edge, and comes in hundreds of colors and patterns, including the faux-marble Dolce Vita.

Countertops

HIGH END Authenticity is the catchphrase in countertops. That means natural stone for top-tier designers, though many are moving away from speckled granites such as Uba Tuba in favor of wavy marble, especially in popular white kitchens. But given its susceptibility to staining and scratching, marble is not for everyone, cautions Jonas Carnemark, a design-builder in Washington, D.C., who is certified by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. "Designers talk about patina, but you have to remember that's just a fancy term for scratches and stains," he says. If, like many homeowners, you want things to stay looking new, consider quartz, a highly durable engineered stone that can resemble natural stone. All-white quartz countertops are also popular thanks to improvements in technology that give them the purest tone.

FOR LESS Shop around for affordable stone slabs. "If you can fall in love with a Danby marble from Canada instead of one of the more expensive Italian imports, you're going to save at least 20 percent," Stewart says. There are even bigger savings out there with granite, especially if you choose from remnants at the stone yard. Some granite has wavy marble-like veining.

Laminate, the most affordable countertop option by far, has come a long way. The latest printing technologies result in faux patterns that look like real stone, or you can choose a solid white that's suited to contemporary kitchens. Formica has even eliminated the unsightly black line along the edge of the countertop that used to be laminate's telltale sign.



Cabinets

HIGH END In the most expensive kitchens, cabinets are custom-built to the precise dimensions of the room. The result is a fully integrated look that's in keeping with the current taste for clean, minimalist design. The good news is that this style is inherently less expensive—and easier to clean—than the once-fashionable country kitchen, which called for cabinetry with elaborate moldings and applied detail. The bad news is that custom cabinets of any description cost tens of thousands of dollars. "It's half the cost of the kitchen," says designer-architect Laurie Haefeel, recalling projects for which the cabinet bill alone ran to six figures.

PHOTO (ABOVE): ERIC ROTH

Small stuff, big impact

Though it's important to focus on large design issues and big-ticket appliances, also pay attention to the smaller kitchen wares that you'll use every day. Here's a roundup of winners from our tests.

Coffeemakers



❑ **HIGH END DeLonghi EN680, \$600** This single-serve espresso machine scored an excellent for taste and makes coffee, espresso, latte, and cappuccino. But you must use capsules.



❑ **FOR LESS Emerson CCM901, \$90** This dual espresso/coffeemaker offers fine coffee brewing, and its steam nozzle froths milk for latte and cappuccino.

Blenders



❑ **HIGH END Vita-Mix 5200, \$450** It makes superb frozen drinks, smoothies, and purées, and it crushes ice with ease.



Toasters



❑ **HIGH END Magimix Vision Toaster, \$250** Seeing is believing with this Williams-Sonoma exclusive. Its clear walls let you watch your bread or bagel brown evenly with almost every batch.

❑ **FOR LESS Ninja, \$60** You get almost the same performance for about \$400 less, and it's also a bit quieter.



**HIGH
END**



■ **Fieldstone custom cabinet, \$475** The Fulville 36-inch base cabinet has doors and drawers made of solid maple, dovetail joints, full-extension drawers, and soft-close doors.

**FOR
LESS**



■ **Ikea stock cabinet, \$330** The 36-inch Ädel base cabinet has solid birch drawer fronts and door frames around a veneered birch panel, full-extension drawers, and soft-close doors.

FOR LESS If the layout of the existing cabinets works and the units are plumb, square, and sturdy, you could refinish them with a fresh coat of paint or reface them by replacing the cabinet doors and drawers and applying veneers to the face frames and ends. Retrofitting the cabinets with pull-out drawers, lazy Susans, and retractable trash cans can improve their function.

If your cabinets are too far gone, you can save 30 percent or more by choosing semi-custom units. Stock units save even more, without necessarily sacrificing style.

"There are a plethora of showrooms where you can get the full kitchen from Italy or Germany, but we've been able to integrate

Ikea cabinets for budget-minded clients that offer a similar look," says Chicago architect Pam Lamaster-Millet. "The trick is finding a skilled installer who knows the tricks for making the units look built-in." That might include applying a toe kick to base cabinets or a valance to upper cabinets to conceal the undercabinet lighting.

Whether semi-custom or stock, the features that held up best in our cabinet tests include solid-wood or plywood doors; boxes made of ½- to ¾-inch plywood; solid-wood drawer sides with dovetail joints, full-extension glides, and a plywood bottom; and adjustable, ¾-inch plywood or medium-density fiberboard shelving.

Spending traps to avoid

■ **Poor planning** Changing the design after the project is under way is guaranteed to break the budget. Proper planning, including showroom visits and meeting with professionals, will take a couple of months.

■ **Skimping on labor** Sooner or later the cracks will show with poor construction. Invest in quality, especially for cabinet installation and tile setting, where small mistakes can lead to big disappointment.

■ **Paying more for pointless features** Smart appliances are supposed to save money by powering down when electricity rates are highest. But you'll only reap the rewards if your home has a "smart" meter and your utility company offers time-of-use rates. Otherwise, you'll be paying more for a technology that may be years away.

■ **Expecting a fridge to prevent spoilage** Food-preservation features are the latest thing for marketing. But the claims are hard to measure. What you can do is find a refrigerator that delivers top temperature performance in our tests.

■ **Falling for high-priced fixtures** Stainless-steel sinks top our Ratings, even in less expensive thicknesses. Popular pull-out sprays are available on entry-level faucets. As for lighting, the illumination that matters most comes from inexpensive—and hidden—undercabinet fixtures.

Food processors



■ **FOR LESS Cuisinart CPT-170, \$70** Our top-scoring two-slice toaster turns out consistent, evenly browned batches. Paying \$20 more gets you its four-slice brandmate.



■ **HIGH END Breville Sous Chef BFP800XL, \$400** It's the best chopper by far in our tests, and it also excels at slicing, shredding, and grating.

■ **FOR LESS Cuisinart DLC-2011CHB, \$200** It costs half as much but is impressive at most tasks, except for chopping.



Knives

■ **HIGH END Zwilling J.A. Henckels Twin Profection #33049, \$600** These premium knives are forged from a single piece of steel for maximum sharpness and precision.



■ **FOR LESS Ginsu Chikara, \$75** This set is affordable yet high-performing. And like the Zwilling, it includes a santoku knife, a cross between a chef's knife and a cleaver that's great for chopping.





AT YOUR SERVICE Appliance retailers are giving consumers more reasons to buy online.

Where to shop

Most buyers give thumbs up to Amazon and Abt

RETAILERS HAVE BEEN upping their game, pursuing you wherever you are. In an economy that remains wobbly, opening new stores is harder than seeking out customers where they live: online. Retailers also want to get onto your smart phones and iPads with free “lifestyle” apps—and vie for a bigger share of your available cash.

While retailers say “show me the money,” for shoppers it’s “show me the deals.” According to our exclusive appliance-buying survey of more than 18,000 subscribers, price matters, and good customer service and quality are still elusive goals.

Abt Electronics was the top choice of survey respondents for major appliances, and Amazon.com was among the best for small appliances.

Online retailers are trying to make a play on traditional retailers in other ways. Amazon recently made a splash by offering 5 percent discounts to users of its Price Check app, which lets you scan the bar code of a product in a store or snap a photo to learn Amazon’s price.

When survey respondent Marc Hamilton

made his first online major-appliance purchase, Amazon was the seller—but Abt Electronics, which maintains a webstore on Amazon’s site, was the partner and handled delivery from its sole Chicago-area location. “I hadn’t heard of Abt, but I did some online research and liked what I saw,” says Hamilton, who lives in the St. Louis area. “I had no complaints whatsoever with either company.”

For our survey, subscribers told us about their overall satisfaction based on experiences buying almost 26,000 appliances. Here’s what we found:

Price gets you in the door

Low prices and sales were the top reasons people went to a specific retailer. A third of respondents visited price-comparison websites before shopping. People were generally satisfied with the prices they paid, but no seller received our top grade.

About a third of respondents tried negotiating down a major appliance’s price, with success more than 70 percent of the time—to the tune of \$93 on average. Shoppers for small appliances such as air

conditioners and vacuum cleaners were almost as successful in driving down the price when they tried, but more than 90 percent didn’t make the attempt.

For major appliances such as refrigerators, ranges, and dishwashers, only Abt Electronics and the regional HHGregg got the nod from our subscribers with better-than-middling ratings for price. For small appliances, Amazon rated highly, and respondents also praised Costco, Kohl’s, and Sam’s Club for their prices.

Shopping tip. Look for discount coupons from retailer and manufacturer websites. Although only 14 percent of major-appliance shoppers say they tried that, more than a third were successful.

Selection is not always great

Twenty-nine percent of major-appliance shoppers went to a retailer because the store stocked a particular brand or model. But far fewer chose a seller specifically for its selection, and only 3 percent of major-appliance shoppers complained of seeing few brands or models when they shopped at a walk-in retailer.

Abt Electronics scored highest for major appliances, and Amazon was the standout for its small-appliance selection. For major appliances, Home Depot scored lower than archrival Lowe’s, which, like most others in its category, was rated mediocre for its selection.

Our readers were least appreciative of warehouse clubs’ small-appliance selection, panning Costco and Sam’s Club for small appliances. Best Buy and Walmart didn’t do much better.

Shopping tip. If a store doesn’t carry the model you’re looking for, ask whether it can order it for you from another store.

Wide range of service

Our readers evaluated direct contact with store personnel, in the store or over the phone, in judging service. Almost all

BY THE NUMBERS

23%

That’s the percentage of major-appliance shoppers who bought extended warranties, our survey shows. We don’t recommend them.

respondents shopping for a major appliance at a walk-in store interacted with sales staff, though only about half of those shopping for a small appliance did so. The top problem, particularly for small-appliance shoppers, was salespeople who didn't seem knowledgeable.

Only 3 percent of those appliance shoppers complained that the sales staff didn't seem interested in helping them.

For small-appliance shoppers at Amazon, respondents' high praise for the company's service is based on Web customer support. But walk-in stores also got high marks: Abt Electronics for major appliances and independent local retailers for all appliances.

Though our readers were satisfied with warehouse clubs overall, they slammed the small-appliance departments' service at Target and Walmart—along with those at Costco and Sam's Club.

Shopping tip. Some stores let you bypass the showroom floor altogether by shopping online, getting questions answered in a chat window, and picking up the item at a store of your choosing.

Hassles at the checkout

Getting hit with a pitch to buy an extended warranty at checkout has been a top annoyance in past surveys, and more than 85 percent of subscribers who bought a major appliance said their retailer at least suggested they buy one. Still, a quarter of major-appliance buyers did, and most who

Try negotiating at checkout for free delivery or installation.

purchased one didn't regret it. P.C. Richard was the pushiest, followed by Best Buy, HHGregg, and Sears.

We don't recommend extended warranties. Past research has shown that the bill for any needed repair is often comparable with the typical cost of a warranty.

For small-appliance shoppers, checkout was not as easy as you might desire—especially at Sam's Club and Walmart, both

of which had a poor showing for checkout. But most major-appliance retailers enjoyed ratings for checkout that were better than average. With two notable exceptions, our respondents were mostly lukewarm about their checkout experience when buying small appliances.

No surprise: Independent stores got top scores for easy checkout. So did Amazon for small appliances, and Abt Electronics for major appliances. But our readers gave so-so ratings to Best Buy and Sears for major appliances. For respondents who bought small appliances, the lowest marks were reserved for Walmart, followed by its warehouse-club sibling, Sam's Club.

Shopping tip. If you've researched a product, you already know how reliable it is or you wouldn't be buying it. That's often a good rejoinder for any extended-warranty pitch you may get during checkout. And before buying the appliance, ask whether there are any costs for shipping, installation, and, for a major appliance, haul-away of your old one. Then put on your bargaining hat and ask whether the store will provide those free to close the deal.



Overview

Appliance shoppers were a fairly satisfied group compared with shoppers of other items, such as mattresses. Still, no retailer earned perfect marks across the board, and respondents to our survey who bought small appliances were fairly critical about selection and service.

BEST FOR PRICE

- A1 Abt Electronics
- A7 HHGregg
- B1 Amazon.com
- B3 Costco
- B4 Kohl's
- B6 Sam's Club

BEST FOR SELECTION

- A1 Abt Electronics
- A6 Pacific Sales
- A7 HHGregg
- B1 Amazon.com

BEST ALL-AROUND EXPERIENCE

- A1 Abt Electronics
- A6, B2 Independent stores
- B1 Amazon.com

Ratings Appliance stores

In order of reader score, within types.

Better ← → Worse

Order	Retailer	Reader score	Price	Selection	Product quality	Service	Checkout ease	Shipping	Installation	Haul-away
		0 100								
A MAJOR APPLIANCES										
1	Abt Electronics	93	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2	Independents	89	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
3	Lowe's	87	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
4	P.C. Richard & Son	87	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	○
5	Home Depot	86	○	●	○	○	○	●	●	●
6	Pacific Sales	86	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
7	HHGregg	86	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8	Sears	84	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
9	Best Buy	83	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
B SMALL APPLIANCES										
1	Amazon.com	93	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2	Independents	91	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
3	Costco	90	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4	Kohl's	87	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
5	Bed Bath & Beyond	87	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6	Sam's Club	86	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
7	Macy's	86	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8	Lowe's	85	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
9	Sears	83	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
10	Home Depot	82	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
11	Target	82	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12	Best Buy	80	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
13	Walmart	78	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○



Guide to the Ratings

The Ratings are based on 18,226 subscribers to ConsumerReports.org who reported on 25,964 appliance-purchase experiences in the 2011 Consumer Reports National Research Center Appliance Retailer Satisfaction Survey. Respondents might not be representative of the U.S. population. Major appliances include ranges, refrigerators, washers, dryers, and others; small appliances include air conditioners, grills, vacuum cleaners, and others. **Reader score** reflects readers' assessments of their overall buying experience and is not limited to factors under **survey results**. A score of 100 would mean all respondents had been completely satisfied; 80 would mean very satisfied, on average; 60, fairly well satisfied. Differences of fewer than 4 points are not meaningful. Displayed scores are rounded; stores are listed in order of reader score. **Price, selection, product quality, service, checkout ease, shipping, installation, and haul-away** were rated on a scale from very poor to excellent. Scores for service are based on ratings of contact with company staff except for Amazon.com, which reflects customer ratings of Web customer support. Small-appliance and major-appliance results are not directly comparable due to differences in methodology. "—" signifies not applicable or insufficient sample size.



ROCK STAR Armstrong's Alterna Mesa Stone Canyon Sun, \$5.50 per square foot, adds style to vinyl's durability.

Flooring

12 top picks include a vinyl you'll swear is stone

VINYL ISN'T ONLY the best-selling flooring at retailers; it also stood up to our battery of everyday abuse better than any other flooring. Our latest tests found a new top pick that blends the toughness of vinyl with the natural look and feel of slate for a fraction of the price.

Armstrong's Alterna Mesa Stone Canyon Sun, \$5.50 per square foot, mimics the real stuff right down to its dappled colors and random textures. Yet it delivers the wear and damage resistance that makes vinyl our top-rated flooring overall. And like many vinyls, it comes in tiles that are easier to trim and install than traditional sheets.

We tested more than 40 products and found 11 other winners, including an oak flooring that fended off the effects of foot traffic almost as well as the best vinyls and laminates. But after we subjected flooring to months of scuffs, scratches, stains,

dropped weights, and intense UV light, we discovered that many woods, and even some vinyl and laminate floors, can wilt under life's daily grind. We also found that some bamboo and other "green" floors could have you seeing red. Here are the details:

Wood that's worse for wear. We mimic floor wear with repeated passes under an abrasion machine, checking the finish fre-

quently to spot changes when they occur. The Bruce Dundee solid oak, \$5.70 per square foot, continues to outclass most other floorings at keeping its luster. But Lumber Liquidators Bellawood, a previous pick, dropped off our list with the same sub-par foot-traffic performance that brought down most other woods and bamboos.

Fakes that aren't so fabulous. Plastic-laminate floors use a photo of natural materials beneath a plastic wear layer. Pergo XP Grand Oak, \$3.50 per square foot, is among the newly tested entries in that group and comes from the top-selling brand. But like most others, it was unimpressive at resisting dents and the effects of foot traffic.

Five steps to savings

Save on retailers' mistakes. Discounters such as iFloor (ifloor.com) and Lumber Liquidators (lumberliquidators.com) buy directly from manufacturers and sometimes offer deals on overstocked flooring.

Turn damaged goods into an asset. You can often save on opened or damaged boxes and flooring with minor flaws.

Don't overbuy. Determine the room's square footage by multiplying length by

width. Then keep to 10 percent the extra you buy to account for the unexpected.

See it in person. Paying for samples costs far less than buying flooring that looks great in a catalog or online—and miserable once it's installed in your kitchen.

Prep it yourself. Even if you hire a pro, you can save hundreds by tearing off old flooring, leveling the subfloor, and removing any baseboard that's in the way.

Another laminate, DuPont Real Touch Elite Sand Hickory, \$3.40 per square foot, mimics distressed wood down to the knots but fell down when it came to performance.

Green floors that didn't cut it. Bamboo is considered renewable because it's a fast-growing grass. The best bamboo floorings tested are stranded products such as the EcoTimber solid and Teragren engineered flooring, which are made of fibers that are shredded and compressed for strength. But Lumber Liquidators' Morning Star solid bamboo was unimpressive despite that process. Cork floors are made of tree bark in a process that doesn't kill trees. The Wicanders Corkcomfort Floating HPS we've tested before did relatively well and had a thick plastic top layer; it's still available. The Corkcomfort Series 100 Natural WRT in this year's report lets more of the natural cork show. But it lacks the thick plastic coating and fared worse, especially in our UV-fading tests.

How to choose

Federal anti-dumping duties as high as 85 percent could dramatically increase the price of some Chinese engineered-wood and laminate products later this year. The good news for buyers is that any price hikes won't affect any of our top picks. Here's what else to keep in mind before buying:

Know how rough you'll be. The best products in every category were also the best overall in our simulated foot-traffic tests. For less busy kitchens, you may want to consider the top engineered wood or bamboo, with its blend of natural veneer and easy installation.

Pick a factory finish. Prefinished wood and bamboo floors cost about 40 percent more than unfinished products. But you're likely to save overall because a factory finish tends to last longer—and paying a pro to apply the finish adds costs, mess, and hassle. Factory finishes are also warranted by the manufacturer.

Check for certification. Vinyl floors with the industry's FloorScore certification emit relatively low levels of volatile organic compounds, substances linked to health problems and pollution. All vinyl we recommend has that certification. For wood flooring, certification by the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative offers some assurance that it comes from responsibly managed forests, a plus for the planet. The product and manufacturer must be certified; check the packaging.

What you pay, what you get

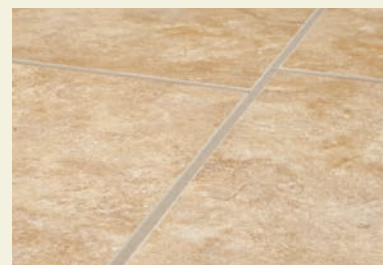


▶ Solid wood or bamboo

Best for natural warmth. Solid flooring can usually be sanded and refinished multiple times.

But most tend to dent easily, an issue for households with children. Several changed color under UV light. All are challenging to install.

PRICE \$5 to \$10 per square foot.*



▶ Vinyl

Best for practicality and easy installation. Many products resist wear from foot traffic, moisture, dents, stains, and sun, with tiles and strips doing best. Some look more like stone than older versions do.

But even the best still look like vinyl up close.

PRICE \$2 to \$6 per square foot.*

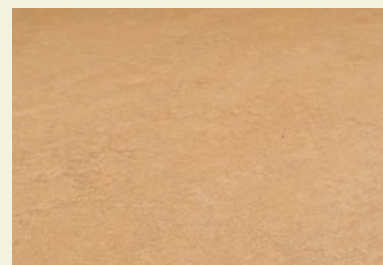


▶ Engineered wood or bamboo

Best for easy installation with natural warmth. This veneer over substrate can usually be nailed, stapled, or glued in place—or snapped together and floated without fasteners or glue. Many products of this type can be refinished once.

But it can be damaged by spills, usually shows wear quickly, and dents easily.

PRICE \$4 to \$9 per square foot.*

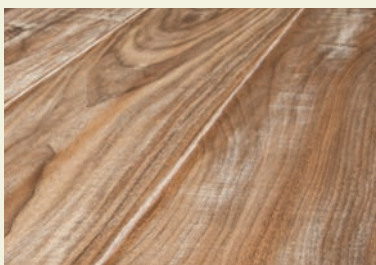


▶ Linoleum

Best for those who want a natural, resilient surface and lots of style choices. All we tested resisted stains and especially sun exposure. Some added other strengths to those virtues.

But all fell down in at least one of our tough tests. Vinyl tiles offer more choices and better performance overall.

PRICE \$4 to \$9 per square foot.*

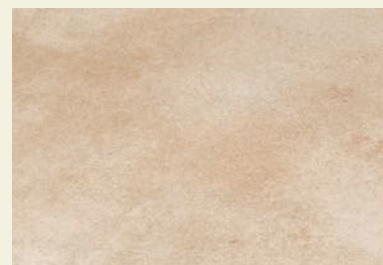


▶ Plastic laminate

Best for toughness, lots of styles, and easy installation. It can mimic a variety of natural materials and can usually be floated. The best wears well. And all resist stains and sunlight.

But it can be damaged by big spills. Most dent relatively easily, and plastic laminate can't be refinished.

PRICE \$3 to \$7 per square foot.*



▶ Ceramic tile

Best for kitchen projects that have a bigger budget. This natural material offers an array of styles and colors. And it tends to resist wear and most typical kitchen damage.

But it's difficult to install. Dropped items can crack it and break on its hard surface, and grout can stain.

PRICE \$8 to \$15 per square foot.*

*Price includes installation.

Overview

Flooring that made our winners list usually resisted wear from foot traffic as well as scratches and stains better than others in that category. But dents were a challenge for most. We focus below on top picks with specific strengths, value, or both. All prices are per square foot.

✓ **CR Best Buy** These blend overall durability and value. All are recommended.

✓ **Recommended** These high-scoring floorings stand out from the crowd for the reasons below.

BEST SOLID WOOD

A1 EcoTimber \$5.90

A2 Mullican \$6.30

A3 Bruce \$5.70

A1 is a stranded bamboo that's typically denser than solid strips and is among the few non-vinyl floors that resists dents. For oak, choose **A2** if fading and scratches are an issue and **A3** for its stellar resistance to foot traffic.

REAL WOOD, EASIER INSTALLATION

B1 Teragren \$6

B2 Armstrong \$6

These layer wood or bamboo over a sublayer and often install without glue or fasteners. Choose **B1** if you like bamboo and need the added resistance to stains and fading. **B2** resists foot traffic and scratches similarly to **B1**—but skip it if fading and frequent stains are a concern.

BEST LAMINATES

C1 Armstrong \$3.50

C2 Quick-Step \$4

C3 Surface Source \$1 **CR Best Buy**

Plastic laminates usually put a photo of wood or stone under a plastic wear layer. **C1** is tops for its superb performance. **C2** looked especially authentic, and **C3** is a clear value.

FOR A SOFTER FEEL UNDERFOOT

D1 Congoleum \$5

D2 Armstrong \$5.50

E1 Armstrong \$4.50 **CR Best Buy**

Tiles or planks make all of these floorings easier to install than sheets. For vinyl, choose **D1** for its superb stain resistance and **D2** for its authentic appearance. **E1** offers the natural materials in linoleum.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is based mainly on resistance to foot traffic, scratches, dents, stains, sunlight, moisture, and slips. Moisture resistance (not shown) is based on a damp sponge left overnight (minor spills) and soaked samples (long exposure). **Foot traffic** is how quickly surface wear was noticeable using an abrasion machine. **Scratches** denote ability to resist damage from simulated dragged object. **Dents** is resistance to blunt and pointed objects dropped from different heights. **Sunlight (UV)** is resistance to color change after more than 300 hours of high ultraviolet levels. **Price per square foot** is based mainly on price paid. **Square feet per box** is as claimed.

Ratings Flooring

All tested products In performance order, within types.

✓ **CR Best Buy**
 ✓ **Recommended**
 ● Excellent
 ● Very good
 ○ Good
 ○ Fair
 ● Poor

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price (sq. ft.)	Sq. ft. (box)	Overall score	Test results
		All engineered-wood, plastic-laminate, and linoleum products can be floated unless otherwise indicated.				Foot traffic Scratches Stains Dents Sunlight (UV)
					0 100	P F G V E

A PREFINISHED SOLID WOOD Usually nailed to a subfloor at grade or above.

✓	1	EcoTimber Woven Honey WBH061 ¹	\$5.90	23	78	● ● ● ● ● ●
✓	2	Mullican St. Andrews Solid Oak Strip 10930	6.30	24	69	○ ● ● ● ● ●
✓	3	Bruce Dundee Plank CB1210	5.70	22	62	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	4	Natural Floors by USFloors Bamboo Woven Strand 602WSS ¹	4.00	23	58	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	5	Noble House Solid Oak Gunstock FC3410	3.50	21	56	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	6	Lumber Liquidators Bellawood Natural Red Oak	4.40	40	54	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	7	Teragren Signature Naturals Horizontal Flat Natural PF-FGN-MPL ¹	7.00	22	53	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	8	Lumber Liquidators Morning Star Strand Natural ¹	3.90	17	51	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	9	Lauzon Classics Northern Red Oak Natural R0020225	6.40	20	50	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	10	The Woods Company Eco-nomical Antique Oak	8.00	varies	49	○ ● ● ● ● ●

B ENGINEERED WOOD Can usually be nailed or stapled anywhere in the house. Some can float.

✓	1	Teragren Synergy Strand with Xcora Java ¹	6.00	23	73	○ ● ● ● ● ●
✓	2	Armstrong Century Farm Hickory Natural GCH452NALG	6.00	28	61	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	3	Home Legend Hand Scraped Oak Gunstock Click-Lock HL16 (Home Depot)	3.40	21	59	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	4	Shaw Epic Hardwood Symphonic SW119-774 Red Oak Natural	7.25	20	55	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	5	Armstrong Premier Performance Red Oak Natural EHP3000	8.00	28	53	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	6	Mannington American Hardwoods American Oak Plank	4.00	36	51	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	7	Mohawk Pastoria Red Oak Natural HCC27-10 (Home Depot)	4.30	29	50	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	8	Harris Wood Traditions Solid Red Oak Natural HS70200K33 ²	4.00	20	45	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	9	Natural Floors by USFloors Bamboo 609LS ¹	3.30	17	43	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	10	Wicanders Corkcomfort Series 100 WRT Natural 0801007 ³	7.00	23	41	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	11	Duluth Timber Engineered Mixed Grain Douglas Fir	11.00	⁴	38	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	12	Home Legend Lisbon Natural HL9311LN (Home Depot) ³	3.50	23	34	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	13	Lisbon Cork Evora ³	4.00	13	32	○ ● ● ● ● ●

C PLASTIC LAMINATE Can usually be floated anywhere in the house.

✓	1	Armstrong Coastal Living L3051 White Wash Walnut	3.50	14	87	○ ● ● ● ● ●
✓	2	Quick-Step Perspectives Ansel Oak UF1259	4.00	16	75	○ ● ● ● ● ●
✓	3	Surface Source Winchester Oak 2765 (Lowe's)	1.00	24	74	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	4	Pergo Accolade Rustic Oak PJ2627	3.00	18	61	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	5	Pergo XP Grand Oak LF000326 (Home Depot)	3.50	20	60	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	6	SwiftLock Plus Acappella Jatoba LX60300842 (Lowe's)	3.00	13	56	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	7	Home Legend Jatoba HL89 (Home Depot)	3.00	13	53	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	8	DuPont Real Touch Elite Sand Hickory 635350 (Home Depot)	3.40	19	44	○ ● ● ● ● ●

D VINYL Can usually be glued anywhere in the house.

✓	1	Congoleum DuraCeramic Sierra Slate SI-74 Golden Greige	5.00	17	92	○ ● ● ● ● ●
✓	2	Armstrong Alterna Mesa Stone Canyon Sun D4112	5.50	25	90	○ ● ● ● ● ●
✓	3	Armstrong LUXE Plank Timber Bay Barnyard Gray A6861	5.50	24	80	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	4	Mannington Adura Essex Oak Natural AW511	5.00	15	78	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	5	Tarkett NAFCO PermaStone Collection Natural Slate Sand Stone NS-660	4.70	27	77	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	6	TrafficMaster Allure Ultra Vintage Oak Cinnamon 517115 (Home Depot)	3.00	20	63	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	7	Armstrong StrataMax Best Distressed Hickory 12 X3540	3.40	⁵	47	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	8	Congoleum Pacesetter	2.00	⁵	37	○ ● ● ● ● ●

E LINOLEUM Can usually be glued or floated anywhere in the house.

✓	1	Armstrong Marmorette Oak Brown LP066 ²	4.50	⁵	62	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	2	Forbo Marmoleum Click	8.00	7	41	○ ● ● ● ● ●
	3	Nova Linoleum Klick 6615	6.00	18	34	○ ● ● ● ● ●

¹ Bamboo product. ² Cannot be floated. ³ Cork product. ⁴ Not applicable; custom-milled to order. ⁵ Not applicable; comes in sheets.

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Countertops

Stylish and strong options fit every budget

GORGEOUS MATERIALS are easy to fall in love with in the showroom. Options include classics such as granite and marble and new surfaces such as quartz, recycled glass, and bamboo. But will your choice end up breaking your heart and your budget? Not if you use our advice.

We stained, sliced, scratched, scorched, and nicked 14 materials from leading brands to see which ones will continue to look good year after year. Except for recycled glass, we found huge differences in materials but little variation among brands. That's why we've rated materials, not brands. Use our Ratings, and these do's and don'ts, to find the materials that work best for you:

Don't rely on tiny samples, online pictures, or a brochure. You can start with apps and design tools, but then take home the largest samples available. Natural

stone can vary tremendously from store samples, so go to the stone yard and pick the piece. Once you've found one you love, reserve it. It might be difficult to find a similar-looking slab when you return.

Don't be afraid to mix materials or colors for added interest and savings, especially in a big kitchen. Select a more durable or less expensive material for heavily used areas, for example, and a less durable one as an accent or focal point on, say, an island.

Don't forget about details. Matte and grain finishes help conceal stains and scratches in stainless steel better than polished finishes. Quartz and granite performed similarly regardless of the finish. Always ask about seams and edges. Seams between pieces of solid surfacing are almost invisible; other materials have more prominent seams. Rounded edges are less likely to chip. Straight and beveled edges

Some types can take more wear and tear

1. Quartz

Price \$40 to \$100 per square foot. \$2,240 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen*.

Best for busy kitchens and bathrooms. It's stain- and heat-resistant and low-maintenance. It doesn't need sealing and is available in vibrant colors and in styles that mimic natural stone.

But edges and corners can chip. Rounded edges help. Stone finishes can appear more uniform than natural.

2. Granite

Price \$40 to \$100 per square foot. \$2,240 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen.

Best for a natural stone look. It can withstand heavy use in a kitchen or bathroom. It resists stains when it's properly sealed. It also resists heat and scratches.

But it can chip and needs resealing to protect it from stains. Look can differ from samples, so it's best to choose at the stone yard.

3. Recycled glass

Price \$60 to \$120 per square foot. \$3,360 to \$6,720 for a typical kitchen.

Best for a contemporary look when it's made with large shards, or it can resemble solid surfacing when it's finely ground. Resistant to heat, cuts, and scratches.

But chips and stains can be a problem. Unlike other recycled-glass counters we tested, Cosentino's Eco line developed a thin crack during our heat tests.

4. Laminate

Price \$10 to \$40 per square foot. \$560 to \$2,240 for a typical kitchen

Best for a wide variety of colors and patterns at a budget-friendly price. It's excellent at resisting stains and heat damage and is simple to install.

But it's easily scratched by knives and can't be repaired. Most laminates have visible seams, though (seamless) options are available.

5. Tile (ceramic or porcelain)

Price \$5 to \$30 per square foot. \$280 to \$1,680 for a typical kitchen.

Best for use near stoves because it's heat-resistant. It comes in many colors and patterns.

But it chips. The grout between tiles stains, even when it's sealed, and can mildew. Poor installation can increase those problems. Thinner grout lines and darker grout might help.

6. Solid surfacing

Price \$35 to \$100 per square foot. \$1,960 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen.

give counters a more modern look, and an S-shaped curve called an ogee offers a more traditional feel. Some edges don't add to cost; others do.

Do consider resale value. You don't need to be a slave to buyers' expectations, but be aware of them. "Tile is a cleaning nightmare," says Tom Ceponis of Howard Hanna Real Estate Services in Pittsburgh. "Women run out of homes with it."

Do have the installer measure. Have the fabricator make final measurements and take responsibility for their accuracy. Make sure the contract lists counter thickness and finish, and fees for sink and faucet cutouts, edges, backsplash, and removal of old counters.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT MATERIAL

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for video.



Guide to the Ratings

Overall score summarizes performance in all tests. **Stains** shows resistance to 20 common foods and household products. **Cutting** reflects resistance to damage from weighted chef's and serrated knives used in slicing and chopping motions. **Heat** gauges how well materials resisted damage and

discoloration from a pot filled with oil heated to 400° F. **Abrasion** is resistance to damage from a weighted sanding block. **Impact** reflects ability to withstand blunt and pointed weights dropped from up to 3½ feet. **Price** is the usual range per square foot, including installation.

Ratings Countertops

All tested materials In performance order.

● Excellent
● Very good
○ Good
○ Fair
● Poor

Material	Price per sq. ft.	Overall score	Test results				
			Resists				
			Stains	Cutting	Heat	Abrasion	Impact
Quartz (engineered stone)	\$40-\$100	84	●	●	●	●	●
Granite	40-100	81	●	●	●	●	●
Recycled glass (penetrating sealer) ¹	60-120	69	○	●	●	●	●
Laminate	10-40	68	●	○	●	○	●
Tile (ceramic and porcelain)	5-30	67	●	●	●	○	○
Solid surfacing	35-100	53	○	○	●	○	●
Soapstone (mineral oil finish)	50-100	46	○	○	●	○	○
Concrete (penetrating sealer)	60-120	40	○	○	●	○	○
Concrete (topical sealer)	60-120	39	●	○	○	○	○
Stainless steel	50-150	39	○	○	●	○	○
Butcher block (varnished)	40-100	37	●	○	○	○	○
Paper composite ²	30-100	34	○	○	○	○	○
Limestone	50-100	27	○	○	○	○	○
Butcher block (oil finish)	40-100	24	○	○	○	○	○
Marble	50-150	14	○	○	○	○	○
Bamboo (beeswax/mineral oil finish)	40-100	10	○	○	○	○	○

¹ Unlike other brands, Cosentino's Eco line of recycled-glass counters developed a thin crack during our heat tests and was excluded from the Ratings. ² Only Richlite's product was tested. Results for other brands may vary.

Best for seamless installations, especially in bathrooms. Many colors and styles are available, including those that mimic concrete, stone, and quartz. It's stain-resistant, and small nicks and scratches can be repaired. **But** it's easily scratched. Stone finishes can look more uniform than natural.

7. Soapstone

Price \$50 to \$100 per square foot.

\$2,800 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen.

Best for adding the beauty of stone to a low-traffic kitchen. It withstands heat very well, and small scratches can be repaired. Slabs vary, so go to a stone yard.

But it's easily sliced, scratched, and nicked. Stain resistance is so-so, and it needs to be periodically rubbed with mineral oil.

8. Concrete

Price \$60 to \$120 per square foot.

\$3,360 to \$6,720 for a typical kitchen.

Best for customizing. It can be dyed or textured.

But it can develop cracks. Its durability depends on the fabricator's skill and the sealers used. Topical sealers, which resist stains but not heat, are best for bathrooms. Penetrating sealers resist heat but not stains and must be reapplied.

9. Stainless steel

Price \$50 to \$150 per square foot.

\$2,800 to \$8,400 for a typical kitchen.

Best for a modern kitchen. It repels stains and heat and doesn't rust or discolor. The countertop can be made with an integral sink for a seamless look.

But it shows fingerprints, and it dents and scratches easily. Matte or grain finishes hide damage better. Stainless steel can look cold in a bathroom.

10. Butcher block

Price \$40 to \$100 per square foot.

\$2,240 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen.

Best for a country kitchen and for cutting produce. It's easy to install and repair.

But it might need periodic sealing or refinishing to remove cuts, dings, and scratches. Its finish affects performance. Varnish improves stain resistance, and penetrating oils decrease it.

11. Limestone

Price \$50 to \$100 per square foot.

\$2,800 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen.

Best for a natural stone look without heavy veining or graining in a low-traffic kitchen, guest bathroom, or powder room. It withstands heat very well.

But it's a very soft stone that is easily sliced, nicked, and scratched. It's also porous, so it stains easily, even when it's properly sealed.

12. Marble

Price \$50 to \$150 per square foot.

\$2,800 to \$8,400 for a typical kitchen.

Best for a classic stone look in low-traffic areas, such as a baking zone or a guest bathroom. It's available in a wide range of natural colors.

But it's more porous than granite, so it's not as stain-resistant. It also scratches easily, isn't very heat-resistant, and needs to be resealed periodically to help ward off stains.

13. Bamboo

Price \$40 to \$100 per square foot.

\$2,240 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen.

Best for show rather than daily use. It's available in several styles, including a parquet pattern.

But it's easily stained, scorched, sliced, and nicked. The maker might warn against using it around a sink because moisture can warp the material. It might darken over time.

*Prices include installation.
A typical kitchen needs 56 square feet.

Kitchen sinks

Stainless steel outshines the rest

INEXPENSIVE AND VIRTUALLY indestructible, stainless-steel sinks aced most of our tests. We found little difference between one that cost \$115 and another that cost \$420. Our tests of five other sink materials, including solid surfacing and acrylic, found that you may need to be more careful to avoid stains and damage from hot pots and sharp knives.

We compared thick, heavy-gauge stainless with thinner versions, and heavy cast iron with lightweight acrylic and trendy fireclay. For months we stained, scoured, dropped objects, and put hot pots in 18 double-bowl sinks from big brands including American Standard, Elkay, Franke, and Kohler. We found that the manufacturer wasn't as important as the material, which is why the Ratings are listed by material. Here's what else we found:

Finish matters more than thickness. We tested 18- to 23-gauge stainless-steel sinks. (The lower the gauge, the thicker the steel.) Contrary to what some companies claim, we found that expensive, thicker-gauge stainless didn't necessarily hold up better than thinner versions. They all withstood stains from common foods, cleaning products, and drain cleaners. They also resisted heat and dings, though they did dent when we dropped a 5-pound weight—similar to a heavy pot—from a height of as little as 4 inches. Sound-absorbing pads on the sink's exterior bottom and sides minimized the noise of

running water better than spray-on sound-insulating coatings. And sinks with polished or glossy surfaces showed scratches and stains more than those with matte or random grain finishes.

Color requires compromises. You can add color to your kitchen by choosing a sink made of solid surfacing, enameled steel, enameled cast iron, acrylic, or fireclay. But each material has a weakness. Almost all were dented, dinged, or slight-

The material matters more than brand or price.

ly chipped in our impact tests. Fireclay fared even worse, cracking significantly after our toughest drop tests. The acrylic sinks didn't chip but they did melt slightly when we "accidentally" left a hot pot in them, leaving a visible mark. Solid-surfacing sinks were also damaged in that test, but the mark was barely noticeable.

How to choose

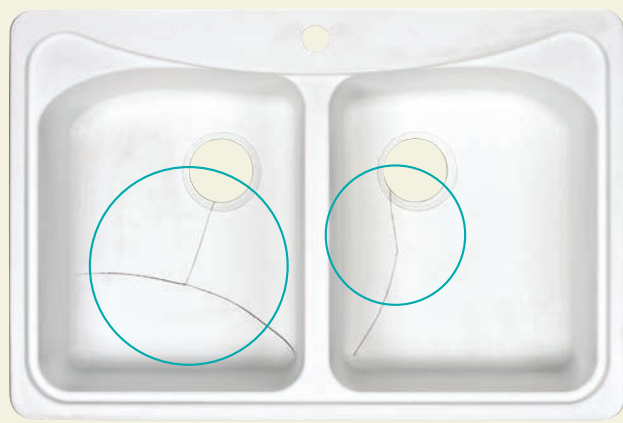
If you're keeping your current countertop and faucet, your new sink will need to match the old sink's cutout area and the number of faucet holes. If you're replacing all three, keep these points in mind:

Consider the style. Drop-in sinks, also called top mounts or self-rimming sinks,

fit in the counter and can be used with any countertop material. They're also the simplest to install. Undermount sinks, which are installed beneath the counter, require waterproof countertop materials, such as stone or solid surfacing. Seamless installations, where the sink and counter are made of the same material, have a nice clean look. But because they're made as a unit, if the sink or counter is damaged you'll have



► CLOSE-UP



Composite sinks

They didn't look like granite. They didn't feel like granite. They didn't even look like each other, though both were supposed to be composite granite sinks, a mixture of mostly granite and other unnamed ingredients, according to one manufacturer. And the two sinks performed very differently in our tests.

One, the Blanco 441258 (shown), \$290, cracked so severely during our blunt-impact test that it became unusable. (In that test, we dropped a 5-pound weight to simulate what happens when you drop a heavy pot.) The other, the Mont Blanc Waterbrook 79415Q, \$200, excelled in the blunt-impact test but was slightly damaged in our heat-resistance test. There was also some variation between the two sinks when it came to resisting stains. Because of those inconsistencies, we decided to keep this material out of our Ratings. So if you want a piece of the rock, stick to granite counters.



to replace both. Apron-front (or farmhouse) sinks usually have a single deep basin with an exposed front. They typically require a special sink cabinet, but now some Kohler models can be dropped into existing cabinets. Tile-in sinks have flat edges and square corners and can be mounted at the same level as tile countertops.

Pick a bowl. Double-bowl sinks let you soak a pot in one bowl while you rinse in the other. Just be sure that at least one of the bowls is wide enough to fit large pots or roasters. The easiest way to do that is to take one with you to the store. Or consider a double-bowl sink with one large bowl and a smaller one. A single large bowl may be better for smaller spaces.

Rectangular-shaped sinks are standard. D-shaped bowls have a curved back and offer more space front to back. Rear drains provide for more usable storage space in the sink cabinet but will probably require additional plumbing.

Think about depth. Sinks are usually 6 to 12 inches deep. Deeper models reduce splashes but it might be uncomfortable to reach the bottom. Remember that under-mounted sinks will be up to 1½ inches lower than a drop-in.

Spouting off: Kitchen faucets

What's the difference between an \$80 faucet and one that costs \$600? Besides style, not much, according to our past tests. That's because all but the cheapest faucets now come with better valves, tougher finishes, and lifetime warranties against leaks and stains.

We tested single-handle faucets, most with pullout spouts that combine spray head and spout. But our findings are applicable to other types of faucets, too. PVD (physical vapor deposition) finishes, available on nickel, bronze, and other faucets, were the toughest and resisted scratching, though drain cleaners and other corrosives can stain them slightly. Chrome was pretty durable, too, although a heavy-duty scouring pad can leave scratches. Just use common sense when cleaning these faucets and they'll stay scratch- and stain-free.

How to choose

Single-lever faucets take up less counter space. But we found that side-mounted single levers weren't

as easy to use because there might be less clearance from the backsplash. So you might bang your knuckles as you turn the handle. Straight-spout faucets are compact and often inexpensive, but you might need to move the faucet to fit a big pot underneath. Gooseneck models have higher clearances but they can cause splashing if your sink is shallow. Single-lever faucets that can be turned off without losing the last temperature setting are more convenient than those that require you to reset the temp every time you turn them on.

Whatever style you choose, keep the faucet proportional; a small faucet looks silly with a large sink and vice versa. Also make sure that the faucet head swings enough to reach the entire sink and that the faucet has a lifetime warranty against leaks and stains.



Ratings Sinks

All tested materials In performance order.

● Excellent
● Very good
○ Good
○ Fair
● Poor

Material	Price	Overall score	Resists					
			Stains	Abrasion	Sharp impact	Blunt impact	Heat	Noise
		0 100 P F G V E						
Stainless steel	\$100-\$600	83	●	●	●	○	●	○
Solid surfacing	200-500	80	●	●	○	●	●	●
Enameled steel	100-350	77	●	●	●	●	●	●
Enameled cast iron	150-450	74	○	●	●	●	●	●
Acrylic	75-200	71	●	●	●	●	●	○
Fireclay	550-800	66	●	●	●	●	●	○

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score summarizes performance in all tests. **Stains** shows resistance to 15 common foods and cleaning products. **Abrasion** reflects resistance to damage from nylon and metal scouring pads. **Impact** shows resistance to damage from blunt and sharp objects dropped from up to 20 inches. **Heat** gauges resistance to damage from a pot filled with oil and heated to 400° F. **Noise** is based on sound transmission from a stream of water and the impact of a sharp metal object. Our tests for sink and countertop materials are different, which is why the scores of materials may vary. **Price** is approximate retail.



Cooking appliances

More than 60 top-scoring models smoke some pricey pros

OUR LATEST TESTS of more than 250 ranges, cooktops, wall ovens, and microwaves served up a smorgasbord of choices that outperform models from Viking, Wolf, and other big names for hundreds or even thousands of dollars less. And if you want added features or the commercial style of a “pro” range, we have some money-saving options.

Electric smoothtop ranges sell the most overall and are tops in performance and value. GE’s new JB650DTWW, a CR Best Buy at \$700, blends superb heating and simmering with a large oven and a cooktop warming zone that keeps the vegetables warm while you cook the main course. Prefer a gas range? Frigidaire’s Gallery FGC3032 is also a CR Best Buy, at \$800. It blends impressive cooking with five burners instead

of the usual four, plus a spacious oven with convection and a temperature probe.

Our gamut of heating and cooking tests also served up two lower-priced induction cooktops and some winning microwaves. But whether you’re spending a little or a lot on your next appliance, we found it’s easy to get burned. Here are the details:

Ranges: Some “bargains” aren’t. Hotpoint’s new gas RGB 790DER may seem

Ranges vs. cooktop and wall-oven combos

Stand-alone range

Best for economy. Spending more buys slide-in, stainless, dual-fuel, and pro-style models, including those wider than 30 inches.

But all lack the placement flexibility of a separate cooktop and wall oven. Pro-style and dual-fuel ranges are pricier without necessarily being better; some pro-style brands have been repair-prone.

Price \$450 and up.



Cooktop and wall oven

Best for separate cooking areas. Some cooktop and oven combos can cost less than some stand-alone ranges, especially pro-style models.

But a separate cooktop and wall oven cost more to install than a stand-alone range. You’ll also find a growing number of stylish and capable ranges for less than you’d pay for many of the cooktop and wall-oven combos.

Price \$1,500 and up for both.



like a deal at just \$500. But mediocre baking plus subpar broiling and oven cleaning kept it out of our winners' circle. Unimpressive broiling also dinged the gas GE JGB600SET, \$800, despite its superb simmering and baking. Looking to go pro? A \$500 discount makes the 30-inch Viking VGSC5304B, \$5,000, slightly less pricey, and a factory fix for a misrouted wiring harness means we no longer consider it a Don't Buy: Performance Problem. But its baking is still subpar and its oven is small. A better bet: The 30-inch dual-fuel Kenmore Pro 7952, \$3,400. Although none of those smaller pro-style ranges made our top picks, the Kenmore did relatively well in our tests.

Cooktops: Induction prices drop. Induction ranges and cooktops heat roughly 25 percent faster than conventional electric smoothtop models, using an electromagnetic field that heats mostly the pot or pan. Among cooktops, Kenmore's new 43820 model, \$1,600, leads that stellar field for hundreds of dollars less than some we tested. Almost as good: The brand's 43800 cooktop, which costs just \$1,300.

Wall ovens: Spending more buys less. Bosch's HBL54[50]UC, \$1,900, baked and broiled impressively and includes plenty of usable space. Paying more than twice that price for Wolf's E-Series SO30-2F/S buys 10 cooking modes and a cobalt-blue interior, along with less space and less-even baking. You can also pay less and get less oven: Kenmore's new 48839, \$900, proved shy on performance and capacity.

Microwave ovens: Some leave us cold. Kenmore's new Elite 8600, \$620, joins our top picks with superb auto defrosting, easy programming, and quiet heating. But defrosting was just middling for the Dacor PMOR3021S, \$1,000, and subpar for the \$700 Professional Series KO30PROX

And the biggest losers are ...

Overall scores of just 40 or less put some cooking appliances at the bottom of our Ratings. Lowest of all: the \$2,400 Bertazzoni A30 4GGV XE pro-style gas range, where subpar performance in our simmering and baking tests helped earn it a score of just 24 overall. Here are the others on that list:

Ranges

KitchenAid Architect Series KGRS807S

Lackluster usable oven capacity and poor cooktop simmering in our tests put this \$1,700 gas range below other conventional 30-inch gas models.

American Range ARR30A

None of the 30-inch pro-style models made our winner's list. Subpar broiling and simmering put this \$3,600 model near the bottom of this lackluster bunch.

BlueStar RNB304BSS

Poor simmering and broiling helped put this \$3,700 model a notch below even the

low-scoring American Range ARR30A among 30-inch pro-style ranges.

Cooktops

Whirlpool Gold GLT3657R At \$800, this 36-inch gas cooktop costs less than most we tested. But you pay for those savings at the store with mediocre heating speed and poor simmering in your kitchen.

Wall ovens

Whirlpool GBS309PV If a wall oven isn't impressive at baking or broiling, what's the point? This 30-inch electric model was lousy at both tasks in our tests and proved relatively shy on usable space.

from Bertazzoni, which also scored low among 30-inch pro-style ranges.

How to choose

Love steaks? Choose a range or wall oven that did well in our broiling tests. And if you're sweet on desserts, look for models with strong baking scores. A roomy range or wall oven also helps if you entertain often; we measure space you can actually use. Then keep these tips in mind:

Focus on convenience. Look for at least one high-powered burner or element for quick heating. Expandable electric elements let you match their size to the pot or pan. Ranges and wall ovens with at least five rack positions provide added flexibility when cooking on more than one rack, and models with dual ovens can roast a turkey and bake a pie at the same time.

Reap the savings. You'll find more promotions, rebates, and even free delivery

and haul away as retailers battle it out in a tough market. Examples include the moving and military discounts at Lowe's, along with price-match offers if you find the same model online or elsewhere. GE and Whirlpool have online outlet stores that sell discontinued models and sometimes include free shipping.

Don't buy by Btu. Short for British thermal unit, range and cooktop Btu are often a selling point at the store. But that measure merely indicates the amount of gas used and heat generated, not performance. Indeed, higher Btu haven't guaranteed faster heating in our tests.

HOW TO BUY THE RIGHT RANGE

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for video.



Over-the-range microwaves vs. range hoods

Microwave oven

Best for convenience and saving counter space. Many have convection and speed-cook features, and most have a sensor that helps avoid under- or overcooking by basing the cook time on the amount of steam the food emits.

But none of the over-the-range microwave ovens we tested could match the smoke-clearing ability of an effective range hood.

Price \$170 and up.



Range hood

Best for venting smoke, fumes, and heat. Today's offer more style. Many stainless hoods cost less than \$1,000.

But you must find countertop or other space for a microwave oven if you use one in your cooking. Good undercabinet and wall-chimney range hoods often cost \$800 or less, but island models for venting cooktops often cost \$2,000 or more.

Price \$225 and up.



Overview

Among our top picks, models listed below offer special strengths, value, or both.

- ✓ **CR Best Buy** These blend performance and value. All are recommended.
- ✓ **Recommended** These models meet our performance standards and are all fine choices.

ELECTRIC RANGES

A4 Kenmore \$950

A5 Maytag \$1,600

A7 GE \$700 **CR Best Buy**

B1 GE \$650

A4 includes convection at a low price; **A5** adds a double oven. **A7** has expandable elements and a warming zone for less than most smoothtops. Consider **B1** if you prefer a coil-top model.

GAS RANGES

D1 GE \$1,500

D4 Frigidaire \$800 **CR Best Buy**

D7 Electrolux \$2,200

Relatively fast cooktop heating helped put **D1** on top. **D4** includes a convection mode, temperature probe, and center burner at a low price. **D7** adds dual ovens and better broiling.

DUAL-FUEL AND PRO-STYLE MODELS

D5 KitchenAid \$2,200

E1 KitchenAid \$6,000

E3 Thermador \$6,000

D5 is the only 30-inch, dual-fuel range that made our list of picks. Also consider the 30-inch Kenmore Pro 7952, \$3,400, if you want a pro-style range for less than most models. Among 36-inch ranges, **E1** topped our scores for dual-fuel ranges, **E3** for all-gas models.

FOR THE SPEED OF INDUCTION

C3 Samsung \$1,700

This range delivers top performance for less than most induction models. But you'll need magnetic cookware for the technology to work.

Ratings Ranges

Recommended models only From 123 tested.

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- ✓ CR Best Buy
- ✓ Recommended

		Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results					Features		
Rec.	Rank	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model. Bracketed letters or numbers are color codes.			Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Oven cleaning	Second oven/ cooking drawer	Convection
					0 100	P	F	I	G	V	G	E

A 30-INCH SMOOTHTOP

✓	1	Kenmore 92163 97103	\$1,480	87	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	2	GE Cafe C5980SN[SS]	2,600	86	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
✓	3	GE PB920STSS	1,700	85	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	4	Kenmore 92803	950	84	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	5	Maytag MET8885X[S]	1,600	83	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	●
✓	6	Electrolux EW30EF65G[W]	2,300	83	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	7	GE JB650DTWW JB655DTWW	700	81	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	8	LG LDE3015ST	1,300	81	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	9	LG LRE3012ST	850	81	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

B 30-INCH ELECTRIC COIL

✓	1	GE JBP35SM[SS]	650	82	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
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C 30-INCH INDUCTION

✓	1	GE Profile PHB925SP[SS]	2,400	90	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	2	Kenmore Elite 97203	2,700	89	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	3	Samsung FTQ307NWGX	1,700	89	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

D 30-INCH GAS AND DUAL-FUEL

✓	1	GE Profile PGB910SEM[SS]	1,500	74	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	●
✓	2	LG LRG3097[ST]	1,900	74	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
✓	3	LG LRG3095[ST]	1,400	72	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
✓	4	Frigidaire Gallery FGGF3032MW	800	71	○	●	●	○	●	○	●	●
✓	5	KitchenAid KDRS505X[SS]*	2,200	71	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
✓	6	LG LRG3091SW	1,000	71	○	●	●	○	●	○	●	●
✓	7	Electrolux EW30GF65G[W]	2,200	70	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●

E 36-INCH PROFESSIONAL GAS AND DUAL-FUEL

✓	1	KitchenAid KDRU763V[SS]* KDRU767VSS, KDRS467VSS, KDRS463VSS, KDRS462VSS	6,000	74	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	2	GE Monogram ZDP364NDP[SS]*	7,500	72	○	●	●	○	●	○	●	●
✓	3	Thermador Pro Grand PG366B[S] PG364GEB5, PG364GLB5	6,000	69	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	●

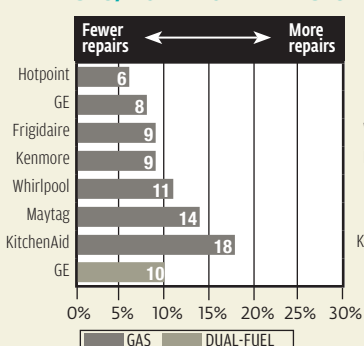
*Dual-fuel model.

Most and least reliable

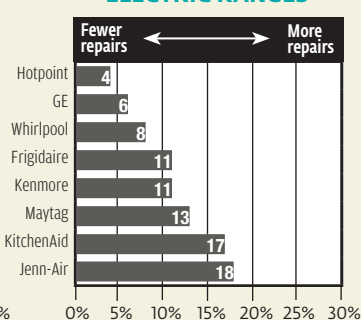
Hotpoint and General Electric were among the least repair-prone electric-range brands; KitchenAid and Jenn-Air were the most repair-prone. KitchenAid was also the most repair-prone for gas ranges. We lacked enough data to include Kenmore dual-fuel and Jenn-Air gas and dual-fuel ranges; data we have indicate Kenmore dual-fuel models have been reliable and Jenn-Air gas and dual-fuel repair-prone. That's what we found when we asked over 76,000 readers who bought an electric range between 2005

and 2011, or a gas or dual-fuel range between 2005 and the first half of 2011, about their experiences. The graphs show the percentage of models for each brand that were repaired or had a serious problem. Differences of less than 3 points aren't meaningful, and data are adjusted to eliminate differences linked solely to age. Models within a brand may vary, and changes in design or manufacture may affect future reliability. Still, choosing a brand with a good repair history can improve your odds of getting a reliable model.

GAS/DUAL-FUEL RANGES



ELECTRIC RANGES



Source: Annual Product Reliability Survey, Consumer Reports National Research Center.



A2 Kenmore

Overview

Our top picks scored at least Very Good overall. Models listed below offer special strengths, value, or both.

- ✓ **CR Best Buy** These blend overall durability and value. All are recommended.
- ✓ **Recommended** These high-scoring models stand out from the crowd for the reasons below.

SMOOTHTOP MODELS

- A1 Kenmore \$1,150
- A2 Kenmore \$640 **CR Best Buy**
- A4 Electrolux \$1,200
- B1 Frigidaire \$1,000

All include expandable elements and blend fast heating with precise simmering. **A1** is tops among 30-inch models and has touch controls; **A2** lacks that feature but performs comparably. Paying more for **A4** buys an extra element. **B1** is 36 inches wide and also has five elements.

30-INCH INDUCTION MODELS

- C3 Kenmore \$1,300
- C6 Frigidaire \$1,200 **CR Best Buy**
- C8 Whirlpool \$1,200 **CR Best Buy**

All three delivered the superb performance of other induction models for less. **C6** is a hybrid model with two induction and two conventional elements. **C8** offers all induction with touch controls for the same price.

36-INCH GAS COOKTOPS

- D1 Thermador \$1,900
- D5 LG \$1,300
- D7 Kenmore \$1,100

Five burners and added width let these accommodate an extra pot over most 30-inch models. And all have continuous grates. **D1** delivers the best blend of heating and simmering performance overall. **D5** and **D7** give up some simmering performance for a lower price.

Ratings Cooktops

Recommended models only From 44 tested.

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- ✓ CR Best Buy
- ✓ Recommended

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Features
		Bracketed letters or numbers are color codes.		0 100 P F G V E	Cooktop high Cooktop low	High-power burners Medium-power burners Low-power burners Touch controls Expandable elements/continuous grates

A 30-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP

✓	1	Kenmore 44273	\$1,150	93	● ●	2 1 1 ● ●
✓	2	Kenmore 42733	640	91	● ●	2 2 ● ●
✓	3	Frigidaire Professional FPEC3085K[S]	950	90	● ●	1 3 ● ●
✓	4	Electrolux Icon E30EC65E[SS]	1,200	88	● ●	1 2 2 ● ●
✓	5	LG LCE3081[ST]	1,000	87	● ●	1 1 2 ● ●
✓	6	Whirlpool G7CE3034XP	700	86	● ●	2 2 ● ●
✓	7	GE Profile PP945BM[BB]	900	86	● ●	2 2 ● ●
✓	8	Bosch NET5054UC	900	85	● ●	1 2 1 ● ●

B 36-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP

✓	1	Frigidaire Professional FPEC3685K[S]	1,000	90	● ●	1 3 1 ●
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C 30-INCH INDUCTION

✓	1	Kenmore 43820	1,600	99	● ●	3 1 ● ●
✓	2	GE Profile PHP900DM[BB]	1,400	99	● ●	2 2 ● ●
✓	3	Kenmore 43800	1,300	97	● ●	3 1 ● ●
✓	4	Bosch NIT5065UC	1,800	97	● ●	2 2 ● ●
✓	5	Electrolux Icon E30IC75F[SS]	2,000	97	● ●	3 1 ● ●
✓	6	Frigidaire Professional FPCC3085K[S]*	1,200	96	● ●	1 3 ● ●
✓	7	KitchenAid KICU500XB	1,400	95	● ●	2 2 ● ●
✓	8	Whirlpool GCI3061XB	1,200	95	● ●	2 2 ● ●
✓	9	LG LCE30845	1,800	93	● ●	1 2 1 ● ●

D 36-INCH GAS

✓	1	Thermador SG5X365FS	1,900	81	● ●	3 2 ● ●
✓	2	GE Monogram ZGU385NSM[SS]	1,400	80	○ ●	3 2 ● ●
✓	3	GE Profile JGP975WEK[WW]	1,200	80	○ ●	1 2 2 ● ●
✓	4	Electrolux EW36GC55G[S]	1,300	74	○ ●	2 2 1 ● ●
✓	5	LG LCG3691[ST]	1,300	74	● ●	2 2 1 ● ●
✓	6	Bosch NGM8654UC	1,200	70	○ ●	4 1 ● ●
✓	7	Kenmore 32313 32333	1,100	69	● ●	2 2 1 ● ●

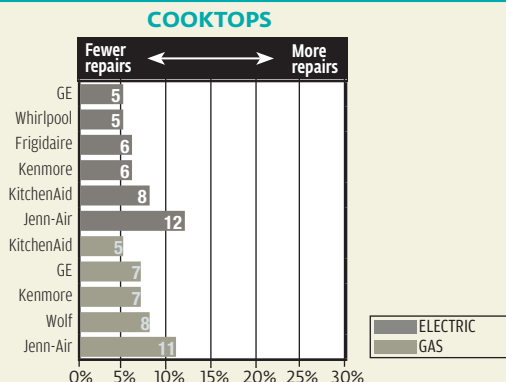
*Has radiant and induction elements.

Most and least reliable

Jenn-Air was the most repair-prone brand of electric cooktops and among the most repair-prone gas cooktops. Although we lacked sufficient historical data to include Dacor and Whirlpool gas cooktops, we did have enough information to conclude that Whirlpool has been reliable and Dacor repair-prone. That's what we found when we asked over 16,000 readers who bought a cooktop between 2007 and 2011 about their experiences. The graph shows the percentage of

models for each brand that were repaired or had a serious problem. Differences of less than 4 points aren't meaningful, and we've adjusted the data to eliminate differences linked solely to product age. Models within a brand may vary, and changes in design or manufacture may affect future reliability. Still, choosing a brand with a good repair history can improve your odds of getting a reliable model.

Source: Annual Product Reliability Survey, Consumer Reports National Research Center.





2 Bosch

Overview

Our top picks scored at least Very Good overall. Indeed, mediocre baking or broiling, and less capacity, kept several newly tested ovens off our winners list. Below, we focus on models that offer special strengths, value, or both.

☒ **Recommended** This high-scoring model stands out for the reasons below.

TOP WALL OVEN

2 Bosch \$1,900

The Bosch blends impressive baking, broiling, and self-cleaning with lots of usable capacity. Also consider the GE Profile PT925DN[BB], \$2,500, if you want the added cooking flexibility of two separate oven cavities and are willing to live with unimpressive self-cleaning performance. The Thermador performs well, but the brand has been repair-prone.

Guide to the Ratings: Ranges, cooktops, and wall ovens

Overall score reflects cooktop performance, oven capacity and cleaning, baking, and broiling. Displayed scores are rounded; models are listed in order of precise overall score. Note that scores for previously tested models may have changed because of changes in test methodology.

Cooktop high is how quickly highest-powered element or burner heated water to a near-boil.

Cooktop low is how well lowest-powered element or burner melted and held chocolate without scorching and how well highest element or burner, set on low, held tomato sauce below a boil. **Baking** reflects even browning of cakes and cookies on two oven racks. **Broiling** is even browning of pan of burgers as well as high-heat searing. **Oven capacity** is our evaluation of usable space. **Oven cleaning** is ability to remove our baked-on mix of eggs, cheese, pie filling, and other ingredients on self-clean setting. **Price** is approximate retail.

Ratings Wall ovens

All tested products In performance order.

☒ Recommended

● Excellent
● Very good
○ Good
● Fair
● Poor

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Features
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model. Bracketed letters or numbers are color codes.			Baking Broiling Capacity Self-clean Convection Covered element Temperature probe Dual cavities	

30-INCH MODELS

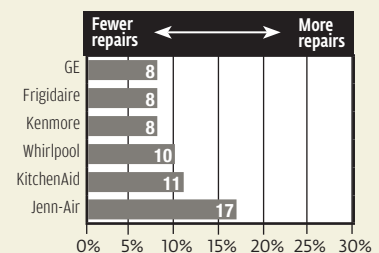
	1	Thermador ME301E[S]	\$2,600	72	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Bosch HBL54[50]UC	1,900	72	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	3	Viking Professional VES0130[SS]	2,900	69	○	●	●	○	●	●	●
	4	Electrolux (con E30EW75E[SS] E30EW75G[SS])	2,200	67	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	5	LG LWS3081[ST]	2,000	65	○	●	●	○	●	●	●
	6	GE Profile PT916SRSS	1,600	64	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
	7	GE Profile PT925DN[BB]	2,500	63	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	8	GE JTP705M[SS]	1,500	62	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
	9	Kenmore Pro 41003	2,000	61	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
	10	GE Cafe CT918STSS	2,200	60	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
	11	Frigidaire Professional FPEW3085KF	1,700	56	○	●	○	●	●	●	●
	12	Frigidaire FGEW3065K[F]	1,500	54	○	●	○	●	●	●	●
	13	GE JTP30DP[BB]	1,200	54	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	14	Wolf E-Series S030-2F/S E-Series S030-2U/S, L-Series S030F/S, S030U/S	4,000	52	○	●	○	●	●	●	●
	15	Kenmore 48839	900	52	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
	16	KitchenAid KEBS1075[SS]	2,000	49	○	○	○	●	●	●	●

Most and least reliable

Jenn-Air has been the most repair-prone brand of electric wall ovens; also troubling is a noticeable uptick in its failure rate over the past year and a half. Although we lacked sufficient historical data for all years to include Maytag and Thermador in the chart, our data indicate that Maytag has been reliable and Thermador repair-prone. That's what we found when we asked more than 14,000 readers who bought an electric wall oven between 2006 and 2011 about their experiences. The graph shows the percentage of brands that needed repair or had a serious problem. Differences of less than 3 points aren't meaningful, and we've adjusted the data to eliminate differences linked solely to product age. Models within a brand may vary, and design or

manufacture changes may affect future reliability. Still, choosing a brand with a good repair history can improve your odds of getting a reliable model.

WALL OVENS



Source: Annual Product Reliability Survey, Consumer Reports National Research Center.



1 Samsung



2 Kenmore

Overview

Our top picks scored at least Very Good overall. We've focused the list of models below on machines that offer special strengths, value, or both.

- ✓ **CR Best Buy** These ranges blend performance and value. All are recommended.
- ✓ **Recommended** These models meet our performance standards; all are fine choices.

TOP OVER-THE-RANGE MODELS

- 1 **Kenmore** \$550
- 2 **LG** \$400
- 3 **Kenmore** \$670

All of these over-the-range ovens were impressive at a microwave's primary tasks and include sensors that help prevent undercooking and overcooking by determining when food is done. **1** tops our Ratings and delivers the most usable space in this category. **2** costs less, did almost as well overall, and heated more evenly with less noise. Choose **3** for its convection and speed-cook features. Also consider the relatively basic Whirlpool WMH1163XV if you're willing to give up some quietness and the convenience of a sensor for a lower price.

Ratings Microwave ovens

Recommended models only From 68 tested. ✓ CR Best Buy ✓ Recommended ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ○ Fair ● Poor

	Brand & model	Price	Specs	Overall score	Test results	Features
Recommendation	Rank		Claimed cu. ft. Usable cu. ft.		Evenness Auto defrost Ease of use Noise	Sensor Convection Speed cook
			0 100 P F G V E			

30-INCH OVER-THE-RANGE MODELS

✓ 1	Kenmore Elite 8852[2]*	\$550	2.0	1.4	81	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 2	LG LMHM2017[SW]	400	2.0	0.9	80	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 3	Kenmore Elite 8601[3]	670	1.7	0.8	77	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 4	Samsung SMH9207[ST] (Lowe's)	360	2.0	1.0	75	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 5	Whirlpool GH7208XR[Q]	800	2.0	1.1	73	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 6	Panasonic Genius Prestige NN-SD297[SR]	430	2.0	0.8	73	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 7	Kenmore Elite 8600[3]	620	2.0	0.8	72	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 8	Whirlpool WMH1163XV[Q]	200	1.6	0.8	72	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 9	GE Profile Advantium PSA1201R[SS] PSA1200R[I]	850	1.7	0.8	72	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 10	LG LMV2015[SW]	350	2.0	0.9	71	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 11	Kenmore 8504[9]	260	1.7	0.8	71	● ● ● ● ●

*Has a sliding tray.

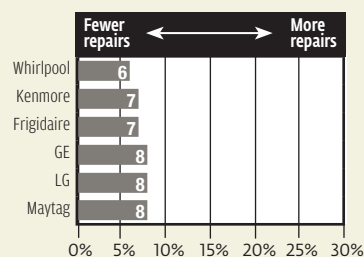
Most and least reliable

We found no meaningful differences among the brands for which we had enough data to include in our chart. Although we lacked sufficient data to include KitchenAid, data we have indicates it has been among the more repair-prone brands. That's what we found when we asked more than 14,000 readers who bought an over-the-range microwave oven between 2007 and 2011. The graph shows the percentage of brands that

needed repair or had a serious problem. We've adjusted the data to eliminate differences linked solely to product age. Models within a brand may vary, and design or manufacture changes may affect future reliability. Still, choosing a brand with a good repair history can improve your odds of getting a reliable model.

Source: Annual Product Reliability Survey, Consumer Reports National Research Center.

OVER-THE-RANGE MICROWAVES



Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is mainly cooking evenness, defrosting, and ease of use. Displayed scores are rounded; models are listed by precise overall score. Note that scores for previously tested models may have changed because of changes in scoring methodology. **Evenness** is uniform heating of cold leftovers. **Auto defrost** is how completely and evenly the program defrosted 1 pound of frozen

ground beef. **Ease of use** is ease of setting without checking the manual. **Noise** reflects sound-meter measurements. **Claimed cu. ft.** is per manufacturer. **Usable cu. ft.** is our measure of what fits on a turntable or sliding tray. **Price** is approximate retail.

Refrigerators

New models offer more features for less money

SLUCCISH SALES have manufacturers working harder than ever for your business. One maker even accused competitors of knowingly underpricing their products. Our latest tests of more than 200 refrigerators found that the competition has been good for consumers, with many well-priced models rising to the top of our Ratings. But we also found plenty of pricey and overhyped duds that don't deliver.

After more than a year of back and forth, the U.S. International Trade Commission ruled that LG and Samsung, among others, were not selling bottom-freezers at below-market prices and so were not subject to fines. That could help keep prices down on some imports. More good news: The Energy Star program is making it easier to spot the most efficient refrigerators.

And makers are offering new technologies on their pricier products and popular features on less expensive models. Here's what our testing and reporting found:

Features (and fridges) expand. High-end features, such as temperature-controlled drawers, adjustable shelves, split shelves, and internal water dispensers, are increasingly available on even the most affordable refrigerators. The Whirlpool WR-T71REY, \$1,100, is one of the few top-freezers to offer an external water dispenser with built-in filtration. Two tested French-door refrigerators, the LG LFX31925, \$3,000, and the Kenmore Elite 7205, \$2,850, come loaded with features, including through-the-door ice and water dispensers, LED interior lights, and dual evaporators designed to maintain optimal humidity in their fresh-food sections. At a claimed capacity of 31 cu-

bic feet, they're also among the roomiest refrigerators we've ever tested.

Beyond Energy Star. As the program turns 20, a new Most Efficient designation has been rolled out for appliances that are roughly 10 percent more efficient than Energy Star models and at least 30 percent more than non-Energy Star ones. Choosing a Most Efficient refrigerator (footnoted in the Ratings) over a non-Energy Star model could save you roughly \$200 during the life of the unit.

The renewed focus on efficiency should help spur innovation. The side-by-side GE GSH25JSC, \$1,100, is 35 percent more efficient than the federal standard calls for thanks to its advanced compressor design and high-efficiency foam insulation. The Samsung RFG298HD, \$2,800, also delivers exceptional efficiency, especially for a French-door model, with dual ice makers and external ice and water.

Pro-style in name only. Viking is synonymous with pro-style appliances, including built-in fridges with tricked-out interiors. The Viking Designer DDF136DD, \$3,690, comes with the familiar logo, but

Match the type to your needs and budget



Top-freezers

Best for small kitchens and tight budgets. Top-freezers have been the sensible, entry-level option for decades, though manufacturers are now giving them more upscale features and styling. Usual width: 30 to 33 inches.

But you have to stoop to access items in the fridge, and the wide-swinging door requires sufficient clearance.

PRICE \$500 to \$1,400



Conventional bottom-freezers

Best for keeping food items at eye level so there's less bending to reach refrigerator drawers, shelves, or bins. Typical width, as with top-freezers, is 30 to 33 inches.

But you have to bend to access the freezer, items can be hard to organize, and the wide-swinging door needs clearance.

PRICE \$900 to \$2,200



Side-by-sides

Best for galley-style kitchens and other narrow spaces that can't accommodate wide-swinging doors. The vertical configuration also provides more freezer storage.

But they're not as energy- or space-efficient overall. Ice and water dispensers, which are standard for this type, make them less reliable.

PRICE \$800 to \$2,700



Cabinet-depth

Best for mimicking the look of a true built-in for thousands less. They're available as French-door bottom-freezers, conventional bottom-freezers, and side-by-sides. Usual width is 36 inches.

But they protrude slightly past cabinets and typically have less usable space than similar standard-depth models.

PRICE \$2,000 to \$3,500



Built-in

Best for creating a clean, unified look thanks to their flush-with-the-cabinets design. Models with overlay panels can blend in with surrounding cabinets. Usual width is 36 to 48 inches.

But they're expensive and their usable capacity tends to be comparable or even less than standard refrigerators.

PRICE \$5,000 to \$9,000

the interior of this cabinet-depth French-door refrigerator is as bare-bones as many entry-level models. Its efficiency is also unimpressive, though that's one thing it has in common with some of its true pro-style brand mates. See "And the Worst From Our Tests," on page 47, for details.

How to choose

Check below to find the type that works best for you. Then keep these shopping tips in mind:

Check the specs. Make sure the refrigerator fits your kitchen. Remember to factor in the door swing in relation to adjacent walls, cabinets, and other appliances. And leave at least a 1-inch clearance around the unit and the surrounding cabinetry to ensure adequate air flow.

Consider your food-shopping habits. Do you do a big weekly shop or like to stock up on bulk purchases? Then you may need a larger capacity than the 19 to 22 claimed cubic feet that most manufacturers suggest for a typical family of four.

Use EnergyGuide labels wisely. Don't look for the Energy Star alone, since effi-

ciency standards vary by refrigerator type. A non-Energy Star-qualified top-freezer might actually be more efficient than a side-by-side with the label. For an apples-to-apples comparison, use the annual operating costs and the kilowatt-hours per year the refrigerator uses, which are listed on the yellow EnergyGuide label. Or check our Ratings, which are consistent between types, for efficiency and energy costs.

Don't be afraid to haggle. Those who did saved a median of \$93 on a large appliance, according to our latest reader survey of retailers, detailed on page 28. Checking market prices will help you negotiate, though basic courtesy often goes further with salespeople than hardball tactics. And skip extended warranties.

Consider shopping online. While most major appliances are still bought at walk-in stores, online sales hit nearly 10 percent in 2011, up from barely a blip a decade earlier, according to Ipsos, a market-research company. But you may still want to go to a showroom to check fit, finish, and features, and give the retailer a chance to match an online price.



French-door bottom-freezers

Best for combining the benefits of a side-by-side and a bottom-freezer. It features two refrigerator doors on top and a freezer drawer below. French-door refrigerators are the fastest-growing configuration. The latest include a middle drawer designed for fresh or frozen foods, depending on the make and model. In-door ice and water dispensers are common.

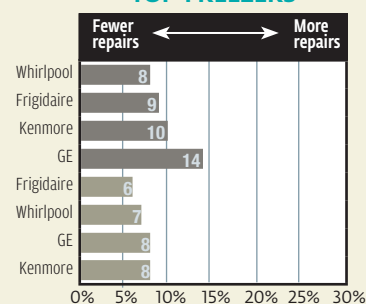
But you have to bend down to reach items in the freezer.

PRICE \$1,400 to \$3,000

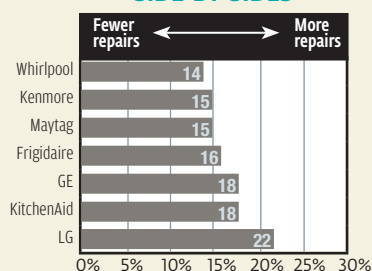
Most and least reliable

Whirlpool was among the more reliable brands of bottom-freezers with icemakers. GE was among the more repair-prone brands of top- and bottom-freezers with icemakers, while LG has been among the more repair-prone brands of side-by-sides with icemakers. That's what almost 61,000 readers who bought a freestanding refrigerator between 2007 and 2011 told us. The graphs show the percentage of brands that needed a repair or had a serious problem. Differences of fewer than 5 points aren't meaningful, and we've adjusted the data to eliminate differences linked solely to the refrigerator age. Models within a brand may vary, and changes in design or manufacture may affect future reliability. Still, choosing a brand with a good repair history can improve your odds of getting a reliable model.

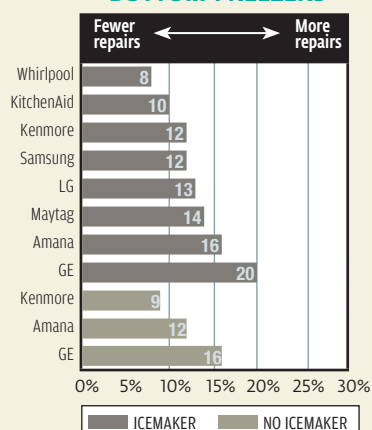
TOP-FREEZERS



SIDE-BY-SIDES



BOTTOM-FREEZERS



Source: Annual Product Reliability Survey, Consumer Reports National Research Center.

Overview

The best refrigerators combine superb temperature performance with high energy efficiency. Those listed below have special features, exceptional value, or both. Remember, icemakers and water dispensers add convenience but decrease reliability.

- CR Best Buy These models offer the best combination of performance and price.
- Recommended All are top-performing models.

STANDOUT TOP-FREEZERS

- A1 Maytag \$700 CR Best Buy
- A3 Whirlpool \$1,100
- A8 Frigidaire \$700

A1 combines excellent temperature performance and efficiency, and is available in stainless steel. Paying more for A3 gets you even better efficiency and the convenience of an external water dispenser. A8 is an extremely affordable 30-inch-wide model that features adjustable shelves, temperature-controlled drawers, and a full-width freezer rack.

TOP-NOTCH CONVENTIONAL BOTTOM-FREEZERS

- B1 Whirlpool \$1,200
- B2 Amana \$1,000 CR Best Buy
- B4 Maytag \$1,100

B1 and B2 are 33-inch-wide models that deliver excellent temperature performance and energy efficiency. B1 comes in stainless steel; B2 is the quieter model. B4 is 30 inches wide with stellar temperature control, Very Good efficiency, and many storage conveniences.

FINEST FRENCH-DOOR BOTTOM-FREEZERS

- C2 Whirlpool \$1,700 CR Best Buy
- C3 Samsung \$2,800
- C6 LG \$3,000
- C7 Kenmore \$2,100
- C8 Samsung \$1,500
- C11 Kenmore \$2,850

C2 offers exceptional temperature performance, energy efficiency, and value. C3 adds a second icemaker and is very quiet. C7 is the only recommended French-door model that's just 33-inches wide. Like C3, C8 has a dual compressor that prevents odors from migrating between the refrigerator and freezer.

EXCEPTIONAL SIDE-BY-SIDES

- D1 GE \$1,100 CR Best Buy
- D2 Samsung \$1,300 CR Best Buy
- D3 Whirlpool \$1,400 CR Best Buy
- D4 Bosch \$2,700
- D6 Kenmore \$2,000

D1 offers superb temperature performance, energy efficiency, and overall value. D2 and D3 are also competitively priced, with D2 adding extra capacity and extremely quiet operation. D4 is cabinet depth, delivering a built-in look for thousands less. D6 has the largest usable capacity of all the recommended side-by-sides.



Ratings Refrigerators

Recommended models only From 235 tested.

		Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results			Capacity (cu. ft.)		Features		
Recommendation	Rank	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Temperature performance	Energy efficiency	Noise	Ease of use	Claimed	Usable	Water dispenser (ext./int.)	Energy cost/yr.
												HxWxD (in.)

A TOP-FREEZERS

✓	1	Maytag MITXEMMW[W] ⓘ	\$ 700	68	•	•	○	●	21.0	16.5		\$56	67x33x30
✓	2	Kenmore 7930[2] ⓘ	960	67	•	•	•	●	22.0	15.1	int.	55	68x33x33
✓	3	Whirlpool WRT77IREY[W] ⓘ ⓘ	1,100	67	•	•	•	○	21.2	17.8	ext.	53	66x33x34
✓	4	Frigidaire Gallery FGUI2149L[P] ⓘ ⓘ	800	65	•	•	○	●	20.6	16.4		46	70x30x32
✓	5	LG LTC22350[SW] ⓘ	850	64	•	•	○	●	22.0	17.3		54	68x33x33
✓	6	Frigidaire Gallery FGHT2144K[F] FGHT2134K[] FGHT2146K[] ⓘ ⓘ	800	64	•	•	○	●	20.6	16.7		56	70x30x33
✓	7	Whirlpool Gold G9RXXFMW[Q] ⓘ W9RXXFMW[] ⓘ	700	63	•	•	○	●	18.9	14.5		49	67x30x32
✓	8	Frigidaire LFHT2117L[W] (Lowe's) FFHT2116L[] FFHT2117L[] FFHT2126L[] ⓘ	700	62	•	•	•	●	20.5	17.1		54	69x30x34
✓	9	Maytag MITXEGMY[W] ⓘ	720	62	•	•	○	●	20.4	16.7		58	66x33x31
✓	10	Frigidaire Gallery FGHT1844K[F] FGHT1846K[], FGHT1834K[] ⓘ	750	62	•	•	○	●	18.3	14.7		54	67x30x32
✓	11	Kenmore 7215[2] 6215[] ⓘ	940	61	•	•	○	●	20.6	17.6		62	66x33x32
✓	12	Frigidaire LFHT1817L[W] (Lowe's) FFHT1814L[] FFHT1816L[] FFHT1817L[] FFHT1826L[] ⓘ	600	61	•	•	○	●	18.2	15.4		47	66x30x32

B CONVENTIONAL BOTTOM-FREEZERS

✓	1	Whirlpool Gold GB2FHDXXW[Q] ⓘ	1,200	73	•	•	•	●	21.9	15.4		51	70x33x31
✓	2	Amana ABB2221WE[W] ABB2224WE[] ⓘ	1,000	73	•	•	○	●	21.9	16.4		55	70x33x32
✓	3	Maytag MBF2258XE[W] MBL2258XE[] MBR2258XE[] ⓘ	1,150	72	•	•	○	●	21.9	15.4		51	70x33x31
✓	4	Maytag MBF1958XE[W] ⓘ	1,100	72	•	•	○	●	18.5	12.8		49	67x30x31
✓	5	Amana ABB1921WE[W] ⓘ	950	71	•	○	•	●	18.5	13.2		68	68x30x31
✓	6	LG LDC22720[SW] ⓘ	1,100	71	•	•	•	●	22.4	15.8		60	69x33x33

C FRENCH-DOOR BOTTOM-FREEZERS

✓	1	Kenmore 7160[3] ⓘ	1,600	83	•	•	•	○	25.0	17.5		51	69x36x32
✓	2	Whirlpool Gold GX5FHTXV[Q] GX5FHDXV[] ⓘ	1,700	82	•	•	○	●	24.8	16.2	int.	59	70x36x33
✓	3	Samsung RFG298HD[RS] RFG29PHD[] RFG297HD[] RFG29THD[] RFG296HD[] RFG298HD[RS] ⓘ (Lowe's)	2,800	81	•	•	•	○	28.5	18.6	ext.	73	69x36x35
✓	4	LG LFC25776[SW] ⓘ	1,500	81	•	•	•	○	25.0	18.0		50	70x36x33
✓	5	Kenmore Elite 7106[2] ⓘ	2,500	80	•	•	•	○	28.0	18.5	ext.	66	70x36x33
✓	6	LG LFX31925[ST] ⓘ	3,000	79	•	•	•	●	31.0	19.4	ext.	72	69x36x34
✓	7	Kenmore Elite 7103[2] ⓘ	2,100	79	•	•	○	●	25.0	16.9	ext.	66	70x33x33
✓	8	Samsung RF266AE[WP] RF263AE[] ⓘ	1,500	78	•	•	•	●	25.8	17.4	int.	65	70x36x34



C11 Kenmore



D1 GE



D6 Kenmore



E2 Thermador



	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Capacity (cu. ft.)	Features
Recommendation	Rank			Temperature performance Energy efficiency Noise Ease of use	Claimed Usable	Water dispenser (ext./int.) Energy cost/yr. HXWD (in.)

C FRENCH-DOOR BOTTOM-FREEZERS continued

✓	9	Kenmore 7201[2] ①	\$1,550	78	● ● ● ● ○	24.8 16.9 int. \$59 70x36x33
✓	10	LG LFX28978[SW] ①	2,200	77	● ● ● ● ○	28.0 18.3 ext. 65 70x36x33
✓	11	Kenmore Elite 7205[3] ①	2,850	77	● ● ● ● ●	31.0 19.5 ext. 74 71x36x35
✓	12	LG LFX25976[SW]	1,900	77	● ● ● ● ○	25.0 16.7 ext. 65 70x36x33
✓	13	LG LFX28977[SW]	2,200	77	● ● ● ● ○	28.0 17.9 ext. 80 70x36x33
✓	14	Kenmore 7101[2] ①	1,750	76	● ● ● ● ○	25.0 17.7 ext. 72 70x36x32
✓	15	Amana AF12538AE[W]	1,800	75	● ● ● ● ○	24.9 14.8 • 71 71x36x32

D SIDE-BY-SIDES

✓	1	GE GSH25JSC[SS] ① ②	1,100	80	● ● ● ● ○	25.3 16.5 ext. 61 69x36x31
✓	2	Samsung RS265TD[WP] RS263TD[] RS267TD[] ①	1,300	76	● ● ● ● ●	25.5 18.1 ext. 72 70x36x34
✓	3	Whirlpool Gold GS5VHAXW[Q] ①	1,400	75	● ● ● ● ○	25.7 16.0 ext. 65 70x36x33
✓	4	Bosch Linea 800 B22CS80SN[S] B22CS50SN[] ① ③	2,700	74	● ● ● ● ●	21.7 14.6 ext. 74 69x36x28
✓	5	DCS RX215PJX1 ① ③	2,500	72	● ● ● ● ○	21.5 15.8 61 70x36x28
✓	6	Kenmore Elite 5118[3] ①	2,000	72	● ● ● ● ●	29.1 21.2 ext. 71 69x36x35
✓	7	Maytag MSD2559XE[W] ① ②	1,250	72	● ● ● ● ○	25.8 15.9 ext. 66 70x36x33
✓	8	Whirlpool Gold GD5DHAXV[Q] ①	1,300	71	● ● ● ● ●	25.6 16.6 ext. 79 70x36x31
✓	9	Frigidaire Gallery FGUS2676L[P] FGUS2647L[] FGUS2645L[] FGUS2637L[] FGUS2642L[] FGUS2635L[] FGUS2632L[] ①	1,350	71	● ● ● ● ○	17.0 17.0 ext. 71 70x36x33

E BUILT-INS

✓	1	Jenn-Air JS42PPDUB[SS] ③	7,200	80	● ● ● ● ●	25.3 17.3 ext. 72 84x42x26
✓	2	Thermador T361B70NSP ① ③	6,300	77	● ● ● ● ○	19.7 14.3 54 84x36x24
✓	3	Thermador KBUDT4265E[S] ③	8,000	77	● ● ● ● ●	25.2 16.0 ext. 77 84x42x26
✓	4	Sub-Zero BI425[S] ③	7,500	76	● ● ● ● ●	24.1 18.3 77 84x42x26
✓	5	Miele KF1901Vi ① ③	7,200	76	● ● ● ● ○	18.3 14.0 64 83x36x24
✓	6	Jenn-Air JS42SEDUDW ③	7,800	75	● ● ● ● ●	25.3 17.3 ext. 82 84x42x26
✓	7	KitchenAid KBFC42FT[SS] KBFC42FT[] KBFO42FT[] ①	7,500	73	● ● ● ● ●	22.6 16.1 72 84x43x28
✓	8	Liebherr CS2062 ① ③	5,000	73	● ● ● ● ○	19.5 13.6 51 81x36x25
✓	9	Sub-Zero BI36U[S] ① ③	7,700	71	● ● ● ● ○	21.2 15.6 73 84x35x26

① Discontinued but similar model available. ② Energy Star-qualified. ③ Most Efficient-qualified. ④ Cabinet-depth.

BEST BUILT-INS

- E1** Jenn-Air \$7,200
E2 Thermador \$6,300
E4 Sub-Zero \$7,500

E1 and **E4** are both 42-inch side-by-side models. **E1** has excellent energy efficiency, quietness, and a through-the-door ice and water dispenser. **E4** has superior temperature performance, and its flat dispenser-free door can easily receive integrated panels. **E2** is a 36-inch-wide bottom-freezer that also performs well and takes integrated panels.

And the worst from our tests . . .

Our Ratings feature the best of the best from our tests. The models below occupy the opposite end of the performance spectrum, with overall scores below 40. Most suffer from lousy temperature control, high energy costs, or both.

Similar models, in small type, haven't been tested, but in our judgment they're enough alike in performance, features, and specs that the same results apply.

Top-freezers

Maytag M9BXXGMY
 Kenmore 7093, 6093
 Estate T8TXNGFW, T8RXNGF
 Estate T8TXNWFW
 Maytag M8RXEGMX
 Maytag M1BXXGMY
 Amana A8RXNGMW
 GE GTH21KCX, GTH21KBX

Conventional bottom-freezers

LG LBC22518, LBC22520
 Fisher & Paykel E522B
 Blomberg BRFB1450

French-door bottom-freezers

GE Profile PGSS5RKZ
 Fisher & Paykel RF201ADUX
 GE Profile PFCS1RKZ, PFCS1RKZ
 GE Profile PFSF6PKX
 GE Profile PGCS1RKZ
 Haier PBFS21EDA

Side-by-sides

Frigidaire Gallery FGHS2669K[F], FGHS2665K, FGHS2667K, FGHS2679K
 Whirlpool Gold GSC25C4EY
 Electrolux EW23CS65G

Built-ins

Viking Professional VCBB536L, DDBB536L, DFB536L
 Viking Professional VCSB542, DDSB542, DFSB542, VISB542
 Samsung RSG257AA



Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for video.





TOP VALUE The Bosch Ascenta SHX3AR7[5]UC, a CR Best Buy at \$700, is fast and efficient.

Dishwashers

We find greener machines that really clean

TOUGHER NEW RULES have slashed the energy and water dishwashers can use to get the government's Energy Star seal. But our latest tests of 77 models show that you don't have to live with dirty dishes or endure even longer cycles. Better yet, some of the biggest energy misers are also easy on your wallet.

Dishwashers built since January must use about 9 percent less electricity and 27 percent less water to meet the federal EPA's voluntary Energy Star standard. Our 14 top picks qualify for that coveted seal.

Bosch's new Ascenta SHX3AR7[5]UC, \$700, and Kenmore's new 1328[3], \$650, are among nine recommended models priced well under \$1,000. With a cycle time of 95 minutes, the Bosch was fastest in our tests after the noisier and less-capable Electrolux IQ EIDW5905[S]. It's also almost twice as fast as the new GE Monogram ZBD9900R[ii], which took 3 hours. Cycle times even for energy-efficient models can be long. A unit needs time to recirculate the small amounts of water it uses to clean items while meeting federal standards for energy and water efficiency.

We slathered plates with egg yolks, peanut butter, raspberry jam, and other stubborn goo to see which made our clean-plate club. Our results show that it's easy to pay a tidy sum for so-so performance. You can also pay less and get more noise than you expected. Here are the details:

Middling choices at high prices. Paying \$1,600 for Dacor's Renaissance ED-WH24S lets you choose between two handle styles. Its washing is top-notch but you'll find more features, better efficiency, and quieter running for far less. Viking's Professional VDB450E[SS], \$1,800, is also shy on features and only so-so at washing.

What does an extra grand get you?

More cycles. They can total six or more and include sanitizing, cycles for crystal and china, and power-scrubbing modes like the ones on some Bosch, GE, Kenmore, and Miele models. But normal, heavy-duty, and delicate cycles should handle most needs.

A third rack. This slim compartment, found on the Bosch 800 Plus Series SHX9ER5[5]UC, \$1,800, and Asko D5894XXL[HS], \$2,300, can

Less cost, more noise. Two new \$300 dishwashers from GE and Kenmore are among six budget-priced models that are especially noisy. Most raucous of that bunch: the Hotpoint HDA3600R[WW], which also scored lowest among conventional machines.

A new dud among drawers. Dishwasher drawers typically include upper and lower pullout compartments, letting you use only the upper one without needing to bend. But they're high in price and typically low in overall performance. Subpar washing put Fisher & Paykel's single-drawer 36-inch DD36SDFTX1 at the bottom of this group. And despite the added width, it fits only nine place settings instead of the usual 10 to 12.

How to choose

Energy Star standards for dishwashers could add a wash-performance component as soon as January 2014. The Department of Energy, which sets the underlying standards, bases them on lightly soiled loads. Consumer Reports has urged them to use much dirtier loads, as we do in our tests. Here's what else to consider:

Look for convenience. Dishwashers that scored well for ease of use usually include adjustable racks and lots of flatware slots. Many also have fold-down tines, which let you fit large or odd-shaped dishes and other dinnerware. Stainless-steel tubs resist stains better than white plastic tubs.

Match your cleaning habits. Our picks clean well enough for you to skip pre-rinsing. If you do prerinse, skip extra-cost power-scrubbing modes. And sidestep noisy self-cleaning filters. More models now have manual-clean filters.

Check the controls. Some models include interactive touch controls, but the usual touchpads are fine if they're clearly marked. Also look for cycle-time and other visible displays if you opt for controls that are hidden when the door is closed.

hold long utensils sideways so they don't block the spray arms.

Sturdier racks. They have thicker coated wire for added strength.

Quieter washing. Even low-priced dishwashers can be relatively quiet. Paying \$1,500 to \$1,800 for the Bosch 800 Plus Series SHX9ER5[5]UC or SHX98M0[9]UC, or the Kenmore Pro HE 1317[3] buys more relief.



A3 Bosch



A11 Whirlpool

Overview

All of our top picks meet the latest Energy Star requirements, are from reliable brands, and scored at least Very Good at washing a full load of very dirty dishes and dinnerware. They also include a sensor that adjusts cycle time depending on soil level. Among them, we focus below on models that deliver special strengths, value, or both.

✓ **CR Best Buy** These blend overall performance and value. All are recommended.

✓ **Recommended** These high-scoring models stand out from the crowd for the reasons below.

FULL-FEATURED MODELS

A2 Bosch \$1,550

A3 Bosch \$900

A8 Bosch \$850

All have an adjustable top rack, a cycle-time display, lots of flatware slots, and a stainless-steel tub. **A2** is among the quietest dishwashers we tested, with a relatively short cycle time. **A3** and **A8** are slightly noisier but cost far less.

FEWER CONVENIENCES FOR LESS

A1 Bosch \$700 **CR Best Buy**

A11 Whirlpool \$500 **CR Best Buy**

A12 Kenmore \$650

All three include adjustable racks. **A1** is the best blend of performance and value, with an especially fast cycle time and ample flatware slots. **A11** and **A12** trade some quiet and speed for an even lower price. Among the three, choose the Whirlpool for its self-cleaning filter and the Kenmore for its added efficiency and flatware slots.

Ratings Dishwashers

All tested models In performance order, within types.

✓ **CR Best Buy**
✓ **Recommended**

● Excellent
● Very good
● Good
● Fair
● Poor

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Features
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Washing Energy use Noise Ease of use Cycle time (min.) Adjustable top rack Self-cleaning filter Cycle-time display Ample flatware slots Stainless-steel tub	
				0 100 P F G V E		

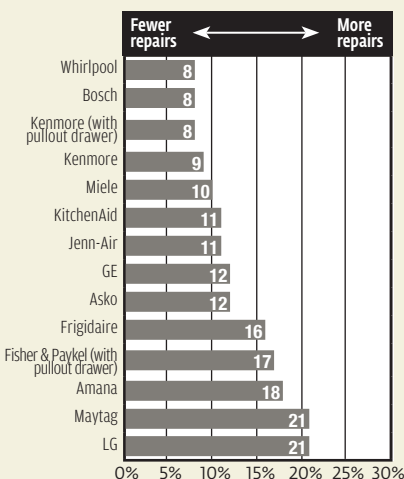
A CONVENTIONAL MODELS

✓ 1	Bosch Ascenta SHX3AR7[5]UC SHE3ARF[]UC (Lowe's), SHE3AR7[]UC, SHX3AR5[]UC	\$ 700	81	● ● ● ● ●	95	●
✓ 2	Bosch SHX98M0[9]UC	1,550	81	● ● ● ● ●	115	● ● ● ●
✓ 3	Bosch 800 Series SHE68R5[2]UC SHV68R5[3]UC, SHX68R5[]UC	900	80	● ● ● ● ●	115	● ● ● ●
4	LG Steam LDF7932[ST]	1,000	80	● ● ● ● ●	130	● ● ● ● ●
✓ 5	Miele Futura Dimension G5575SCSF G5505[], G5575SC-Vi, Plus G55705[], Plus G55755C[]	1,950	80	● ● ● ● ●	150	● ● ● ●
✓ 6	KitchenAid KUDE50CX[SS] KUDE48FX[], KUDE40FX[], KUDE20FX[], KUDE20IX[]	1,350	79	● ● ● ● ●	125	● ●
✓ 7	Bosch 800 Plus Series SHX9ER5[5]UC SHE9ER5[5]UC, SHV9ER5[3]UC	1,800	79	● ● ● ● ●	120	● ● ● ●
✓ 8	Bosch Evolution 500 SHE55M1[2]UC	850	79	● ● ● ● ●	110	● ● ● ●
9	LG LDF6920[WW]	720	79	● ● ● ● ●	125	● ● ● ●
✓ 10	Kenmore Pro HE 1317[3]	1,500	79	● ● ● ● ●	145	● ●
✓ 11	Whirlpool Gold GU2300XTV[Q] GU2275XTV[], GU2475XTV[]	500	78	● ● ● ● ●	135	● ●
✓ 12	Kenmore 1328[3] 1304[], 1327[]	650	77	● ● ● ● ●	120	● ●
✓ 13	Bosch SHX43P1[2]UC SHE43P1[]UC, SHV43P1[]UC	800	77	● ● ● ● ●	115	● ●
✓ 14	Bosch 500 Series SHX55R5[5]UC SHV55R5[3]UC, SHE55R5[]UC	900	76	● ● ● ● ●	110	● ● ● ●
✓ 15	KitchenAid KUDE70FX[SS] KUDE60FX[], KUDE60HX[]	1,450	76	● ● ● ● ●	115	● ●
✓ 16	Whirlpool Gold GU3600XTV[Q]	850	76	● ● ● ● ●	145	● ●
17	Bosch SHE6APO[2]UC SHE4APO[]UC	600	75	● ● ● ● ●	135	● ● ● ●
18	KitchenAid KUD530SX[SS]	950	75	● ● ● ● ●	115	● ● ● ●
19	Whirlpool DU1055XTV[Q]	400	75	● ● ● ● ●	125	●
20	Bosch 300 Series SHX33RL[5]UC	720	74	● ● ● ● ●	110	● ●
21	GE Profile PDWT500R[WW] PDWT580R[], PDWT502R[]	1,200	74	● ● ● ● ●	110	● ● ● ● ●
22	Kenmore Elite 1404[3] 1397[]	1,910	74	● ● ● ● ●	135	● ● ● ●
23	Miele Futura Crystal G5105SC G5175SC	1,530	74	● ● ● ● ●	145	● ● ● ●
24	Kenmore Elite 1396[2] 1394[]	800	73	● ● ● ● ●	135	● ●
25	Kenmore Elite 1392[2] 1393[]	670	72	● ● ● ● ●	135	● ●
26	Bosch SHX65P0[5]UC SHV65P0[]UC	1,050	72	● ● ● ● ●	120	● ● ● ●
27	Bosch Integra 800 Plus SHX58E2[5]UC SHE8ERS[]UC, SHX8ERS[]UC, SHX7ERS[]UC, SHE7ERS[]UC, SHV7ERS[]UC	1,500	72	● ● ● ● ●	125	● ● ● ●
28	Samsung DMT800RH[W]	850	72	● ● ● ● ●	120	● ● ● ●
29	GE GDWT668V[SS] GDWT608V[], GDWT768V[SS], GDWT368V[SS], GDWT308V[], GDWT708V[]	750	70	● ● ● ● ●	135	● ● ● ●
30	Whirlpool DU1300XTV[Q]	400	70	● ● ● ● ●	140	●
31	GE Profile PDWT580V[SS] PDWT500V[], PDWT480V[SS], Cafe CDWT980V[SS], Monogram ZBD6900V[], Monogram ZBD6920V[SS], Monogram ZBD7920V[SS], Monogram ZBD8920V[SS], Monogram ZBD8900V[]	1,450	70	● ● ● ● ●	110	● ● ● ● ●
32	KitchenAid KUDS30FX[SS] KUDC10IX[], KUDC10FX[], KUDS30IX[], KUDS30CX[]	850	70	● ● ● ● ●	115	● ● ● ●
33	Maytag MDB8959AW[W] MDB8859AW[]	750	70	● ● ● ● ●	120	● ● ● ●
34	GE Profile PDWT200V[WW] PDWT280V[SS], PDWT100V[], PDWT180V[SS], PDWT380V[SS], PDWT300V[], Cafe CDWT280V[SS]	850	69	● ● ● ● ●	140	● ● ● ●
35	Asko D5894XXL[HS] D5654XXL[HS]	2,300	69	● ● ● ● ●	130	● ● ● ●
36	Asko D5634XXL[HS] D5434XXL[]	1,300	68	● ● ● ● ●	150	● ●
37	Whirlpool Gold WDT770PAY[M]	700	68	● ● ● ● ●	115	● ●
38	GE GDWF100V[WW] GDWF160V[], GDWT166V[SS], GHDT108V[] (Home Depot), GHDT168V[SS] (Home Depot)	500	67	● ● ● ● ●	110	● ● ● ●
39	Bosch SHE68P0[2]UC	1,100	67	● ● ● ● ●	120	● ● ● ●

Most and least reliable

Frigidaire, Fisher & Paykel, Amana, Maytag, and LG were among the most repair-prone brands; Amana and Maytag repair records were affected by major recalls in 2010. That's what we found when we asked more than 82,000 readers who bought a dishwasher between 2007 and 2011 about their experiences. The graph shows the percentage of models for each brand that were repaired or had a serious problem. Differences of fewer than 5 points aren't meaningful, and we've adjusted data to eliminate differences linked solely to age and usage. Models within a brand may vary, and changes in design or manufacture may affect future reliability. Still, choosing a brand with a good repair history can improve your odds of getting a reliable model.

DISHWASHERS



Source: Annual Product Reliability Survey, Consumer Reports National Research Center.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is mostly washing performance, and includes energy and water use (not shown), noise, cycle time, and ease of use. Displayed scores are rounded; models are listed by precise overall score. Scores for previously tested models may have changed due to changes in scoring methodology. **Washing** is normal-cycle results with very dirty full load. **Energy use** is energy and water use for normal cycle. **Noise** covers listener judgments and sound-level measurements. **Ease of use** includes convenience factors and loading. **Cycle time** (rounded to nearest 5 minutes) is for normal cycle with very dirty full load; includes temperature-boost option and, if available, heated dry. Under **brand & model**, bracketed letters or numbers mean color code. **Price** is approximate retail.

HOW TO BUY THE RIGHT DISHWASHER

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for video.



Ratings Dishwashers

All tested models In performance order, within types.

CR Best Buy
Recommended

Excellent
Very good
Good
Fair
Poor

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Features
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Washing Energy use Noise Ease of use Cycle time (min.) Adjustable top rack Self-cleaning filter Cycle-time display Ample flatware slots Stainless-steel tub	
				0 100 P F G V E		

A CONVENTIONAL MODELS continued

40	Maytag	MDB4709AW[W]	\$ 400	66	● ● ● ● ●	125	•
41	Frigidaire	Gallery FGBD2431K[W]	350	66	● ● ● ● ●	155	•
42	Frigidaire	Gallery FGBD2432K[W] BBD2432K [] (Best Buy), LGBD2432K [] (Lowe's), DGBD2432K []	400	66	● ● ● ● ●	145	• •
43	Kenmore	1326[3] 1325[], 1329[]	750	65	● ● ● ● ●	130	• • •
44	GE	GDWF100R[WW] GDWF160R [], GDWT200R [], GDWT260R []	500	64	● ● ● ● ●	120	• • •
45	Whirlpool	Gold WDF530PAY[W] WDT710PAY []	440	63	● ● ● ● ●	105	•
46	Dacor	Renaissance EDWH24S	1,600	63	● ● ● ● ●	120	•
47	Maytag	MDB7609AW[W] MDB7709AW [], MDB7809AW []	500	63	● ● ● ● ●	120	• • •
48	GE	Monogram ZBD9900R[ij]	1,800	62	● ● ● ● ●	180	•
49	Whirlpool	Gold WDF730PAY[M]	600	61	● ● ● ● ●	115	•
50	Frigidaire	Gallery FGH2433K[F] BGHD2433K [] (Best Buy), FGH2471K []	450	61	● ● ● ● ●	135	• • • •
51	Samsung	DMT300RF[W]	500	60	● ● ● ● ●	170	• • • •
52	Frigidaire	Professional FPHD2491K[F]	600	60	● ● ● ● ●	180	• • •
53	Whirlpool	DUI030XTX[Q]	380	59	● ● ● ● ●	130	•
54	Electrolux	Wave-Touch EWDW6505G[W]	1,200	59	● ● ● ● ●	135	• • • •
55	Kenmore	1391[2] 1390[]	520	59	● ● ● ● ●	115	• • •
56	Jenn-Air	JDB3200AW[W]	1,100	59	● ● ● ● ●	125	• •
57	GE	GLD2800V[WW] GLD2850V[CS], GLD4604V [], GLD4664V[SS], GLD4664V[SA]	300	59	● ● ● ● ●	100	•
58	GE	GLD5766V[SS] GLD5706V [], GLD5664V[SS], GLD5604V [], GLD5606V [], GLD5666V[SS], GLD5708V [], GLD5768V[SS], GLD5808V [], GLD5868V[SS]	520	58	● ● ● ● ●	140	• •
59	Electrolux	IQ EIDW5905J[S]	900	57	● ● ● ● ●	90	• • • •
60	Kenmore	1301[2] 1302[]	300	57	● ● ● ● ●	125	•
61	GE	Monogram ZBD6920P[SS]	1,200	56	● ● ● ● ●	115	• • • •
62	Fagor	LFA-086XL	1,300	55	● ● ● ● ●	120	• • •
63	GE	GLD7400R[WW] GLD7460RSS	650	54	● ● ● ● ●	110	• • • •
64	Electrolux	Icon EDW7505HP[S]	1,400	54	● ● ● ● ●	125	• • • •
65	Ikea	Nutid	650	52	● ● ● ● ●	125	• • •
66	Amana	ADB1600AW[W]	350	49	● ● ● ● ●	130	• •
67	GE	GLD6904R[WW]	500	47	● ● ● ● ●	115	• • • •
68	GE	GLD4408R[WW] GLD4458R[CS], GLD4468R [], GLD4406R [], GLD4456R[CS], GLD4466R[SS], GLD4404R [], GLD4464R []	400	45	● ● ● ● ●	135	•
69	Viking	Professional VDB450E[SS] Designer Series DFB450E	1,800	44	● ● ● ● ●	170	• •
70	Whirlpool	Gold WDT910SAY[M]	750	43	● ● ● ● ●	125	• • •
71	Viking	Professional VDB200[SS]	1,350	43	● ● ● ● ●	115	•
72	Hotpoint	HDA3600R[WW]	300	35	● ● ● ● ●	115	•

B DRAWER MODELS

1	Fisher & Paykel	DD24DCTX7	\$1,300	66	● ● ● ● ●	110	• •
2	KitchenAid	KUDD03DT[SS]	1,400	43	● ● ● ● ●	125	•
3	Maytag	MDD8000AW[S]	1,300	40	● ● ● ● ●	145	•
4	Jenn-Air	JDD4000AW[S]	1,600	21	● ● ● ● ●	130	•
5	Fisher & Paykel	DD36SDFTX1*	1,050	20	● ● ● ● ●	115	• •

* Discontinued but similar model available; price is for similar model. *36 inches wide; requires nonstandard opening.



Lab tests

Ratings, reviews, recommendations

Reports

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Best bike helmets

THE RACY GOOD LOOKS of today's bicycle helmets mask a serious purpose: protecting their wearers from serious head injuries and even death.

To see how well helmets do their job, we put 13 models, nine for adults and four for kids, through an impact test using an apparatus that drops them at about 11 or 14 mph onto differently shaped anvils.

We use an electronic sensor inside a dummy metal head to detect how much force would be transmitted to a rider's head in an accident. We also evaluated the helmets for ventilation, ease of use, fit adjustments, and other features.

All but two models absorbed the force of impact within the limit set by the current Consumer Product Safety Commission standard. The **A8 Nutcase** and **A9 Bern**, both multisport helmets that claim to be usable for other activities such as skateboarding, slightly exceeded that limit in at least two out of three drops. We have judged them Poor for impact absorption.

Of the nine adult helmets we tested, only the **A1 Specialized** provided the necessary protection in our own more stringent test, in which we dropped helmets on the anvils at about 2 mph faster. At \$60, it is a CR Best Buy. The **A3 Garneau**, \$55, and the **A2 Bontrager** and **A4 Bell**, each \$100, met the government standard but did not pass our higher velocity test.

All four of those helmets earned high scores for ventilation, fit adjustments, ease of use, and weight. Youth helmets are intended for children age 5 or older. The **B1 Bontrager**, \$45, is our one recommended model of the youth helmets tested, scoring the highest marks for impact absorption



A1 Specialized



A3 Garneau

Ratings

All tested models In performance order, within types.

☒ CR Best Buy
☒ Recommended

● Excellent
● Very good
○ Good
○ Fair
● Poor

	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results				
Recommendation	Rank			Impact absorption	Ventilation	Fit adjustments	Ease of use	Weight
			0 100 P F G V E					

A ADULT

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Specialized Echelon	\$ 60	73	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Bontrager Circuit	100	62	○	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Garneau Baristo	55	62	○	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Bell Array Road	100	59	○	●	●	●	●
	5	Giro Indicator	40	57	○	●	○	●	●
	6	Bell Muni	65	53	○	●	●	●	●
	7	Giro Reverb	60	38	○	●	●	●	●
	8	Nutcase Street Sport 8 Ball ¹	60	14	●	●	●	●	○
	9	Bern Brighton Thin Shell EPS ¹ ²	50	13	●	●	●	●	○

B YOUTH

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Bontrager Solstice Youth	45	75	●	●	●	●	●
	2	Bell Strata Youth	25	57	○	●	○	●	●
	3	Schwinn Thrasher Youth	25	52	○	●	○	○	●
	4	Bern Nino Zip Mold ¹	45	33	○	●	●	●	●

¹ Multisport helmet. ² Women's helmet.

by passing our own more stringent test. Although almost any bike helmet is better than none in an accident, we believe that the models we have judged Very Good for impact absorption should provide significantly better protection.

SEE OUR TESTS OF HELMETS

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for video.



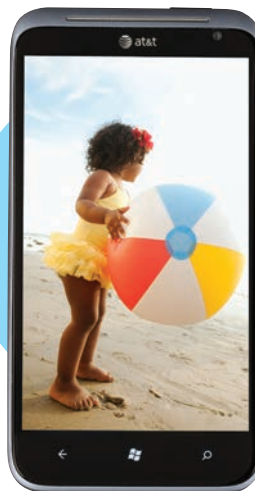
Smart phones with smart features

The **Nokia Lumia 900** and **HTC Titan II** are two of the first Windows phones to run on both of AT&T's high-speed 4G (LTE and HSPA+) networks. And they sport the new version of the operating system, which has improved. The **HTC One S**, on T-Mobile, runs on the latest version of the Android operating system, which adds better text-editing tools and controls for managing data usage, and enhanced voice-activated navigation and dictation. You can also do more from a locked screen, such as go directly to the camera or pull down notification windows to check messages. All lack a memory card slot. Prices are based on a two-year contract, including rebates.

▶ **Nokia Lumia 900 (\$100, AT&T)**

The Lumia's 4.3-inch OLED display is stunning. It is available in a matte-finish blue, black, or white plastic case with rounded sides measuring 5x2.7x0.5 inches. It shines, like the HTC II, with a feature called People Hub, which puts all of your contacts and social-network updates in one place. It also lets you blast updates to several social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, at the same time. Its 8-megapixel camera took good-quality videos but fair-quality pictures. Battery life is good.

Bottom line. With its large, beautiful display and handy controls, the Lumia is a very good choice for a Windows-based phone.



▶ **HTC Titan II (\$200, AT&T)**

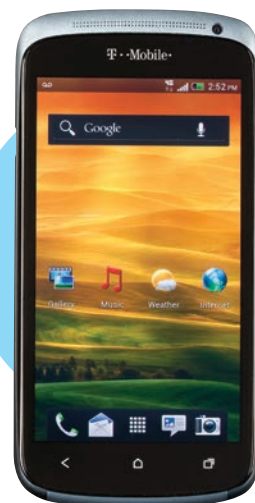
This Windows phone packs a gigantic 4.7-inch high-resolution LCD display and a 16-megapixel camera, the highest resolution we've seen on a phone. But pictures didn't appear noticeably better than those taken with other 5- and 8-megapixel phone cameras. It took good-quality pictures and video. The Titan II is large, shaping up at 5.3x2.8x0.4 inches, and heavier than the other two phones, at over 6 ounces. HTC added features to make and take calls with greater ease. Battery life is good.

Bottom line. The Titan is heavier to carry, but its large display may make it easier to view Web pages or e-mail.

▶ **HTC One S (\$200, T-Mobile)**

The HTC One S has a dazzling 4.3-inch OLED display and a feature-packed 8-megapixel camera. The 4G HSPA+ Android phone, which measures 5.2x2.6x0.3 inches, is comfortable to hold and has interesting photo features. You can capture pictures at the same time you're shooting a video by simply tapping the camera icon. You can also grab additional photos while you're reviewing the video. The camera took good-quality pictures and video. Battery life is very good.

Bottom line. The HTC One S is a top-notch Android-based phone with a superb display.



Spotlight on LEDs: 8,000 hours and counting



STILL SHINING Almost all the tested LED bulbs are going strong.

To help you save energy, we leave our lightbulbs on. And two of our top-rated light-emitting diodes have been cycling on and off for the past eight months. We last reported on them after 3,000 hours of testing. The 60-watt replacement **Philips AmbientLED 12.5W 12E26A60**, \$25, claims to last for 25,000 hours, and Home Depot's **EcoSmart LED Downlight 10.5W 65W E26**

ECO-575L, \$35, claims to last for 35,000 hours. So we kept testing. After 8,000 hours both are still burning brightly. In fact, 95 percent of all the LEDs we've tested, some 95 bulbs in all, are still going strong.

Lots of lumens

The Philips is almost as bright now as it was at 3,000 hours and is brighter than its claimed 800 lumens. (Brightness is measured in lumens; watts indicate energy use.) The

EcoSmart is only 5 lumens below its claim of 575 lumens. Both still emit a warm yellow light, similar to an incandescent, and still show colors as accurately as they did when we started testing. At 8,000 hours, they've lasted about eight times as long as a standard incandescent bulb and are much more energy efficient, using about 75 percent less energy. That's a savings of up to \$27 compared with

buying and using standard incandescents for the same amount of time.

The bulbs are still expensive, though their prices have dropped by \$15 to \$25 per bulb since we first reported on them last year. Manufacturers and retailers expect prices to continue to go down.

Some readers may remember that we also turned on two **Cree CR6 R30 LED** floodlights more than 18 months ago. They have been continuously burning for more than 13,000 hours, with little or no change in brightness or light color. We'll continue our LED testing and report on their brightness and color. We've also started testing some new LEDs, including some 75-watt equivalents. Look for our full report in October.



SEE OUR TESTS OF LIGHTBULBS

Use your smart phone to download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app and scan the code for video.



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- Equipment Cost and Recommendations
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Cars

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High prices lead top repair gripes

HEFTY CHARGES and an inability to perform repairs properly are the main reasons that car owners become dissatisfied with auto-repair shops. Those are among the findings of our latest Annual Auto Survey, conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center. Other common reasons are that a shop took longer than expected to complete the work and that owners had to take the car back because the repair didn't "hold up."

Every year we ask car owners how satisfied they were with auto repairs performed by dealerships and independent shops in the previous 12 months. This year we received responses on about 168,000 vehicles. As in past years, most car owners prefer taking their vehicles to independent shops rather than dealerships for repair work. Those who prefer independents the most are owners of Chrysler, Dodge, Jaguar, Jeep, Nissan, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo vehicles, who tended to be less satisfied as a group with dealership repairs than owners of most other makes.



■ DID YOU KNOW?

Land Rover owners were among the least satisfied with dealer repairs in our survey, which covered 32 brands.

For the first time, we also recontacted 5,400 of the respondents and asked about their specific repair gripes. Of that group, 73 percent were either completely or very satisfied with their repair shop. But of those who weren't, almost 40 percent cited high prices as a reason, more than a quarter said their vehicle's problem wasn't fixed properly, and about a fifth said that it took longer than expected to complete the work or that they had to take the car back to the shop.

Why people fire their shop

Sometimes dissatisfaction led to owners switching mechanics. Of the subscribers we recontacted, almost a quarter revealed that in the previous five years they'd had a vehicle repaired at a shop they no longer use. Almost half of that group cited a dealership, a third said it was an independent shop, and a fifth no longer use a franchise chain (such as Midas or Sears).

The top reasons for switching shops involved similar complaints. Half of the group said the shop didn't fix the problem properly, about a third said the price was too high, and about a quarter reported that they had to take the car back or that the shop sold them unnecessary parts or service. A fifth said they were treated poorly by the staff, the shop took longer than expected to complete the work, or the price was more than originally estimated.

Another red flag for repair shops: A sizeable 30 percent of female respondents in the group said they stopped using a shop because they felt the staff had tried to take

advantage of them because of their gender.

To avoid unexpectedly high charges, request an estimate for you to approve before your shop starts the work and ask that it contact you before performing any work that would increase your cost. If you think a price is too high, get a second opinion.

Top complaints

Of owners who weren't satisfied with their shop in the past year, here are the gripes they reported:

Price was too high	38%
Did not fix problem	28
Took longer than expected to complete work	21
Had to take car back because repair did not "hold up"	18
Price was more than originally estimated	11
Car was not clean when it was picked up	8
Sold me unnecessary parts or service	7
Treated poorly by staff	6
Had to wait more than 30 minutes to pick up car	4
Did not honor warranty	4
Staff tried to take advantage of me because of my gender	3
Did not honor a coupon or advertised special	2



Best ways to save gas

How to get better fuel economy starting today

THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY to slash what you're spending at the gas pump is to buy a more fuel-efficient car, such as those listed on the facing page. But if that's not in your budget, the following do's and don'ts can help you put the brakes on gas spending right away.

What to do

Watch your speed. The faster you drive on the highway, the worse your gas mileage will be. When we tested a 2005 Toyota Camry at various cruising speeds, we found that dropping from 65 to 55 mph improved its fuel economy by a dramatic 5 mpg. Speeding up from 65 to 75 mph, on the other hand, decreased its gas mileage by 5 mpg. That can add up.

Compare pump prices. With the right smart-phone app or GPS navigator, or by using a website such as GasBuddy.com, you can easily compare gas prices. In May a quick search of Pasadena, Calif., for example, showed a price difference of 48 cents per gallon between stations only

six blocks apart. Using such an app or navigator while on the road can also pay off at interstate exits. One of our editors recently saved 13 cents per gallon on a fill-up simply by driving a mile off of the highway instead of using a gas station located right at the exit.

Keep the pressure up. Underinflated tires require more energy to roll, which wastes fuel. How much? With the pressure in our Camry's tires deflated by 10 pounds per square inch, gas mileage dropped by 1.3 mpg. Underinflated tires are also a safety concern because they compromise a car's braking and handling. Plus they wear faster. Check tire pressure at least once a month and, if necessary, adjust it to the pressure recommended in your car's owner's manual.

Get the right rental. When you're traveling, try to reserve a fuel-efficient car. For about the same rate, you could get a 27-mpg four-cylinder Hyundai Sonata or Toyota Camry instead of a 21-mpg V6 Chrysler 200. Or choose a 32-mpg Toyota Corolla over a 26-mpg Chevrolet Cruze.

What not to do

Keep lots of stuff in your trunk. If your car has become a rolling storage shed, it's costing you extra to haul that gear around. For automakers trying to improve a vehicle's fuel economy, shedding every excess pound is important. You should do the same. According to the EPA, carrying an extra 100 pounds in your car can reduce gas mileage by 1 to 2 percent.

Be a drag. At highway speeds, more than 50 percent of your engine's power goes to overcoming aerodynamic drag, or simply driving through the air. Don't add to that resistance by carrying things on top of the car. When we put a large car-top carrier on our Camry, its gas mileage at 65 mph dropped from 35 to 29 mpg.

Cool off. Combine errands into one trip. Because an engine runs most efficiently when it's warm, repeatedly letting your car cool down and warm up while making short trips eats up extra fuel. In our Camry test, making multiple short trips, starting the engine cold each time, reduced gas mileage by almost 4 mpg.

Best recommended cars for fuel economy

These are well-rounded, reliable vehicles that have achieved the highest overall mpg results in their categories in our real-world gas-mileage tests. "MT" indicates a manual transmission.

▶ Subcompact cars

MODEL	MPG
Scion xD (MT)	34
Honda Fit Sport (MT)	33
Honda Fit (base)	30
Worst in class Chevrolet Sonic LT (1.8), Nissan Versa Hatchback SL	28

▶ Small sedans

MODEL	MPG
Mazda3 i Touring (Skyactiv)	32
Toyota Corolla LE	32
Hyundai Elantra	29
Kia Forte EX (2.0)	28
Mazda3 i Sport	28
Worst in class Volkswagen Jetta (5-cyl.), Mitsubishi Lancer ES	25

▶ Family sedans

MODEL	MPG
Toyota Camry Hybrid XLE	38
Ford Fusion Hybrid	34
Hyundai Sonata GLS (2.4)	27
Toyota Camry LE (4-cyl.)	27
Worst in class Ford Fusion AWD (V6), Mazda6 (V6)	20



Toyota Camry Hybrid

▶ Hatchbacks and wagons

MODEL	MPG
Chevrolet Volt (plug-in hybrid)	61/99/32*
Toyota Prius Four	44
Toyota Prius V Three	41
Lexus CT200h	40
Volkswagen Golf TDI (diesel, MT)	38
Volkswagen Jetta SportWagen TDI (diesel, MT)	36
Worst in class Scion xB, Mazda5, Volkswagen Jetta SportWagen (2.5)	23

*Combined gas and electric/MPGe electric only/mpg gas only.

▶ Small SUVs

MODEL	MPG
Mini Cooper Countryman S	26
Nissan Juke	24
Honda CR-V EX	23
Toyota RAV4 (4-cyl.)	23
Worst in class Jeep Liberty	16

▶ Midsize SUVs

MODEL	MPG
Toyota Highlander Hybrid	27
Chevrolet Equinox (4-cyl.)	21
GMC Terrain (4-cyl.)	21
Hyundai Santa Fe (4-cyl.)	20
Kia Sorento (4-cyl.)	20
Worst in class Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited (V8)	14

▶ Sports and upscale sedans

MODEL	MPG
Lexus HS 250h (hybrid)	31
Acura TSX	25
Audi A4	25
Acura TL	24
Infiniti G25 Journey	24
Lexus IS 250	24
Worst in class Chrysler 300C	18



Scion xD



Drivers think smaller

Higher gas prices are motivating people to drive less and move to smaller and more fuel-efficient vehicles. Those are some of the highlights of a survey conducted in April, amid rising fuel costs, by the Consumer Reports National Research Center. We also found that almost three-quarters of respondents are considering buying a vehicle powered by an alternative drivetrain, such as a hybrid, flex-fuel (which can use E85 ethanol), natural-gas, or electric vehicle.

About a third of those surveyed are driving less than a year ago, in contrast to November 2011, when only a quarter said they had cut back. And more respondents—37 percent—consider fuel economy to be the most important factor in choosing a car over other considerations, such as quality, safety, and value.

Not surprisingly, almost seven in 10 said they wanted better fuel economy in their next vehicle; 40 percent want much better gas mileage. To get it, most owners—58 percent—are willing to compromise on the size or capacity of the vehicle, and about half will sacrifice comfort or amenities.

In line with this, about a fifth of the respondents said that for their next vehicle they are most likely to buy a small car, with family sedans, midsize SUVs, pickups, and small SUVs following. On the other hand, less than three in 10 large-SUV owners would buy another.

Low interest in wagons, diesels

Two interesting notes: Only 2 percent of the surveyed owners are likely to buy a wagon, even though wagons usually provide a better balance of fuel economy and passenger/cargo versatility than SUVs. And only one in five are considering a diesel car, which we've found to be among the most fuel-efficient vehicles we've tested and little different from driving a modern gasoline-powered car. A limited selection of reasonably priced diesel models might be the biggest deterrent.

To cut your fuel costs, we recommend focusing on the size and type of vehicle that will best meet your needs, then looking for models with the best gas mileage in that class. The lists of recommended vehicles at left are a good starting point.

Toyota Prius C

This low-priced hybrid is fuel-efficient, but it's not a deal

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
53

As Toyota's least-expensive hybrid, the Prius C, \$20,850, has been much anticipated. True to its namesake, it delivers excellent fuel economy of 43 mpg overall, 1 mpg less than the larger Prius, and a stellar 37 mpg in the city—the best of any car we've tested. The C's tiny dimensions and easy parking also make it a natural for urban driving.

But overall you get what you pay for. This subcompact hatchback, which is related to the lackluster Toyota Yaris, suffers from a stiff ride, very noisy cabin, slow acceleration, and cheap-looking interior trim. In our Ratings, the Prius C's overall test score of 53 puts it

slightly under its chief competitor, the mediocre Honda Insight, and is too low for us to recommend the model.

As with other Toyota hybrids, we expect very good reliability.

Thrifty but slow

The C's small 1.5-liter, four-cylinder gasoline engine is coupled with an electric motor and a nickel-metal-hydrate battery. It's fuel-efficient, but with only 99 combined horsepower on tap, the engine has to work hard and it often struggles to maintain speed on hills.

The hybrid system is well integrated, with smooth transitions between electric and gasoline modes. The engine doesn't need to kick in until the car is going about 35 mph and, to save fuel, it automatically shuts off when the car comes to a stop and smoothly restarts when you lift your foot from the brake pedal. An EV mode lets you drive about a mile at low speeds on electric-only power, as long as you maintain a light foot on the throttle.

Ride and noise are major gripes. The continuously variable transmission operates smoothly but can hold engine revs high, which results in a raucous noise. Wind and road noise

adds to the din. The ride is stiff and choppy.

The Prius C handles soundly, but it isn't particularly agile and the steering lacks feedback. When pushed at our track, the C reached the limits of its grip early, although the electronic stability control system kept it secure. It posted a decent speed in our avoidance maneuver.

Cheap accommodations

The Prius C's cabin is very basic. The hard-plastic panels have disparate textures in an attempt to add some flair to the interior, but they don't hide the cheap materials, including the thin carpet and headliner. At least the seat cushions are covered in nice fabric.

Drivers have enough room, but the driving position is flawed overall. The steering wheel tilts and telescopes, but its adjustment range is small and many drivers couldn't pull it close enough for comfort. The left-foot rest is too close, and taller drivers found their knee rested against the door panel. Visibility is decent to the front, but much of the small rear window is blocked by large rear head restraints.

Front seats are flat and firm, and many drivers wished for more lumbar support.

How they compare

Rec.	SUBCOMPACT HATCHBACKS	0 100				
		P	F	G	V	E
✓	Honda Fit (base)	68				
	Honda Insight EX	54				
	Toyota Prius C Two	53				
	Toyota Yaris LE	41				





BRAGGING RIGHTS You can compare fuel costs with those of another car.

Most testers found the rear seat to be supportive and roomy for the car's small size, but as expected it's very tight for three people.

The digital instruments in the center of the dashboard are easy to read, but many testers would have preferred them to be directly in front of them. As you drive, a color screen can display your fuel cost and how much money you're saving on gas compared with another vehicle, based on the price per gallon and gas mileage you input. Controls are mostly straightforward, though some are a long reach for the driver, and the radio knobs are shallow. Many ancillary controls (mirrors, door locks, and panel-illumination adjuster) are unlit. Bluetooth is standard on all trim levels, as is automatic climate control, a rare feature in this class.

Cargo space is limited to one large suitcase and a duffel bag, but it can be expanded by folding the 60/40-split rear seat.

First drive Toyota Prius Plug-in

If you want to use even less gas than the Prius C or standard Prius, you can now buy the Prius Plug-in hybrid, the fourth model in the growing Prius lineup. We recently purchased one to test and have some initial impressions.

The Plug-in is a version of the standard Prius. But in place of the 1.1-kilowatt-hour nickel-metal-hydride battery, which is charged by the gas engine and regenerative braking, it uses a 4.4-kWh lithium-ion battery that can also be recharged using an electrical outlet.

We've been able to go 12 to 15 miles solely on electricity, but we have to be gentle with the throttle and stay below 60 mph.

The gas engine kicks in with even moderate acceleration, so unlike the Chevrolet Volt, you can't drive it completely gas-free. That could limit its appeal to people who want to maximize their electric-only

driving. The Plug-in includes a button that lets you reserve the electric charge for later use if, say, you want to use gas on the highway and save the electric motor for city driving, where it will be most efficient.

The battery takes only 1.5 hours to charge on a 240-volt charger, or about 3 hours on standard 120-volt current. When it's depleted, the Plug-in operates like a normal Prius, alternating between gas and electric modes.

Prices start at \$32,000, but we paid \$40,510 for our loaded Advanced trim version. A \$2,500 federal tax credit is available.

We'll give you all the details on how it performs once we've fully tested it.

FAST FILL-UP The battery recharges in 3 hours, even on 120-volt current.



Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Fuel economy, turning circle, smooth transmission, good rear-seat room for two
LOWS	Acceleration, noise, ride, driving position, rear visibility, fit and finish, small trunk
TRIM LINE	Two
DRIVETRAIN	99-hp, 1.5-liter, four-cylinder engine with hybrid electric assist; continuously variable transmission; front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	None
TESTED PRICE	\$20,850

The Prius C line

TRIM LINES	One, Two, Three, Four
BASE PRICES	\$18,950-\$23,230



More test findings

BRAKING	Short stops overall, but the brake pedal can feel touchy.
HEADLIGHTS	Fair illumination from low beams. High beams are more intense and provide better illumination.
ACCESS	Front access is easy, but rear access is impeded by a sloping roof and narrow foot path.
VISIBILITY	Good to the front and sides. But rear restraints and thick pillars impede the view aft. Good-sized door mirrors help.
CABIN STORAGE	Modest.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	The center-rear restraint must be raised to provide adequate whiplash protection for adults.
CHILD SEATS	Limited rear-seat room might prevent larger rear-facing seats from fitting behind front occupants. Toyota suggests not using the center seat if a child seat is installed on the right because a child seat interferes with the center safety belt.

Small '40 mpg' sedans

Are special fuel-efficient versions worth the extra cost?

THE LATEST BUZZWORD in auto advertising is "40 mpg." In recent months, a number of automakers have been touting new models that meet or exceed that milestone with their highway gas mileage. But some cars require you to pay extra money up front for that fuel efficiency.

We bought three for this issue: the Chevrolet Cruze Eco, Ford Focus SE SFE, and Honda Civic HF. Compared with their standard versions, the cars are modified

to increase fuel economy. But they cost between \$500 and \$800 more.

When we compared their gas mileage with that of the standard versions, we found that the Cruze Eco saves you only \$20 per year; the Focus SFE and Civic HF save you \$145 and \$135, respectively. So you'd need to own them between three and 38 years, depending on the model, for the fuel savings to offset the higher price.

There are other ways to get impressive efficiency. The roomier and higher-rated Hyundai Sonata family sedan costs the same as the Cruze Eco and gets the same 27 mpg overall. And the Toyota Corolla and Mazda3 i Skyactiv cost less and get 32 mpg.

In our Ratings, the Focus SFE and Cruze Eco rank near the top of their class, and the Civic HF ranks near the bottom.

Small savings

Our real-world fuel-economy tests of each model show only modest savings when you opt for the more fuel-efficient versions. The annual savings in fuel costs for the modified models ranged from \$20 to \$145, based on driving 12,000 miles per year and a gasoline cost of \$4 per gallon.

Model tested	Extra MSRP cost	Overall mpg	Annual fuel cost	Annual fuel savings
Chevrolet Cruze Eco	\$770	27	\$1,805	\$ 20
Chevrolet Cruze 1LT (1.4T)		26	1,825	
Ford Focus SE SFE	495	31	1,565	145
Ford Focus SE		28	1,710	
Honda Civic HF	800	33	1,450	135
Honda Civic LX		30	1,585	

SEE OUR ROAD-TEST VIDEO

On your smart phone, download the RedLaser or ShopSavvy app, then scan the code to watch.



Ford Focus SFE

ROAD-TEST SCORE
77

The Focus offers a solid feel, relatively low cabin-noise levels, and a combination of agile handling and a supple ride that makes it feel more like a sports sedan than an inexpensive economy model.

The \$495 SFE (Super Fuel Economy) package provides a 3-mpg bump in overall and city fuel economy, to 31 and 21, respectively. The highway mileage in our tests stayed the same at 43 mpg. According to our calculations, the package would save you about \$145 in annual

fuel costs. So, it could take more than three years to make up the difference in price.

Available as an option on midtrim SE models, the SFE package adds low-rolling-resistance tires and aerodynamic wheel covers, along with a rear spoiler and automatic grille shutters that adjust for engine cooling or less drag.

SFE models get the same 160-hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine found in other Focus models, but where the others are available with automatic or manual transmissions, the only choice for SFE buyers is a six-

speed automated manual.

Performance is good, but even though the automated manual transmission is better than in Focus models we'd previously tested, it remains a weak point. Although smooth once under way, the transmission can stumble or transmit vibrations into the cabin at low speeds and in stop-and-go traffic.

The good news is that the SFE is as fun to drive as other Focus models, with impressive agility due to well-tuned steering and little body lean. Braking distances were excellent overall and shorter than on previously tested Focus models despite the low-rolling-resistance tires.

The interior is identical to SE models, with good fit and finish for the class. There is decent room for the driver and passenger up-front, but the rear seating area is tight, with little leg room. Radio controls are complicated, but the Sync system, which allows voice commands for phones and music players, works well.

Focus reliability has been below average, so we do not recommend the SFE.

Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Ride, handling, fuel economy, braking, solid feel
LOWS	Transmission, rear seat, controls, reliability
DRIVETRAIN	160-hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine; six-speed automated manual transmission; front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Cruise control, Sync voice-command system, heated seats
TESTED PRICE	\$21,650



SLEEK ADDITION A rear wing is claimed to aid fuel economy.



Chevrolet Cruze Eco

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
72

In the quest for better fuel economy, the Chevrolet Cruze Eco gets a makeover similar to the Ford Focus SFE and Honda Civic HF. Low-rolling-resistance tires, lightweight alloy wheels, a rear spoiler, a marginally lower ride height, and a front grille that automatically closes at higher speeds all improve airflow around the Cruze.

The Cruze Eco is available with a six-speed manual transmission, which is touted to achieve 42 mpg on the highway, or the more widely sold six-speed automatic

transmission that we bought with our car. Chevrolet claims that the Eco with the automatic transmission delivers 39 mpg on the highway.

Our Eco's price is about \$800 more than a similarly equipped Cruze LT. But the results of the Eco's modifications don't increase overall fuel economy by much. Our Eco beat the Cruze LS and LT by just 1 mpg overall, for an unremarkable 27, and by 4 mpg on the highway, for 40. City mileage was identical at 17 mpg.

Based on driving 12,000 miles annually and a gas price of \$4 per gallon, that would save you

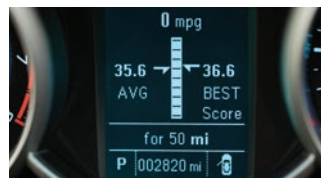
merely \$20 per year. Your savings would be higher if you mostly drove on the highway.

What the numbers don't show is that our Eco felt smoother and more responsive overall than the 2011 Cruze LT we tested last year. That has less to do with the Eco package and more to do with new transmission programming that was applied to all 2012 models.

Powered by the 138-hp, 1.4-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine used in uplevel LT models, acceleration is about the same.

Handling is nimble, with quick, nicely weighted steering. The brakes performed well, and dry stopping distances with the 17-inch low-rolling-resistance tires were slightly shorter than the distances of our previously tested Cruze models. Like other Cruzes, the Eco has a solid feel, with a quiet cabin and compliant ride.

The nicely finished interior provides very good visibility and plenty of leg room up front but has a tight rear seat. Reliability has been much below average, keeping us from recommending the Cruze.



SAVINGS GAME The Cruze scores your green-driving skills.

Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Ride, transmission, quietness, front-seat space, solid feel
LOWS	Middling fuel economy, rear seat, reliability
DRIVETRAIN	138-hp, 1.4-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine; six-speed automatic transmission; front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Power driver's seat, remote start, parking assist
TESTED PRICE	\$21,775



Honda Civic HF

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
61

Like the Focus SFE and Cruze Eco, the Civic HF uses low-rolling-resistance tires and a rear spoiler for increased fuel economy. It also adds smoother underbody panels and flush alloy wheels to further improve airflow around the car.

The interior trim is similar to base Civic LX models, with an added electronic display to help drivers monitor fuel economy. All told, the extra equipment tacks \$800 onto the price of a similarly equipped LX sedan.

The result is a 3-mpg gain in overall fuel economy over our

previously tested and similarly equipped Civic LX, to 33 mpg. City and highway mileage improved to 21 and 49 mpg, respectively. That's easily the best highway figure of this group.

We calculate that the Civic HF would save you about \$135 annually on fuel, so it would take about six years to make up for the higher price.

The HF's mediocre 61 overall test score places it near the bottom of our small-sedan Ratings and near the other Civics we've recently tested.

The HF has the same 140-hp, 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine and

five-speed automatic transmission found in other Civic versions. A manual is not available in this version. Like the other Civics we've tested, the powertrain is very smooth, but performance is not notable.

As with the LX, handling is capable but falls a bit short of its peers. Steering is vague, and the HF has pronounced body lean in turns. With its low-rolling-resistance tires, the HF's long braking distances are on par with the Civic Hybrid, which uses the same tires.

Road noise is very pronounced, and the ride is choppy. Overall, the car feels insubstantial. The HF displays the cost cutting we've seen on other Civics. The cabin is roomy, with plenty of space for drivers, and even 6-footers can fit in the back seat. But as with other Civics, the HF has cheap-looking hard plastics in the cockpit, and we saw poor panel fits and notable gaps in the trim.

The trunk is roomy enough for three large suitcases. Reliability is expected to be better than average, but the Civic scores too low to be recommended.

Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Fuel economy, crash-test results
LOWS	Ride, road noise, braking, agility, fit and finish
DRIVETRAIN	140-hp, 1.8-liter, four-cylinder engine; five-speed automatic transmission; front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	None
TESTED PRICE	\$20,225



NO DRAG
The HF has an aerodynamic wheel design.

SPORTY CARS

Hyundai Veloster vs. Volkswagen Beetle

A new, fuel-efficient rival flattens the redesigned Bug

The appeal of the new Hyundai Veloster and redesigned Volkswagen Beetle is as much about style as substance. The Veloster is a fresh, sporty coupe with a unique asymmetrical three-door design: one on the driver's side, two on the passenger side. The latest incarnation of VW's iconic Bug is longer, wider, and edgier than the previous model and is just as distinctive. But overall the Veloster does a better job of backing up its head-turning design with competitive performance.

The Veloster, which is based on the Hyundai Accent, delivers agile handling, a smooth-shifting manual transmission, and excellent fuel economy of 31 mpg overall and 37 mpg on the highway. The Beetle drives decently, but its fuel economy is an unimpressive 26 mpg, and it suffers from the same cost-cutting that compromised the VW Jetta.

In our Ratings, the Veloster's road-test score of 71 places it midpack in the sporty-car category, and the Beetle's mediocre 60 is too low for us to recommend the car. Both are too new for us to have reliability data, which is why we can't recommend the Veloster, either.

The driving experience

For a fun-to-drive car, the Veloster is the clear choice. It showed tenacious cornering grip and posted a high speed in our avoidance course. In routine driving the Beetle's handling is responsive, but it's not crisp or sporty. When the Beetle was pushed to its cornering limits, its tail would slide out before electronic stability control intervened. And it took our drivers a lot of wheel-winding to eke out a decent speed thorough our avoidance maneuver.

A stiff ride is the Veloster's trade-off for its agile handling. Bumps are pronounced, and every tar strip is transmitted into the cabin, even on the highway. The Beetle provides a more comfortable, compliant ride. Noise levels are tolerable but far from hushed, with notable engine and road noise in the Veloster and wind noise in the Beetle.

Neither car is quick. Our Veloster teams a 138-hp, 1.6-liter direct-injection four-cylinder engine with an easy-shifting six-speed manual transmission. Acceleration is adequate, but you'll need to downshift a lot to extract top performance. A more potent 201-hp turbocharged four-cylinder is coming soon.

Our Beetle is powered by a 170-hp, 2.5-liter

five-cylinder engine that's matched to a smooth five-speed manual. Performance is punchy at low to moderate engine speeds but lackluster past that. A smooth and perky 200-hp, 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine is also available. And the Beetle will get the very efficient TDI turbodiesel this summer.

Inside the cabins

Both cars have rudimentary but well-assembled interiors. The Veloster's optional imitation leather seats are well trimmed. The Beetle's cabin is cheered by a bold, body-color swath of plastic that sweeps from door to door and is evocative of the original Bug.

You sit low in the Veloster, but it has plenty of room. Its front seats are well shaped and supportive. The rear seats are best suited for kids because head room is stingy.

Beetle drivers will find good head room, but the wide center console intrudes at knee level. Clutch travel is long, so you need to sit closer to the wheel than is desirable so that you can fully floor its pedal. The front seats are comfortable; the two well-shaped rear seats have adequate head room for adults, but knee room is sparse.

Controls in both cars are straightforward. The Beetle's basic audio system is notably easy to use. The Veloster's Bluelink system provides voice-command controls and connectivity for navigation and accident notification.

The cargo areas in both cars are fairly small, especially the Veloster's, but folding the split rear seatbacks provides more cargo room.

How they compare		0100					
Rec.	SPORTY CARS (manual transmission)	P	F	I	G	V	E
✓	Mini Cooper (base)	81					
	Hyundai Veloster	71					
	Scion tC	63					
	Fiat 500 Sport	61					
	Volkswagen Beetle 2.5L	60					



Hyundai Veloster

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
71



CLEAN LINES

The Veloster's dash has a big, logical touch screen.

Hyundai Veloster

HIGHS	Handling, fuel economy, extra door, turning circle
LOWS	Ride, noise, low-end torque, rear visibility, rear seat
TRIM LINE	—
DRIVETRAIN	138-hp, 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine; six-speed manual transmission; front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	18-inch alloy wheels, panoramic sunroof, leatherette trim, Dimension stereo
TESTED PRICE	\$20,340

More test findings

BRAKING	Very good overall.
HEADLIGHTS	Low beams provide good intensity and reach but might look like high beams to oncoming drivers. High beams are brighter and reach farther.
ACCESS	A third door makes rear access easier than in a traditional coupe.
VISIBILITY	Short side windows, thick roof pillars, and a split rear window create some blind spots.
CABIN STORAGE	Console has a deep compartment and open bins.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	Restraints are sufficiently tall, even when lowered.
CHILD SEATS	Front- and rear-facing child seats can be secured fairly easily, but the LATCH anchors are difficult to reach.

SKY LIGHT

A dual-paned sunroof brightens up the Veloster's cabin.



SECRET ENTRANCE

A small third door aids rear access.



Scan for video.

Volkswagen Beetle

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
60



NOTHING FANCY

The Beetle's dash is a model of simplicity.

Volkswagen Beetle

HIGHS	Tight turning circle, compliant ride
LOWS	Rear visibility, wind noise, long clutch travel, tricky at-the-limit handling
TRIM LINE	2.5L
DRIVETRAIN	170-hp, 2.5-liter five-cylinder engine; five-speed manual transmission; front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	None
TESTED PRICE	\$20,835

More test findings

BRAKING	Very good overall, with short stops and linear pedal feel.
HEADLIGHTS	Low beams don't reach very far and have a sharp upper cutoff. High beams reach a very good distance but leave the foreground dim.
ACCESS	Front seats fold and slide easily to aid rear access, but it still takes agility to climb in and out.
VISIBILITY	Taller drivers might need to lean forward to see overhead traffic signals. Rear head restraints impair the view aft through a small rear window.
CABIN STORAGE	No console compartment, but two glove boxes.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	Restraints are sufficiently tall enough to provide protection, even when lowered.
CHILD SEATS	Front seats might need to be moved up to fit rear-facing child seats behind them. Rear-facing child seats might require extra bolstering to get a good recline angle. LATCH anchors are easy to reach, and there are two top-tether anchors.

CHROME DOMES

The Beetle's hubcaps are reminiscent of those on '70s-era models.



Scan for video.



Compare



VERSION	Toyota Prius C	Ford Focus	Chevrolet Cruze	Honda Civic	Hyundai Veloster	Volkswagen Beetle
TRIM LINE	Two	SE SFE	Eco	HF	—	2.5L
PRICE: BASE/TESTED ⁽¹⁾	\$19,900/\$20,850	\$17,500/\$21,650	\$19,245/\$21,775	\$19,455/\$20,225	\$17,300/\$20,340	\$19,795/\$20,835
DRIVETRAIN	1.5-liter 4-cyl. hybrid (99 hp)	2.0-liter 4-cyl. (159 hp)	1.4-liter 4-cyl. turbo (138 hp)	1.8-liter 4-cyl. (140 hp)	1.6-liter 4-cyl. (138 hp)	2.5-liter 5-cyl. (170 hp)
Engine						
Transmission	CVT	6-speed sequential	6-speed automatic	5-speed automatic	6-speed manual	5-speed manual
Drive wheels	Front	Front	Front	Front	Front	Front
TIRES TESTED	Bridgestone Turanza EL400	Continental ContiTouring	Goodyear Assurance,	Bridgestone Ecopia EP20,	Kumho Solus KH25,	Hankook Optimo H426,
Model & size	02, P175/65R15 84H	Contact, 215/55R16 93H	215/55R17 94V	P195/65R15 89S	215/40R18 85V	215/55R17 94H
RATINGS						
PERFORMANCE						
Acceleration	○	●	○	○	●	●
0 to 60 mph, sec.	11.3	8.5	10.0	9.7	9.2	8.6
45 to 65 mph, sec.	7.3	5.7	6.0	5.6	5.9	5.6
Quarter-mile, sec.	18.4	16.5	17.7	17.5	17.1	16.8
Transmission	●	●	●	●	●	●
Routine handling	○	●	●	●	●	●
Emergency handling	○	●	●	○	●	○
Avoid. maneuver, speed, mph	51.5	52.0	52.5	51.0	54.0	52.0
Braking	●	●	●	○	●	●
From 60 mph, dry/wet, ft.	135/140	129/141	131/143	145/151	131/142	131/141
Headlights	●	○	●	○	●	●
COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE						
Ride	○	●	●	○	○	●
Noise	●	●	●	○	○	○
Driving position	○	●	●	●	○	○
Front-seat comfort	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rear-seat comfort	○	○	●	○	●	●
Access	●	●	○	○	●	●
Controls and displays	●	○	●	●	●	●
Interior fit and finish	●	○	●	○	●	●
Trunk	●	○	○	○	●	○
PREDICTED RELIABILITY	●	●	●	●	New	New
FUEL						
Overall mpg	43	31	27	33	31	26
City/highway mpg	37/48	21/43	17/40	21/49	24/37	18/34
Type	regular	regular	regular	regular	regular	regular
Capacity, gal./Cruising range, mi.	9.5/410	12.4/380	15.6/415	13.2/435	13.2/410	14.5/370
Annual cost, 12K mi. at \$4.00/gal.	\$1,110	\$1,565	\$1,805	\$1,450	\$1,550	\$1,875
SAFETY						
CRASH TESTS						
IIHS frontal offset	Good	Good	Good	Good	NA	NA
IIHS side	Good	Good	Good	Good	NA	NA
IIHS rear	Good	Good	Good	Good	NA	Good
IIHS roof strength	Good	Good	Good	Good	NA	NA
NHTSA front, driver/pass.	NA/NA	●/●	●/●	●/●	NA/NA	●/●
NHTSA side, driver/rear	NA/NA	●/●	●/●	●/●	NA/NA	●/●
NHTSA rollover 2WD/4WD	NA/NA	●/NA	●/NA	●/NA	NA/NA	●/NA
AIR BAGS						
Side, front/rear	std./no	std./no	std./std.	std./no	std./no	std./no
Head protection	standard	standard	standard	standard	standard	no
SPECIFICATIONS						
DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHT						
Length/width/height, in.	157/67/57	179/72/58	181/71/58	177/69/57	166/71/55	168/71/59
Wheelbase, in.	100	104	106	105	104	100
Turning circle, ft.	35	39	38	39	36	36
Ground clearance, in.	5.0	4.5	4.0	4.0	5.5	4.0
Curb weight, lb. (% front/rear)	2,545 (61/39)	2,985 (59/41)	3,140 (61/39)	2,680 (61/39)	2,765 (60/40)	3,040 (63/37)
Maximum load, lb.	845	825	900	850	700	820
Luggage, suitcases + duffels	1+1	3+1	3+1	3+0	1+3	2+1
Towing capacity, lb.	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
INTERIOR ROOM						
Front shoulder room, in.	52.0	55.5	54.5	56.0	54.5	54.5
Front leg room, in.	41.0	42.0	43.0	41.0	41.5	41.5
Front head room, in. ⁽²⁾	4.0	4.5	6.0	5.0	2.0	5.5
Rear shoulder room, in.	48.5	51.0	53.0	52.5	50.5	46.0
Rear leg room, in.	27.0	27.0	26.0	27.0	26.5	25.0
Rear head room, in. ⁽²⁾	2.5	2.0	3.0	2.5	0.0	1.5

⁽¹⁾ Based on sticker price at time of purchase. ⁽²⁾ Above a person 5'9" tall.

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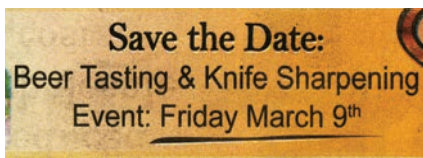
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Not nice!

A Black Hole Award goes to Walgreens magic trail mix, which—presto!—disappears when you turn the package upside down.



Trouble is brewing

"Maybe next month," a reader writes, "they could host a liquor-sippin' and gun-loading event!"



Mixed message

Submissions: SellingIt@cro.consumer.org or
Selling It, Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703

Which way is up?

"It's little wonder our economy is in such a mess!" says a reader who spied this app-ad typo. (Another eagle-eyed reader reports that the numbers were corrected in later ads.)

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A little too late

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– PRODUCT CANNOT BE EATEN.

But it looks so tasty

When it comes to product warnings, we've seen some doozies (a favorite, on a hair dryer: "Do Not Use While Sleeping"). Here, the latest winner of a Duh Award.

P.S. Any additional contribution you can make today -- \$.02, \$.03, or even \$.04 -- will help us continue to build a strong foundation

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As elections approach, Republicans and Democrats appreciate every dollar. Make that every penny. A lifelong member of one party sent two cents—count 'em, two—to the opposition after receiving one too many solicitations. A party chairman then spent 42 cents to mail him a response with the P.S. above.

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How to use the Canada Extra section

Every month, Canada Extra provides Canadian pricing and availability information about products tested for that issue. The Ratings in this section are based on this month's reports, but they narrow your choices to the products that are sold in Canada.

You can use this section in either of two ways: Start with the main report, read about the products that interest you, and turn to this section to find whether they're sold—and for what price—in Canada. Or start here, find products sold in Canada whose price and overall score appear promising, and read more about them in the main report and full Ratings chart; page numbers appear with each Canadian report. (For some products, the Canadian model designation differs slightly from the one used in the U.S.)

In most cases, the prices we list here

are the approximate retail in Canadian dollars; manufacturers' list prices are indicated by an asterisk (*). Check marks identify CR Best Buys or Recommended products in the U.S. Ratings. "NA" in a chart means that information wasn't available from the manufacturer. We include, in the Contact Info list on page 32D, the manufacturer's phone number and Web address in Canada, so that you can call or go online to get information on a model you can't find in the stores. (Many products that aren't available in Canadian stores can be bought online.)

We appreciate your support but we don't take it for granted. Please write to CanadaExtra@cu.consumer.org and tell us what you think. We can't reply to every e-mail message or implement every suggestion, but with your help we'll try to keep growing to serve your needs.

Paul Reynolds, *Canada Extra editor*

☒ **CR Best Buy** Products with this icon offer the best combination of performance and price. All are recommended.

☒ **Recommended** Models with this designation perform well and stand out for reasons we note.

Bike helmets

Report and Ratings, page 51

All of the tested adult and two of the tested youth bike helmets are available, including 5 of the recommended models.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

A ADULT

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Specialized Echelon	\$ 80	73
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Bontrager Circuit	120	62
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Garneau Baristo	50	62
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Bell Array Road	130*	59
	5	Giro Indicator	50*	57
	6	Bell Muni Urban Sport	90*	53
	7	Giro Reverb	80*	38

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

A ADULT continued

	8	Nutcase Street Sport 8 Ball ①	\$70	14
	9	Bern Brighton Thin Shell ① ②	90	13

B YOUTH

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Bontrager Solstice Youth	45	75
	4	Bern Nino Zip Mold ①	75	33

① Multisport helmet. ② Women's helmet.

Refrigerators

Report, page 44; Ratings, pages 46-47

The best choices from our tests of 235 models.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G V E

A TOP-FREEZERS

✓	1	Maytag MITXEMMW[W] ¹	\$ NA	68
✓	3	Whirlpool WRT771REY[W] ¹	1,250	67
✓	4	Frigidaire Professional FPUI2188L[P] ¹	1,100	65
✓	5	LG LTC22350[SW] ¹	NA	64
✓	6	Frigidaire Gallery FGHT2144K[F] ¹	1,050	64
✓	7	Whirlpool Gold WR9XXFMW[Q] ¹	NA	63
✓	8	Frigidaire FFHT2117L[W] ¹	800	62
✓	9	Maytag MITXEGMY[W] ¹	NA	62
✓	10	Frigidaire Gallery FGHT1844K[F] ¹	900	62
✓	12	Frigidaire FFHT1826LL[W] ¹	700	61

B CONVENTIONAL BOTTOM-FREEZERS

✓	1	Whirlpool Gold GB2FHDWX[Q] ¹	1,300	73
✓	2	Amana ABB2221WE[W] ¹	NA	73
✓	3	Maytag MBF2258XE[W] ¹	1,350	72
✓	4	Maytag MBF1958XE[W] ¹	1,200	72
✓	5	Amana ABB1921WE[W] ¹	900	71

C FRENCH-DOOR BOTTOM-FREEZERS

✓	2	Whirlpool Gold GX5FHTXV[Q] ¹	1,900	82
✓	3	Samsung RFG298HD[RS] ¹	2,800	81
✓	4	LG LFC25776[SW] ¹	2,100	81
✓	6	LG LFX31925[ST] ¹	3,700	79
✓	8	Samsung RF266AE[WP] ¹	1,900	78
✓	10	LG LFX28978[SW] ¹	2,600	77

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G V E

C FRENCH-DOOR BOTTOM-FREEZERS continued

✓	12	LG LFX25976[SW]	NA	77
✓	13	LG LFX28977[SW]	\$2,400	77
✓	14	Kenmore 7101[2] ¹	2,100	76
✓	15	Amana AF12538AE[W]	1,900	75

D SIDE-BY-SIDES

✓	1	GE GSH25JSC[SS] ¹	NA	80
✓	2	Samsung RS265TD[WP] ¹	1,500	76
✓	3	Whirlpool Gold GS5VHAXW[Q] ¹	1,800	75
✓	4	Bosch Linea 800 B22CS80SN[S] ^{1 2}	3,200	74
✓	5	DCS RX215PJX1 ^{1 2}	NA	72
✓	7	Maytag MSD2559XE[W] ¹	1,400	72
✓	9	Frigidaire Gallery FGUS2676L[P] ¹	1,500	71

E BUILT-INS

✓	1	Jenn-Air JS42PPDUB[SS] ²	8,900	80
✓	2	Thermador T36IB70NSP ^{1 2}	NA	77
✓	3	Thermador KBUDT4265E[S]	NA	77
✓	4	Sub-Zero BI42S[S] ²	NA	76
✓	5	Miele KF1901Vi ^{1 2}	NA	76
✓	6	Jenn-Air JS42SEDUDW ²	8,800	75
✓	7	KitchenAid KBFC42FT[SS] ²	9,000	73
✓	8	Liebherr CS2062 ^{1 2}	NA	73
✓	9	Sub-Zero BI36U[S] ^{1 2}	NA	71

¹ Energy Star-qualified. ² Cabinet-depth.

Room air conditioners

Report and Ratings, page 53

Eleven of the small, midsized, and large room air conditioners are available, including 6 of the recommended models.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G V E

A SMALL (5,000 to 6,500 Btu/hr.)

✓	1	Friedrich CP06F10	\$245	80
✓	2	Kenmore 70051	NA	78
✓	4	Friedrich Chill CP05G10	NA	77
	11	Friedrich Chill CP06G10	NA	73

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G V E

B MIDSIZED (7,000 to 8,200 Btu/hr.)

✓	1	Friedrich Kuhl S508M10	\$660	82
	5	Kenmore 79081	NA	70
	9	Friedrich CP08F10	295	66

C LARGE (9,800 to 12,500 Btu/hr.)

✓	3	Kenmore 70101	NA	71
✓	5	Haier ESA410J	340*	69
	6	Friedrich CP10F10A	350	68
	7	Kenmore 70121	NA	67

Dishwashers

Report, page 48; Ratings, pages 49-50

Sixty-six of the 77 tested dishwashers are available, including 13 of the recommended models.

	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
Rec.	Rank		
			0 100 P F G V E

A CONVENTIONAL MODELS

✓	1	Bosch Ascenta SHX3AR7[5]UC	\$1,000	81
✓	2	Bosch SHX98M0[9]UC	NA	81
✓	3	Bosch 800 Series SHE68R5[2]UC	1,200	80
	4	LG Steam LDF7932[ST]	NA	80
✓	5	Miele Futura Dimension G557SCSF	NA	80
✓	6	KitchenAid KUDES0CX[SS]	1,400	79
✓	7	Bosch 800 Plus Series SHX9ER5[5]UC	2,200	79
✓	8	Bosch Evolution 500 SHE55M1[2]UC	1,150	79
	9	LG LDF6920[WW]	700	79
✓	10	Kenmore Pro HE 1317[3]	1,700	79
✓	11	Whirlpool Gold GU2300XTV[Q]	600	78
✓	12	Kenmore 1328[3]	700	77
✓	14	Bosch 500 Series SHX55R5[5]UC	1,200	76
✓	15	KitchenAid KUDE70FX[SS]	1,650	76
✓	16	Whirlpool Gold GU3600XTV[Q]	900	76
	18	KitchenAid KUDS30SX[SS]	1,200	75
	19	Whirlpool DU1055XTV[Q]	500	75
	20	Bosch 300 Series SHX33RL[5]UC	890	74
	21	GE Profile PDWT500R[WW]	NA	74
	22	Kenmore Elite 1404[3]	2,000	74
	23	Miele Futura Crystal G5105SC	NA	74
	24	Kenmore Elite 1396[2]	1,400	73
	25	Kenmore Elite 1392[2]	900	72
	27	Bosch Integra 800 Plus SHX58E2[5]UC	NA	72
	28	Samsung DMT800RH[W]	900	72
	29	GE GDWT668V[SS]	1,000	70
	30	Whirlpool DU1300XTV[Q]	550	70
	31	GE Profile PDWT580V[SS]	NA	70
	32	KitchenAid KUDS30FX[SS]	1,100	70
	33	Maytag MDB8959AW[W]	900	70
	34	GE Profile PDWT200V[WW]	900	69
	35	Asko D5894XXL[HS]	NA	69
	36	Asko D5634XXL[HS]	NA	68
	37	Whirlpool Gold WDT770PAY[M]	850	68

	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
Rec.	Rank		
			0 100 P F G V E

A CONVENTIONAL MODELS continued

	38	GE GDWF100V[WW]	\$ 750	67
	40	Maytag MDB4709AW[W]	NA	66
	41	Frigidaire Gallery FGBD2431K[W]	500	66
	42	Frigidaire Gallery FGBD2432K[W]	550	66
	43	Kenmore 1326[3]	800	65
	44	GE GDWF100R[WW]	650	64
	45	Whirlpool Gold WDF530PAY[W]	600	63
	47	Maytag MDB7609AW[W]	650	63
	49	Whirlpool Gold WDF730PAY[M]	750	61
	50	Frigidaire Gallery FGBD2433K[F]	700	61
	51	Samsung DMT300RF[W]	600	60
	52	Frigidaire Professional FPHD2491K[F]	800	60
	54	Electrolux Wave-Touch EWDW6505G[W]	1,800	59
	55	Kenmore 1391[2]	800	59
	56	Jenn-Air JDB3200AW[W]	NA	59
	57	GE GLD2800V[WW]	480	59
	58	GE GLD5766V[SS]	650	58
	59	Electrolux IQ EIDW5905J[S]	NA	57
	61	GE Monogram ZBD6920P[SS]	NA	56
	64	Electrolux Icon EDW7505HP[S]	1,900	54
	65	Ikea Nutid	700	52
	66	Amana ADB1600AW[W]	400	49
	67	GE GLD6904R[WW]	700	47
	68	GE GLD4408R[WW]	600	45
	69	Viking Professional VDB450E[SS]	NA	44
	70	Whirlpool Gold WDT910SAY[M]	900	43
	71	Viking Professional VDB200[SS]	1,800	43
	72	Hotpoint HDA3600R[WW]	360	35

B DRAWER MODELS

	1	Fisher & Paykel DD24DCTX7	NA	66
	2	KitchenAid KUDD03DT[SS]	2,000	43
	4	Jenn-Air JDD4000AW[S]	2,400	21
	5	Fisher & Paykel DD36SDFTX1	NA	20

Autos

Report, page 58; Ratings, page 62

All of the tested vehicles are available in Canada.

Make & model	Price range	Acceleration (sec.)				Fuel economy (liters per 100 km)		
		0-50 km/h	0-100 km/h	80-100 km/h	500 meters	City driving	Highway driving	Overall
SMALL SEDANS								
Ford Focus	\$15,999-\$25,099	3.4	9.0	4.0	18.9	11.4	5.5	7.7
Chevrolet Cruze	15,655-25,990	3.7	10.6	4.3	20.3	13.8	5.9	8.9
Honda Civic	14,990-28,690	3.8	10.2	4.1	20.1	11.0	4.7	7.1
SUBCOMPACT HATCHBACK (AUTOMATIC)								
Toyota Prius C	20,950-25,340	3.9	12.1	4.8	21.2	6.4	4.9	5.5
SPORTS/SPORTY CARS								
Hyundai Veloster	18,990-23,899	3.3	9.9	3.9	88.1	9.7	6.3	7.6
Volkswagen Beetle	21,975-30,425	3.3	9.2	3.7	19.3	13.1	6.9	9.2

Contact info

How to reach manufacturers in Canada.

Amana
800-843-0304
amana.com

Asko
800-463-2566
askousa.com

Bell
514-630-9669
bellsports.com

Bern
781-582-8125
bernunlimited.com

Bontrager
bontrager.com

Bosch
800-921-9622
boschappliances.com

DCS
888-936-7872
dcsappliances.com

Electrolux
800-932-1778
electrolux.ca

Fisher & Paykel
888-936-7872
fisherpaykel.ca

Friedrich
800-541-6645
friedrich.com

Frigidaire
800-265-8352
frigidaire.ca

Garneau
800-463-8356
louisgarneau.com/ca

GE
877-994-5366
geappliances.ca

Giro
514-630-9669
bellsports.com

Haier
877-337-3639
haieramerica.com

Hotpoint
800-432-2737
hotpoint.com

Ikea
Contact local store
ikea.ca

Jenn-Air
800-807-6777
jennair.ca

Kenmore
Contact local Sears
sears.ca

KitchenAid
800-807-6777; 877-427-5144
kitchenaid.ca

LG
888-542-2623
lg.com/ca

Liebherr
800-836-2522
liebherr.com

Maytag
800-807-6777
maytag.ca

Miele
800-565-6432
miele.ca

Nutcase
250-586-2262
nutcasehelmet.ca

Samsung
800-726-7864
samsung.ca

Specialized
877-808-8154
specialized.com/ca

Sub-Zero
800-222-7820
subzero.com

Thermador
800-735-7328
thermador.ca


Viking
800-467-2632
vikingrange.com

Whirlpool
800-807-6777
whirlpool.ca

Special Report for Massachusetts residents

How Does Your Doctor Compare?

- ▶ **Exclusive:**
Patients rate 487 adult, family & pediatric practices
- ▶ **How to get**
the best care
- ▶ **Quiz:** Does
your physician
measure up?



**GUIDE TO
PRIMARY CARE
PHYSICIANS IN
MASSACHUSETTS**
PAGE 10

May 31, 2012

Dear Consumer Reports readers,



We are pleased to present a special insert on Massachusetts primary-care physician practices in the July 2012 edition of CONSUMER REPORTS. The Ratings shown in the following pages come from data provided by the Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP). That coalition of physicians, hospitals, health plans, purchasers, patient and public representatives, academics, and government agencies has worked to improve the quality of health-care services in Massachusetts since 1995, in part by collecting data on physician performance and making it public.

The data we present here focus on patient experiences with their doctors. Our hope is that by working with MHQP to make this important information accessible, we can help more Massachusetts citizens take advantage of it. You can learn more about the quality of care by going to MHQP's website, www.mhqp.org.

Massachusetts primary-care doctors deserve applause for their support in the collection of this data, making it public, and collaborating with Consumer Reports and MHQP to make it widely available to consumers. They are among the first in the nation to do so.

Sharing performance data among providers is important, for several reasons. First, it generates conversations among doctors about techniques that lift the quality of care they provide to patients. And making this information available to patients leads to one of the most powerful forces driving improvement—educated health-care consumers.

We are able to do this project in part because of a generous grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation related to a unique program called Aligning Forces for Quality. That program is the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's signature effort to lift the overall quality of health care in 16 targeted communities (including Massachusetts), reduce racial and ethnic disparities, and provide models for national reform. We think this effort is a good example of the foundation's unprecedented commitment of resources, expertise, and training focused on turning proven practices for improving quality into real results.

We hope you find this information useful.

Sincerely,



John Santa, M.D.
Director,
Consumer Reports Health Ratings Center



How does your doctor compare?

We rate adult, family, and pediatric physician groups in the Bay State

LOOKING FOR RELIABLE information about physicians? Good luck. Doctor ratings are often little more than glorified popularity contests. The top-doctor lists found in magazines or on websites, for example, tend to be based on reputation or anecdotal reports, not hard data. And while advice from family and friends can be helpful, it is hardly comprehensive or scientific.

That's why we've teamed with the Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP), a coalition of consumers, government agencies, hospitals, insurers, physicians, and researchers that is on the cutting edge of providing reliable, meaningful, and fair information about primary-care physicians to consumers.

Using a comprehensive scientific survey, they recently asked 47,565 adults and an additional 16,530 parents of children, all of whom had health insurance, about their experiences with their doctors. The

findings provide important information about how well physicians communicate with their patients, coordinate medical care, know their patients, and whether patients would recommend their doctor to family and friends.

The survey also asks patients about their experiences with the rest of the office staff, such as nurses, receptionists, and the people who handle billing and insurance questions.

The scores for each doctor in a practice are pooled into one score. MHQP only scores practices that have at least three physicians.

High- and low-scoring practices exist in all parts of the state.

Of course, medical care is complex, and patient experience is only one measure of quality. For example, it's important to know how well a doctor helps patients manage conditions like arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol. But patient experience can affect those clinical measures.

"If patients have a poor experience with their doctor, they're not going to come back for their tests, they may not take their medications, and they may not learn how to manage these things themselves," says Michael Cantor, M.D., quality medical director for the New England Quality Care Alliance. (To see how practices scored in those clinical measures, go to MHQP.org and click on "Clinical Quality in Primary Care.")

Use the Ratings on the following pages to see how your doctor's practice fared in the survey. On page 4 we give some highlights from the survey, and use questions from it to help you assess your relation-

ship with your doctor and how to improve it if necessary.

“The doctor is the medical expert, but you’re the expert about you and your child,” says Lester Hartman, M.D., the quality improvement director at Westwood-Mansfield Pediatric Associates, which got the top two scores in all measures. “It’s that collaboration between the doctor and the patient that results in the best health care for all involved.”

What we found

The good news is that whether you live in America’s medical capital of Boston, out in rural Western parts of the state, on the Cape, or anywhere else in the Bay State, you’re probably close to at least one high-scoring doctors’ practice. None of the seven regions in the state (see the map on page 9) scored better or worse overall than any other region.

The flip side: There are probably some low-scoring groups near you, too.

Most practices in the state earn one of the top two ratings across multiple measures in the survey. But nearly every practice has room for improvement. Only 13 of the 329 adult practices earned the highest score in all five Ratings categories. (See box, below, for details.)

And while practices that treat mainly children do better overall than those that treat adults, only one of the 158 pediatric groups in the state—Drs. Benjamin and Spingarn, in Newton—got top marks across all five patient-experience categories. (Note that practices that treat adults and those that treat children are ranked on somewhat different measures.)

Overall, scores for physician practices in

Massachusetts have been on the upswing since the first patient-experience survey in 2005. Many practices have used the results to improve how they interact with patients (see “How Practices Can Improve,” on the facing page).

The survey also provides some information about Massachusetts’ 2006 health-reform law. While that law has increased demand for doctors, which might make it harder to find a new one, the survey shows that it hasn’t made it harder for people who already have a primary-care provider to get the care they need.

Rate your doctor

Below are 20 of the most important questions in the survey. They’re divided into six categories, which in most cases correspond to different areas in the Ratings chart, which starts on page 10:

- Communication
- Coordinating your care
- Getting to know you
- Working with the office staff
- Staying healthy
- Caring for your child

Use the questions below to score your doctor or the doctor who cares for your child. Then check the Ratings to see how your experience compares with those of other patients in the same practice, as well as how your doctor’s practice stacks up against other groups across the state.

Communication

Clear and honest communication with your doctor and other health-care providers can help keep you healthy and, if you get sick, recover faster, too. Research suggests that patients who take an active role in the

doctor-patient relationship by asking questions, stating their symptoms clearly, and interrupting when necessary, have better outcomes. The ideal is shared decision-making: cooperation between an informed patient and the doctor.

1 How often did your doctor explain things in a way that was easy to understand?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Never | <input type="radio"/> Usually |
| <input type="radio"/> Almost never | <input type="radio"/> Almost always |
| <input type="radio"/> Sometimes | <input type="radio"/> Always |

Percent who said Always: **84 percent**

What to do: Take detailed notes. Repeat your doctor’s instructions back in your own words to check that you got them right. If you’re confused, say so. Finally, consider bringing along a friend or relative, says Rosalind Joffe, from Newton, who has several chronic conditions and serves on the MHQP patient and public-engagement committee. “Even though I’ve gone through this for 35 years, I still don’t hear new information all that well,” she says, explaining why her husband often comes along. “I still get a little overwhelmed, and I don’t take as good notes.” If there are complicated instructions that need to be followed every day, she has her doctor write the instructions down.

2 How often did your doctor listen carefully to you?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Never | <input type="radio"/> Usually |
| <input type="radio"/> Almost never | <input type="radio"/> Almost always |
| <input type="radio"/> Sometimes | <input type="radio"/> Always |

Percent who said Always: **83 percent**

What to do: Ask your doctors to repeat

Excellence across the board

High-quality care can thrive just about anywhere, our Ratings show. Thirteen adult primary-care practices all over Massachusetts, serving a variety of communities in a variety of hospitals, earned our highest rating in every category.

Geographic variation. Practices range from small independent practices in rural areas, like Adams Internists in the Berkshires, to large group practices in urban areas, such as Chestnut Medical Associates in Springfield, Massachusetts General Hospital Internal Medicine Associates Team 2 in Boston, and Millview Medical Associates in Fall River. Southcoast, a regional network, has three top-scoring practices: Borden Medical and Fall River Family Practice, both in Fall River, as well as Primary Care Mattapoisett. Suburban practices, such as Westborough Internal Medicine, are also represented.

Economic diversity. The practices cover the economic spectrum as well. For example, Personal Physicians Health Care in Chestnut Hill is a “concierge” provider, catering to patients who are willing and able to

pay extra for greater access to care, while others serve economically diverse populations, particularly those located in cities like Boston, Fall River, Northampton, and Springfield.

Different kinds of hospitals. While many of the bigger urban practices are allied with academic teaching hospitals, others—including Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, Merrimack Family Medicine in Tewksbury, Primary Care of Wellesley, and Elm Street Adult Medicine in Northampton—admit to smaller community ones.

Bottom line. Excellent doctors can be found even in practices that don’t have high scores in all measures. But for a practice to earn top marks across the board, all of the doctors have to perform well. “High practice scores reflect teamwork and a positive practice culture,” says Susan Edgman-Levitan, a physician assistant and the executive director of the John D. Stoeckle Center for Primary Care Innovation at Massachusetts General Hospital. It shows that the doctors can work together and that the staff knows its patients, she says.

what you've told them, to make sure they hear you. If you still have concerns when you get home, ask for a follow-up appointment, on the phone even, and perhaps with a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant who can spend more time with you. If you would like your doctor to make more eye contact, or sit when he or she talks with you, say so.

3 How often did your doctor show respect for what you had to say?

- ☐ Never ☐ Usually
☐ Almost never ☐ Almost always
☐ Sometimes ☐ Always

Percent who said Always: **87 percent**

What to do: A doctor might focus on the benefits of a particular treatment, while you might be more concerned about the side effects or alternatives. Tell your doctor what's important to you. If you don't think your feelings are being respected or taken into consideration, speak up. "Say, 'I don't think you're hearing what I'm saying,'" Hartman says.

4 How often did your doctor spend enough time with you?

- ☐ Never ☐ Usually
☐ Almost never ☐ Almost always
☐ Sometimes ☐ Always

Percent who said Always: **79 percent**

What to do: Doctors are busy, so visits can feel rushed. To maximize your time, prepare a list of questions and concerns in advance, listing the most important first. Ask if there are other health providers on staff who can help you with the less pressing questions. If you want to raise a new health concern during your visit, mention that to the office staff when you make the appointment so they can schedule enough time. Research suggests that doctors who don't rush their visits with patients are less likely to write prescriptions and more likely to spend time talking about preventive care.

Coordinating your care

It's your primary-care doctor's job to know about the treatments and tests you get from specialists. "That's important from a patient-experience perspective, but it's also very important from a patient-safety perspective," says Susan Edgman-Levitan, a physician assistant and the executive director of the John D. Stoeckle Center for Primary Care Innova-

tion at Massachusetts General Hospital.

5 How often did your doctor seem informed and up-to-date about the care you received from specialists?

- ☐ Never ☐ Usually
☐ Almost never ☐ Almost always
☐ Sometimes ☐ Always

Percent who said Always: **63 percent**

What to do: Make sure your doctor knows about the care you get from other providers, including other physicians as well as

acupuncturists, chiropractors, herbalists, and other alternative health-care practitioners. Explain why you saw them, what happened during the visit, and what treatments or drugs were prescribed. Make sure those providers communicate with your primary-care doctor, too. That can help you avoid duplicate care, drug interactions, and fragmented health care. Ask for copies of letters or reports that the specialist plans to send to your primary-care provider. Electronic health records can help doctors share information, but patients need to be in-

How practices can improve

When Lester Hartman, M.D., quality improvement medical director at Westwood-Mansfield Pediatric Associates, first saw his practice's patient-experience survey results, he was disappointed by how few of his patients said they would recommend his practice to family and friends. "I couldn't believe what they were saying," Hartman says.

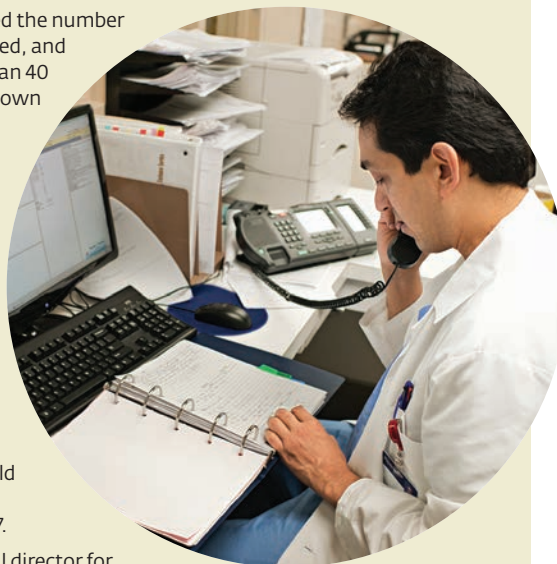
So he conducted his own survey of 1,000 patients. The results were nearly identical. "It was a little hard to take, but reality hit," Hartman says. In response, he changed the way he cared for patients—and his scores went up.

Hartman and his colleagues expanded the number of written treatment plans they offered, and produced YouTube videos on more than 40 common conditions. They used their own surveys to collect information about their patients, and used electronic medical records, so staff can access them when seeing patients. And they took steps to increase preventive programs, reduce wait times, improve access to urgent care, and make test results more accessible.

Patients noticed. In the most recent Ratings, Westwood-Mansfield got top scores for communication and health promotion. And 90 percent of the practice's patients now say they would definitely recommend Westwood-Mansfield, up from 83 percent in 2007.

Michael Cantor, M.D., quality medical director for the New England Quality Care Alliance, a network of 1,500 doctors, including 500 primary-care physicians, distributes the survey results to physicians, so they can see their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, directly. The practices in his network then share tips on what works to improve the patient experience. That can involve anything from changing the phone system to clarifying who is responsible for following up with patients about test results, Cantor says. "Patient experience is not just about checking off a box that a patient said they were able to speak to someone within a certain period of time," Cantor says. "It is about the relationship that patients and their families have with their doctors."

Bottom line. Our Ratings on the following pages can help you see how your practice compares. If you find problems—either from the scores or your own experience—ask what is being done to fix them. "Make sure that you understand what the practice is doing to try to improve," says Susan Edgman-Levitan, a physician assistant and the executive director of the John D. Stoeckle Center for Primary Care Innovation at Massachusetts General Hospital. Are they getting feedback from and including their own patients in quality improvement? If so, get involved. That's a crucial step in improving your care.



volved, to “make sure all that coordination and communication happens,” Joffe says.

6 When your doctor ordered a blood test, X-ray, or other test, how often did someone from the office follow up to give you the results?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Usually
- ☐ Almost never
- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Always

Percent who said Always: **72 percent**

What to do: Your doctor should tell you when to expect test results and who will give them to you—and then deliver them as expected, even if they’re normal. “When practices have a system in place to send all test results to people, they’re less likely to miss positive results,” says Edgman-Levitan. If you don’t get your results, call. Ask for a written copy for your files, too, and see if the practice uses a secure online health portal that gives you access to test results and other information.

Getting to know you
Your doctor needs to know about your medical and family history, as well as your values and beliefs. A quarter of adults reported that their doctor did not always seem to know all the important information about their medical history, and only 56 percent rated their doctors’ knowledge of their values and beliefs as excellent.

7 In the last 12 months, how often did your doctor seem to know the important information about your medical history?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Usually
- ☐ Almost never
- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Always

Percent who said Always: **75 percent**

What to do: During your first visit, your doctor should ask about your personal and family medical history. Mention all the prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and vitamins and other dietary

supplements you take. Don’t forget to describe the surgeries or illnesses you’ve had. If necessary, research your family medical history and write it down. Finally, make sure your doctor records the information in your medical history.

8 How would you rate your doctor’s knowledge of you as a person, including values and beliefs that are important to you?

- ☐ Very poor
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Excellent

Percent who said Always: **56 percent**

What to do: It’s important for your doctor to know your living situation. For example, do you care for someone at home? Is there anyone to care for you? Your beliefs affect treatment decisions, too. For example, you might want to avoid medication or consider alternative treatments whenever possible.

Don't get stuck in the waiting room

You shouldn’t have to wait weeks to make an appointment with your doctor. And once you get there, you shouldn’t routinely have to put up with long delays. If you have a pressing medical question, your doctor or someone in his or her office should be able to squeeze you in, or at least take a phone call. But as the chart below shows, patients often report problems with being seen promptly.

What to do: Try to make your routine appointments for checkups or follow-up visits as soon as you can—weeks or even months in advance. If you know you’ll be late or need to cancel, call right away—they might be able to move someone ahead, or take another patient if you cancel early. If you want an appointment on short notice but can’t be seen by your doctor, ask if a nurse practitioner or physician’s assistant could see you instead. Those professionals have advanced training that allows them to handle many medical issues. Also ask how the office handles problems that arise after business hours. Some nearby practices team up to offer expanded hours for urgent care. Larger practices might keep staff on duty for evenings and weekends for patients who find it difficult to make appointments during business hours or for urgent care.



Percent of patients who didn't always get ...	Adults	Children
...an answer to medical questions they called in during office hours on the day they requested it.	42	19
...an appointment for care they needed right away.	38	21
...after-hours advice as soon as they needed it.	38	23
...an appointment for routine care as soon as they needed it.	39	32
...seen by their provider within 15 minutes after being taken to the exam room.	48	52
...taken to the exam room within 15 minutes.	60	57

Cantor, a geriatrician, says frail, older patients sometimes have to choose among three competing goals: comfort, longevity, and function. Some invasive treatments might provide longevity, but at what cost to comfort and function? “Unless I understand clearly what the patient’s values are,” Cantor says, “I’m not doing my job.”

Working with the staff

Your experience in a doctor’s office depends on the staff as well as the doctor. That includes the other health-care providers, such as nurse practitioners and physician’s assistants, as well as the receptionist or the billing person. While most patients gave the staff high marks, the chart on the opposite page shows that there’s plenty of room for improvement.

9 How often were the front-office staff as helpful as you thought they should be?

- ☐ Never ☐ Usually
☐ Almost never ☐ Almost always
☐ Sometimes ☐ Always

Percent who said Always: **57 percent**

What to do: Be patient, but let the staff know if you expect them to be more helpful. If you ask, politely but firmly, for more help you are likely to get it. But if you don’t, follow up with the office manager or doctor.

10 How often did the front-office staff treat you with courtesy and respect?

- ☐ Never ☐ Usually
☐ Almost never ☐ Almost always
☐ Sometimes ☐ Always

Percent who said Always: **73 percent**

What to do: If you have a disagreement or other unpleasant interaction with someone in the office, make sure your doctor or the office manager knows about it. It’s best to remain calm and polite, but don’t be shy. Will an apology make you feel better, or will you find it so difficult to work with the disrespectful staff member in the future that you would want to be seen by a different provider? Let them know how you feel.

Staying healthy

Quality health care means preventing disease, not just treating it. For example,



your doctor should make sure you get the right screening tests and immunizations and take an active role in helping you lose weight or quit smoking. (Note that we don’t include Ratings on this measure because adult practices scored lower overall and could not be rated on the same scale as other categories.)

11 Did your doctor’s office remind you to get recommended preventive care, such as the flu shot, cancer screening tests, or an eye exam?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Always: **80 percent**

What to do: Ask your doctor about the preventive screenings, tests, and vaccines that are appropriate for someone of your age and health. But even preventive care, like cancer screenings or heart tests, can have risks and benefits and aren’t right for everyone. For example, women who have had a hysterectomy usually don’t need Pap tests, and EKGs don’t need to be part of a routine exam unless you have symptoms of heart disease. So ask why the screening tests being recommended are needed.

12 Did you and your doctor talk about a healthy diet and healthy eating habits?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Yes: **77 percent**

What to do: If you’re worried about your weight or diet, tell your doctor. And don’t be offended if he or she brings it up. Diseases related to unhealthy eating and excess weight—including heart disease, some cancers, stroke, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, and type-2 diabetes—are among the leading causes of illness and death. Ask about getting support, like getting a referral to a certified nutritionist or a registered dietician.

13 Did you and your doctor talk about exercise or physical activity?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Always: **88 percent**

What to do: Most Americans don’t get enough exercise, which can also lead to weight gain and several chronic diseases. The best exercise for you can depend on your overall health and goals. For example, people with arthritis might benefit from different exercises than someone who has diabetes or who needs to lose weight. Talk with your doctor about which makes most sense for you and, if necessary, ask for referrals to a physical therapist. Your doctor might even know about community resources, like gyms or fitness programs near you.

14 Did you and your doctor talk about things in your life that worry you or cause you stress?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Always: **68 percent**

What to do: Stress can be as bad for your heart as excess weight, lack of exercise, and smoking. It can contribute to other diseases, too, such as type 2 diabetes, chronic pain, and depression. It can also undermine your immune system, which could make you susceptible to infection, and led to unhealthy behaviors, like excessive eating and drinking. So talk with your doctor about the stresses in your life, such as long hours at work, family troubles, or financial difficulties.

15 Did your doctor ask whether there was a period of two weeks or more when you felt sad, empty, or depressed?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Always: **39 percent**

What to do: Asking simple questions about emotional health can be surpris-

ingly accurate at identifying people who are at risk of depression, research shows. And serious depression, which affects about 15 million Americans each year, is not only debilitating on its own, but can also worsen other diseases and conditions. So if you have experienced a prolonged period of sadness or depression, and your doctor doesn't ask about it, make a point of bringing it up.

Caring for your child

Parents were asked about how well their children's doctors addressed preventive health care, but the questions differed from those that were asked about their own care, because the advice for children and adults differs. (Note that parents were also asked some of the same questions about working with the office staff, communicating with doctors, and other topics as were other adults. See "Don't Get Stuck in the Waiting Room" on page 6.)

16 Did your child's doctor talk about how your child's body is growing?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Always: **90 percent**

What to do: If your child's growth in height or weight differs substantially from what's expected, talk with your doctor about what might be the cause and what, if anything, should be done.

17 Did your child's doctor talk about how much or what kind of food your child eats?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Always: **89 percent**

What to do: Childhood obesity, which has reached epidemic proportions and now affects more than 12 million U.S. children, can lead to type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, liver disease, and a host of other health problems. So talk with your physician about your child's dietary and exercise habits, especially if you're worried about his or her weight.

18 Did your child's doctor talk about things you can do to keep your child from getting injured?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Always: **71 percent**

What to do: Accidental injuries are a leading cause of death and disability among young children and teenagers.

Pediatric practices, by the numbers

Overall, parents tended to be more willing to recommend their children's doctors to friends and family than adults overall were willing to recommend their physicians. And practices that treated children scored slightly higher on most measures than the adult practices did.

Percent of parents who said their child's doctor always:

- Explained things in a way that was easy to understand: **89.**
- Listened carefully: **88.**
- Spent enough time with the parent and child: **83.**
- Followed up with information about test results: **72.**
- Seemed to know the important information about the child's medical history: **77.**
- Seemed up to date or informed about the care the child received from specialists: **66.**



Your child's doctor should help you prevent accidents by, for example, recommending that you post a poison-control number prominently in your home, put fences around swimming pools, store guns securely, and make sure that your child uses safety belts and bike helmets.

19 Did your child's doctor talk about the kinds of behavior that are normal for your child at this age?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Always: **81 percent**

What to do: Your doctor should look for behavioral disorders. Speech delays affect 5 to 8 percent of preschool children, but they can linger into grade school and lower performance. Autism or Asperger's syndrome can also be spotted early. Other problems become more common after school starts. If you're worried about any of those issues, say so, and make sure you ask what to look for.

20 Did your child's doctor's office remind you to get preventive care, such as vaccines, including an annual flu shot or an eye exam?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Percent who said Always: **86 percent**

What to do: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommends vaccinations against 16 childhood diseases, including measles, whooping cough, and influenza, which have had recent outbreaks in some parts of the U.S. Together, those vaccines have saved millions of lives. But it's key to get them on time. Your doctor should keep track of them all and schedule them appropriately, and provide you information about their benefits and risks. Also ask about other preventive exams, such as for vision and hearing.

This report is based on data from MHQP, a participant in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Aligning Forces for Quality initiative. Aligning Forces is the Foundation's project aiming to lift the overall quality of health care in targeted communities throughout the country, reduce racial and ethnic disparities, and provide models for national reform. One core requirement of the program is that participating communities publicly report the type of data used here.



What's behind the Ratings

These Ratings of primary-care physician groups are published with the Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP), a nonprofit organization that has surveyed patients about their health-care experiences since 2005. The results shown here are from the most recent survey, done in the spring of 2011, and are based on patients' reports about their experiences.

MHQP rates physician practices, not individual doctors. The current data rate 329 practices that cared mainly for adults and 158 practices that saw mainly children. To be included, each doctor's office must have had three or more doctors at the time of the survey.

How should I use these Ratings?

Use them to see how your primary-care practice fares, or to look for practices in your region that have scored particularly well. In either case, focus on two things. First look at the percentage of patients who said they would recommend the practice. Don't focus too much on minor differences, such as between practices with scores from, say, 82 to 86. Second, look at its scores for individual aspects of performance, such as communicating with patients, coordinating care, and getting timely appointments.

These measures are a guide to help you assess certain aspects of patient care. No single measure reveals everything about the quality of care at a doctor's office. Different practices may excel in different areas. But a low score can point out certain aspects of care that a doctor's office needs to improve.

How are practices rated?

The measures reported here are based on survey responses from more than 47,500 adult patients and 16,530 parents of pediatric patients. The survey asked about aspects of their health-care experience such as the strength of the doctor-patient relationship and access to care. These Ratings show results on five measures as well as patients' willingness to recommend their doctor to family and friends.

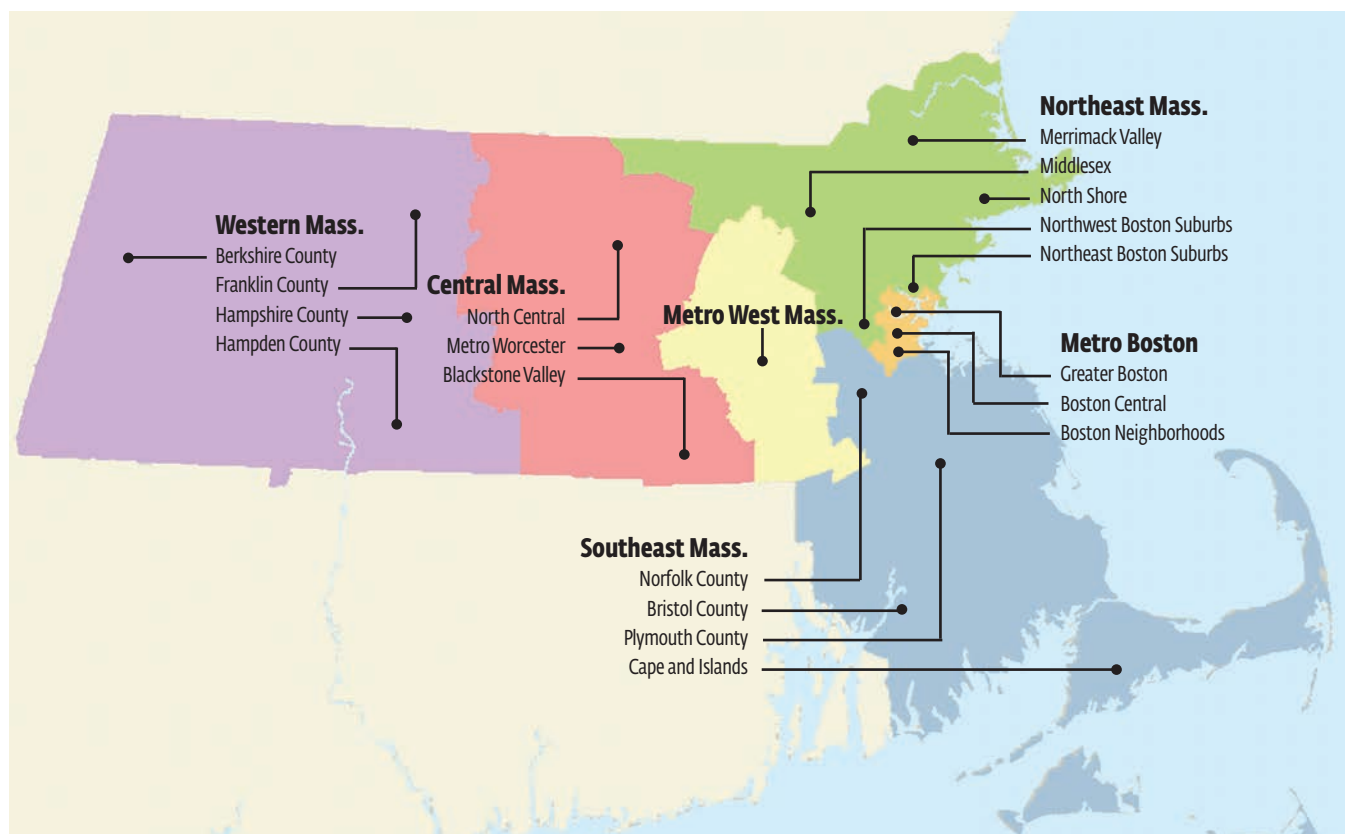
How are the scores determined?

MHQP rates each performance measure on a scale of 0 to 100. Those scores are then divided into four categories, with 4 being best. For all measures except Doctor Communication, the practices that score a 4 are in the top 15 percent compared with other practices in the same category (adult or pediatric) statewide. Those that score a 3 are in the top half but not

in the top 15 percent. A score of 2 indicates that the practice is in the bottom half, but not the bottom 15 percent. Those with a 1 are in the bottom 15 percent. Practices score consistently high in the doctor communication category, so that is scored somewhat differently. Practices that score 95 points or higher earn the highest Rating of 4; practices scoring between 90 and 95 points get a 3; practices between 80 and 90 points get a 2; and practices that score below 80 points get a 1. Some practices are missing scores for measures because we only publish ratings for performance measures if we have enough data to provide statistically reliable results.

Where can I find more details?

Go to MHQP's website at MHQP.org, where you can find the data and technical details about these ratings on the "Quality Reports" tab. MHQP also collects and publicly reports other information, such as clinical-outcomes data, which can also be found at MHQP.org.



Ratings of practices for adults

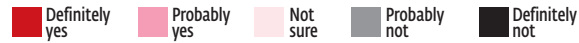
In collaboration with MHQP

Based on patient experience In alphabetical order, within regions and towns

Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance
			0%100%	How well doctors communicate with patients How well doctors coordinate care How well doctors know their patients Getting timely appointments, care, and information Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff
NORTHEAST MASSACHUSETTS				
Merrimack Valley				
Amesbury	Lahey - Amesbury	24 Morrill Pl.	74	4 3 3 2 2
Andover	New England Medical Group	140 Haverhill St.	69	4 2 2 2 3
Billerica	Burlington Medical Associates - Billerica	790 Boston Rd.	72	4 2 3 4 3
Chelmsford	Chelmsford Primary Care	2 Meeting House Rd.	76	3 3 2 2 3
Chelmsford	Harvard Vanguard Chelmsford	228 Billerica Rd.	75	3 3 2 2 3
Haverhill	Pentucket Medical Associates - Haverhill	1 Parkway	69	3 2 2 2 2
Haverhill	Whittier Medical Associates	62 Brown St., Suite 200	76	3 2 2 3 3
Lawrence	Pentucket Medical Associates - RiverWalk	500 Merrimack St.	64	3 3 2 2 3
Lowell	Cardiology Associates of Greater Lowell	33 Bartlett St., Suite 206	70	3 2 2 3 2
Lowell	Lowell Community Health Center	597 Merrimack St.	84	4 1 4 2 2
Lowell	Mill City Medical Group	45 Palmer St., Suite 1	84	4 2 4 3 3
Lowell	Riverside Medical Group	275 Varnum Ave., Suite 201	68	4 2 2 2 3
Newbury	Holistic Family Practice	65 Newburyport Turnpike	74	4 3 3 3 4
Newburyport	Highland Primary Care Associates	21 Highland Ave., Suite 2	63	4 2 2 3 2
Newburyport	Pentucket Medical Associates - Newburyport	260 Merrimac St., Towle Bldg	71	3 3 2 2 2
Tewksbury	Family Care Center - Tewksbury	2345 Main St.	69	4 3 4 3 3
Tewksbury	Merrimack Family Medicine	170 Main St., G 06	83	4 4 4 4 4
North Shore				
Beverly	Beacon Family Medicine	130 County Rd.	77	4 3 3 4 3
Beverly	Cummings/Patten Associates	900 Cummings Center	78	3 1 2 3 3
Beverly	Family Medicine Associates - Beverly	38R Enon St.	74	4 2 4 3 2
Beverly	Family Practice - Beverly	900 Cummings Center	81	4 3 4 3 3
Beverly	Lahey - Beverly/Danvers/Ipswich	152 Conant St.	83	4 3 3 3 2
Beverly	NeCoMG Family Practice	500 Cummings Center	61	4 3 4 4 4
Beverly	North Shore Physicians Group - Beverly	900 Cummings Center, Suite 107	84	4 4 3 4 4
Beverly	The Medical Group	77 Herrick St., Suite 101	71	3 2 2 1 2
Danvers	North Shore Physicians Group - Endicott	104 Endicott St., Suite 104	78	4 4 3 3 3
Danvers	North Shore Primary Care	140 Commonwealth Ave.	73	3 2 3 3 3
Gloucester	Cape Ann Medical Center	1 Blackburn Dr.	64	3 3 1 3 2
Gloucester	Cape Ann Physicians	302 Washington St.	76	3 2 2 3 3
Hamilton	Lahey - Hamilton/Wenham	205 Willow St., Bldg C	83	4 4 4 3 4
Lynn	Lynn Community Health Center	269 Union St.	59	3 -- -- 1 1
Lynn	North Shore Physicians Group - North Shore Medical Group	496 Lynnfield St.	77	4 3 3 3 3
Manchester	Family Medicine Associates - Manchester	195 School St.	86	3 2 3 3 2
Peabody	Harvard Vanguard Lynnfield Medical	2 Essex Center Dr.	89	4 3 4 4 4
Peabody	Harvard Vanguard Peabody	2 Essex Center Dr.	81	4 3 2 3 3
Peabody	Internal Medicine Physicians of the North Shore., LLC	27 Centennial Dr.	83	4 3 3 2 3
Peabody	Lahey - Peabody	1 Essex Center Dr.	70	3 2 2 2 2

-- Not enough data to rate.

Willingness to recommend



Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance
			0% 100%	How well doctors communicate with patients How well doctors coordinate care How well doctors know their patients Getting timely appointments, care, and information Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff
Peabody	North Shore Physicians Group - Peabody Medical Center	2 Essex Center Dr.	82	4 4 4 3 4
Salem	North Shore Physicians Group - Harbor Medical Group	400 Highland Ave.	82	4 4 3 4 4
Salem	North Shore Physicians Group- Puritan Medical	331 Highland Ave.	81	4 4 3 3 2
Swampscott	Family Doctors	250 Paradise Rd.	78	4 3 2 2 2
Topsfield	Northeast Medical Practice Lynnfield/Topsfield	11 South Main St.	75	4 3 3 4 4

Middlesex

Ayer	Nashoba Valley Healthcare Group	190 Groton Rd., Suite 250	64	3 1 1 1 1
Burlington	Harvard Vanguard Burlington	20 Wall St.	59	3 2 1 3 3
Burlington	Lahey - Burlington	41 Mall Rd.	72	3 2 2 2 2
Chelmsford	Chelmsford Family Practice	10 Adams St.	71	3 3 3 3 2
Chelmsford	Merrimack Valley Internal Medicine Associates	20 Research Pl., Suite 310	82	4 2 3 1 1
Concord	Harvard Vanguard Concord Hillside	86 Baker Ave. Ext	80	4 3 3 2 3
Groton	Groton Medical Associates	100 Boston Rd., 2nd Floor	72	3 2 2 2 2
Lexington	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Lexington	482 Bedford St.	75	3 2 3 2 1
Lexington	Lahey - Lexington	16 Hayden Ave.	72	3 3 2 3 3
Lexington	Mount Auburn Healthcare at Lexington	57 Bedford St., Suite 130	67	4 3 3 3 2
Lincoln	Lincoln Physicians	233 Concord Rd.	78	4 2 4 2 3
Melrose	Hallmark Health Medical Associates	585 Lebanon St.	46	2 1 1 2 2
Reading	Reading Internal Medicine	20 Pond Meadow Dr., Suite 206	80	3 2 2 3 1
Stoneham	Family Care Center - Stoneham	3 Woodland Rd., Suite 100	69	3 2 2 3 2
Stoneham	Stoneham Medical Group	88 Montvale Ave. #3	70	3 3 1 1 3
Westford	Blackwell Family Medicine	506 Groton Rd.	81	4 3 3 3 3
Westford	Westford Internal Medicine	133 Littleton Rd., Suite 202	67	3 2 2 3 2
Wilmington	Lahey - Wilmington	66 Concord St.	70	3 2 3 3 2
Wilmington	Woburn Medical Associates - Wilmington	500 Salem St.	76	4 4 3 3 3
Winchester	Winchester Family Physicians	11 Shore Rd.	82	4 3 3 2 2
Woburn	Woburn Medical Associates - Woburn	23 Warren Ave. #100	77	3 3 2 3 4

Northeast Boston Suburbs

Everett	MGH Everett Family Care	19 Norwood St.	83	4 3 4 3 2
Malden	Malden Family Medicine	195 Canal St.	74	3 -- -- 1 1
Medford	Hallmark Health Medical Associates	170 Governors Ave.	67	3 2 2 2 3
Medford	Harvard Vanguard Medford	26 City Hall Mall	79	4 3 3 2 3
Medford	Medford Family Care - WPA	92 High St., Suite DH4	77	4 2 2 1 1
Revere	Revere Family Health Center	454 Broadway	68	3 2 2 2 2
Revere	Revere Health Center	300 Ocean Ave.	81	4 3 4 2 2
Revere	Revere Health Center - Broadway	300 Broadway	71	2 2 2 1 3

Northwest Boston Suburbs

Arlington	Family Practice Group	11 Water St., Suite 1A	72	3 2 2 2 4
Arlington	Lahey - Arlington/Billerica	37 Broadway	83	3 4 3 3 2
Arlington	Mount Auburn Healthcare at Arlington	22 Mill St., Suite 208	75	4 3 3 3 3

Ratings of practices for adults Continued

Based on patient experience In alphabetical order, within regions and towns

Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance				
				How well doctors communicate with patients	How well doctors coordinate care	How well doctors know their patients	Getting timely appointments, care, and information	Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff
			0% 100%					
Chestnut Hill	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Chestnut Hill	25 Boylston St., Suite 204	81	3	3	3	3	2
Chestnut Hill	Brigham and Women's Hospital, Physician Group	850 Boylston St., Suite 530	81	4	4	3	2	2
Chestnut Hill	Personal Physicians Health Care	1244 Boylston St., Suite 306	98	4	4	4	4	4
Chestnut Hill	The Fish Center for Women's Health	850 Boylston St., Suite 402	78	4	3	4	2	2
Newton	Brigham and Women's Hospital at Newton Corner	272 Centre St.	81	4	4	3	3	2
Newton	Newton Wellesley Internists	2000 Washington St., White bldg., suite 546	74	4	3	3	3	3
Newton	Newton Wellesley Primary Care	2000 Washington St., White bldg., suite 441	83	4	4	3	4	4
Newton	Steward Medical Group - Newton	29 Crafts St., Suite 400	90	4	3	4	4	4
Waltham	Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center - Waltham	564 Main St.	76	3	1	2	1	1
Waltham	Mass General West	40 Second Ave., Suite 400	71	3	2	2	3	2
Waltham	Waltham Family Medicine	9 Hope Ave., Suite 151	73	3	3	2	1	4
Waltham	Waltham Family Medicine	9 Hope Ave., Suite 151	73	3	3	2	1	4
Watertown	Harvard Vanguard Watertown	485 Arsenal St.	76	4	3	3	4	4
Watertown	Mount Auburn Medical Associates	521 Mount Auburn St., Suite 202	69	3	2	2	2	4
METRO BOSTON								
Boston Central								
Boston	Beacon Hill Primary Care	Charles River Plaza, 5th Floor	85	4	4	4	3	3
Boston	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Boston	294 Washington St., Suite 219	64	3	1	1	2	1
Boston	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare Associates	330 Brookline Ave.	86	4	4	4	3	3
Boston	Brigham Circle Medical Associates	75 Francis St., Rm 227	92	4	3	4	4	4
Boston	BU Family Medicine	771 Albany St., Dowling 5 South	71	4	--	--	1	2
Boston	Bulfinch Medical Group	15 Parkman St., WAC 535	86	4	3	4	3	3
Boston	Child Health Foundation of Boston	1 Boston Medical Center Pl., Dowling 3414 South	52	2	--	--	1	1
Boston	Evans Medical Foundation	88 East Newton St.	78	3	2	3	2	1
Boston	Fenway Community Health Center, Haviland St	7 Haviland St.	83	3	2	3	3	3
Boston	Harvard Vanguard Copley	165 Dartmouth St.	66	3	1	3	3	3
Boston	Harvard Vanguard Kenmore	133 Brookline Ave.	84	4	4	3	3	3
Boston	Harvard Vanguard Post Office Square	147 Milk St.	82	4	2	3	2	2
Boston	Mass General Medical Group (MGMG)	50 Staniford. St., Suite 300	87	4	3	3	3	2
Boston	MGH Back Bay	388 Commonwealth Ave.	78	3	3	3	3	2
Boston	MGH Downtown	294 Washington St. #210	78	4	4	3	2	2
Boston	MGH Internal Medicine Associates Team 1	15 Parkman St., Suite 645	93	4	3	4	3	4
Boston	MGH Internal Medicine Associates Team 2	15 Parkman St., Suite 645	90	4	4	4	4	4
Boston	MGH Internal Medicine Associates Team 3	15 Parkman St., Suite 645	85	4	4	4	3	3
Boston	MGH Women's Health Associates	55 Fruit St., Yawkey 4	80	3	2	3	2	1
Boston	North End Community Health Center	332 Hanover St.	72	3	1	2	2	2
Boston	South Cove Community Health Center	885 Washington St.	51	2	1	2	1	1
Boston	The Phyllis Jen Center for Primary Care (BIMA)	75 Francis St., A1-02	83	4	3	4	3	3
Boston	Tufts Medical Center Adult Internal Medicine	800 Washington St.	81	4	3	3	2	2

Willingness to recommend



Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance
			0% 100%	How well doctors communicate with patients How well doctors coordinate care How well doctors know their patients Getting timely appointments, care, and information Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff

Boston Neighborhoods

Brighton	Brookline Associates	11 Nevins St., Suite 505	83	4	3	4	3	2
Brighton	St. Elizabeth's Health Care at Brighton Marine	77 Warren St., 1st. Floor	82	4	2	3	1	2
Brighton	Stanton Medical	280 Washington St.	76	4	4	3	3	1
Charlestown	Charlestown Healthcare Center - Adult	73 High St.	88	4	4	4	2	2
Dorchester	Caritas Carney Hospital	2100 Dorchester Ave.	86	4	4	4	3	3
Dorchester	Carney Medical Group	2100 Dorchester Ave., Pulmonary	80	4	3	4	3	2
Dorchester	Dorchester House Multi-Service Center	1353 Dorchester Ave.	72	4	--	--	1	2
Dorchester	Neponset Health Center	398 Neponset Ave.	68	3	--	--	2	1
Dorchester	Upham's Corner Health Center	500 Columbia Rd.	81	4	2	4	1	1
East Boston	East Boston Neighborhood Health Center	10 Gove St.	72	3	2	2	1	2
Hyde Park	Carr-Mahoney-Driscoll-Barravecchio	695 Truman Parkway	88	4	3	4	3	4
Jamaica Plain	Brigham Primary Physicians at Faulkner Hospital	1153 Centre St.	66	3	4	3	4	3
Jamaica Plain	Brookside Community Health Center	3297 Washington St.	55	2	--	--	1	1
Jamaica Plain	Harvard Vanguard PCIMA Faulkner	1153 Centre St.	77	4	3	4	4	3
Jamaica Plain	Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center	640 Centre St.	78	3	3	2	2	3
Roslindale	Greater Roslindale Medical and Dental Center	4199 Washington St.	89	4	--	--	4	1
Roxbury	The Dimock Center	55 Dimock St.	72	4	2	3	2	4
South Boston	South Boston Community Health Center	409 West Broadway	83	3	2	4	2	1
West Roxbury	Harvard Vanguard West Roxbury	291 Independence Dr.	72	4	2	2	3	3
West Roxbury	West Roxbury Medical Group - Faulkner Hospital	1832 Centre St.	77	4	4	3	4	3

Greater Boston

Brookline	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Brookline	1101 Beacon St.	71	3	1	3	4	2
Brookline	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Pastor Medical Group	1180 Beacon St., 8th Floor	84	4	3	3	4	2
Brookline	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Washington Square Group	637 Washington St., Suite 100	71	3	2	1	2	2
Brookline	Brigham and Women's Primary Care Associates of Brookline	1180 Beacon St., Suite 1A-B	63	3	3	1	2	2
Cambridge	Belmont Medical Associates	725 Concord Ave., Suite 4100	73	3	2	2	2	2
Cambridge	Cambridge Family Health	237 Hampshire St.	78	4	3	4	1	1
Cambridge	Cambridge Health Alliance Primary Care Center	1493 Cambridge St.	66	3	2	2	1	3
Cambridge	Cambridge Medical Associates	625 Mt. Auburn St., Suite 104	77	4	4	3	4	4
Cambridge	Harvard Vanguard Cambridge	1611 Cambridge St.	70	3	2	1	2	3
Cambridge	Mount Auburn Primary Care Center	330 Mount Auburn St.	83	4	2	3	3	2
Cambridge	Reservoir Medical Associates	725 Concord Ave., Suite 2000	75	4	3	3	2	2
Cambridge	Windsor Street Health Center - CHA	119 Windsor St.	71	4	3	3	2	2
Chelsea	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Chelsea	1000 Broadway	71	3	3	3	3	3
Chelsea	Chelsea Health Center	151 Everett Ave.	81	4	4	3	2	2
Somerville	Broadway Health Center - CHA	300 Broadway	78	4	2	4	1	2
Somerville	Harvard Vanguard Somerville	40 Holland St.	66	3	3	2	4	3
Somerville	Somerville Hospital Primary Care - CHA	236 Highland Ave.	64	3	1	2	2	2
Somerville	Union Square Family Health Center	337 Somerville Ave.	75	4	2	3	1	2

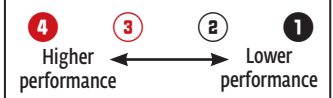
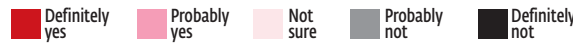
Ratings of practices for adults Continued

Based on patient experience In alphabetical order, within regions and towns

Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance				
			0%100%	How well doctors communicate with patients	How well doctors coordinate care	How well doctors know their patients	Getting timely appointments, care, and information	Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff
SOUTHEAST MASSACHUSETTS								
Norfolk County								
Braintree	Harvard Vanguard Braintree	111 Grossman Dr.	79	4	4	3	4	4
Cohasset	Cohasset Family Practice - Healthcare South	223 Chief Justice Cushing Hwy, Suite 301	87	4	3	3	3	2
Dedham	Dedham Medical Associates - Dedham	1 Lyons St.	79	4	3	4	3	3
Milton	South Shore Internal Medicine Associates	100 Highland St., Suite 300	84	4	3	3	4	2
Needham	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Needham	310 Chestnut St.	77	3	3	3	3	1
Needham	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Needham Village	272 Chestnut St.	67	3	2	2	3	3
Norwood	Associates in Internal Medicine	825 Washington St.	74	4	3	3	3	2
Norwood	Dedham Medical Associates - Norwood	325 River Ridge Dr.	79	4	3	3	3	3
Quincy	Granite Medical	500 Congress St.	77	3	3	3	3	3
Quincy	Harvard Vanguard Quincy	1250 Hancock St.	70	3	3	2	3	3
Randolph	Community Physician Associates	32 South Main St.	78	4	2	3	2	3
Sharon	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Sharon	93 Pond St.	76	4	3	3	3	3
Walpole	Newton Wellesley Family Medicine	111 Norfolk St.	80	4	4	3	3	4
Wellesley	Harvard Vanguard Wellesley	230 Worcester St.	82	4	3	3	2	3
Wellesley	Marino Center for Integrative Health	372 Washington St.	74	3	3	3	3	2
Wellesley	Primary Care of Wellesley	195 Worcester St.	88	4	4	4	4	4
Wellesley	Visions Medical Center	170 Worcester St.	83	4	2	3	2	3
Wellesley	Wellesley Family Care Associates	173 Worcester St.	69	3	3	2	3	2
Weymouth	Harbor Medical Associates	1221 Main St., Suite 402	77	3	3	3	2	3
Weymouth	Harbor Medical Associates - Family Practice	541 Main St., Suite 301	63	3	2	1	3	3
Weymouth	Harbor Medical Associates - Internal Medicine	541 Main St., Suite 210	77	4	2	3	1	2
Weymouth	South Shore Medical Center - Weymouth	90 Libbey Parkway	81	3	4	3	3	3
Plymouth County								
Abington	Compass Medical - Abington	673 Bedford St.	82	4	4	3	3	4
Bridgewater	Signature Medical Group	545 Bedford St.	72	4	3	3	3	3
Brockton	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Brockton	1 Pearl St., Suite 1000	86	4	3	3	2	3
Brockton	Caritas Good Samaritan Medical Practice	235 North Pearl St.	71	3	3	3	3	2
Brockton	Signature Healthcare Brockton Hospital - Outpatient Department	130 Quincy Ave.	61	3	1	1	1	2
Brockton	Signature Medical Group	110 Liberty St.	78	4	2	3	2	3
Brockton	Signature Medical Group	1300 Belmont St.	76	3	2	2	3	3
East Bridgewater	Compass Medical - East Bridgewater Primary Care	Southeast Medical Center, 1 Compass Way	67	3	2	2	1	2
Kingston	South Shore Medical Center - Kingston	5 Tarklin Rd.	86	4	4	4	3	4
Mattapoisett	Southcoast Primary Care Mattapoisett	109 Fairhaven Rd.	91	4	4	4	4	4
Norwell	South Shore Medical Center - Norwell	75 Washington St.	72	3	3	2	1	3
Pembroke	Harbor Medical Associates	28 Riverside Dr.	71	3	3	2	3	2
Plymouth	Plymouth Carver Primary Care - Plymouth	110 Long Pond Rd., Suite 212	69	3	1	2	1	1
Plymouth	Plymouth Medical Group Physician Associates	10 Cordage Park Circle, Suite 201	78	4	3	3	3	3

-- Not enough data to rate.

Willingness to recommend



Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance
			0% 100%	How well doctors communicate with patients How well doctors coordinate care How well doctors know their patients Getting timely appointments, care, and information Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff
Plymouth	Plymouth Medical Group Physician Associates	10 Cordage Park Circle, Suite 211	74	4 3 3 3 3
Plymouth	Pulmonary & Primary Care Association of Plymouth	116 Court St.	88	4 2 3 3 2
Scituate	Harbor Medical Associates	56 New Driftway, Suite 101	77	3 2 2 3 4
Whitman	Beth Israel Deaconess Healthcare - Bridgewater	312 Bedford St.	79	3 4 3 3 3
Bristol County				
Attleboro	Family Medical Associates of South Attleboro	230 Washington St.	80	4 3 3 3 2
Attleboro	Sturdy Memorial Hospital & Associates	211 Park St.	78	4 2 3 3 3
Dartmouth	Hawthorn Medical Associates	535 Faunce Corner Rd.	74	3 2 3 2 3
Easton	Compass Medical - Easton Family Medicine	21 Bristol Dr., Suite 101	72	3 2 3 2 3
Easton	Compass Medical - Easton Internal Medicine	21 Bristol Dr., Suite 200	73	3 3 2 2 4
Easton	Trinity Family Practice	15 Roche Brothers Way, Suite 220	78	3 2 2 2 2
Fall River	Internal Medicine & Cardiology Associates	1565 North Main St., Suite 306	73	4 1 3 3 2
Fall River	Millview Medical Associates	191 Bedford St.	94	4 4 4 4 4
Fall River	Prima CARE	277 Pleasant St., Bldg. 1	70	3 2 2 3 3
Fall River	Southcoast Physician Services Borden Medical	534 Prospect St.	92	4 4 4 4 4
Fall River	Southcoast Physician Services Fall River Family Practice	1030 Presidents Ave., Suite 104	84	4 4 4 4 4
Fall River	Southcoast Physician Services Truesdale Medical	1030 President Ave., Suite 1001	71	4 4 3 2 3
Fall River	Stanley St. Treatment and Resources (SSTAR)	400 Stanley St.	70	3 1 3 3 3
New Bedford	New Bedford Cardiology - NBMA	275 Allen St.	74	3 2 2 2 3
New Bedford	Southcoast Primary Care Buttonwood IM	543 North St.	84	4 4 3 4 3
Raynham	Signature Medical Group	1215 Broadway	69	3 2 2 2 2
Swansea	Southcoast Physician Services Swansea Family Practice	479 Swansea Mall Dr.	78	3 3 2 3 3
Taunton	Compass Medical - Taunton	152 Dean St.	72	3 3 3 2 2
Cape & Islands				
Bourne	Bourne Family Practice - PMG Physician Associates	2 Technology Park Dr., Suite A	86	4 4 4 4 3
Bourne	Medical Affiliates of Cape Cod - Bourne	1 Trowbridge Rd., Suite 100	76	3 1 2 2 1
Brewster	Brewster Medical Associates	20 Granite State Court	85	4 4 4 3 3
Falmouth	Bramblebush Medical Group	21 Bramblebush Park	73	3 2 1 3 3
Harwich	Fontaine Medical Center	525 Long Pond Dr.	69	3 2 2 3 2
Harwich	Pleasant Lake Medical	253 Pleasant Lake Ave.	88	4 4 4 4 3
Hyannis	Emerald Physician Services	62 Park St.	76	3 3 2 3 4
Hyannis	Primary Care Internists	22 Lewis Bay Rd.	75	3 2 2 4 3
Mashpee	Community Health Center of Cape Cod	107 Commercial St.	80	3 1 3 1 2
Nantucket	Nantucket Cottage Hospital	57 Prospect St.	65	3 2 2 2 3
Oak Bluffs	Martha's Vineyard Hospital	1 Hospital Rd.	68	3 2 2 2 2
Orleans	Orleans Medical Center	204 Main St.	68	3 4 2 2 2
Wellfleet	Outer Cape Health Services, Wellfleet	3130 State Hwy, Route 6	72	2 3 1 2 4

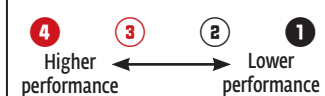
Ratings of practices for adults Continued

Based on patient experience In alphabetical order, within regions and towns

Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance					
			0%100%	How well doctors communicate with patients	How well doctors coordinate care	How well doctors know their patients	Getting timely appointments, care, and information	Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff	
METRO WEST MASSACHUSETTS									
Acton	Acton Medical Associates	321 Main St.	68	3	2	2	3	2	
Bellingham	Bellingham Medical Associates	1003 South Main St.	76	3	3	2	2	3	
Foxborough	Brigham and Women's Primary Care at Foxborough	20 Patriot Pl.	79	4	3	2	3	2	
Foxborough	Internal Medicine Foxborough	113 Washington St.	75	4	4	3	4	2	
Framingham	Charles River Medical Associates - Framingham	571 Union Ave.	81	3	3	3	3	4	
Framingham	MetroWest Internal Medicine	61 Lincoln St.	80	3	3	3	3	2	
Framingham	Southboro Medical Group - Framingham	761 Worcester Rd.	80	4	3	3	4	3	
Franklin	Franklin Family Practice	693 East Central St.	78	3	3	2	3	2	
Franklin	Franklin Primary Care	440 East Central St., Suite 1	80	3	2	2	2	2	
Marlborough	Charles River Medical Associates - Marlborough	246 Maple St.	61	3	2	1	4	3	
Marlborough	Marlborough Hospital	112 Main St.	79	4	2	3	3	4	
Medfield	Beth Israel Deaconess Family Medicine of Medfield	50 North St.	76	4	3	3	2	4	
Milford	McGrath Medical Group	117 Water St.	85	4	2	3	3	4	
Milford	Reliant Medical Group - Milford	176 West St.	61	2	3	1	2	2	
Natick	Charles River Medical Associates	67 Union St., 410	66	3	2	2	2	3	
Natick	Charles River Medical Associates	83 Speen St.	76	3	3	3	3	4	
Natick	Medical Associates of Greater Boston	307 West Central St.	73	3	2	2	2	2	
Natick	Suburban Cardiology and Internal Medicine	190 North Main St.	66	3	1	2	2	1	
Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury Family Medicine #1	24 Julio Dr.	87	4	2	4	3	3	
Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury Family Medicine #2	604 Main St.	64	3	2	2	2	3	
Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury Internal Medicine	604 Main St.	85	4	3	3	3	2	
Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury Primary Care	26 Julio Dr.	82	4	3	4	4	4	
Southborough	Southboro Medical Group - Southboro	24 Newton St.	58	3	2	2	2	2	
Sudbury	Paula Jo Carbone, MD	490 Boston Post Rd., Suite 2001	73	3	2	2	4	3	
Westborough	Reliant Medical Group - Westborough	106 East Main St.	75	3	2	2	2	3	
Westborough	Westborough Adult and Pediatric Medicine	33 West Main St.	67	3	2	2	3	1	
Westborough	Westborough Internal Medicine	154 East Main St.	81	4	4	4	4	4	
CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS									
North Central									
Baldwinville	Mountain View Family Practice	570 Baldwinville Rd.	73	4	4	3	3	4	
Barre	Barre Family Health Center	151 Worcester Rd.	75	4	2	3	2	3	
Clinton	Physicians of North Worcester	201 Highland St.	57	2	1	1	2	1	
Fitchburg	CPC Family Practice	155 Franklin Rd.	62	3	2	1	2	2	
Fitchburg	Fitchburg Adult Medicine	76 Summer St., Suite 230	61	3	3	2	4	3	
Gardner	ChairCity Family Practice	250 Green St.	88	4	4	3	4	3	
Leominster	Family Medicine & Maternity Care	87 North Main St.	61	2	2	1	2	2	
Leominster	Kamens Haberman Cotter	50 Memorial Dr., Suite 214	55	3	1	2	2	3	
Leominster	Reliant Medical Group - Leominster	165 Mill St.	73	3	2	2	2	3	
Westminster	Meeting House Family Practice	16 Wyman Rd.	80	4	3	3	1	2	

-- Not enough data to rate.

Willingness to recommend



Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance
			0% 100%	How well doctors communicate with patients How well doctors coordinate care How well doctors know their patients Getting timely appointments, care and information Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff

Metro Worcester

Auburn	Auburn Internal Medicine	103 Millbury St.	71	<div><div></div></div>	4	2	3	4	4
Auburn	Grove Medical Associates	250 Hampton St.	89	<div><div></div></div>	4	3	4	3	3
Auburn	Internal Medicine - Auburn	319 Southbridge St.	90	<div><div></div></div>	4	4	4	4	3
Auburn	Reliant Medical Group - Auburn	35 Millbury St.	82	<div><div></div></div>	3	3	3	3	3
Charlton	Charlton Family Practice	246 Southbridge Rd.	69	<div><div></div></div>	4	4	3	1	3
Charlton	Harrington HealthCare at Charlton	10 North Main St.	78	<div><div></div></div>	4	3	3	2	2
Holden	Reliant Medical Group - Holden	27 Shrewbury St.	71	<div><div></div></div>	4	2	2	3	3
Holden	Wachusett Family Practice	52 Boyden Rd., Suite 209	69	<div><div></div></div>	3	3	3	3	2
Southbridge	Harrington PHO	100 South St.	63	<div><div></div></div>	3	1	2	2	3
Southbridge	Harrington Physician Services	100 South St.	67	<div><div></div></div>	3	2	1	2	2
Spencer	Reliant Medical Group - Spencer	407 Main St.	85	<div><div></div></div>	4	3	3	3	3
Webster	Inter Med Associates	72 Cudworth Rd.	76	<div><div></div></div>	3	1	2	2	2
West Brookfield	West Brookfield Family Practice	46 North Main St.	68	<div><div></div></div>	3	2	3	2	2
Worcester	Benedict Internal Medicine	55 Lake Ave. North, Benedict Bldg	81	<div><div></div></div>	4	3	3	2	2
Worcester	Chadwick Medical Associates	385 Grove St.	82	<div><div></div></div>	4	4	4	3	4
Worcester	Chadwick Square Internal Medicine	1 West Boylston St.	68	<div><div></div></div>	3	2	1	3	2
Worcester	Family Medicine University - Benedict	55 Lake Ave. North, Benedict Bldg	77	<div><div></div></div>	3	2	3	2	2
Worcester	Hahnemann Family Health Center	279 Lincoln St.	84	<div><div></div></div>	4	2	4	2	2
Worcester	Hahnemann Medical Group	1 West Boylston St., 3rd floor	88	<div><div></div></div>	4	4	3	4	3
Worcester	Lincoln Primary Care	281 Lincoln St.	72	<div><div></div></div>	4	3	3	3	3
Worcester	Primary Physician Partners	123 Summer St., Suite 370 North	89	<div><div></div></div>	4	3	4	4	4
Worcester	Reliant Medical Group - May Street	191 May St.	73	<div><div></div></div>	3	2	2	3	2
Worcester	Reliant Medical Group - North Lake Ave	425 North Lake Ave.	76	<div><div></div></div>	4	2	3	2	2
Worcester	Reliant Medical Group - Plantation Street	630 Plantation St.	77	<div><div></div></div>	3	2	2	3	3
Worcester	Saint Vincent Medical Group	102 Shore Dr., Suite 303	77	<div><div></div></div>	4	2	3	3	3

Blackstone Valley

Mendon	Tri-County Internal Medicine	12 Uxbridge Rd., Route 16	83	<div><div></div></div>	4	3	3	3	3
Millbury	Millbury Internal Medicine	65 Canal St.	85	<div><div></div></div>	4	4	4	4	3
Millbury	Reliant Medical Group - Millbury	94 Elm St.	79	<div><div></div></div>	4	4	4	3	3
Sutton	Sutton Internal Medicine	188 Worcester Providence Turnpike	69	<div><div></div></div>	3	4	2	2	3
Uxbridge	Tri-River Family Health Center	281 East Hartford Ave.	66	<div><div></div></div>	3	1	2	2	2
Whitinsville	Blackstone Valley Family Physicians	18 Granite St.	84	<div><div></div></div>	4	3	3	2	3

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Franklin County

Greenfield	Greenfield Health Center	329 Conway St.	80	<div><div></div></div>	4	4	3	2	3
Turners Falls	Community Health Center of Franklin County	338 Montague City Rd.	61	<div><div></div></div>	3	2	1	2	3
Turners Falls	Connecticut River Internists	8 Burnham St.	77	<div><div></div></div>	4	3	4	4	4

MASSACHUSETTS DOCTOR RATINGS

Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance				
			0%100%	How well doctors communicate with patients	How well doctors coordinate care	How well doctors know their patients	Getting timely appointments, care, and information	Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff

Hampshire County

Amherst	Amherst Medical Center	31 Hall Dr., Suite 1	75	3	3	2	3	3
Amherst	University Health Services - Amherst	150 Infirmary Way	81	4	4	4	3	3
Belchertown	Wing Hospital - Belchertown	20 Daniel Shays Hwy	68	3	4	3	2	4
Easthampton	Easthampton Health Center	238 Northampton St.	70	3	3	2	3	3
Florence	Northampton Health Center	70 Main St.	80	3	4	3	3	4
Northampton	Baystate Medical Practices Pioneer Valley Family Medicine	118 Conz St.	71	4	4	2	4	4
Northampton	Cooley Dickinson Practice Associates	30 Locust St.	78	4	3	3	4	4
Northampton	Elm St. Adult Medicine	264 Elm St., Suites 10 & 12	82	4	4	4	4	4
South Hadley	Baystate Medical Practices - South Hadley	470 Granby Rd.	65	4	1	3	4	4
Worthington	Hilltown Community Health Center - Worthington	58 Old North Rd.	67	4	4	2	2	2

Hampden County

Agawam	RiverBend Agawam	232 Main St.	63	4	3	3	4	3
Chicopee	RiverBend Chicopee	444 Montgomery St.	70	3	3	2	3	4
Chicopee	Western Mass. Physicians Associates-Chicopee Medical Center	262 New Ludlow Rd.	48	2	1	1	1	1
East Longmeadow	Baystate Medical Practices - East Longmeadow	294 North Main St.	74	3	3	2	2	3
East Longmeadow	Hampden County Physician Associates - East Longmeadow	98 Shaker Rd.	66	3	1	2	2	1
Holyoke	Valley Health Partners	Holyoke Medical Center, 575 Beech St.	80	4	3	4	3	4
Holyoke	Western Mass. Physicians Associates - Holyoke Associates in Internal Medicine	2 Hospital Dr., Suite 101	65	3	1	2	2	2
Palmer	Wing Hospital - Palmer	40 Wright St.	52	2	1	1	2	2
Springfield	Baystate Medical Practices - Northern Edge	3455 North Main St.	71	4	3	3	3	4
Springfield	Cardiology & Internal Medicine Associates	222 Carew St.	81	4	3	4	4	4
Springfield	Chestnut Medical Associates	300 Birnie Ave., Suite 102	90	4	4	4	4	4
Springfield	Endocrine Associates of Western Massachusetts	2 Medical Center Dr., Suite 210	79	3	3	3	2	2
Springfield	Hampden County Physician Associates - Boylston	77 Boylston St.	63	3	2	3	2	2
Springfield	Orchard Medical Associates	835 Worcester St.	81	4	2	4	4	4
Springfield	RiverBend Springfield	305 Bicentennial Hwy	59	3	3	1	3	2
Springfield	Springfield Medical Associates	2150 Main St.	79	4	3	3	3	3
Springfield	Valley Medical Associates	3640 Main St., Suite 207	87	4	3	4	3	3
Springfield	Valley Pulmonary & Medical Associates	222 Carew St., 2nd Floor	68	3	1	2	1	3
West Springfield	Baystate Medical Practices - West Side	46 Daggett Dr.	81	3	4	3	3	3
West Springfield	Hampden County Physician Associates - West Springfield	900 Memorial Ave.	55	2	2	1	2	2
Westfield	Family Medicine Associates	75 Springfield Rd.	67	3	1	2	1	2
Westfield	Hampden County Physician Associates - Westfield	140 Southampton Rd.	63	3	1	1	1	1
Wilbraham	Baystate Medical Practices - Wilbraham	2377 Boston Rd.	73	4	2	3	3	2

Berkshire County

Adams	Adams Internists	19 Depot St., Suite 1	76	4	4	4	4	4
Pittsfield	Berkshire Medical Center	725 North St.	90	4	4	4	4	4
Pittsfield	Berkshire Medical Group	777 North St., Suite 207	77	4	2	4	3	2
Pittsfield	Family Practice Associates	20 Elm St.	71	3	1	3	2	2
Pittsfield	Neighborhood Health Center	510 North St.	70	3	1	2	1	2

Willingness to recommend



Ratings of practices for children In collaboration with MHQP

Based on patient experience In alphabetical order, within regions and towns

Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance
			0% 100%	How well doctors communicate with patients How well doctors know their patients How well doctors give preventative care and advice Getting timely appointments, care, and information Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff
NORTHEAST MASSACHUSETTS				
Merrimack Valley				
Andover	Andover Pediatrics	140 Haverhill St.	76	4 3 2 3 1
Chelmsford	Chelmsford Pediatrics	7 Village Square	86	4 3 3 2 2
Chelmsford	Harvard Vanguard Chelmsford	228 Billerica Rd.	77	4 -- 4 2 3
Haverhill	Pentucket Medical Associates - Haverhill	1 Parkway	90	4 3 2 2 2
Lowell	Greater Lowell Pediatrics	33 Bartlett St., # 305	92	4 3 4 3 4
Lowell	Lowell Community Health Center	597 Merrimack St.	82	4 -- 3 2 1
Methuen	Pediatric Professional Associates	413 Broadway, Route 28	93	4 3 3 3 1
Newburyport	Children's Health Care	257 Low St.	80	4 3 4 2 2
North Andover	Children's Medical Office of N. Andover	477 Andover St.	88	4 3 4 3 4
North Andover	North Andover Pediatrics	800 Turnpike St., Jefferson Office Park	94	4 3 4 4 4
North Shore				
Beverly	Garden City Pediatrics	83 Herrick St., Suite 1003	79	4 3 3 2 3
Beverly	Lahey - Beverly/Danvers/Ipswich	152 Conant St.	80	4 3 3 3 3
Danvers	North Shore Pediatrics	480 Maple St., Suite 3A	91	4 3 4 2 2
Gloucester	Cape Ann Pediatricians	298 Washington St.	78	4 3 1 3 2
Peabody	Harvard Vanguard Peabody	2 Essex Center Dr.	83	4 -- 3 3 4
Peabody	Pediatric Health Care Associates - Peabody	10 Centennial Dr.	86	4 3 2 2 3
Salem	Pediatric Associates of Greater Salem	72 Highland Ave.	88	4 3 3 2 2
Middlesex				
Bedford	Patriot Pediatrics - Private	74 Loomis St.	90	4 3 3 3 3
Burlington	Burlington Pediatrics	281 Cambridge St.	81	4 3 4 4 3
Burlington	Harvard Vanguard Burlington	20 Wall St.	82	4 3 3 3 3
Concord	Harvard Vanguard Concord Hillside	86 Baker Ave. Ext	87	4 3 3 3 3
Groton	Pediatrics West - Groton	100 Boston Rd., Suite F	81	3 2 2 3 3
Lexington	Lexington Pediatrics	19 Muzzey St.	86	4 3 2 2 2
Melrose	Pediatric Health Care Associates - Melrose	467R Main St.	80	3 3 3 2 2
Reading	Dowd Medical Associates	107 Woburn St.	93	4 3 3 3 4
Reading	Reading Pediatric Associates	36 Woburn St.	88	4 3 4 3 4
Westford	Pediatrics West - Westford	133 Littleton Rd., Suite 101	90	4 3 3 3 3
Wilmington	Wilmington Pediatrics	500 Salem St.	85	4 3 3 3 3
Winchester	Pediatricians, Inc.	955 Main St., Suite 106	92	4 3 1 3 2
Woburn	Woburn Pediatrics	7 Alfred St.	86	4 3 4 4 4

-- Not enough data to rate.

Ratings of practices for children Continued

Based on patient experience In alphabetical order, within regions and towns

Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance					
			0%100%	How well doctors communicate with patients	How well doctors know their patients	How well doctors give preventative care and advice	Getting timely appointments, care, and information	Getting courteous and respectful help	from office staff
Northeast Boston Suburbs									
Malden	Pediatric Associates of Malden	105 Commercial St.	72	4	3	2	3	3	
Medford	Harvard Vanguard Medford	26 City Hall Mall	83	3	2	3	3	4	
Medford	Mystic Valley Pediatrics	75 Riverside Ave.	81	4	2	2	3	2	
Medford	Pediatric Associates of Medford	101 Main St., Suite 201	74	4	3	2	2	2	
Revere	Revere Winthrop Pediatrics	280 Beach St.	71	4	--	1	2	1	
Northwest Boston Suburbs									
Arlington	Alewife Brook Community Pediatrics	29 Massachusetts Ave.	79	4	3	2	2	1	
Arlington	Arlington Pediatrics	5 Water St.	92	4	3	3	3	3	
Chestnut Hill	Chestnut Hill Pediatrics	25 Boylston St., Suite 112	79	4	3	3	3	4	
Newton	Drs. Benjamin and Spingarn	1400 Centre St., Suite 203	92	4	4	4	4	4	
Newton	Newton-Wellesley Family Pediatrics	2000 Washington St., Suite 468	73	3	2	3	1	3	
Newton	Pediatric Health Care at Newton Wellesley	109 Oak St., Suite 103	74	3	2	2	3	3	
Newton	Pediatrics at Newton-Wellesley	2000 Washington St., Suite 466	88	4	3	3	3	2	
Waltham	Beaver Brook Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine	411 Waverly Oaks Rd., Bldg 3, Suite 302	85	4	3	3	3	4	
Waltham	Mass General West (Pediatric)	40 Second Ave.	89	4	3	1	3	3	
Watertown	Harvard Vanguard Watertown	485 Arsenal St.	89	4	3	4	2	3	
Weston	Pediatric Associates of Wellesley	134 South Ave.	86	4	3	3	4	2	
Weston	Weston Pediatric Physicians	486 Boston Post Rd.	81	4	--	3	1	1	
METRO BOSTON									
Boston Central									
Boston	Child Health Foundation of Boston	1 Boston Medical Center Pl., Dowling 3414 South	88	4	--	--	2	2	
Boston	Children's Hospital Primary Care Center	300 Longwood Ave.	86	4	--	2	1	2	
Boston	Harvard Vanguard Copley	165 Dartmouth St.	88	4	3	2	3	4	
Boston	Harvard Vanguard Kenmore	133 Brookline Ave.	84	4	--	2	4	3	
Boston	Longwood Pediatrics	319 Longwood Ave.	89	4	3	4	2	2	
Boston	MGH - Pediatric Group Practice	55 Fruit St., Yawkey Bldg 6	75	3	2	2	1	2	
Boston	South Cove Community Health Center	885 Washington St.	57	3	2	3	1	1	
Boston	Tufts Medical Center Pediatrics	800 Washington St.	83	4	--	3	3	2	
Boston Neighborhoods									
Dorchester	Dorchester House Multi-Service Center	1353 Dorchester Ave.	91	4	--	4	1	1	
Dorchester	Neponset Health Center	398 Neponset Ave.	65	4	--	1	2	2	
East Boston	East Boston Neighborhood Health Center	10 Gove St.	75	3	--	3	1	1	
Hyde Park	Hyde Park Pediatrics	695 Truman Parkway, Suite 203	93	4	3	3	4	4	
Jamaica Plain	Roslindale Pediatrics	1153 Centre St., Suite 31	89	4	3	3	4	3	
West Roxbury	Harvard Vanguard West Roxbury	291 Independence Dr.	81	3	--	2	3	2	
Greater Boston									
Brookline	Centre Pediatric Associates	1 Brookline Pl., Suite 327	82	4	3	3	4	4	
Cambridge	Cambridge Family Health	237 Hampshire St.	95	4	3	2	1	1	
Cambridge	Cambridge Health Alliance - Cambridge Pediatrics	1493 Cambridge St.	83	4	--	2	3	2	

-- Not enough data to rate.

Willingness to recommend



Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance
			0% 100%	How well doctors communicate with patients How well doctors know their patients How well doctors give preventative care and advice Getting timely appointments, care, and information Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff
Cambridge	West Cambridge Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine	575 Mt. Auburn St., Suite 101	89	4 4 3 3 3
Cambridge	Yogman Pediatric Associates	575 Mt. Auburn St., Suite 202	70	3 2 2 4 3
Chelsea	Pediatric Medical Care	1000 Broadway	90	4 -- 3 2 4
Somerville	Broadway Health Center - CHA	300 Broadway	90	4 -- 3 3 3
Somerville	Harvard Vanguard Somerville	40 Holland St.	85	4 -- 3 2 2
SOUTHEAST MASSACHUSETTS				
Norfolk County				
Braintree	Harvard Vanguard Braintree	111 Grossman Dr.	80	4 2 1 3 3
Braintree	Milton Pediatric Associates - Braintree	340 Wood Rd., Suite 301	92	4 4 3 3 4
Cohasset	Cohasset Pediatrics - Healthcare South	223 Chief Justice Cushing Hwy, Suite 101	86	4 3 2 2 3
Dedham	Dedham Medical Associates - Dedham	1 Lyons St.	91	4 4 3 3 3
Milton	East Milton Pediatric Associates	464 Granite Ave.	97	4 4 3 3 3
Needham	Needham Pediatrics	111 Lincoln St.	88	4 3 2 3 2
Norwood	Dedham Medical Associates - Norwood	325 River Ridge Dr.	89	4 3 3 3 3
Norwood	Pediatric Associates of Norwood and Franklin	62 Walpole St.	88	4 3 4 3 3
Quincy	Crown Colony Pediatrics	500 Congress St., Suite 1F	78	3 2 2 1 1
Quincy	Harvard Vanguard Quincy	1250 Hancock St.	88	4 -- 4 1 2
Quincy	Quincy Pediatric Associates	191 Independence Ave.	88	4 -- 4 3 2
Stoughton	Tri County Pediatrics Associates	907 Sumner St., Suite M-102	84	4 3 4 2 3
Walpole	Walpole Pediatric Associates	1350 Main St.	88	4 3 3 2 3
Wellesley	Harvard Vanguard Wellesley	230 Worcester St.	85	4 3 3 3 3
Westwood	Westwood/Mansfield Pediatrics	541 High St.	90	4 3 4 3 3
Weymouth	South Shore Pediatric Associates - Healthcare South	70 Pleasant St.	71	3 2 2 2 3
Plymouth County				
Bridgewater	Bridgewater Pediatrics	1440 Pleasant St., Suite D	77	3 2 2 3 2
Brockton	Alan Bulotsky, MD & Associates	201 Quincy St.	96	4 4 4 4 2
Brockton	Allied Pediatrics - Brockton	179 Quincy St.	59	2 -- 1 3 2
Brockton	Brockton Pediatrics	65 Libby St.	94	4 4 3 3 3
Brockton	Pediatric Associates of Brockton	370 Oak St., Suite A	84	4 3 4 2 3
Brockton	Pediatric HealthCare Brockton	830 Oak St., #200W	93	4 4 4 3 3
Brockton	Signature Medical Group	110 Liberty St.	82	4 -- 3 2 2
Hanover	Hanover Pediatrics - Healthcare South	51 Mill St., Bldg E, Suite 17	93	4 3 2 3 2
Lakeville	Middleboro Pediatrics	2 Lakeville Business Park	77	4 3 4 3 4
Norwell	South Shore Medical Center - Norwell	75 Washington St.	86	4 3 3 2 3
Plymouth	PMG Physician Associates - Sandwich Street Pediatrics	139 Sandwich St.	82	4 2 1 2 2
Scituate	Scituate Pediatrics - Healthcare South	10 New Driftway, Suite 201	90	4 3 3 3 3
Wareham	Wareham Pediatrics	53 Marion Rd., Suite 1	90	4 3 3 2 2

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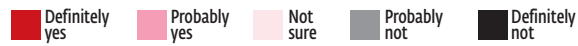
Ratings of practices for children Continued

Based on patient experience In alphabetical order, within regions and towns

Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance					
			0%100%	How well doctors communicate with patients	How well doctors know their patients	How well doctors give preventative care and advice	Getting timely appointments, care, and information	Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff	
Bristol County									
Attleboro	Sturdy Memorial Hospital & Associates	211 Park St.	81	4	3	2	3	2	
Dartmouth	Southcoast Primary Care - Nauset	49 State Rd., Nauset Bldg	85	4	3	3	1	2	
Fall River	Highland Pediatrics	1030 President Ave., Suite 2001	86	4	3	3	2	3	
Fall River	Pediatric Associates of Fall River	851 Middle St.	78	4	3	3	1	2	
Swansea	Swansea Pediatrics	2200 GAR Hwy	83	4	3	4	2	2	
Taunton	Pediatric Associates at Northwoods	2007 Bay St., Suite 103	82	4	4	4	2	3	
Cape & Islands									
Falmouth	Bramblebush Pediatrics	15 Bramblebush Park	82	4	3	3	3	3	
Oak Bluffs	Martha's Vineyard Hospital	1 Hospital Rd.	68	3	--	1	1	1	
Sandwich	Cape Cod Pediatrics	55 Route 130	98	4	4	4	4	2	
Yarmouth	Bass River Pediatric Associates	237 Station Ave.	94	4	3	2	4	3	
METRO WEST MASSACHUSETTS									
Acton	Acton Medical Associates	321 Main St.	85	4	3	2	2	1	
Foxborough	Pediatric Specialists of Foxborough and Wrentham	132 Central St., Suite 116	88	4	3	3	3	2	
Framingham	Framingham Pediatrics	125 Newbury St., Suite 300	92	4	3	3	3	3	
Framingham	MetroWest Pediatrics	33 Edgell Rd.	81	4	3	2	3	4	
Framingham	Southboro Medical Group - Framingham	761 Worcester Rd.	94	4	3	3	3	2	
Franklin	Franklin Pediatrics and Adolescent Care	835 West Central St.	92	4	3	4	3	3	
Holliston	Holliston Pediatrics	100 Jeffrey Ave.	87	4	3	3	2	2	
Hopkinton	Main Street Pediatrics	77 West Main St.	85	4	3	1	3	3	
Marlborough	Marlborough Pediatrics	320 Bolton St. #201	81	3	3	2	2	2	
Milford	Community Pediatrics of Milford	229 East Main St.	89	4	3	3	3	3	
Milford	Southboro Medical Group - Family Health of Milford	327 West St.	91	4	4	2	4	4	
Natick	Charles River Medical Associates - Pediatrics	233 West Central St.	92	4	4	3	4	3	
Southborough	Southboro Medical Group - Southboro	24 Newton St.	83	4	3	2	2	2	
Sudbury	Post Road Pediatrics	616 Boston Post. Rd.	86	4	3	2	2	2	
Westborough	Reliant Medical Group - Westborough	106 East Main St.	84	4	--	2	3	4	
Westborough	Southboro Medical Group - Westborough	24 Lyman St., Suite 280	91	4	3	3	4	4	
CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS									
Auburn	Child Health Associates	105 Millbury St.	79	4	3	2	2	2	
Auburn	Reliant Medical Group - Auburn	35 Millbury St.	85	4	--	3	3	4	
Holden	Holden Pediatrics	52 Boyden Rd.	80	4	2	2	4	3	
Leominster	Medical Associates Pediatrics	100 Hospital Rd., Suite 4A	92	4	3	3	3	3	
Leominster	Reliant Medical Group - Leominster	165 Mill St.	70	4	--	3	2	2	
Southbridge	Harrington PHO	100 South St.	91	4	3	3	4	4	
Southbridge	Harrington Physician Services	100 South St.	84	4	3	3	2	3	
Uxbridge	Tri-River Family Health Center	281 East Hartford Ave.	83	4	3	3	2	1	
Worcester	Chandler Pediatrics	421 Chandler St.	92	4	3	1	4	4	
Worcester	Harding Pediatrics	45 Oak Ave.	80	3	3	2	2	2	
Worcester	Lincoln Street Pediatrics	291 Lincoln St.	79	4	2	2	3	3	

-- Not enough data to rate.

Willingness to recommend



Town	Practice Name	Address	Willingness to Recommend	Performance	How well doctors communicate with patients	How well doctors know their patients	How well doctors give preventative care and advice	Getting timely appointments, care, and information	Getting courteous and respectful help from office staff
			0% 100%						
Worcester	Pediatric Medicine University - Benedict	55 Lake Ave. North, Benedict	90	4	--	3	2	2	
Worcester	Reliant Medical Group - May Street	191 May St.	84	4	--	4	3	3	
Worcester	Reliant Medical Group - Plantation Street	630 Plantation St.	85	4	--	2	3	2	
Worcester	Worcester Pediatrics Associates	20 Worcester Center Blvd	94	4	3	4	4	4	
WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS									
Amherst	Amherst Pediatrics	31A Hall Dr., Suite 2	88	4	3	2	4	4	
Chicopee	Fairview Pediatrics	1176 Memorial Dr.	92	4	4	2	3	4	
Chicopee	RiverBend Chicopee	444 Montgomery St.	81	3	3	2	3	2	
East Longmeadow	Pediatric Services of Springfield	294 North Main St., Suite 101	84	4	3	2	4	4	
East Longmeadow	Redwood Peds & Adolescent Medicine	15 Vreeland Ave.	87	4	3	3	3	1	
Greenfield	Baystate Medical Practices Greenfield Pediatrics	48 Sanderson St.	77	3	2	1	3	3	
Holyoke	Holyoke Pediatric Associates - Holyoke	150 Lower Westfield Rd.	93	4	4	3	3	3	
Longmeadow	Pioneer Valley Pediatrics	123 Dwight Rd.	89	4	3	3	4	4	
North Adams	Williamstown Medical Associates - ACC North Adams	77 Hospital Ave., Suite 300	83	4	3	3	2	3	
Northampton	Northampton Area Pediatrics	193 Locust St.	91	4	3	3	3	4	
Pittsfield	Berkshire Pediatric Associates	777 North St., Suite 305	96	4	4	4	3	3	
South Hadley	Holyoke Pediatric Associates - South Hadley	84 Willimansett St.	74	3	2	2	1	1	
Springfield	Baystate General Pediatrics	3300 Main St., 4th Floor	88	4	--	1	2	2	
Springfield	RiverBend Springfield	305 Bicentennial Hwy	89	4	--	2	3	4	
Ware	Baystate Medical Practices Quabbin Pediatrics	83 South St., Suite 112	79	4	2	2	2	3	
West Springfield	Pediatric Assoc. of Hampden County - West Springfield	373 Park St.	90	4	3	3	3	3	
Westfield	Pediatric Assoc. of Hampden County - Westfield	477 Southwick Rd.	88	4	2	2	2	2	
Wilbraham	George F. Vitek, M.D. , & Associates	2207 Boston Rd.	91	4	3	3	2	2	

-- Not enough data to rate.

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