

**BEST CARS TO  
BUY RIGHT NOW**

**RETIREMENT  
PLANNING GUIDE** P.52

**TOP LAUNDRY  
DETERGENTS**

# **CR** Consumer Reports®

NOVEMBER 2022

✓ **RATINGS & REVIEWS**

Car Batteries

Washers

Luxury Sedans

Electric  
Toothbrushes

Induction Cooktops  
and Ranges

# The Hidden Health Hazards in Your Home



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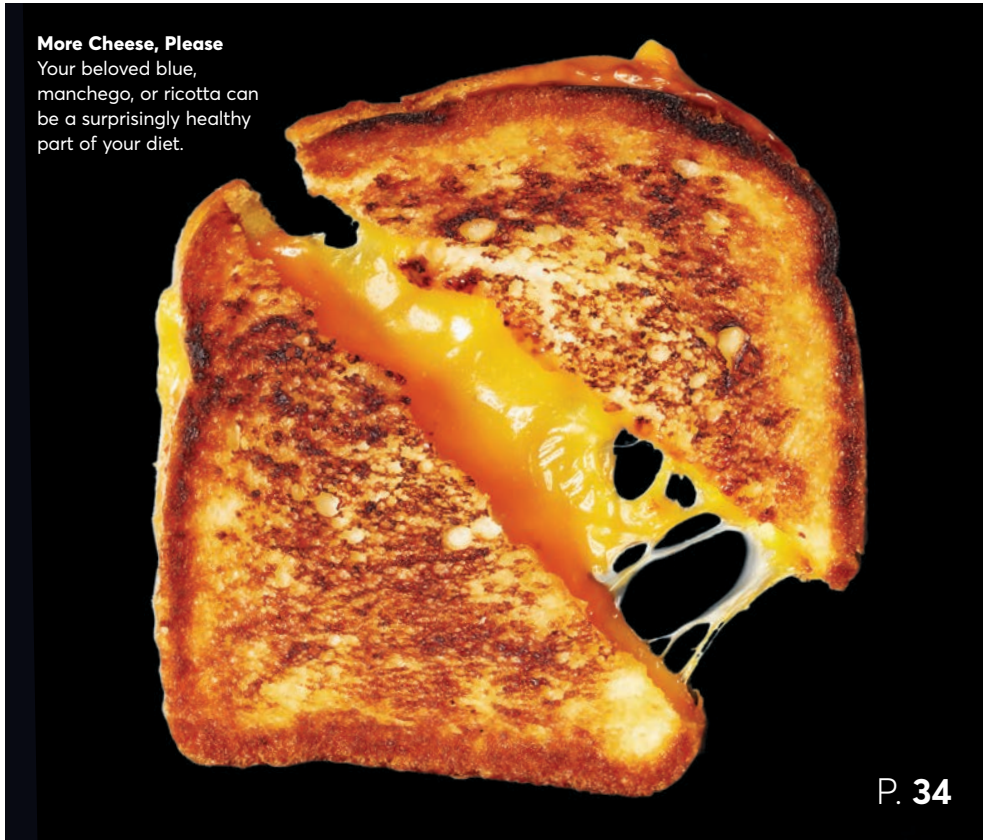
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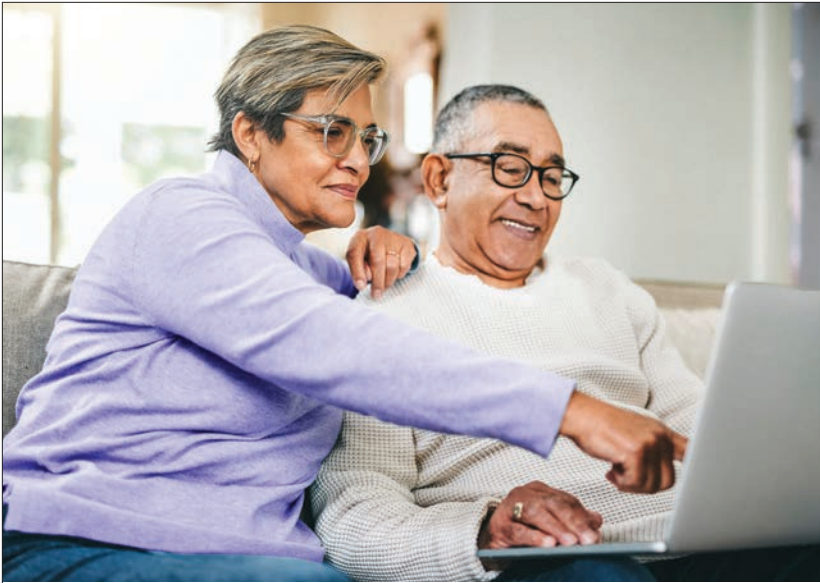
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# Driving Toward an Electric Future



GROWING UP, my brothers and I spent hours in our wood-paneled basement racing slot cars on our electrified racetrack. I drove a white convertible against my brothers' blue Corvette Stingray and apple-red Jaguar. I never thought we might all be driving real electric vehicles one day, but that future now seems likely. Rapid advancements in technology, combined with growing consumer

interest and favorable government incentives, have reshaped the EV landscape.

A recent nationally representative CR survey found, for example, that more than a third of Americans would at least seriously consider buying or leasing an electric-only vehicle today. And the percentage who say they are "definitely" planning to buy an EV has more than tripled since 2020. That's for good reason: On top of environmental benefits, a CR analysis found that because of lower fuel and maintenance costs, EV owners could save \$1,600 to \$2,400 for every 15,000 miles they drive.

Meanwhile, policymakers are making EVs more accessible. The recent Inflation Reduction Act included funding to make new and used EVs more affordable and expand the charging infrastructure in the U.S. Getting that effort to scale is the next big challenge, which is why states like California have begun phasing out the sale of new gas vehicles for battery-powered ones.

At CR, we have our eye on improving access to fuel-efficient vehicles and providing you with the tools to choose a car that fits your lifestyle. We've tested more than 60 hybrids and EVs to date, and in this issue you'll find even more information about hybrid vehicles on page 54. And our online Electric Vehicle Savings Finder, at [CR.org/evsavings](https://www.consumerreports.org/evsavings), will help you explore potential rebates, tax credits, and benefits that can lower costs.

Bottom line: EVs are no longer the stuff of toys and imagination. The cars of the future are here.

*Marta Tellado*

**Marta L. Tellado,**  
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## Button Battery Protection

Every year, more than 3,500 people are reported to have swallowed lithium button batteries, the small, coin-shaped kind found in countless household items, including watches, toys, electronics, flashing jewelry, and even “singing” greeting cards.

Once ingested, these batteries can cause serious injuries and even death. Without immediate medical care, permanent harm can occur within 2 hours, and damage can continue even after a battery has been removed. Unfortunately, because these batteries are so ubiquitous and the early symptoms of ingesting them can resemble those of other childhood illnesses, parents often don't immediately realize their child has swallowed one.

For these reasons, CR helped develop—and spent the past year urging federal legislators to pass—Reese's Law. Named in honor of Reese Hamsmith, an 18-month-old who died in December 2020 after swallowing a battery from a remote control, the bipartisan measure would direct the Consumer Product Safety Commission to create safety standards to prevent such tragedies.

It passed both chambers of Congress this summer and in August was signed into law by President Joe Biden.

Reese's Law will require that products with button batteries, as well as battery packaging, be more child-resistant, and will mandate clear warning labels on products and packaging and in user manuals.

To learn more about how to keep children safe from button batteries, and what to do if one is ingested, go to [poison.org/battery/guideline](https://poison.org/battery/guideline); and see [CR.org/nursery](https://CR.org/nursery) for CR's guide to creating safe spaces for babies in your home.

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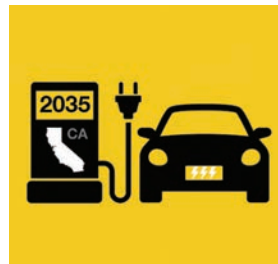
Number of children age 6 and under reported to have ingested button batteries between 1985 and 2021.

Source: National Battery Ingestion Hotline ([batteryingestionhotline.com](https://batteryingestionhotline.com)).



## PRIVACY UPDATE

Inadequate digital privacy laws have left Americans vulnerable to the rampant misuse of their personal data, from our financial and health statuses to our shopping histories and relationship preferences. So CR joined over 40 groups calling on the Federal Trade Commission to fill the gap, and helped map out how the commission could do so under its unfair-practices authority. In August, the FTC announced that it would move forward—“a critical step for providing basic privacy protections for all Americans,” says Justin Brookman, CR's director of technology policy.



## More Access to Clean Cars

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

Americans are increasingly eager to buy electric vehicles (EVs), according to CR's largest-ever nationally representative survey on the subject, conducted this year. Yet sizable challenges still limit their adoption: Sixty-one percent of those not currently planning to buy or lease an EV (if they were buying a vehicle today) said the barriers include concerns over charging logistics. And more than half said the same about range limitations and the cost of buying and owning an EV.

### HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR has been pushing policymakers for measures

that would address these and other barriers. The federal Inflation Reduction Act, for example, which passed in early August, expanded the tax credit program for consumers who buy EVs.

Now California is going further. In late August, the state's clean air agency approved a landmark rule to accelerate the transition to zero-emissions cars and plug-in hybrid vehicles. The Advanced Clean Cars II regulations, which CR endorsed and helped improve, will increase clean vehicle options, speed the development of EV charging infrastructure, and require all new vehicles sold in California to be zero-emissions or plug-in hybrids by 2035.

And the 17 “clean car” states that previously adopted California's auto emissions regulations are likely to follow its lead here as well.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Learn more about which cars qualify for tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act on page 53 and at [CR.org/EVcredits](https://CR.org/EVcredits). And find CR's full EV and hybrid buying guide at [CR.org/EVguide](https://CR.org/EVguide).



Our September 2022 article “Do You Really Need That Root Canal, Crown, or Implant?” offered strategies for making decisions about those pricey procedures. Our readers shared their thoughts and tips. To add your own, head to [CR.org/dentalcare](https://CR.org/dentalcare).

I FOUND YOUR report on dental care very helpful. I was wondering, however, if it’s safe to return to the dentist yet because of COVID-19.  
–Suzanne Epstein, New York, NY

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Yes, it’s generally safe to see your dentist, with reasonable precautions. When making your next appointment, ask what steps the practice is taking to keep patients safe. Even before COVID-19, many dentists and their staff wore personal

protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, and eye guards during appointments, which help protect both the provider and patients from the germs that cause illnesses. And be sure to wear a mask yourself in the waiting room.

THE OPENING PHOTO with the hand on the exam lamp makes me wonder if lamps are cleaned between patient visits. The same hand that goes in and out of my mouth also makes frequent lamp adjustments, dragging along saliva and germs.

–Mark Hastings, Dover, NH

**EDITOR’S NOTE** While we can’t guarantee that every dentist follows these practices, the

American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention do have recommendations for infection control in dental settings. Among their guidelines: cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces (including lamps) and replacing any disposable plastic covers protecting equipment between each patient’s appointment.

NO DENTAL OR medical procedure should be performed on any patient without an informed consent by the patient or guardian. A dentist is required to explain—in understandable language—the benefits and risks of [the recommended] treatment and of any

alternatives (including no treatment at all), as well as the cost. The patient must be allowed to ask questions—and the dentist should ask questions to make sure the patient understands.  
–Jeffrey Levin, DDS, retired professor, Virginia Commonwealth School of Dentistry, Richmond, VA

PRICES FOR the same services can vary between dentists and locations. I moved from an expensive area in Connecticut to a small town in Massachusetts. Dental costs here are 50 percent lower.  
–Art Layton, via [CR.org](https://CR.org)



GROUND POULTRY

YOUR ARTICLE ENTITLED “Is Our Meat Safe to Eat?” in the August issue was very enlightening. You touched on possible salmonella in ground chicken but didn’t mention the contamination possibilities in ground turkey. Is the chance of getting ill from ground turkey the same as it is from ground chicken?  
–Nicholas Zubulake, Readington Township, NJ

**EDITOR’S NOTE** No. In our recent tests, we found that about 6 percent of 110 ground turkey samples were contaminated with campylobacter and/or salmonella, bacteria that cause foodborne illness. That’s much less than the 30 percent of ground chicken samples that contained salmonella (we didn’t find any campylobacter in chicken), but still high enough that you should be careful when handling ground turkey. And be certain to always cook it to 165° F to kill bacteria.



WRITE

Go to [CR.org/lettertoeditor](https://CR.org/lettertoeditor) to share your comments for publication.





## COMFY DESK CHAIRS

IN “THE MOST Comfortable Desk Chair for You” in the September issue, you’ve omitted one key factor: In general, women have narrower frames than men and require width-adjustable armrests. It would have been useful to include models with that feature.

—Elizabeth Cardman, Urbana, IL

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Women—and anyone with narrower shoulders—can benefit from width-adjustable armrests. Our tests did include some chairs with that feature, including the Hon and Branch models included in the article. The Steelcase Series 1 model also has an optional four-way adjustable armrest. The comfort scores were based on a panel of three people, two of whom were women.

I BOUGHT A refurbished Steelcase Series 1 [office chair] for about a third of the

retail price through an office furniture reseller. eBay is a good starting point, and the feedback on the site will help guide a purchase. Most larger metro areas will have these sellers, so you can even go by and choose the one you want. It’s a great way to save money and recycle a gently used product.

—James Threadgill, Chattanooga, TN

**EDITOR’S NOTE** When buying a used or refurbished chair, try to see it in person so you can check its condition and comfort. Also, find out if the warranty is still in effect and whether it will transfer to you as the new owner. Finally, be sure the chair will fit in your car fully assembled. As our testing team discovered, some models are tough to disassemble (and may require two people).



## FIRE PREVENTION

“THE NEW RULES for Fire Safety” in the September issue was very informative. It may also be useful to share with your readers the extensive 2017 Kidde fire extinguisher recall. I’ve returned several such recalled units. The process was quick, easy, and free. I believe CR may have previously reported this recall. The number of affected fire extinguishers was well into the millions of units.

—Thomas E. Brun, Rumford, RI

**EDITOR’S NOTE** CR did report on the 2017 recall when it first occurred and again last year, noting that Kidde’s mishandling of the recall resulted in injuries and fire damage. We’re happy to hear that your return went smoothly—and agree that



## ARE SOME CAR COLORS SAFER THAN OTHERS?

“What Color Car Is the Best for Resale?” on page 53 of the September issue suggested that it’s best to buy eye-catching colors that are sporty. [I think] these colors are also safer. I have noticed that gray, silver, and black vehicles blend in with the road and are not as easy to spot in the side-view mirrors.

—Cindy Cook, Knoxville, TN

**EDITOR’S NOTE** It seems obvious that a flashy color would be easier to spot than an asphalt-gray painted car. But the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety advises that daytime running lights, or headlights, are more effective at preventing multivehicle daytime collisions than bright colors.

it’s wise to check for recalls, particularly on potentially lifesaving products like fire extinguishers. Go to the website of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, at [cpsc.gov/recalls](http://cpsc.gov/recalls), to find information on recalls. CR readers with Digital or All Access membership can check car recalls at [CR.org/more](http://CR.org/more).

GREAT ARTICLE ABOUT smoke detectors. Please don’t forget carbon monoxide [CO] detectors. Serving as fire chief and fire marshal in my town, I’ve been on numerous CO calls where levels were high enough that medical treatment was required, and in one case the CO poisoning was fatal.

—Rich Schopperth, Totowa, NJ

**EDITOR’S NOTE** This is an excellent point regarding carbon monoxide detectors, and one we discuss in “Mold, Radon, Cooking Gas: How to Stay Safe From Hidden Home Hazards,” starting on page 24 of this issue. You’ll find our recommendations for the best CO detectors on page 32.



## VEHICLE SATISFACTION

I LOVED “THE 9 Easiest Cars to Drive” in the September issue. Discovering that a Toyota Camry was on your list made my day! I purchased the 2018 LE model—my 9th Toyota. While the advertised 47 mpg overall was impressive, I’ve consistently exceeded that. I get from 50 mpg (winter) to 55 mpg (spring, summer, and fall). The ride is smooth, the visibility is excellent, and the safety alerts are priceless. At 85, I’m happy to be driving the best car I’ve ever owned!

—Harold Pease, California, MD

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# What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

## Winter Tire Deals

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b>WE TESTED:</b> 24 models<br/> <b>WE TEST FOR:</b> How well tires can brake on ice, how much traction tires have in the snow, road noise, ride comfort, and more.</p> <p><b>ABOUT THE SCORES:</b><br/>         Median: 67<br/>         Range: 54-73</p> | <p>EXCELLENT ON ICY ROADS<br/> <b>✔ Bridgestone Blizzak WS90</b><br/>         \$131</p> <p><b>73</b><br/>         OVERALL SCORE</p>  | <p>SMART CHOICE FOR TRUCKS<br/> <b>✔ Nexen Winguard Winspike WS62</b><br/>         \$127</p> <p><b>72</b><br/>         OVERALL SCORE</p>  | <p>SMOOTH RIDE AT A NICE PRICE<br/> <b>✔ Hankook Winter I*cept iZ2</b><br/>         \$113</p> <p><b>69</b><br/>         OVERALL SCORE</p>  |
|--|--|--|--|

## Electric Toothbrushes

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p><b>WE TESTED:</b> 17 models<br/> <b>WE TEST FOR:</b> How well brushes clean teeth, how long a battery charge lasts, ease of charging, noise during use, and more.</p> <p><b>ABOUT THE SCORES:</b><br/>         Median: 64<br/>         Range: 49-83</p> | <p>BEST OVERALL &amp; QUIETEST<br/> <b>✔ Oral-B iO 7 Series</b><br/>         \$200</p> <p><b>83</b><br/>         OVERALL SCORE</p>  | <p>TOP-NOTCH CLEANING FOR LESS<br/> <b>✔ Brūsh Electric</b><br/>         \$95</p> <p><b>79</b><br/>         OVERALL SCORE</p>  | <p>BARGAIN BUY<br/> <b>✔ Brightline 86700</b><br/>         \$30</p> <p><b>75</b><br/>         OVERALL SCORE</p>  |
|--|--|--|---|

## Ask Our Experts

### How long before I have to replace my electric toothbrush head?



YOU MAY HAVE HEARD that you should swap out your brush every three to four months—and that's true, according to the American Dental Association. But electric brush head replacements can be costly (a two-pack for the Oral-B above can cost \$30), which may make you hesitate to chuck your brush that often. So check it for signs of wear. If the brush still has upright, intact bristles, you're probably okay to keep using it. But if the bristles are matted or frayed, pull out a new one. Worn-down bristles are less effective at cleaning. And toss your brush if you've just gotten over a cold. Lingering germs on the bristles can lead to reinfection. By the way, the Brightline above has lower-cost brush heads (four for \$10).

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to [CR.org](http://CR.org).

## Handheld Vacuums Under \$50

**WE TESTED:** 23 battery and corded models  
**WE TEST FOR:** A vacuum's ability to clean carpets and bare floors, including picking up debris from corners; noise level during use; and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
 Median: 70  
 Range: 46-80

PERFECT FOR PET HAIR  
**\$ Black+Decker DustBuster HHVI315JO42**  
 \$45

**76**  
 OVERALL SCORE



GREAT FOR CARPETS  
**\$ Bissell Pet Hair Eraser 33A1 (corded model)**  
 \$35

**71**  
 OVERALL SCORE



GOOD RUN TIME (14 MINUTES)  
**\$ Shark Pet Perfect SV75Z**  
 \$45

**70**  
 OVERALL SCORE



## Water Leak Detectors

**WE TESTED:** 5 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** How easy a system is to set up and use, how well it detects different types of water leaks, and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
 Median: 74  
 Range: 66-93

BEST PROTECTION  
**✓ Flo by Moen Smart Water Shutoff System 900-001**  
 \$500

**93**  
 OVERALL SCORE



NICE PRICE  
**Guardian by Alexa Leak Prevention System GVD3**  
 \$350

**74**  
 OVERALL SCORE



RELIABLE LEAK DETECTION BUT PRICEY  
**Phyn Plus Smart Water Assistant + Shutoff**  
 \$700

**74**  
 OVERALL SCORE



## Noise-Canceling Headphones

**WE TESTED:** 89 wireless models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Sound quality and how well headphones reduce ambient noise when noise cancellation is turned on.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
 Median: 69  
 Range: 40-88

QUICK TO RECHARGE EARBUDS  
**\$ Sennheiser CX Plus**  
 \$130

**76**  
 OVERALL SCORE



OVER-THE-EAR BARGAIN  
**\$ Monoprice BT-300ANC**  
 \$45

**74**  
 OVERALL SCORE



LONG CLAIMED BATTERY LIFE (35 TO 55 HOURS)  
**\$ JBL Tune 660NC**  
 \$70

**71**  
 OVERALL SCORE



## Nonstick Baking Sheet Pans

**WE TESTED:** 12 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** How evenly a pan bakes cookies, how easy it is to clean, how well the nonstick coating resists scratches, and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
 Median: 69  
 Range: 63-83

EASIEST TO CLEAN  
**\$ Williams Sonoma Goldtouch Pro Nonstick Non Corrugated Half Sheet**  
 \$35

**83**  
 OVERALL SCORE



DURABLE & LOW-COST PICK  
**\$ Mainstays (Walmart) Gold Nonstick Aluminized Half Sheet**  
 \$8

**81**  
 OVERALL SCORE



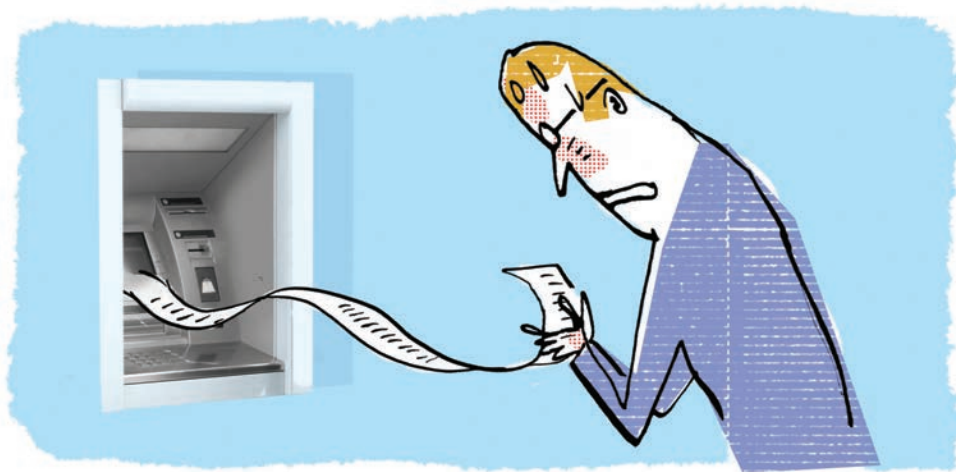
LIGHTWEIGHT & SMALLER SIZE  
**Wilton Diamond-Infused Non-Stick Medium Baking Sheet**  
 \$13

**71**  
 OVERALL SCORE



**Note:** We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with those of another.

COMING NEXT MONTH Drills & More



## My banking fees have gone up again. Should I switch banks?

IF YOU'RE UNHAPPY with the fees imposed on your checking and/or savings accounts, it's worth looking at fees of other banks. If, for example, you incur a \$12 monthly maintenance charge and as little as \$20 in ATM fees annually, you could still save more than \$160 a year by switching to a bank that doesn't charge those expenses. It's no secret, however, that switching banks can be a real hassle—particularly if you have direct paycheck deposits or recurring online payments.

To see whether there's a better deal, make a list of all your current account fees, so you can compare them quickly with fees at other banks. Be sure to include monthly service charges and ATM withdrawal, overdraft, and wire transfer fees. Also consider the minimum deposit, plus how

many free withdrawals you'll get per month, convenience of ATM access, and check writing. And, of course, compare the interest rates the banks are offering.

If you decide to switch banks, don't close your old account right away. Follow these steps: 1. Make a list of your current automatic deposits and withdrawals. 2. Open the new account, and have your employer reroute any direct deposits to it. If the first direct deposit is a success, set up all your automatic deposits and withdrawals. Then cancel automatic payments on your old account. 3. Leave enough money in the old account to cover checks or payments that haven't cleared yet and to stay above your minimum balance. 4. Transfer remaining funds out of the old account, then close it (and get a written confirmation of the closure).

### How can I listen to free music on my phone?

WHILE MANY MUSIC streaming services let you sample their paid, ad-free options with a free

trial, those typically end after a few weeks, then the services start charging you a monthly rate. So if you're looking to pay nothing—and keep it that way—your best option is to enroll in the free tier offered by major music apps, such as Pandora, Spotify, and Idagio (a relative newcomer that streams only classical music). These apps offer large catalogs of free music—though all will interrupt your listening with ads if you don't opt for their premium level of service.

Choosing the service that's right for you will depend on how you want to listen to those ads. If your goal is to listen to as few ads as possible, Spotify may be your best bet: You can opt to listen to one long ad, then have 30 minutes of uninterrupted play time. But you typically can't pick individual tracks on Spotify's free phone app: If you want to listen to Bruce Springsteen, for example, Spotify will curate a radio-style playlist of his music for you. Pandora lets you request specific songs on its free tier, but you'll need to listen to a short ad each time. Idagio's free tier offers only radio-style playlists (and you'll listen to ads regularly) but it can't be beaten for classical music lovers because of its extensive

collection. Go to [CR.org/freemusic](http://CR.org/freemusic) for more info on these and other music plans.

### Is the pasta made from hearts of palm healthier than regular pasta?

PASTA MADE FROM hearts of palm (a white vegetable that tastes similar to artichoke hearts) is lower in carbohydrates and calories than traditional pasta, which is made with semolina wheat flour. A 12-ounce bag of hearts of palm noodles has just 60 calories, 12 grams of carbs, and about 3 grams of protein. Compare that with 1 cup of cooked semolina pasta, which has 220 calories, 43 grams of carbs, and 8 grams of protein. While hearts of palm won't give you as robust a serving of protein as traditional pasta, it does offer the additional benefits of small amounts of iron, manganese, and zinc, plus a little vitamin C and potassium. Because hearts of palm pasta also has a decent amount of fiber, it can be beneficial for your gut health, too.

"Eating hearts of palm pasta instead of the usual version is a great way to increase the vegetables in your diet," says Amy Keating, RD, who leads CR's food testing lab. Plus, many consumers say it tastes more like the real thing than other vegetable-based pastas, such as zoodles, made from zucchini.



We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at [CR.org/askourexperts](http://CR.org/askourexperts) ... and watch for the answers.

# CR Insights

IN THE KNOW

## The Best (& Worst) Laundry Detergents

**EVERY STORE CARRIES** shelves chock-full of laundry detergents boasting superherolike names: “Ultra Oxi,” “Stain Fighter,” and “Power Pods.” What’s more, a single detergent brand might offer a variety of formats—including liquids, powders, pods, and strips. How to choose the right cleanser for your clothes? In our labs, we’ve found that some types of detergent clean more effectively than others: Liquid detergents generally work best, tending to surpass the cleaning performance of pods. And liquids and pods usually do a better job than newer detergent “strips,” which are more eco-friendly (they use less plastic packaging) but simply don’t clean as well.

The best detergents in our tests (at top right) tackle hard-to-remove stains like blood, coffee, dirt, and more. But not all detergents are worth your money (see “3 Detergents to Skip,” at right). Finally, there can be a big difference in performance even within the same brand: Tide Plus Ultra Stain Release gets an Excellent rating in our tests, for example, but Tide PurClean gets only a Good score.

ILLUSTRATIONS: RODRIGO DAMATI | PHOTO, LEFT: BEN GOLDSTEIN, PROP. STYLING: MIAKO KATOH



### TOP DETERGENTS FROM OUR TESTS

BEST FOR STAINS & HARD WATER

✔ **Tide Plus Ultra Stain Release**  
(shown above)  
28 cents

**84** OVERALL SCORE



BEST VALUE

✔ **Kirkland Signature (Costco) Ultra Clean**  
11 cents

**76** OVERALL SCORE



BEST FOR SENSITIVE SKIN

✔ **Persil ProClean Sensitive Skin**  
37 cents

**75** OVERALL SCORE

### 3 DETERGENTS TO SKIP



WORST PODS/PACKS

**Arm & Hammer 4-in-1 Power Paks OxiClean**  
16 cents

**32** OVERALL SCORE



WORST LIQUID

**Sun Triple Clean**  
8 cents

**31** OVERALL SCORE



WORST STRIPS

**Tru Earth Eco Strips**  
39 cents

**11** OVERALL SCORE

SAFETY UPDATE

# Build a Safer Fire

**THERE'S NOTHING COZIER** than gathering around a fire pit in the fall. But in the U.S., nearly 9 out of 10 wildfires are started by people being careless. That's why it's important to review a few safety basics before building your next backyard blaze.

**STEP 1**

Check the weather: Don't start a fire on a day with strong winds. Also check that local fire rules haven't changed this autumn. Some areas at risk for wildfires may be restricting backyard fire pits.

**STEP 3**

To build the fire, opt for hardwoods like oak and birch, and stay away from pine and spruce, which are harder to light and get smokier when they burn.

**STEP 2**

Place the fire pit at least 15 feet from your house and foliage (go farther if you can), and have a hose and fire extinguisher nearby. Dampen the ground around the pit so that stray embers won't start a fire.

**STEP 4**

Create a nest of tinder and kindling in the center of the fire pit, then stand the firewood upright around the inner perimeter of the pit over the tinder. Stack any extra wood for the fire upwind and at least 10 feet away from the fire.



**CR Time Traveler** CAPTURING MEMORIES

**1938** We test new low-cost "mini" cameras, like this \$5 model, but find them to be overpriced, or too "shoddy" to recommend.



**1947** We test home slide projectors, which let you show color photos to a group. We rate this SVE model a Best Buy at \$63, which is less than half the price of the top-ranked \$130 projector.



**1962** There's a whole new way to show home movies: This technicolor projector uses film cartridges, eliminating the need to thread a reel with film.



**1958** CR tests 32 "hold it up and look" photo slide viewers. A Kodaslide Dial-Lite Viewer is a CR Best Buy (\$3.94) and lets you adjust both the brightness and focus of the slides.

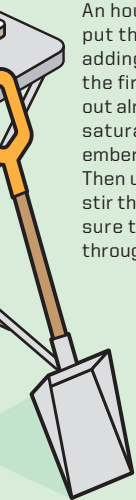


### STEP 5

To stay safe when cooking over the fire pit, wait until the flames have died down some. Use a thermometer to make sure any meats have reached a safe internal temperature. Ground beef and pork should be cooked to 160° F; poultry, to 165° F; and beef roasts and steaks, and pork chops, to 145° F.

### STEP 6

An hour before you'll put the fire out, stop adding wood. Once the fire has burned out almost entirely, saturate the remaining embers with cold water. Then use a shovel to stir the ashes, making sure they're soaked through.



## MONEY SAVER

# GET FREE AUDIOBOOKS

**LISTENING TO AUDIOBOOKS** can make morning walks and daily commutes a lot less tedious. But downloading titles from conventional apps such as Amazon's Audible is a pricey habit (up to \$22.95 for a monthly subscription or between \$17 and \$35 per audiobook). One way to save is to “borrow” free digital audiobooks from the library—including hot titles like “Where the Crawdads Sing” by Delia Owens or John Grisham’s thriller “Camino Winds.” Here’s how to get started.



### Pull out your library card—or apply for one.

You’ll need to have an active library card number to access any library’s free downloads. If you’re not a member of your local library yet, the fastest way to apply is through your library’s website. Many public libraries now let you apply online, so you can get a digital copy of your library card within minutes.

### Download a library app on your phone.

Free apps such as Libby and Hoopla let you download digital audiobooks from your local library to your smartphone. When you open the apps, you’ll be prompted to input your local library branch and card number. While many local libraries are compatible with Libby and Hoopla, some aren’t, so if the app can’t find your branch, check directly with your local library; it may offer its own stand-alone app instead.

### Start browsing, but plan ahead for popular titles.

Libraries don’t just offer the classics: You can download popular books, such as “The Lincoln Highway” by Amor Towles, for free, too. On your app, you’ll be able to see which titles are “available now” to borrow, and which ones require you to join a waitlist. You’ll see how many people are ahead of you on the list and get an estimate of how many weeks you’ll need to wait for the title.

### Enjoy your book—without late-fee worries.

Most digital loans last about 21 days, then disappear from your phone’s app when your time’s up—so you don’t need to remember to return the loan. If you’ve borrowed a particularly long book or don’t have enough time to listen during the time period given, you can renew a title you’re currently listening to through your library app—as long as no one else is waiting for it.



**1987** Instead of using 8mm film, many camcorders now record directly on VHS tapes—and we find that they tend to have very good picture quality.



**1990** A tripod is essential to avoid jittery videos, CR says. Our tests show that a Hollywood Titan is the steadiest.

**2002** Wanting to find a better way to film while surfing, Nick Woodman starts the GoPro company—which now makes one of CR’s top-rated action cams.



**2014** While digital cameras can shoot video, camcorders like this waterproof Sony action cam still make the best-quality videos, we say.

**2022** CR currently has over 80 cameras in our ratings. This Canon takes great photos and videos, and is a Best Buy to boot.

**1978** Almost a third of “Super 8” camcorders record sound. We test 20 and find that those with microphone “booms” tend to have the best sound quality.



**\$ Canon EOS M50 Mark II w/ 15-45mm \$700**

**81**  
OVERALL SCORE



FOOD IQ™

## Soups With Special Powers

**YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD** for years that chicken soup helps you feel better when you have a cold. Making the right soup a regular part of your diet is a great way to get some of the nutrients you may be short on, says Joan Salge Blake, EdD, RDN, nutrition professor at Boston University. And the soup doesn't have to be homemade: You can find plenty of store-bought ones with veggies, beans, or whole grains, which provide important nutrients like heart-healthy potassium and fiber. (Just be mindful of sodium: Most adults should have less than 2,300 mg per day.) Here's how to pick the best soups for what ails you, along with examples of ones to try.

### FOR WEIGHT LOSS

All soups can help you feel full. When people have soup before a meal, they eat about 20 percent fewer calories, according to research from Penn State. And choosing one that's high in protein, like the pea soup here, will make you feel fuller, too. Steer clear of high-calorie cream-based soups, though, if weight loss is your goal.

#### Amy's Organic Split Pea Soup Light in Sodium

|               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| CALORIES 120  | FIBER 5 g   |
| SODIUM 310 mg | PROTEIN 7 g |

### FOR BATTLING COLDS

Chicken soup may temporarily help reduce stuffiness, control inflammation, and hydrate you when you have a cold, according to a lab study published in the journal *Chest*. Says Salge Blake: "It's like a warm blanket in a bowl."

#### Progresso Reduced-Sodium Roasted Chicken Noodle

|               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| CALORIES 90   | FIBER 1 g   |
| SODIUM 470 mg | PROTEIN 6 g |

### FOR CONSTIPATION

Only 5 percent of men and 9 percent of women get the recommended daily amount of fiber. For many, this can lead to constipation. If your diet runs low on fiber, try a bean-based soup. "A nice mug of bean soup might get things moving," says Salge Blake.

#### Dr. McDougall's Organic Lentil Vegetable With Kale

|               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| CALORIES 140  | FIBER 10 g  |
| SODIUM 480 mg | PROTEIN 8 g |

### FOR BOOSTING IMMUNITY

Produce is the body's best source of vitamins A and C—germ fighters that bolster immunity. Choose a soup with a variety of veggies and you'll get more immune-boosting nutrients in one bowlful. Trader Joe's Garden Vegetable includes carrots, celery, sweet potato, swiss chard, and bell pepper. (Because sodium in this soup is high, eat lower-sodium foods the rest of the day.)

#### Trader Joe's Garden Vegetable Soup

|               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| CALORIES 100  | FIBER 3 g   |
| SODIUM 790 mg | PROTEIN 2 g |



## GREAT TOOLS FOR HOMEMADE SOUP

✓ **Breville Control Grip BSB510XL**  
\$120

92

OVERALL SCORE



This top-rated immersion blender is small enough to fit in a kitchen drawer, and powerful enough to purée veggies while they're cooking in your pot.

✓ **Vitamix 5200**  
\$480

84

OVERALL SCORE



The Vitamix brand dominates our full-sized blender ratings with Excellent predicted reliability and owner satisfaction scores. This model aced our lab tests for puréeing raw veggies into soup, making icy drinks, and more.

✓ **GoWise USA Premier High Performance Heating**  
\$150

75

OVERALL SCORE



This budget-friendly blender is designed for handling hot liquids and garners an Excellent rating for turning raw veggies into soup.

For more blender ratings, Digital and All Access members can go to [CR.org/blenders](https://www.consumerreports.org/blenders).

PHOTOS, PREVIOUS SPREAD, BOTTOM, FROM LEFT: CONSUMER REPORTS; DAVID PAUL MORRIS/GETTY IMAGES; JAMES WOJCIK; CONSUMER REPORTS





CR TRAVEL TIPS

## Save on Vacations With Warehouse Clubs

IT'S NOT JUST bulk groceries and rotisserie chickens that await you at Costco and Sam's Club. These days, joining a members-only warehouse club can sometimes get you some great travel bargains. CR recently priced vacation packages at BJ's, Costco, and Sam's Club, and found that warehouse clubs could offer substantial savings over booking directly with hotels, car rental companies, and airlines. You don't always save, though, so shop carefully. Sam's Club was best for the hotel-only booking we tried, Costco had an excellent variety of pre-bundled hotel-car-and-flight packages, and BJ's offered us a vast selection of hotel and flight options. What's more, in a December 2021 nationally representative CR survey of 2,073 U.S. adults, a majority of people who used big-box stores to book travel in the last three years told us that the customer service and value of the packages were "excellent" or "very good." For a look at some of the deals we uncovered, check out what we found, below.

DIRECT BOOKING



### A 4-Night Stay at the Savoy in London for 2

Four nights in a superior queen room for two adults

We booked directly on the Savoy website, which offered penalty-free, refundable cancellation until three days before arrival.

Through BJ's, the same stay cost less and was fully refundable until three days before arrival.

Costco's price for the Savoy was \$219 more than booking directly but included round-trip private airport transfers, worth about \$200, and a \$400 tour credit.

Sam's Club offered a lower rate than booking through the Savoy website and was fully refundable until three days before arrival.

**\$4,087**

**\$3,129**

**\$4,306**

**\$2,868**

SAVINGS

**\$958**

**\$0**  
+ \$400 credit at Golden Tours and private airport transfers

**\$1,219**

### A 7-Night Travel Package to the Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea for 2

An ocean view room at the hotel for two adults, with full-sized rental car and round-trip economy airfare

We booked the hotel on the Four Seasons Resort Maui site for \$21,658, a rental car through Alamo for \$881, and economy flights from New York through United Airlines for \$1,202.

The same ocean view room, rental car, and flights cost slightly less through BJ's. And the club threw in a store gift card worth 5 percent of the total cost, which in this case comes out to roughly \$1,000.

Costco's nicely bundled Four Seasons Maui package included flights and a rental car with unlimited mileage. As a perk, Costco included a \$961 store gift card.

Sam's Club offered the room and a limited-mileage rental car for \$23,705, but it doesn't offer flight booking. When we added the \$1,202 United flights, this option cost \$1,167 more than booking directly.

**\$23,740**

**\$23,425**

**\$16,056**

**\$24,907**

SAVINGS

**\$315**  
+ \$1,000 BJ's gift card

**\$7,684**  
+ \$961 Costco gift card

**\$0**

PHOTO, FACING PAGE, LEFT: BEN GOLDSTEIN, PROP STYLING: MIYAKO KATOH

THE BETTER DEAL

LUXURY SEDAN

HIGHER PRICE  
\$42,650 - \$58,500



✓ Infiniti Q50  
87  
OVERALL SCORE

BETTER PRICE  
\$24,395 - \$37,695



✓ Subaru Legacy  
87  
OVERALL SCORE

THE LOWDOWN

THE INFINITI Q50 is an engaging sports sedan, with agile handling and strong acceleration, but it isn't as quiet or comfortable of a ride as its rivals. For an upscale sedan, consider the well-equipped, turbocharged Subaru Legacy XT Touring. It has a comfortable interior, with a smooth ride, higher owner satisfaction, and better fuel economy—and it doesn't require premium gas.

WASHER

HIGHER PRICE  
\$1,950



✓ Speed Queen FF7005WNK  
84  
OVERALL SCORE

BETTER PRICE  
\$950



✓ LG WM3600HWA  
86  
OVERALL SCORE

THE LOWDOWN

BOTH OF THESE front-loading washing machines are superstars when it comes to getting your clothes clean, but the LG is \$1,000 less than the Speed Queen and earns a higher Overall Score for being quieter and more energy efficient. The LG also has a slightly higher predicted brand reliability rating and fits more laundry in its 4.5 cu. ft. drum; the Speed Queen offers 3.5 cu. ft.

NOVEMBER IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...

COFFEE MAKERS



HEADPHONES



COOKWARE



HUMIDIFIERS



PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: INFINITI; SUBARU; LG; SPEED QUEEN



## RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT [CR.ORG/MORE](http://CR.ORG/MORE).



### 4MOMS BABY SWINGS AND BABY ROCKERS

4moms is recalling about 2 million MamaRoo baby swings versions 1.0 through 4.0 and 220,000 RockaRoo baby rockers because when the swing or rocker is not in use, the restraint straps can dangle below the seat and crawling infants can become entangled in the straps, posing a strangulation hazard. The swings and rockers were sold at Buy Buy Baby and Target stores nationwide and online at 4moms.com and Amazon from January 2010 through August 2022 for \$160 to \$250.

**What to do:** Immediately stop using the swing or rocker and place it in an area that your infant cannot access. Call 4moms at 877-870-7390 or go to 4moms.com and click on "Safety & Recall" for details and to register for a free strap fastener that will prevent the straps from extending under the swing when not in use. You can also read our ongoing investigative reporting about the dangers of infant sleepers, rockers, and more, at [CR.org/sleepersafety](http://CR.org/sleepersafety).

### DEWALT MITER SAWS

DeWalt is recalling about 1,364,000 12-inch sliding compound miter saws because

the rear safety guard can break or detach, posing an injury hazard. The user could come into direct contact with the saw blade, or projectiles can strike the user and bystanders. The saws were sold at Home Depot, Lowe's, and hardware stores nationwide, and online at Amazon, lowes.com, and other websites from April 2019 through May 2022 for \$600 to \$820.

**What to do:** Stop using the saw. Call 800-990-6421 or go to [dewalt.com](http://dewalt.com) for details on how to receive a free repair kit, or take the saw to a DeWalt service center for a free repair.

### DAIKIN COIL DRAIN PANS FOR GAS FURNACES

Daikin Comfort Technologies (formerly Goodman Manufacturing Company) is recalling about 298,300 evaporator coil drain pans for gas furnaces because the molded plastic drain pan located at the bottom of the evaporator coil can overheat, melt, and deform, posing a fire hazard. The drain pans were sold at heating and cooling equipment independent dealers nationwide from January 2019 through November 2021 for \$200 to \$1,200. Consumers may have purchased a bundled product including the coil, furnace, installation, and ancillary

parts and supplies, or may have purchased the evaporator coil drain pan separately as a replacement product.

**What to do:** Contact Daikin Comfort Technologies at 888-520-0579 or go to [goodmanmfg.com](http://goodmanmfg.com) for details and to determine whether your unit is included in this recall and to register for the free repair by a qualified technician.

### KIDDOOZIE PLAY TENTS AND PLAYHOUSES

Epoch Everlasting Play is recalling about 251,600 Kidoozie Play Tents and Playhouses because the fabric used fails to meet an industry flammability standard for these products, posing a risk of burn injuries to children. The tents and playhouses were sold at Barnes & Noble, Marshalls, Target, Toys "R" Us, and other independent toy stores, and online at Amazon, [fatbraintoy.com](http://fatbraintoy.com), and [zulily.com](http://zulily.com) from March 2014 through March 2022 for \$30 to \$35.

**What to do:** Take the playhouse and/or tent away from children. Call 800-631-1272 or go to [epocheverlastingplay.com/recalls](http://epocheverlastingplay.com/recalls) for details and for a full refund or free replacement product.

### VICHY LIFTACTIV PEPTIDE-C SKIN PRODUCTS

Vichy Laboratoires is recalling about 206,200 LiftActiv Peptide-C Anti-Aging Ampoules because the glass packaging of the small, sealed vials (called "ampoules") can weaken over time and break when opened, posing a laceration hazard to fingers and hands. The products were sold at CVS, Target, and Walgreens stores nationwide and online at Amazon and [vichyusa.com](http://vichyusa.com) from November 2019 through April 2022 for \$33 to \$60.

**What to do:** Stop using the product and contact Vichy USA Consumer Care at 844-973-0595, or go to [vichyusa.com](http://vichyusa.com) for details and to get a full refund.

### FUTURE MOTION SKATEBOARD FOOTPADS

Future Motion is recalling about 20,500 footpads for Onewheel GT Electric skateboards because the footpad can fail to disengage after the rider has dismounted while the board is in motion, and the skateboard can unexpectedly continue to operate, posing an injury hazard to bystanders. The skateboards were sold online at [onewheel.com](http://onewheel.com) from March 2022 through June 2022 and at authorized independent dealers nationwide from March 2022 through August 2022 for about \$2,200.

**What to do:** Stop using the skateboard. Call 800-283-7943 or go to [onewheel.com](http://onewheel.com) for details and to determine whether your footpad is affected. If it is, you will receive a free replacement footpad, including free shipping and installation instructions.

### TONY HAWK BIKE HELMETS

Sakar International is recalling about 12,655 Tony Hawk Silver helmets because they do not comply with the Consumer Product Safety Commission federal safety standard for bicycle helmets and can fail to protect in the event of a crash, posing a risk of head injury. The helmets were sold at Walmart stores nationwide and online at [walmart.com](http://walmart.com) from March 2022 through June 2022 for about \$30.

**What to do:** Stop using the helmet. Call 800-592-9541 or go to [vitar.com/pages/recalls](http://vitar.com/pages/recalls) for details on returning the helmet and receiving a refund in the form of a \$40 Walmart gift card.

# PRODUCT UPDATE



THE LATEST RATINGS FROM OUR LABS

## CR's Complete Guide to Induction Cooking

These cooktops and ranges may cost more, but they heat faster, save on energy, and don't add to indoor air pollution.

by Mary H.J. Farrell and Paul Hope

**\$** FRIGIDAIRE  
FFIC3626TB  
COOKTOP \$705

**93** OVERALL SCORE

3

In turn, whatever is in the pot is heated.

2

When the magnetic field engages a pot made from iron or ferromagnetic stainless steel, it induces the heating of the pot.

1

When you turn on an induction burner, an oscillating magnetic field transfers energy between the burner and the pot.

4

Because the burner induces heat only in the pot, the glass of the cooktop remains relatively cool.



# A

**AMERICANS ARE TAKING** some time to embrace induction appliances. According to CR’s June 2022 nationally representative survey of 2,103 U.S. adults, almost 70 percent of people said they might or would consider induction for their next range or cooktop, but only 3 percent currently have an induction appliance in their kitchen. That may be because in the past, induction ranges were far pricier than radiant electric smoothtops. And while switching from a traditional electric range to an induction one only requires plugging in the new appliance, switching from a gas range can mean higher installation fees.

The good news is that prices have fallen considerably—some induction cooktops now cost around \$1,000. And the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act allocates \$4.5 billion to states to provide rebates on the purchase of new electric appliances, including induction ranges and cooktops, which could reduce your expenses for buying and installing a new induction appliance (see “How much does it cost to make the switch?” at right). Here are answers to your questions about induction, and ratings for top-scoring induction ranges, cooktops, and compatible cookware.

### Q. How does induction cooking work?

These cooktops and ranges look almost indistinguishable from the more common radiant electric smoothtops, but they heat differently. Radiant electric smoothtops have a heating element beneath the flat ceramic glass surface that warms the glass, which in turn heats the pot or pan through a combination of conduction and radiation. An induction burner, by contrast, creates an electromagnetic field that interacts with the compatible cookware itself, inducing heat directly without the need to warm the glass in between (see the illustration on the facing page, and learn what makes a pan compatible on page 22).

By not having to heat that glass, induction elements are about 5 to 10 percent more energy-efficient than traditional electric heating elements. They’re also able to heat pots more precisely because of their digital controls and to bring liquids to a boil faster. In fact, high-power induction burners can boil a pot of water roughly 20 to 40 percent faster than the best gas and radiant electric ranges and cooktops we’ve tested. And because the glass top stays relatively cool, induction appliances are generally considered

safer than other types. For example, if you leave a burner on and then place a flammable object such as a pizza box on it, the box won’t burn because the electromagnetic field can heat up only compatible metal objects. That’s true for your skin, too: If you accidentally graze against the stovetop when the burner is on, you won’t be burned. (That said, you could still be burned by a hot pan while cooking—or if you brush up against an area warmed by the pot.) Another safety bonus: Induction, like other electric appliances, won’t produce toxic emissions like gas

stovetops do. (See “How to Stay Safe From Hidden Home Hazards,” on page 24.)

### Q. How much does it cost to make the switch?

Induction ranges and cooktops are some of the best performers we test when compared with gas and electric models. But this cool new technology comes at a slightly higher price than traditional range and cooktop prices.

➤ **If you’re switching from an electric range or cooktop**, chances are good that you can swap in your new induction appliance by plugging it into the same outlet. Most induction ranges and cooktops work with the same 240-volt outlets as radiant electric stoves. But because induction heats cookware faster, you’re likely to use less energy and may save on your electric bill.

However, induction appliances can cost more: In our ratings, 30-inch electric ranges start at \$600, while 30-inch induction ranges start at \$1,160. And 30-inch electric cooktops start at \$630; 30-inch induction ones start at \$950. (See our pricing chart, below.) In some cases, you’ll find induction options for as little as 5 percent more than a comparable electric appliance, but premium models can cost quite a bit more.



> **If you're switching from gas**, the cost of moving to induction will inevitably be higher because you're likely to need a new outlet and an electric line run from your home's circuit panel. Expect to pay \$50 to \$100 per hour for an electrician and plan on about 3 to 4 hours for a simple installation. You may also need to pay to cap off your old gas line. And induction appliances are pricier than many gas models (which start at \$505 for ranges and \$700 for cooktops in our ratings).

Keep in mind that the new Inflation Reduction Act allocates funding for

states to offer credits of up to \$840 for new electric ranges and cooktops, including induction models. If you're switching from gas to induction, you may also be eligible for an extra \$500 to offset the costs of the conversion. These funds will be administered through your state; to find out if you're eligible, go to [dsireusa.org](https://dsireusa.org).

**Q. Is cooking with an induction appliance different from using my old stove?**


In addition to faster and more precise control of heating, you'll notice

some other distinctive qualities of induction appliances.

> **If you're switching from traditional electric**, you'll have the same number of burners as the majority of electric smoothtops (30-inch appliances tend to have four burners; 36-inch appliances tend to have five). But where a typical electric smoothtop may have only one or two high-power burners, induction stovetops often have three or more—ideal if you want to boil pasta and potatoes at the same time.


You might also be surprised to learn that induction cooktops are easier to

**Ratings** > **Now You're Cooking Without Gas** These induction ranges and cooktops heat quickly, simmer steadily, and are among the best performers of all the cooking appliances we test.




✓ **GE PROFILE PHS93XYPFS**  
\$4,030

**89**  
OVERALL SCORE




🏷️ **FRIGIDAIRE GALLERY GCRI3058AF**  
\$1,160

**87**  
OVERALL SCORE



✓ **CAFÉ CHP95302MSS 30-INCH COOKTOP**  
\$2,300

**93**  
OVERALL SCORE



✓ **FRIGIDAIRE FPIC3677RF 36-INCH COOKTOP** \$2,180

**94**  
OVERALL SCORE

| Brand + Model | Overall Score | Price | Survey Results        |                    | Test Results  |              |        |          |               | Features + Specs |                     |                       |                    |                 |                           |      |
|---------------|---------------|-------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------|--------|----------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|------|
|               |               |       | Predicted reliability | Owner satisfaction | Cooktop, high | Cooktop, low | Baking | Broiling | Oven capacity | Self-cleaning    | High-power elements | Medium-power elements | Low-power elements | Convection mode | Stainless steel available | WiFi |

**30-INCH ELECTRIC INDUCTION RANGES**

| Brand + Model                    | Overall Score | Price   | Predicted reliability | Owner satisfaction | Cooktop, high | Cooktop, low | Baking | Broiling | Oven capacity | Self-cleaning | High-power elements | Medium-power elements | Low-power elements | Convection mode | Stainless steel available | WiFi |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------|--------|----------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|------|
| ✓ GE Profile PHS93XYPFS          | 89            | \$4,030 | ⬆️                    | ⬆️                 | ⬆️            | ⬆️           | ⬆️     | ⬆️       | NA            | NA            | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  | •               | •                         | •    |
| 🏷️ Frigidaire Gallery GCRI3058AF | 87            | \$1,160 | ⬆️                    | ⬆️                 | ⬆️            | ⬆️           | ⬆️     | ⬆️       | ⬆️            | ⬆️            | 4                   | 0                     | 0                  | •               | •                         | •    |
| ✓ LG LSE4617ST                   | 87            | \$3,325 | ⬆️                    | ⬆️                 | ⬆️            | ⬆️           | ⬆️     | ⬆️       | ⬆️            | ⬆️            | 2                   | 2                     | 0                  | •               | •                         | •    |
| ✓ LG Studio LSIS3018SS           | 87            | \$3,900 | ⬆️                    | ⬆️                 | ⬆️            | ⬆️           | ⬆️     | ⬆️       | ⬆️            | ⬆️            | 2                   | 2                     | 0                  | •               | •                         | •    |
| ✓ Frigidaire Gallery FGIH3047VF  | 87            | \$1,300 | ⬆️                    | ⬆️                 | ⬆️            | ⬆️           | ⬆️     | ⬆️       | ⬆️            | ⬆️            | 4                   | 0                     | 0                  | •               | •                         | •    |
| ✓ Samsung NE63T8951SG            | 86            | \$3,795 | ⬆️                    | ⬆️                 | ⬆️            | ⬆️           | ⬆️     | ⬆️       | ⬆️            | ⬆️            | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  | •               | •                         | •    |
| ✓ Ikea Tvaraker 404.660.06       | 83            | \$1,400 | —                     | —                  | ⬆️            | ⬆️           | ⬆️     | ⬆️       | ⬆️            | ⬆️            | 4                   | 0                     | 0                  | •               | •                         | •    |
| Samsung NE63B8211SS              | 80            | \$1,370 | ⬆️                    | ⬆️                 | ⬆️            | ⬆️           | ⬆️     | ⬆️       | ⬆️            | ⬆️            | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  | •               | •                         | •    |

clean than radiant electric ones. That's because a radiant electric smoothtop gets so hot that any spills from cooking can burn onto the surface. That's not likely to happen on the cooler glass of induction stovetops: Even if you spill something sticky while cooking, you can usually just wipe it up with a sponge. But one thing will stay exactly the same: Induction ranges have regular electric ovens, and they heat just like any electric one would, with heating elements on the top and bottom of the cavity.


> If you're switching from gas, no electric stovetop (induction or not)

can truly match the visual feedback offered by a flame. But some induction smoothtops feature an artificial "flame": rings of LED lights at the front edge of the burner that glow brighter as you turn the heat up.

Other models may have only smaller indicator lights on the control panel to alert you when a burner is on. So gas converts may feel most comfortable with induction cooktops that offer bold LEDs, such as the Samsung NZ30K7880UG in our ratings, rather than those with a subtle glow. And when you first use induction, our

experts advise lowering the heat for recipes until you're more accustomed to the speedier heating of induction, to prevent things burning or boiling over.

If you're swapping a gas range for an induction model, you may also like your broiler better: In our testing, electric ranges are far better than gas models at broiling, and induction models are no exception—all but one of the induction models in our ratings earn a rating of Good or better for broiling. The best models heat evenly and get roaring hot, which should mean nicely seared meats or beautifully baked ziti.

| Brand + Model  | Overall Score | Price   | Survey Results        |                    | Test Results |          | Features + Specs    |                       |                    |                     |                |
|--|---------------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
|  |               |         | Predicted reliability | Owner satisfaction | High heat    | Low heat | High-power elements | Medium-power elements | Low-power elements | Expandable elements | Touch controls |
|    |               |         |                       |                    |              |          |                     |                       |                    |                     |                |
| <b>30-INCH ELECTRIC INDUCTION COOKTOPS</b>   |               |         |                       |                    |              |          |                     |                       |                    |                     |                |
| ✓ GE Profile PHP9030DJBB   | 95            | \$2,000 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  |                     | •              |
| ✓ Café CHP95302MSS   | 93            | \$2,300 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  |                     | •              |
| Ⓢ Frigidaire FGIC3066TB  | 93            | \$1,000 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  |                     | •              |
| ✓ Thermador Masterpiece CIT304TM   | 93            | \$3,600 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 4                   | 0                     | 0                  |                     | •              |
| ✓ Dacor Transitional DTI30P876BB   | 92            | \$2,500 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  | •                   | •              |
| Viking Virtuoso MVIC6304BB   | 91            | \$3,710 | –                     | –                  | ↑            | ↑        | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  |                     | •              |
| Electrolux ECCI3068AS  | 90            | \$2,200 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 4                   | 0                     | 0                  |                     | •              |
| Samsung NZ30K7880UG  | 89            | \$2,130 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  | •                   | •              |
| <b>36-INCH ELECTRIC INDUCTION COOKTOPS</b>   |               |         |                       |                    |              |          |                     |                       |                    |                     |                |
| ✓ Frigidaire FPIC3677RF  | 94            | \$2,180 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 4                   | 1                     | 0                  |                     | •              |
| Ⓢ Frigidaire FFIC3626TB  | 93            | \$705   | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 3                   | 2                     | 0                  |                     | •              |
| ✓ Dacor Transitional DTI36P876BB   | 92            | \$2,900 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 3                   | 1                     | 0                  | •                   | •              |
| Samsung NZ36K7880UG  | 89            | \$2,380 | ↓                     | ↑                  | ↑            | ↑        | 4                   | 1                     | 0                  | •                   | •              |
| Jenn-Air JIC4536XS   | 83            | \$2,775 | ↓                     | ↓                  | ↑            | ↑        | 5                   | 0                     | 0                  |                     | •              |
| > Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at <a href="https://www.consumerreports.org/induction">CR.org/induction</a> . |               |         |                       |                    |              |          |                     |                       |                    |                     |                |

**HOW WE TEST:** Overall Score is a combination of our most recent survey results for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction, as well as our in-lab performance tests. In cases where we have insufficient survey data to provide

a brand-level rating, indicated by a gray dash (–), we assume the model has average reliability and satisfaction. **High heat** (or **cooktop, high**) reflects how quickly a range or cooktop brings a large pot of water to a near-boil.

**Low heat** (or **cooktop, low**) captures how steadily a range or cooktop simmers. **Baking** reflects how evenly an oven bakes cakes and cookies on multiple racks. **Broiling** is a measurement of the temperatures a pan of food would see on

its highest setting. **Oven capacity** is determined by our experts measuring usable space. **Self-clean** reflects how thoroughly that cycle burns off a mixture of grime and whether the oven cavity can be easily wiped clean after.



## HOW CAN I TELL IF MY POT IS INDUCTION-COMPATIBLE?

**THE KEY TO INDUCTION'S** electromagnetic cooking prowess is magnetism. “The most important consideration for cooking with an induction appliance is owning cookware that’s made of ferromagnetic metal, such as cast iron or some types of stainless steel,” says Gill Stansfield, assistant dean of the College of Food Innovation & Technology at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I. He recommends a simple trick to check for induction compatibility: Grab a magnet from your fridge and place it against the bottom of any pan in your current

collection. If the magnet sticks, the pan will work on an induction appliance.

You may discover that many of your existing pots and pans can be used with induction. Exceptions include a few nonstick pieces, which are made of aluminum—a material that won’t work with induction stovetops. But they’re still worth testing with a magnet because some nonstick pans are clad with another magnetic metal, which makes them compatible. Most copper pans are also not ferromagnetic, but some of those, too, are clad with magnetic metals and

so work on an induction cooktop. If you find you’ll need to replace a few pots and pans that aren’t compatible, the good news is that induction cookware has become ubiquitous. And cookware manufacturers have become a lot better at noting whether their wares are induction-compatible on the box—but when in doubt, you can always take a magnet with you to the store and check. In our ratings, at **CR.org/cookware**, we note for our members whether a pot or pan can be used with an induction cooktop based on the material it’s made of and the manufacturer’s recommendation. On the facing page, we highlight some of the best-performing cookware of all types—from frying pans to Dutch ovens—that will work with induction cooktops.



## Top-Rated Induction Cookware From Our Tests

### STAINLESS STEEL FRYING PAN

✔ **Made In Cookware Stainless Steel Frying Pan** \$90

An outstanding all-around frying pan, this 10-inch skillet cooks evenly and is easy to clean. Bonus: The stainless steel handle stays cool to the touch.

75 OVERALL SCORE



67 OVERALL SCORE



### CARBON STEEL FRYING PAN

✔ **Matfer Bourgeat Black Steel 620030 62003** \$42

This 10-inch pan aces our browning test, and cooking evenness earns a Very Good score. The handle stays cool, and you can transfer the pan from your stovetop to the oven.

### NONSTICK FRYING PAN

✔ **Le Creuset Toughened Pro** \$125

While this pan is made of hard-anodized aluminum, which is not induction-compatible, its base is stainless steel, which is. It checks all the boxes in our performance tests, including cooking evenly.

87 OVERALL SCORE



75 OVERALL SCORE



### UNCOATED CAST-IRON FRYING PAN

✔ **Lodge Uncoated Cast-Iron Frying Pan** \$30

Made in the USA, this pan is a perennial favorite and won't disappoint when you sear steak or bake cornbread.

### COATED CAST-IRON FRYING PAN

✔ **Tramontina 80131/066DS** \$60

The colorful Tramontina skillet excels at two tasks that you depend on a cast-iron fry pan for: searing steak and browning scallops. And because it's coated, it's easy to clean.

80 OVERALL SCORE



81

OVERALL SCORE

### NONSTICK COOKWARE SET

✔ **Kenmore Arlington Metallic** \$120

This colorful 12-piece set is stackable, making it a real space saver. All the pans heat up quickly and cook evenly—and our tests find that the nonstick coating is very durable.

77

OVERALL SCORE



### STAINLESS STEEL COOKWARE SET

✔ **Kenmore Elite Devon Tri-Ply** \$135

This nicely priced 10-piece stainless steel set should satisfy most of your cooking needs. The lids are glass, so you can watch what you're cooking without letting heat escape.

83

OVERALL SCORE



### DUTCH OVEN

✔ **Merten & Storck German Enameled Iron 1873** \$170

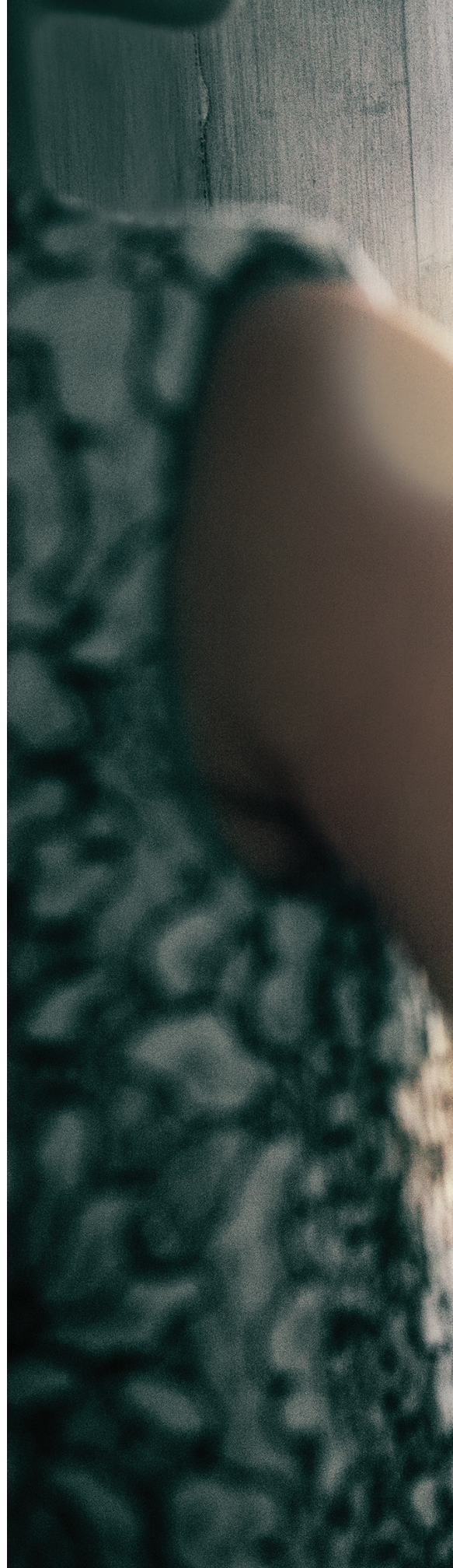
The Merten & Storck Dutch oven is the top-rated of all 10 models we've tested. It heats up quickly and bakes bread like a champ. Plus, it's easy to clean.

Mold, Radon, Cooking Gas, Lead ...

# HOW TO STAY SAFE FROM HIDDEN HOME HAZARDS

Indoor air pollution can pose a serious health threat. Find out what might be a concern in your place and how to deal with it quickly.

BY JESSE WILL





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**AMERICANS SPEND** a lot of our time indoors—up to 90 percent of it, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

But while the quality of our outdoor air has improved over the past few decades, thanks to environmental legislation, indoor air quality hasn't received the same attention and, arguably, has become worse over the same time, experts say. In fact, the concentration of air pollutants in your home can be two to five times higher than what's typically found outdoors, according to the EPA.

That's partly because advancements in the ways homes are constructed have made them better sealed than they were just a few decades ago. As a result, less fresh air seeps in from outside, making indoor air concerns—from long-known issues such as radon, asbestos, and carbon monoxide—potentially even more problematic. In addition, more frequent environmental disasters, such as floods and hurricanes, mean more people are confronting the dangers of mold, which lurks in moist places and can spread through a home's air ducts.

And there are other problems we're just beginning to realize are hazards. For example, the gas stove is now being viewed as a possible source of toxicity in the form of nitrogen dioxide, and new tests from Consumer Reports confirm that this can indeed be a serious concern.

At the same time, the COVID-19 virus, which is transmitted by air, has made many of us far more aware of how important it is to monitor indoor air quality. "People are learning the lexicon—from what HEPA filters are to knowing about the importance of air changes per hour," says Richard Corsi, PhD, dean of the College of Engineering at the University of California, Davis.

Indeed, when asked about sources of indoor air pollution, such as radon and cooking gas, 60 percent of Americans said they were at least mildly concerned about at least one of them in their home, and 19 percent were very concerned, according to a July 2022 CR nationally representative survey of 2,125 U.S. adults.

Fortunately, there is more information about how to handle indoor air quality problems than ever before, and there are more resources to help you address these and other health hazards in your home, including lead in paint or water. Here we explain some of the biggest concerns and help you determine whether they are a problem in your home. If they are, read on for our advice about how to mitigate or eradicate them, and recommendations for products that help do the job.

## VOCs

**WHO'S AT RISK:** People who have new furniture in their homes or who use harsh chemical cleaners.

**WHAT THEY ARE:** VOCs, or volatile organic compounds, are gases emitted from paints, cleaning products, refrigerants, pesticides, aerosols, air fresheners, and more. "A lot of the chemicals used in things like couches and carpets in the home" emit VOCs, Corsi says. They can irritate your throat, nose, and eyes; cause headaches, dizziness, and nausea; and even damage internal organs. Certain VOCs, such as formaldehyde and benzene, are proven or probable human carcinogens.

**WHERE THEY HIDE:** VOCs can be harmful not only when they're breathed in as gases but also, in some cases, when they're "absorbed into particles of house dust and are deposited on a floor or surface," Corsi says. "When that dust becomes disturbed and airborne, you can inhale it."

**HOW TO FIND AND FIX THEM:** First, reconsider some of the harsh chemicals, such as glass and floor cleaners, that you use in the home. How many are truly necessary? When you do need to use them, open the windows. Consider buying mattresses and furnishings that use natural fibers and fillings, such as cotton down, when you can. Look for ways to reduce your use of pesticides inside and outdoors.

In addition, control dust using a vacuum cleaner or an air purifier, or both, with a HEPA filter. That's especially important if a pregnant person or young children are in the home; both are at risk for problems from VOCs. Another option: Use a damp mop on hard surfaces so that you don't agitate the dust.



## MOLD

**WHO'S AT RISK:** People whose homes are damp because of high humidity, poor ventilation, a leaky roof or basement, or damage from flooding.

**WHAT IT IS:** A microscopic fungus that lives both outdoors and in, mold spreads via tiny airborne spores that can grow on almost any damp surface. Over a thousand types have been found in U.S. homes, according to the nonprofit National Center for Healthy Housing. Some mold (and mildew, another type of fungus) can cause skin rashes, flulike symptoms, eye and lung irritation, and other health problems.

**WHERE IT HIDES:** Mold is most often found in damp areas of your home,

such as the bathroom, the kitchen, and the basement. But it can also thrive under and in carpets or rugs, above ceilings, and in walls, cabinets, crawl spaces, attics, and any room where excessive moisture persists.

Mold can also contaminate your home's air ducts, letting spores spread throughout your home every time the heating or air conditioning system runs. And homes can be especially susceptible to mold after catastrophic weather events such as hurricanes, floods, or deep freezes that cause pipes to burst.

**HOW TO FIND AND FIX IT:** Many mold problems can be seen with the naked eye, and many can be detected by their telltale musty odor. If you suspect mold but can't see it, test for it. (Test kits are available at hardware stores and online.)

To mitigate mold, first find and fix the source of moisture, whether it's a leaky roof, a poorly ventilated bathroom, or another problem. Then take steps

to remove the mold, using water, detergent, or a disinfectant such as a diluted bleach solution, or by throwing away the mold-covered object.

The EPA recommends doing the job yourself if the mold-contaminated area is less than 10 square feet. Use protective equipment, such as an N95 mask, goggles, and gloves. (For more, go to [epa.gov](http://epa.gov) and search for "A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home.") Larger-scale problems may require professional remediation.

To prevent mold from returning, reduce your indoor humidity to between 30 and 60 percent, via better ventilation and dehumidifiers, if necessary. (See page 33 for dehumidifiers recommended by CR.)

You might be eligible for financial assistance from the federal government if your mold problem is the result of a recent weather disaster. For details, go to [disasterassistance.gov](http://disasterassistance.gov).

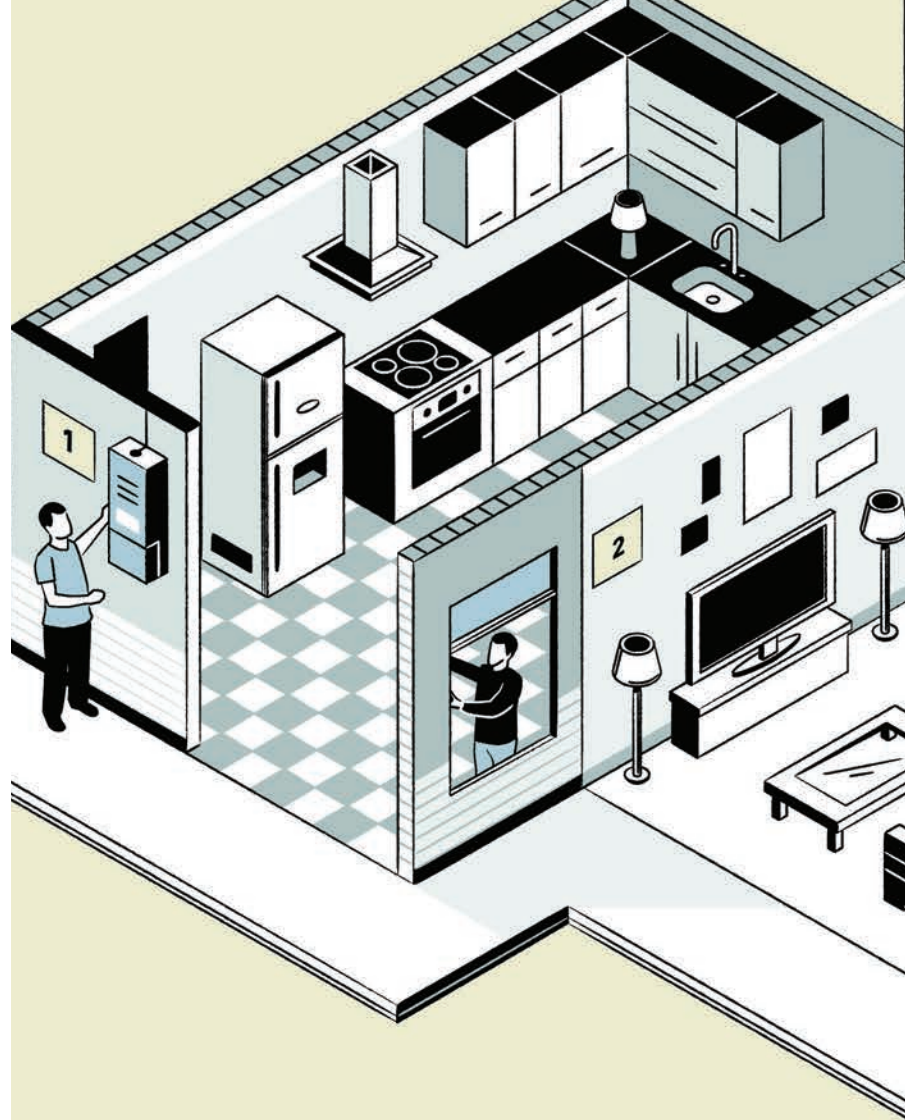
# ASBESTOS

**WHO'S AT RISK:** People with homes built before about 1980 who are renovating after damage or are remodeling.

**WHAT IT IS:** A naturally occurring mineral fiber that's corrosion- and heat-resistant, asbestos has been used for decades in a range of home products, from the insulation around heating ducts in basements to the asphalt tiles on roofs. Inhaling these tiny fibers, which can be 1/500 the width of a human hair, can trigger mesothelioma, a type of cancer, and the lung disease asbestosis. Symptoms frequently emerge decades after exposure. Because of these risks, asbestos is used far less often now than in the past. But it's still thought to contribute to between 12,000 and 15,000 deaths each year in the U.S., according to an analysis by the Environmental Working Group Action Fund, a social welfare organization.

**WHERE IT HIDES:** If your house or apartment was built in or before the 1970s, there's a good chance that certain building materials contain asbestos because insulation frequently contained it. Some textured "popcorn" ceilings also contain asbestos, as do some hot water and steam pipe coatings, roofing and siding shingles, and the backing of some vinyl sheet flooring.

**HOW TO FIND AND FIX IT:** Asbestos in your home is generally a concern only if the material gets disturbed. So look for it if you are considering renovations that might disturb the material, or if the material was damaged, which can cause it to shed fibers. In those situations, hire a professional: Unless a material is labeled, you can't tell that it contains asbestos by looking, and handling the material could dislodge fibers. If tests confirm asbestos, it should be sealed, covered, or removed by an asbestos abatement professional. You can often find licensed experts through your state's health department.



## HEALTHY AIR STARTS HERE

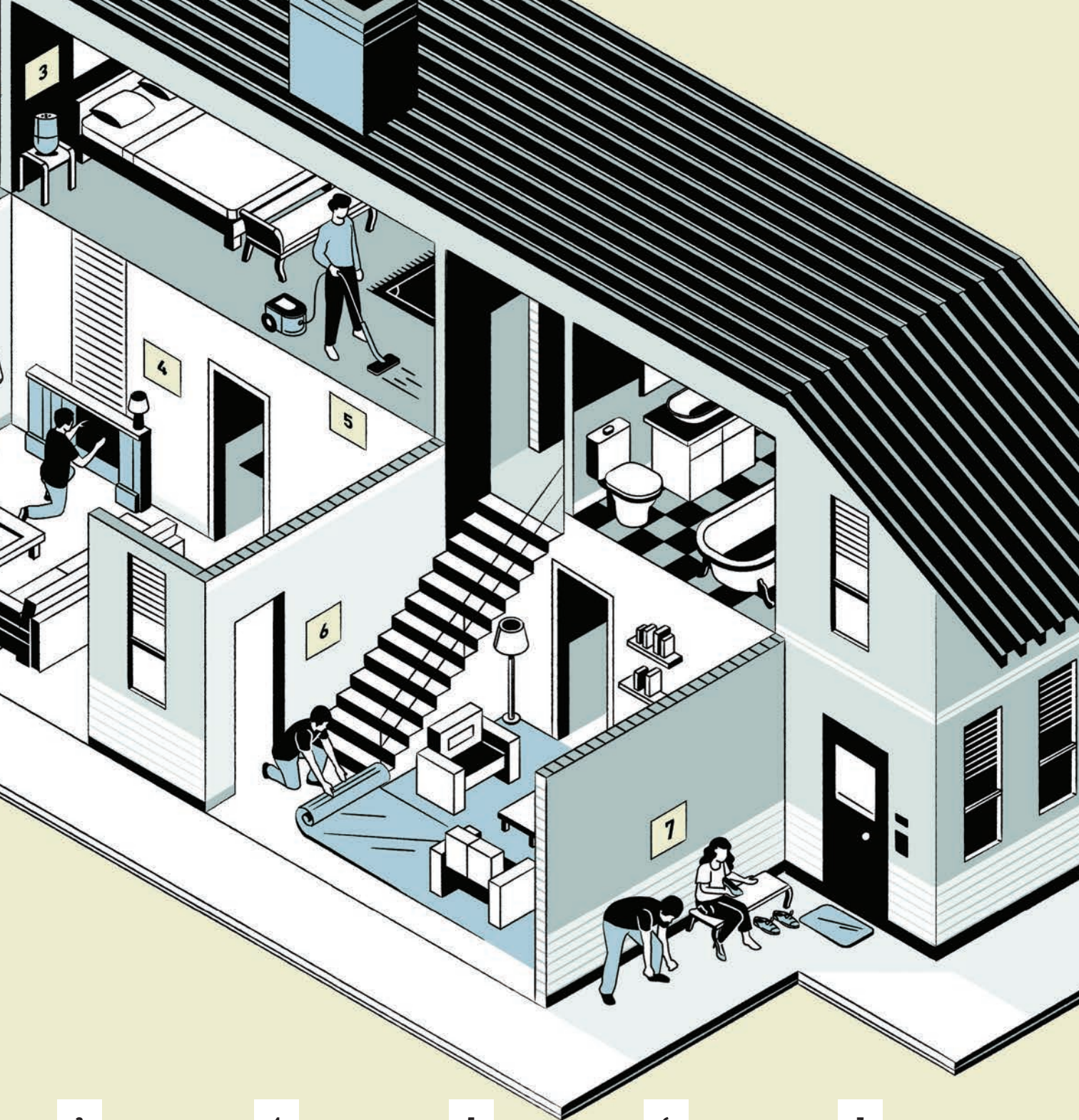
*Take these simple steps to improve the air quality in your home and help keep contaminants out.*

1

**CHANGE FILTERS IN YOUR CENTRAL A/C AND FURNACE.** Use the thickest filter your system can handle. And check the rating: In general, the higher the number, the more effective the filter.

2

**OPEN YOUR WINDOWS WHEN COOKING OR CLEANING.** Many cleaning products contain harsh chemicals that can irritate your lungs, and cooking can create harmful gases, not to mention smoke. So use your stove's vent, too.



3

**RUN A PORTABLE HUMIDIFIER IN THE WINTER.** Drier air helps prevent mold and dust mites, so try to keep the humidity level in your home between 30 and 60 percent.

4

**KEEP YOUR FIREPLACE OR WOODSTOVE IN GOOD WORKING ORDER.** Have it checked annually by a professional to make sure it vents properly.

5

**USE A VACUUM WITH A HEPA FILTER.** This can keep your vacuum from spewing out dust, allergens, and other debris.

6

**LOSE SOME THROW RUGS AND CARPETS.** It's easier to remove dust, which can harbor contaminants and allergens, from wood and tile floors.

7

**TAKE YOUR SHOES OFF AT THE DOOR.** The most basic way to control contaminants is to keep them out of your home in the first place.

## RADON

**WHO'S AT RISK:** People who have not had their home tested for radon and those who haven't taken steps to reduce levels after a positive test.

**WHAT IT IS:** Radon is a radioactive gas that's emitted from soil, water, and rocks and seeps into homes. Almost 1 in 15 U.S. homes has a level that should be reduced, according to the EPA. Radon is deadly. It's the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking, causing 21,000 cancer deaths a year in the U.S.

**WHERE IT HIDES:** The gas enters homes via cracks, holes, sumps, drains, and sometimes well water. It is found in every state, but some parts of the U.S. are more susceptible than others. (See a map at [epa.gov/radon/epa-map-radon-zones](https://epa.gov/radon/epa-map-radon-zones).)

**HOW TO FIND AND FIX IT:** The gas is colorless and odorless but still relatively easy to identify, says Joseph Allen, director of the Harvard Healthy Buildings Program in Boston. Everyone should test their home at least once. Tests, available at hardware stores and online, usually involve putting a detector in your basement or, if you don't have a basement, on your first floor. Levels of 4 picocuries or more per liter need to be addressed. Depending on your home's foundation type, that may involve hiring a certified contractor to seal cracks and openings, insert a pipe through the floor slab, and vent the gas out. Retest a month after the work is completed.

Mitigation can cost from \$800 to \$3,000, according to HomeAdvisor. Buying a home? Get it tested and negotiate mitigation costs before sealing the deal. Some states and municipalities offer financial help for lower-income residents; contact your local health department for more information.



## CARBON MONOXIDE

**WHO'S AT RISK:** People with malfunctioning stoves, furnaces, or other major appliances that use gas, propane, or heating oil, and those who don't have or use exhaust fans with gas stoves.

**WHAT IT IS:** This is an odorless and colorless gas produced when wood, charcoal, or any fossil fuel, such as heating oil, propane, or natural gas, is burned. Exposure to elevated levels of CO can make your blood unable to carry enough oxygen to survive. Symptoms include headaches, nausea, sleepiness, confusion, and shortness of breath. Up to 430 people die in the U.S. each year from accidental exposure to the gas, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



## LEAD

**WHO'S AT RISK:** People who live in communities served by lead water pipes or in homes built before 1986, and people whose homes were painted before 1978.

**WHAT IT IS:** Small amounts of lead, a heavy metal, occur naturally in soil, air, and water, and in the past it was widely used in paint and plumbing supplies. "Lead is one of those dangerous legacy hazards," Allen says. "It's one of the most potent neurotoxins we know of, and exposure to it in kids is associated with lower IQ, nerve and developmental issues, and behavioral problems." Pregnant women could miscarry or deliver prematurely if exposed.

**WHERE IT HIDES:** Homes built or renovated between 1960 and 1978, when lead paint was banned in the U.S., have an almost 1 in 4 chance of having lead-containing paint. (Odds are even higher in pre-1960 homes.) Deteriorating paint creates dust that can be inhaled. Children can ingest lead paint by chewing on an exposed surface. The heavy metal can also be found in the soil near your home. It can

**WHERE IT HIDES:** Most appliances in the home that burn oil or gas, such as stoves and furnaces, are designed to minimize the risk from CO. But a malfunction—a blocked vent or chimney, for example—can quickly turn dangerous. And appliances such as generators and charcoal grills, which are meant for outdoor use, can become killers when used indoors, even in a garage.

**HOW TO FIND AND FIX IT:** Install a CO detector on every level of your home and outside every sleep area, such as in a nearby hall. Test the devices regularly.

enter your water when metal fixtures and pipes made before 1986 corrode.

**HOW TO FIND AND FIX IT:** If your home was built or renovated before 1978, test the paint for lead, especially if young children are in the home. The 3M LeadCheck and D-Lead kits work on wood, drywall, plaster, steel, and iron. But it's best to hire a professional, according to the EPA, and you need a pro to test other surfaces, such as stucco. To reduce the risk of lead paint, consider encapsulation—painting over it with a special primer that seals the lead in place. That's cheaper than complete removal and does not create chips, flakes, or dust. If you want it removed instead, hire a professional and expect to pay between \$8 and \$15 per square foot.

Checking for lead in water is essential if your home was built before 1986 and you have young children at home. But some communities still have lead in pipes leading to homes, so everyone should consider testing. Home tests might not be accurate, so the EPA recommends using a certified lab. Ask your utility whether it offers free lead tests. Or check Healthy Babies Bright Futures' Lead in Drinking Water program ([hbbf.org/lead-drinking-water](http://hbbf.org/lead-drinking-water)). The organization offers low-cost lead tests. Many water filters can remove the heavy metal. (See page 32 for details.)

(See page 32 for models that perform well in CR's tests.) Combination smoke and CO detectors are also available.

For the best protection, have a professional electrician install interconnected detectors in your home so that when one sounds, they all do. If your heating system and hot water tanks are powered by gas or oil, have them checked for CO leakage and maintained each year. Also have them checked for adequate ventilation. Never heat your home using your gas range, and never use a camp stove or generator indoors.

## IS YOUR GAS STOVE A HEALTH RISK?

RECENT RESEARCH has raised a new concern about gas stoves: nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>). It has long been known that the stoves can produce deadly carbon monoxide, but a new report suggests that they can also produce levels of NO<sub>2</sub> that are more than double the EPA's outdoor standard. That's worrisome: NO<sub>2</sub> can worsen asthma and other lung diseases, and it may increase the risk of asthma in children.

To investigate, CR built an insulated chamber with a range hood and ventilation fan, and placed in it two typical gas stoves, one each from two popular brands. We then performed 24 tests to measure levels of NO<sub>2</sub> and other potentially harmful gases. "Our tests found NO<sub>2</sub> at levels above those recommended by public health organizations, particularly when the ranges were used without ventilation and when a burner was set on high," says Ashita Kapoor, CR's associate director of product safety. "This is an alarming concern."

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** If you cook on a gas range or cooktop, make sure your kitchen has adequate ventilation. That means using your range hood every time you cook, even if you're just boiling an egg. If you don't have a range hood, install one. Opening windows and doors can also help. Thinking of switching to an electric smoothtop or induction range or cooktop? See "Your Guide to Induction Cooking," on page 18.

—Paul Hope

# YOUR HEALTHY-HOME

## CHECK FOR CONTAMINANTS

**TESTING FOR SOME** hidden hazards, such as asbestos in your floor tiles, can require hiring a professional. Others, including radon gas in your basement and lead in paint, can be detected through test kits that are available online or in a hardware store. (CR has not recently tested such kits, but examples are shown below.) And everyone should have carbon monoxide detectors. See at right for models that perform well in CR's tests.

### PAINT LEAD TEST KITS

**3M LeadCheck Kit**  
\$40 (8 tests)



**D-Lead Paint Test Kit**  
\$42 (7 tests)



### RADON TEST

**First Alert Radon Gas Test Kit (RD1)**  
\$16



### CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS (INTERCONNECTED)



✓ **First Alert OneLink SCO501CN** \$42 (shown at left)

**91** OVERALL SCORE

**First Alert OneLink CO511B** \$40

**89** OVERALL SCORE

### CO DETECTOR (STAND-ALONE)

✓ **First Alert CO615** \$35

**91** OVERALL SCORE



## MAKE YOUR WATER SAFER

**GET A WATER FILTER** that can remove lead. Here are models that pass CR tests for removing lead or are otherwise certified to do so. Pitchers are easy to use but filter only small amounts at a time. Under-sink and countertop models can filter more, but the former requires professional installation and drilling a hole in your counter. Reverse osmosis models can remove a range of contaminants but are expensive, can be hard to maintain, and create 3 to 5 gallons of wastewater for every gallon filtered.

### COUNTERTOP FILTERS

✓ **Amway eSpring 10-0188** \$1,179

**94** OVERALL SCORE

**Crystal Quest CQE-CT-00109** \$154

**76** OVERALL SCORE

### UNDER-SINK FILTERS

✓ **Multipure Aquaversa MP750** \$500

**87** OVERALL SCORE

✓ **Brondell Coral UC300 Three Stage** \$180

**86** OVERALL SCORE

### WATER FILTER PITCHERS



**Pur Ultimate With Lead Reduction PPT711W**

\$30 (shown at left)

**76** OVERALL SCORE

**ZeroWater Ready-Pour ZD-010RP**  
\$35

**67** OVERALL SCORE



### REVERSE OSMOSIS FILTERS\*

✓ **Kinetico K5 Drinking Water Station** \$2,200

**95** OVERALL SCORE

✓ **Culligan Aqua-Clear** \$1,300

**86** OVERALL SCORE

# E TOOLKIT

The products you need to detect—or help remove—potentially harmful contaminants.

## CLEAN YOUR AIR

**AIR PURIFIERS CAN CAPTURE** pollen, smoke, and dust. Limiting dust may be especially important because potentially dangerous volatile organic compounds emitted from furniture and cleaners can adhere to particles in the air. Shown here are several room air purifiers recommended by CR.



✓ Alen BreatheSmart 75i Pure \$750

91 OVERALL SCORE

### AIR PURIFIERS

✓ Blueair Classic 605 \$430

88 OVERALL SCORE



✓ Blueair Blue Pure 211+ \$250

85 OVERALL SCORE



✓ Honeywell AirGenius 5 HFD-320 \$200

63 OVERALL SCORE



## CONTROL MOLD

**DEHUMIDIFIERS CAN HELP PREVENT MOLD** by keeping humidity levels between 30 and 60 percent. Drier air can also help keep dust mites at bay. The larger and damper the space you want to keep dry, the larger the dehumidifier you need. Here, CR recommends products in three sizes.

### LARGE DEHUMIDIFIERS

#### SMALL DEHUMIDIFIERS

✓ Midea MAD20S1QWT \$200

87 OVERALL SCORE



#### MIDSIZED DEHUMIDIFIERS

✓ Midea MAD35S1QWT \$245

92 OVERALL SCORE



✓ TCL TDW20E20 \$184

77 OVERALL SCORE



✓ hOmeLabs HME020006N \$240

81 OVERALL SCORE



✓ Honeywell TP70WKN \$360 (shown left)

81 OVERALL SCORE



✓ Midea MAD50C1ZWS \$220

79 OVERALL SCORE



Some Really  
**Good News** About



# Cheese

CHEDDAR, GOUDA, BRIE, GORGONZOLA, PARMESAN. THERE'S A TEMPTING TYPE FOR EVERY TASTE, AND RECENT RESEARCH SHOWS THAT ALL OF THEM CAN HAVE A PLACE IN A HEALTHY DIET.

by **Stephanie Clarke**



Cheese is rich and creamy, irresistible on a cracker, paired with a selection of fresh fruit, or sprinkled over a bowl of chili. There are many delicious reasons to love cheese, and Americans really do love it. The per capita consumption is 40 pounds a year, or a little over 1.5 ounces a day. But as much as we love cheese, we're a little afraid of it. When people talk about their fondness for cheese, it's often in a guilty, confessional way, like "Cheese is my weakness."

But "cheese is packed with nutrients like protein, calcium, and phosphorus, and can serve a healthy purpose in the diet," says Lisa Young, RD, an adjunct professor of nutrition at New York University. So if Stilton makes you swoon or you always want more Parm on your pasta, know this: Research shows that even full-fat cheese won't necessarily make you gain weight or give you a heart attack. It seems that cheese doesn't raise or reduce your risk for chronic diseases, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, and some studies show it might even be protective.

## Why Cheese May Be Good for You

It's easy to see why people might feel conflicted about cheese. For years, the U.S. Dietary Guidelines have said that eating low-fat dairy is best because whole-milk products, like full-fat cheese, have saturated fat, which can raise LDL (bad) cholesterol levels, a known risk for heart disease. Cheese has also been blamed for weight gain and digestive issues like bloating. It turns out, though, that cheese may have been misunderstood.

Yes, it's high in calories: Some types have 100 calories or more per ounce. And it's rich in saturated fat. So why is it okay for most people to eat it? "Cheese is more than its saturated fat content," says Emma Feeney, PhD, an assistant professor at the Institute of Food and Health at University College Dublin who studies the effect cheese has on health.

Old-school thinking on nutrition has been focused on individual nutrients—like fats or protein—that either promote

or prevent disease. It's not completely clear that this is the wrong approach, but nutrition experts are now putting more emphasis on the entire food and how its structure, nutrients, enzymes, and other components interact with each other.

When milk is transformed into cheese, the process changes the way the nutrients and other components in it are chemically arranged. (See "How Cheese Is Made," on the facing page.) This has an effect on how it's digested and processed by the body, which can lead to different health effects than eating the same nutrients in another form, such as butter.

In 2018, Feeney led a six-week clinical trial in which 164 people each ate an equal amount of dairy fat either in the form of butter or cheese and then switched partway through the study. "We found that the saturated fat in cheese did not raise LDL cholesterol levels to the same degree as butter did," she says.

Experts have varying theories about why the saturated fat in cheese is less harmful. "Some studies show that the mineral content in cheese, particularly calcium, may bind

## Fromage Facts

**The nutrition content** of cheese, including calories, fat, saturated fat, protein, calcium, and sodium, varies based on the type of milk used (cow, sheep, goat) and the process used to make it. Here's what's in some of your favorite cheeses so you can choose the type that's right for you.

The nutrition content is per 1-ounce serving.



### BRIE

|                     |                                 |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| CALORIES <b>95</b>  | CALCIUM <b>52 mg</b><br>(4% DV) |
| FAT <b>8 g</b>      | SODIUM <b>178 mg</b><br>(8% DV) |
| SAT. FAT <b>5 g</b> |                                 |
| PROTEIN <b>6 g</b>  |                                 |

# How Cheese Is Made

There are an estimated 2,000 distinct types of cheese, but they're all made in the same basic way.



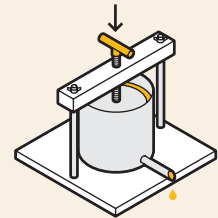
**1.** Cheese producers heat milk, usually from cows but also from goats, sheep, and even buffalo.

**2.** They add healthy bacteria—i.e., “cultures.” Different cheeses are made with different types of bacteria, which, in large part, are responsible for the flavor.

**3.** They add “rennet,” an enzyme that separates the curds (solids) from the whey (liquid).



**4.** Cutting the curds removes the whey. Small curds produce drier (harder) cheese and large ones have more moisture.



**5.** The curds are usually salted. Then they're stretched (e.g., fresh mozzarella) or poured into molds and pressed. Once removed from the molds, most cheeses are aged anywhere from a few weeks (like Brie) to several years (like Parmesan).

with fatty acids in the intestine and flush them out of the body,” Feeney says. Other studies suggest that fatty acids called sphingolipids in cheese may increase the activity of genes that help with the body’s breakdown of cholesterol.

When cheese is made it gains some beneficial compounds, too. “Vitamin K can form during the fermentation process,” says Sarah Booth, PhD, director of the Vitamin K Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston. The vitamin is important for blood clotting and bone and blood vessel health. “Higher-fat cheeses, such as cheddar or blue, have the most.”

And as a fermented food, “both raw and pasteurized cheeses contain good bacteria that can be beneficial to human gut microbiota,” says Adam Brock, vice president of food safety, quality, and regulatory compliance for the Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin. (See “Is Raw-Milk Cheese Safe to Eat?” on page 39.) This good bacteria, found mostly in aged cheeses such as cheddar and Gouda, help break down food, synthesize vitamins, prevent bacteria that cause illness from getting a foothold, and bolster immunity.

## Your Body on Cheese

So cheese may not be a cholesterol worry, it offers important nutrients, and it can promote gut health. But wait, there’s more good news: Cheese seems to reduce the risk of weight gain (really) and several chronic diseases.

■ **Weight gain:** Cheese is a concentrated source of calories. “That’s why portions of cheese should be smaller compared to something like milk or yogurt,” Young says. Still, studies suggest that you don’t need to skip cheese to keep the scale steady. In one, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers set out to determine which foods were linked to weight gain by following 120,877 men and women in the U.S. for 20 years, looking at their weight every four years. While they found that consuming more

ILLUSTRATIONS: CHRIS PHILPOT



### CHEDDAR

CALORIES **113**    CALCIUM **199 mg**  
 FAT **9 g**            (15% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **5 g**        SODIUM **183 mg**  
 PROTEIN **6 g**        (8% DV)



### CHÈVRE (GOAT'S MILK)

CALORIES **103**    CALCIUM **86 mg**  
 FAT **8 g**            (7% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **6 g**        SODIUM **118 mg**  
 PROTEIN **6 g**        (5% DV)



### COTIJA

CALORIES **90**      CALCIUM **200 mg**  
 FAT **6 g**            (15% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **4 g**        SODIUM **480 mg**  
 PROTEIN **7 g**        (21% DV)



### FETA (SHEEP'S MILK)

CALORIES **75**      CALCIUM **140 mg**  
 FAT **6 g**            (11% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **4 g**        SODIUM **323 mg**  
 PROTEIN **4 g**        (14% DV)



of certain foods, like refined grains (as in white bread), was associated with weight gain, eating more of others, like nuts, actually helped with weight loss. Cheese wasn't associated with either gain or loss, even for people who increased the amount of it they ate during the study. Another review published in the journal *Molecular Nutrition & Food Research* in 2018 found that people who ate dairy, including cheese, weighed more than those who didn't, but the dairy eaters had less body fat and more lean body mass, which is beneficial to health.

One reason cheese may help control weight is that it may reduce appetite more than other dairy products. In a small study, researchers measured appetite and the levels of four hormones that control hunger in the blood of 31 people after they ate cheese, sour cream, whipped cream, or butter. Among those foods, cheese caused a greater rise in two of the hormones that help you feel full.

■ **Cardiovascular disease:** A large meta analysis of 15 studies published in the *European Journal of Nutrition* that looked

at cheese's impact on cardiovascular disease found that people eating the most (1.5 ounces per day) had a 10 percent lower risk than those who didn't eat any. Other analyses have found that cheese doesn't seem to affect heart disease risk either way. While many of these studies are observational, which means they don't show cause and effect, together "the research suggests you don't need to avoid cheese if you're concerned about LDL cholesterol levels or heart disease," Feeney says.

■ **Diabetes and hypertension:** Cheese and full-fat dairy also seem to be linked to a lower risk of both. In a study of more than 145,000 people in 21 countries, the researchers found that eating two servings of full-fat dairy or a mix of full-fat and low-fat was linked to a 24 and 11 percent reduced risk of both conditions compared with eating none. Eating only low-fat dairy slightly raised the risk. And among people who didn't have diabetes or hypertension at the start of the nine-year study, those who ate two servings of dairy were less likely to develop the diseases during the study.

■ **Lactose intolerance:** Lactose, a sugar in milk, can be difficult for some people to digest, leading to diarrhea, bloating, and other gastrointestinal symptoms. But the bacteria used to make cheese digests most of the lactose in the milk, says Jamie Png of the American Cheese Society and a 12-year veteran of the cheese-making industry. Much of the lactose that remains is found in the whey, which gets separated from the curds toward the end of the cheese-making process and is drained off. "This means many types of cheese have very little to no lactose," she says. "I'm a lactose intolerant cheese maker, and my general rule is the higher in moisture a cheese is, the higher in lactose." If you're sensitive to lactose, stick to hard and/or aged cheese such as cheddar, provolone, Parmesan, blue, Camembert, and Gouda, and minimize fresh soft cheese like ricotta and cottage cheese. For instance, an ounce of cheddar has about 0.01 gram of lactose while a half-cup of cottage cheese has 3.2 grams. (A cup of whole milk has 12 grams.)

PHOTOS: FROM LEFT: ADOBE STOCK; GETTY IMAGES; ADOBE STOCK; SHUTTERSTOCK; GETTY IMAGES; ADOBE STOCK (3)



**GORGONZOLA**

CALORIES **100**    CALCIUM **150 mg**  
 FAT **8 g**            (15% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **5 g**        SODIUM **326 mg**  
 PROTEIN **6 g**        (14% DV)



**GOUDA**

CALORIES **101**    CALCIUM **198 mg**  
 FAT **8 g**            (15% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **5 g**        SODIUM **232 mg**  
 PROTEIN **7 g**        (10% DV)



**MANCHEGO (SHEEP'S MILK)**

CALORIES **128**    CALCIUM **260 mg**  
 FAT **10 g**            (20% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **7 g**        SODIUM **120 mg**  
 PROTEIN **9 g**        (5% DV)



**MOZZARELLA PART SKIM**

CALORIES **84**        CALCIUM **198 mg**  
 FAT **6 g**            (15% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **3 g**        SODIUM **189 mg**  
 PROTEIN **7 g**        (8% DV)



# Is Raw-Milk Cheese Safe to Eat?

## The Healthiest Way to Eat It

If all this news has you ready to dig into a wheel of Brie with a spoon, hold up. Even though cheese itself doesn't appear to have negative effects on health, how you incorporate it into your overall diet matters.

In much of the research suggesting a neutral or beneficial effect, the highest amount of cheese people ate was about 1.5 ounces, but in some cases it was up to 3 ounces. (An ounce of cheese is about the size of your outstretched thumb.)

In some studies, the health benefits of cheese were found to be the greatest when it replaced a less healthful food like red or processed meats. So there's a big difference between crumbling some blue cheese over a salad and serving up a pepperoni pizza with double cheese. "Incorporating cheese into a Mediterranean-style diet where you also include fruits, veggies, whole grains, and other foods known to lower disease risk is going to be the most beneficial to your overall health," Young says.

For those watching their sodium intake, cheese can be pretty salty. (The salt acts as a preservative.) If you're eating about an ounce a day, it's not a huge concern. Most types give you between 150 and 300 mg of sodium per ounce. (The daily value is no more than 2,300 mg.) Eat more, though, and the sodium can add up.

The form cheese takes may also influence how it affects health. "Many of the studies on cheese and health use cheese in a nonmelted form," Feeney says. "We still don't know how melting or cooking affects the health outcomes, for example, eating cheese on pizza or in cooked dishes like casseroles."

Young suggests pairing cheese with fruit, nuts, or fresh vegetables like carrots and red peppers, and a few whole-grain crackers, or have it on a slice of whole-grain toast topped with tomato. When cheese has a starring role, you can focus on it and enjoy it more.

Many people love the texture and richer, more complex flavors of raw-milk cheese but wonder whether it's okay to eat given it's made with unpasteurized (often called raw) milk.

Raw milk can be contaminated with harmful bacteria, and it's one of the riskiest foods to eat, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Food and Drug Administration requires raw-milk cheese, domestic or imported, to be aged for at least 60 days before it's sold. (In some other countries, raw-milk cheeses aren't aged as long.) During that time, the bacteria should be destroyed, but that's not always the case. In 2016, the FDA tested over 1,600 samples of raw-milk cheeses for salmonella, listeria, and toxin-producing E. coli. Less than 1 percent of the samples were contaminated. Most of those were semisoft types, such as Fontina, or soft-ripened, such as Brie, but some were hard cheeses, like cheddar and manchego.

"If a producer follows strict sanitation protocols and good manufacturing processes, the risk of getting sick from raw-milk cheese is low," says Adam Brock of the Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin. Still, it's safer to avoid softer types of cheese made with unpasteurized milk. And people who are pregnant, immunocompromised, or older should consider avoiding all raw-milk cheese because they're more susceptible to serious effects from food poisoning.



**MOZZARELLA FRESH**

CALORIES **70**    CALCIUM **60 mg**  
 FAT **5 g**    (5% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **3.5 g**    SODIUM **100 mg**  
 PROTEIN **5 g**    (5% DV)



**PARMESAN**

CALORIES **111**    CALCIUM **335 mg**  
 FAT **7 g**    (25% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **4 g**    SODIUM **335 mg**  
 PROTEIN **10 g**    (15% DV)



**QUESO FRESCO**

CALORIES **85**    CALCIUM **160 mg**  
 FAT **7 g**    (12% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **4 g**    SODIUM **213 mg**  
 PROTEIN **5 g**    (9% DV)



**SWISS**

CALORIES **111**    CALCIUM **252 mg**  
 FAT **9 g**    (19% DV)  
 SAT. FAT **5 g**    SODIUM **53 mg**  
 PROTEIN **8 g**    (2% DV)



# The Best Ways to Preserve (AND ORGANIZE) Your Photos





## Safeguarding old family pictures, home movies, and other keepsakes is simpler than you might expect, with these expert steps.

BY MELANIE PINOLA  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN GOLDSTEIN



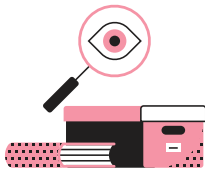
The holidays are typically a time for creating memories,

whether it's feasting with friends and family, watching loved ones open gifts, or donning matching pajamas for photo ops. These are ideal occasions for reminiscing, too, perfect for paging through old family photo albums or viewing home movies from long ago.

Surfacing the crowd-pleasing historical stuff—whether it's love letters penned by your parents, black-and-white photos of your great-grandfather wearing his military uniform and medals, or videos of your childhood puppy—may seem like a herculean task. That's especially true if, like many of us, you've stashed all these photos and other treasures away in various bric-a-brac-filled boxes, not to mention on outdated CDs and camcorder cassette tapes.

Where do you begin? How do you decide what to keep and what to let go? And what's the best way to safely store the items you uncover and then share them with other family members?

We talked to experts in organization and preservation, and found that, thanks to ever more-advanced digitizing processes and other tools, safeguarding your family photos and videos is far easier than you might think. Here are four steps to take, and the tips and resources to help you.



## 1. Collect and Curate

**TRY TO GATHER** all the items you'll be sifting through in one place, preferably an out-of-the-way spot—say, a spare bedroom or table in the den—so that you can sort through one box at a time.

Because old items require extra care, handle them with clean hands. Cotton or nitrile gloves can help protect photos from fingerprints and skin oils. Dust with a soft microfiber cloth, if needed.

Then “just go slowly and thoughtfully,” says Denise Levenick, creator of The Family Curator blog, who became interested in preserving family photos and keepsakes after inheriting her grandmother’s memorabilia-filled steamer trunk. “Our ancestors saved things for a reason. Try to discover the story.”

Think of it as a treasure hunt, where you never know what you might find. Take the case of Jewell Singletary, a wellness coach in Newark, N.J. With the help of older relatives, she unearthed a photo of four generations of family members at their Harlem home, among them her great-great-great-grandfather, William Drake, born in 1865, the year the Civil War ended. She considers the photograph, which was locked away for decades, one of her most cherished finds.

Set fragile items aside for the moment (see “Label and Restore,” below). For the rest, follow the “ABCS” of photo organizing, says Cathi Nelson,

### PRO TIP:

If deciding what to dispose of is too hard, a professional photo organizer can guide you through tough calls.

**General fee range: \$55 to \$125 an hour.**

CEO and founder of The Photo Managers, an online community of professionals who help people find, save, and share their photo collections. Put each item into one of the following buckets:

### A (for album- or archival-worthy)

These are the mementos you’d mourn most if they were lost (your great-aunt’s lace gloves or a photo of you holding your baby sister) and may one day want to put on display. They take priority for preserving and digitizing (see “Future-Proof Your Finds,” on page 44).

### B (for box)

This is memorabilia you don’t want to throw away but don’t

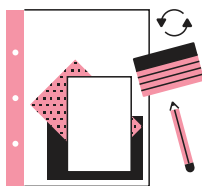
necessarily need to preserve permanently, like random photos from a cousin’s birthday party. Save it in a box to possibly pass on to someone else. But don’t use this category as an excuse to keep everything. “Be ruthless,” Nelson says. “We recommend you throw away 80 percent of your photos, so you can enjoy the best.”

### C (for can, as in “canned”)

These can be tossed out (or “canned”): Think blurry shots, doubles, a card with no personal message.

### S (for story)

These have meaningful tales—like a photo of a tree planted by your grandfather. Move them to the A pile.



## 2. Label and Restore

**IF POSSIBLE**, add names, dates, and other pertinent information to your finds (reach out to relatives for help if you’re uncertain). However, it’s best not to write directly on the back of a photo, because that

can leave an imprint, says Erin Kinhart, head of collections processing and digitization at the Smithsonian Institution’s Archives of American Art. Instead, write on acid-free archival index cards, photo sleeves, or album pages. If you really want to scribble on the back of an image, Kinhart recommends using a soft graphite pencil.

When you come across a great vintage photo that has lost its luster, a professional restoration service can add color and remove wear marks, using computer software. The price for this generally starts at around \$35 per image, but some Fiverr and Etsy vendors will charge as little as \$5 a photo.

For those with the requisite tech savvy, there’s also a DIY

### PRO TIP:

Ask local museums and conservation organizations for restoration advice. **Many will answer your questions for free**, says conservator Dyani Feige.

route, which is the choice that Consumer Reports social media program manager David Morgan made. After his father died in 2017, Morgan began scanning old photos of his parents “as a process of mourning and remembrance.” He used Adobe Photoshop, which starts at \$20.99 per month, to retouch the images. Another option is Pixlr X, a free web-based alternative. But both require some know-how.

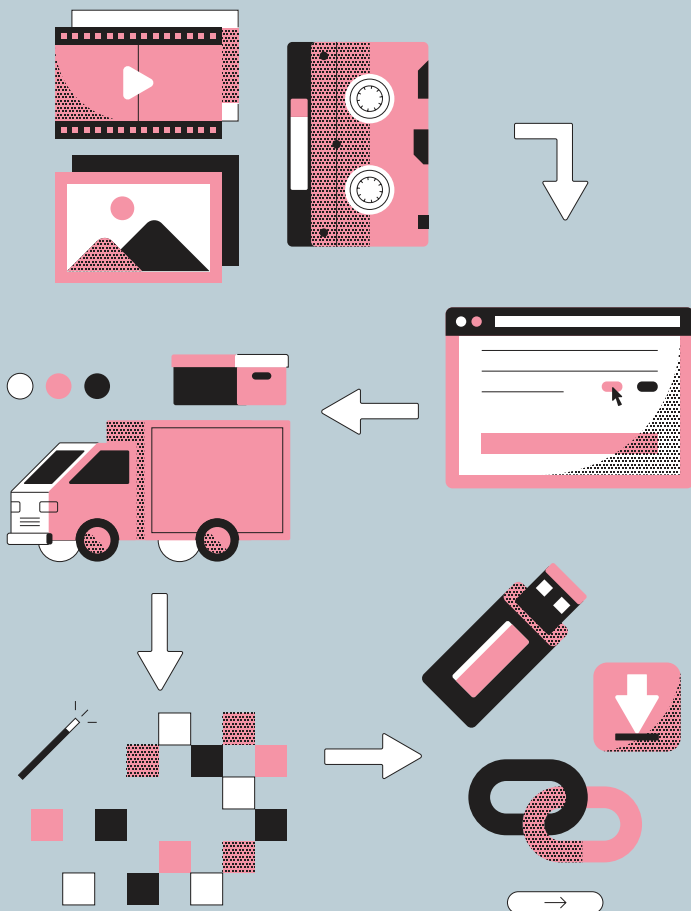
Whether you’re tech savvy or not, when it comes to

artwork, books, and other delicate items (including photos that are torn or stuck together), it’s best to consult a trained conservator, such as Dyani Feige, director of preservation services at the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) in Philadelphia. Otherwise, you may damage a memento further simply by handling it. And moldy or insect-infested items (termites, bookworms) are always better off in the hands of a professional.

# CR Reviews Four Digitizing Services

For those who prefer to leave the tech tasks to someone else, there are services that turn photos, slides, videotapes, and film reels into computer files.

**HOW IT WORKS:** You fill out an online order form and ship your materials to the service of your choice. You'll receive the originals back, along with digitized files. To see how well this process works, CR sent hundreds of photo prints, negatives, and slides—as well as VHS tapes—to four popular services. We then had three people eyeball the results and share their thoughts (so this was not a formal image-quality lab test). We also evaluated the customer service, turnaround time, and security and privacy policies.



## ●●● the best

Memories Renewed

**PRICE:** 75¢ per photo scan (\$20 minimum order)

Memories Renewed produced digital photos that were closest to the original images in color and contrast. The service also saved our files and folders with useful labels, such as "1969-02, Summer Home," and completed the project in eight days. For those who want advanced photo restoration, Memories Renewed offers that as well, at a cost of \$80 per hour.

DigMyPics

**PRICE:** 49¢ per scan (\$30 minimum order)

DigMyPics turned out to be a great budget option. Like Memories Renewed, it provides wonderful customer service. However, the digital photos that came back to us were a bit brighter than the originals and had cooler undertones. A nice feature: DigMyPics lets you preview the scans and delete up to 20 percent of them from your order. It also offers custom editing—above and beyond the usual color correction—at \$30 for each 15 minutes of service.

## ●●● the rest

ScanMyPhotos

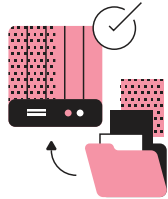
**PRICE:** 13¢ to 30¢ per scan (\$25 minimum order)

ScanMyPhotos offered the lowest rates, though its cheapest option is for scans of the lowest-quality resolution. (These are best for online viewing, not for printing.) Also, many of the features that are standard at other services, such as image color correction, cost extra at ScanMyPhotos. And some of the digital photos we received from the service had dust speckles.

EverPresent

**PRICE:** 59¢ per scan, plus a \$40 service fee for all orders

This service had an onerous ordering process, took seven weeks to complete the job for us, and then delivered some images that were speckled with dust. EverPresent does offer what it calls "advanced image retouching"—but there's no set cost. You'll need to ask for a price quote for your particular job.



3.

## Future-Proof Your Finds

**FOR LONG-TERM** preservation, the experts we consulted stressed the importance of digitizing photos, film, audio recordings, and documents—and saving all the originals. Digital copies are a fail-safe if originals are damaged or lost. They're also easier to share.

You may be able to digitize your family treasures yourself reasonably easily. In a pinch, a smartphone with a free app such as Adobe Scan can assist you. But an all-in-one printer, if you own one, will often give you higher-quality digital scans and allow you to crop them individually using the photo app on your phone or computer.

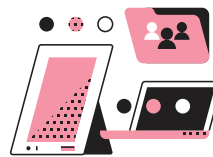
Because hardware may become obsolete (remember Betamax?) and CDs and tapes can degrade, you'll want to save digital copies in the most current formats. If you have image files on CDs, for example, which are becoming less common, it's wise to transfer them to a computer, external hard

drive, or the cloud.

In fact, experts recommend storing your digitized images in all three of the above places. That protects you if your computer dies or is stolen or the cloud service that's storing your files suddenly goes belly up. (Note: To transfer images from a CD, if your computer has no CD drive, you can buy an external device for about \$20.)

Once you have your digitized images, keep the originals in archival-quality boxes, binders, or folders, which are resistant to environmental damage. Not all products marketed as "archival" are the same, so look for terms like "acid-free," "lignin-free," and "neutral-pH" on product labels or in online descriptions. Make sure plastic sleeves and other materials in direct contact with photos have passed the Photographic Activity Test (look for "Passed PAT" on the packaging). Prices vary, but you can find archival boxes and binders for about \$15 to \$45 at specialized retailers like Gaylord and ArchivalMethods.

Finally, choose the safest location for your original items. The Library of Congress advises storing works on paper in a clean, cool (it says "room temperature" or below), relatively dry (about 35 percent humidity) environment. Keep your items away from direct or intense light. Avoid attics, basements, and other spots that may have extremes in temperature or humidity.



4.

## Share With Loved Ones

**GIVING FAMILY MEMBERS**

access to these treasures can deepen emotional connections. And the copies that you make for that purpose serve as additional backups. (For privacy reasons, make sure your relatives are comfortable with their names, faces, and stories being shared.)

One easy option is to create a shared family folder on platforms such as Dropbox, Google Drive, or OneDrive. This allows others to contribute photos and documents, too. Remember that certain services may compress the digital files you upload, making them less



**PRO TIP:**

**Find guidelines from the American Institute for Conservation** on the care and storage of books, art, ceramics, textiles, furniture, metal pieces, and other items at [learning.culturalheritage.org/public](https://learning.culturalheritage.org/public).

suitable for enlarging prints, so if possible, choose to upload them in “original quality.”

A digital photo frame (these generally range from \$100 to \$250) lets you display a rotating series of images in your home. Gift one to a family member and you can send new photos to the frame with your phone. Or buy one for yourself and ask others to add images throughout the year.

You might also think about creating a new physical memento to share. One year, my friends Avi, Alona, and Ariela Fryman created a spiral-bound book filled with their

grandmother’s beloved recipes, all dictated to them because she had not written anything down. The three siblings, along with their cousin Lauren Stephens-Davidowitz, designed the 112-page book themselves, adding anecdotes and photos from other family members, and had the pages printed and assembled by a printer in Long Island, N.Y. The finished product was handed out as a gift during the holiday season to honor their grandmother’s 80th birthday. I was lucky to receive one myself.

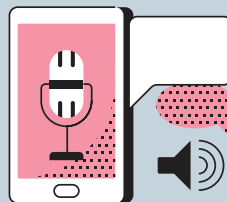
If that kind of project is of

interest to you, photo printing services such as Shutterfly and Snapfish can help you create custom books. Prices start at around \$30 per book.

Museums, historical societies, and universities may be interested in your personal records, too, including photos, letters, and other materials—even if your family members aren’t famous. After discovering the story of her great-great-grandfather’s ownership of nearly 160 acres of land following the adoption of the Civil War-era Homestead Act, Maryland-based author and genealogist

Bernice Bennett created a collection of documents and artifacts related to his legacy, which are now housed at Southeastern Louisiana University. Archivists and preservationists use materials like these to capture details from different times and places.

A plus: In addition to contributing to your area’s recorded history, an item donated to museums and similar organizations can be professionally preserved and secured—and made accessible to you, family members, and researchers for years to come.



## HOW TO CAPTURE STORIES LIVE

**SOMETIMES ALL IT TAKES** to uncover fascinating family tales is a simple question or two. So if you’re planning to see relatives over the holidays, consider recording interviews with them on your smartphone. “I can’t tell you how important those recordings are,” says Ian Lamont, founder of genealogy site EasyGenie, “particularly the ‘why’ explanations—why someone moved to a different state or why she studied a certain subject at school.”

You can do this on your own, but some mobile apps offer appealing extras. For instance, in addition to providing interview prompts (“What are the most important lessons you’ve learned in life?”), the free StoryCorps app lets you upload the audio to the Library of Congress, where it can be accessed for posterity by family members and historians.

Another option, HereAfter AI, provides a virtual interviewer who asks your subjects about their lives and turns the information into recorded, shareable “stories” with uploaded photos. Other family members can then ask an avatar of the interviewee questions, such as “What is your earliest memory?” The free version lets you record up to five stories and share three photos. A paid starter plan (\$4.99 per month) preserves up to 20 stories and 20 photos.





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# Money-Saving Secrets *of* Financial Planners



GETTING YOUR OWN MONEY  
PRO MAY SOUND PRICEY,  
BUT IT COSTS LESS  
THAN YOU MIGHT THINK  
AND CAN SET YOU UP FOR A  
MORE SECURE FUTURE.

BY OCTAVIO BLANCO WITH BETH BRAVERMAN

////////////////////////////////////  
**E**ven though I write about money

for a living, my wife and I still need help managing our finances.

So we've been working with Arthur, a certified financial planner, to make sure we don't overspend and to help us reach our financial goals, which include paying off our house, helping our son pay for college and, eventually, settling into a comfortable retirement.

Many people probably think they don't need or can't afford a financial planner. We were once among them. But it turns out a planner doesn't have to cost a lot. In fact, we feel that Arthur's counsel has been well worth the modest amount of money we're paying him. And in some intangible ways, it has been invaluable.

Here's what our financial planner did to set us on the right track. We've also got some tips to help you find a financial pro to give you the help you need.

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## WHAT DO FINANCIAL PLANNERS DO, ANYWAY?

A financial planner is a professional trained to advise on most aspects of your financial life, from setting a budget to helping plan and save for retirement and other financial goals. (A certified financial planner, or CFP, is someone who has gone through rigorous training and formal testing.)

More broadly, a CFP can be a sounding board and guide for almost any important financial decision, helping you, for example, manage

your debt, invest your savings in an appropriate mix of securities, or determine if you have the right amount of life insurance at a fair price. And if you need specialized advice—say, on complex tax issues or estate planning—he or she can refer you to a trustworthy expert.

Almost as important as what a planner knows is that they're using that knowledge for your benefit and your benefit alone—if, that is, you hire a so-called fiduciary, who is ethically and legally obligated to put your interests ahead of their own. That

may seem a matter of course, but in fact the finance industry has a history of selling financial products that generate large sales commissions but aren't necessarily well suited to a client's needs. (Learn more about fiduciaries in "How to Find a Good Financial Planner," on the facing page.)

And financial planners might offer these services for less money than you think. Many charge a percentage of their client's total assets (and will take on only those with hefty portfolios). But others—including our planner—charge a modest hourly rate (\$100 to \$400) or a flat fee to deliver a particular set of services.

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## THE START OF A FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP

My wife and I first spoke with Arthur in February 2018, a few months after we married. We weren't just beginning a new phase of our lives together; we'd also formed an instant family with my wife's son, who was 7 years old at the time, and wanted to make sure we were on the right path to secure his (and our) financial future.

We found Arthur through the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors, which listed fee-only CFPs within a few miles of our home. We researched his background at BrokerCheck, a database maintained by FINRA, the self-regulatory agency for brokerages. (Some experts recommend [adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://adviserinfo.sec.gov); see the facing page.) Arthur had a clean record, and his firm offered a free, no-obligation 30-minute consultation with no account minimums.

Our first meeting went well beyond our expectations. Instead of a breezy, getting-to-know you session, Arthur outlined how we could become homeowners, our No. 1 goal. When we left his office, we had a plan of action, including a new budget.



# How to Find a Good Financial Planner

Selecting a CFP is one of the most important money decisions you'll make. Here are the steps for finding a great one.

## 1. Consider your priorities.

Nick Bormann, a CFP in Spokane, Wash., says that advisers tend to specialize in a particular type of financial advice or focus on groups of clients with similar financial issues—teachers, tech execs, middle-class pre-retirees, etc.

So begin your search by identifying your key needs and goals. If you want to dig yourself out of debt or boost your savings as you approach retirement, seek someone with experience tweaking budgets and coaching clients to live within them. If you've built up a nest egg but don't know if it's enough to maintain your lifestyle through retirement, choose a planner with experience projecting out long-term financial plans and allocating savings among types of retirement investments.

## 2. Identify planners who fit your needs.

Almost anyone can call themselves a financial adviser. And there's a confusing array of formal accreditations, with an alphabet soup of abbreviated titles to match. For simplicity's sake, you really only need to know one: CFP, or certified financial planner. You can count on a CFP to have completed extensive training and passed a rigorous exam, and to be able to advise you on a wide range of financial areas. Special titles, some more meaningful than others, often get layered on top, such as certified college funding specialist (CCFS).

You can find CFPs in your area by specialty, at FPA PlannerSearch, the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors, the Garrett Planning Network, and the XY Planning Network. Those websites only list

planners who are so-called fiduciaries, which means they're obligated to put your financial interests above their own. To be extra sure, some experts recommend asking your planner to commit to fiduciary status in writing.

## 3. Figure out the costs.

Restrict your search to fee-only advisers, who charge for advice and asset management and don't receive commissions by selling you financial products.

Fee-only advisers use a variety of payment models, says Roxanne Martens, a financial adviser with CGN Advisors in Manhattan, Kan. Some charge an hourly rate, which can range from \$100 to \$400. Many of the same planners will charge a flat fee for a predetermined bundle of services—an average of \$2,400 to evaluate your financial life and map out a comprehensive long-term plan, according to a 2019 study. These models tend to work best if you're looking for help with a specific issue or a plan that you'll carry out on your own, possibly with periodic check-ins.

Other advisers charge clients a percentage of assets under management each year. Their rates generally range from 0.6 to 1.2 percent of the

portfolio size, annually. The percentage is often lower for larger account balances, so this model is generally most cost-effective for investors with more assets and more complicated financial lives. Some planners use only the percentage model and—note—will take you on as a client only if your portfolio meets their minimum.

## 4. Vet the contenders.

Once you've compiled a list of candidates, confirm their credentials at [CFP.net/verify-a-cfp-professional](http://CFP.net/verify-a-cfp-professional). And make sure no disciplinary actions have been taken against them by going to [adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://adviserinfo.sec.gov).

Then schedule a time to speak with two or three of the most promising candidates, ideally in person. Many good financial advisers offer a free initial consultation. Make sure they have experience working with clients in similar circumstances. (Ask them to describe how they handled a situation like yours.) This may be the start of a long relationship, one that will likely touch on very personal issues. So be sure they communicate clearly and listen well, and will be able to keep you motivated to stick to your long-term plans.



whack with our original budget—and we’d become a bit lax with spending, which is especially problematic with inflation hitting a 40-year high.

Arthur helped us create a new budget. Fortunately, we’d long ago done a lot of the initial work, like setting up spending categories. We quickly identified where we were spending too much and where we needed to make changes. We realized, for example, that we were running about \$1,000 over budget on groceries that year. But we’re aiming to bring in other categories—such as eating out at restaurants—under our budget to balance things out.

■ **HE HELPED WITH RETIREMENT PLANNING**

One of the first things Arthur did was pull info from our financial accounts into a single online tool, a kind of digital dashboard for our financial life. It immediately helped us feel more in control of our money. And it enables him to keep track of our assets and model how various market conditions—even a sustained bear market—will affect our retirement outlook.

In short order, Arthur determined that we weren’t saving enough for retirement, outlined how we could get on track, and helped my wife set up a 403(b) retirement savings account. (She’s a healthcare manager at a nonprofit.)

He also noted that I was paying a lot in fees on the investments in my Roth IRA account, where I was stashing some post-tax savings, and helped me pick a less expensive alternative that fit into my broader portfolio—an exchange-traded fund made up of a diversified bundle of stocks.

Now he’s projecting that if we keep up all the contributions we’re currently making, we’ll be on track to sustain our lifestyle in retirement.

■ **HE CONNECTED US WITH A TAX PRO**  
Taxes have been an ever-growing hassle for me and my wife since we

In fact, that one free visit set us on a path to buy a house, boost our savings, and start a 529 college savings plan. That’s not necessarily a typical experience, but it reflects the fact that a little professional financial advice can sometimes go a long way.

**TACKLING THE TOUGH STUFF**

We didn’t see Arthur again until last year. An illness had forced me to take a temporary medical leave from work, during which insurance paid only 60 percent of my salary. We also realized that we’d been under-withholding taxes from our paychecks and would owe the government a sizable chunk of money come tax time. And of course the COVID-19 pandemic added a layer

of financial anxiety to all of this. In short, we were feeling overwhelmed and desperately wanted to get a better handle on our finances.

We officially hired Arthur in July 2021, agreeing to pay him a \$1,000 retainer to get started and \$150 a month for his ongoing services. In exchange, he would dig into our financial lives, look for ways we could make improvements, map out a safe path to a comfortable retirement, and meet with us for about an hour each month to check our progress and address concerns.

**HOW ARTHUR HELPED US**

■ **HE UPDATED OUR BUDGET**  
In the years since we first met Arthur, our evolving lives had fallen out of

married. We'd always done our own taxes with the help of tax software. But filing jointly meant that we owed money at the end of most years, which I hated. And two years ago we underwithheld even more than usual. So we asked Arthur for help.

First, he recommended specific adjustments to the amount we were withholding from our paychecks. Then he connected us with an accounting firm he frequently works with, which went through our recent returns and bills with a fine-tooth comb and turned up some deduction opportunities we hadn't recognized. Lo and behold, this year we got a refund.

#### ■ HE GAVE US A REALITY CHECK ABOUT COLLEGE SAVINGS

One area we're concerned about is sending our now 12-year-old son to college, as we'd only recently started a 529 account for him. According to Arthur's projections, with the cost of college surging we'll have only enough to pay for about a semester of college at a top-ranked private university when

he graduates from high school in five years. But at least we know this now and can start to investigate scholarships, loans, and other options.

#### ■ HE GOT US CHEAPER LIFE INSURANCE

When Arthur looked at our life insurance policies, he found that my wife was paying too much for too little coverage. So he connected us with an insurance broker he trusts, who's in the final stages of setting her up with more coverage at a lower premium.

#### ■ HE MADE US MORE FINANCIALLY COMPATIBLE

My wife and I grew up in families where money was tight, with our parents in a constant state of financial triage. That experience affected us differently, however. My wife tends to be somewhat frugal, while I'm generally looser with money.

Not surprisingly, those tendencies sometimes lead us toward different spending and investing decisions and occasionally cause tension between us. That's where Arthur comes in: Each

month he bridges the gap between our different money-management styles. And he makes time for a quick call if something urgent comes up.

#### ■ HE LOWERED OUR MONEY STRESS LEVEL

The truth is, my wife and I probably could have done a lot of the nuts-and-bolts financial work ourselves. But would we have felt as confident making decisions as we did with Arthur at our side, or as motivated to keep better track of our expenses and our progress toward our goals? Probably not.

And perhaps the most important thing Arthur did was enable us to feel less anxious about money. With life coming at us so fast nowadays, we almost certainly could not have done that alone.



**OCTAVIO BLANCO**  
Blanco, a CR staff writer, covers technology, personal finance, and digital privacy.

## More Places for Low-Cost Money Advice

**There's no substitute** for having a conscientious professional committed to improving your financial well-being. But if your money needs are narrow in scope—say, you simply want a digital budgeting tool to track your spending or basic guidelines for allocating your investments across asset classes—less expensive (and even free) sources of sound financial guidance may fit the bill. Here are some places to look:

■ Your current bank or credit union may offer digital tools that can help you track your spending and highlight areas where you might be able to make changes. You can also

use third-party apps like Mint ([mint.com](http://mint.com)) or You Need a Budget ([ynab.com](http://ynab.com)) for this. If your biggest problem is debt, you may be able to find low-cost guidance from a nonprofit credit counselor. Search for one in your area at the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, at [nfcc.org/agency-finder](http://nfcc.org/).

■ Many companies looking for noncash ways to improve the financial well-being of their employees have started providing free or subsidized access to investing tools and even live one-on-one sessions with financial advisers. "You should absolutely ask your HR department about any and

all advisory or supplemental services," says Lynnette Khalfani-Cox, CEO and co-founder of the advice website [AskTheMoneyCoach.com](http://AskTheMoneyCoach.com).

■ Apps like Betterment and Wealthfront, and Vanguard's Digital Advisor service, use algorithms to recommend a custom investment mix based on factors like your age, your long-term financial goals, and how well you think you can tolerate fluctuating markets without deviating from your long-term plans. With fees of 0.25 to 0.4 percent of assets under management, these platforms are usually less expensive than a human adviser.

# Smarter Retirement Planning

If you're just a couple of years from retirement—or even a few years into it—you might assume that it's too late to benefit from the advice of a financial planner. Not so. "The decisions you make

during this period are crucial," says Bobbi Rebell, a planner and author of "Launching Financial Grownups" (Wiley, 2022). Important areas that a planner can help with include retirement budgeting, minimizing

taxes, maximizing Social Security, real estate decisions, and healthcare planning. For a look at what this advice might involve, we asked Gordon Achtermann, a planner in Fairfax, Va., to describe

how he might advise a couple we'll call Jack and Diane, who are considering retirement this year. Here's their current situation, as we've set it up (with our detailed assumptions in the footnote).

## CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS



Jack 65, Diane 63

**INCOME**  
\$120,000  
a year  
before taxes

**SAVINGS**  
\$800,000  
in 401(k) accounts, to  
which they add \$12,000  
each year

**DEBT**  
After refinancing in 2020  
at a 3% interest rate, they  
owe about \$300,000 on  
their Virginia home, which  
is valued at \$400,000

**CURRENT MONTHLY  
EXPENSES**  
\$6,750

### IF JACK AND DIANE RETIRE NOW



**INCOME** \$5,488/mo.



**EXPENSES** \$6,400/mo.



~\$11,000 ANNUAL DEFICIT

### The Advice

**WAIT 2 YEARS  
TO RETIRE**

**REDUCE THEIR  
LIFE INSURANCE  
COVERAGE**

**MAKE MEASURED  
WITHDRAWALS**

**HOLD OFF ON  
DOWNSIZING**

### The Reason

If Jack and Diane work another two years—until Jack is 67 and Diane is 65—they'll boost their Social Security benefits and the amount of savings they can safely withdraw by more than \$600 a month.

Jack and Diane have life insurance that will replace lost income if one of them dies. They don't need as much in retirement, Achtermann says, just enough to cover the Social Security benefits of the lower-earning spouse. Such a policy will save them about \$300 a month.

A traditional guideline says you can safely withdraw 4 percent of your savings in the first year of retirement. (In today's market, some experts recommend a more conservative 3.5 or even 3 percent rate.) Each year after that, Achtermann would adjust their withdrawals based on spending patterns, market performance, the inflation rate, and other factors.

Jack and Diane found a smaller home for \$275,000, but Achtermann projects the move probably won't yield savings. At today's interest rates, their monthly payment would be about \$85 higher than what they're paying now—without factoring in moving and transaction costs.

### The Result

Increases income  
by \$648 a month

Reduces expenses  
by \$300 a month

Minimizes their  
risk of running out  
of money during  
their lifetime

Avoids a \$1,000  
a year mistake

### IF JACK AND DIANE FOLLOW THE ADVICE



**INCOME** \$6,136/mo.



**EXPENSES** \$6,100/mo.



A BALANCED BUDGET

Additional assumptions: Retirement income of \$5,488/mo. (now) and \$6,136 (in two years) is based on Quick Calculator at ssa.gov and 4% annual withdrawal from assets of \$800K (now) and \$824K (in two years). Preretirement expenses are mortgage (\$1,250/mo.); real estate tax and insurance (\$500); utilities (\$500); out-of-pocket healthcare costs (\$750); misc. spending (\$1,300); federal and state income tax (\$2,000); and life insurance (\$450). Retirement expenses add Medicare premiums (\$350) and additional spending (to \$1,800), and reduce taxes (to \$800). Mortgage savings assume a 30-year loan for \$300K at 3% vs. \$225K at 6%.

# ROAD REPORT



NEWS & EXPERT  
ADVICE TO  
KEEP YOU  
AHEAD OF  
THE CURVE™

## TIP FROM THE TEST TRACK

### How Driving Less Affects Oil Changes

Not driving as much as you used to pre-COVID-19? You still have to be diligent about getting regular oil changes. The need is based on both time and mileage. The best guide is what it says in your owner's manual. Even with low annual miles, change the oil every six months to keep it fresh. Be sure to follow the automaker's guidance and not the recommendation from a business that profits from changing the oil for you.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Get a Tax Break on a Used EV



Thanks to the new Inflation Reduction Act, many used electric vehicles will be eligible for a **tax credit up to \$4,000**, starting in 2023. This is the first time that buyers of used EVs can access such savings. There are a few caveats: The EV can't sell for more than \$25,000, the buyer's income must be **lower than \$75,000 for a single filer and \$150,000 for joint filers**, and the EV must be sold through a dealership that is registered with the IRS.

## THE VITAL STATISTIC

# 2 YEARS

That's how far out of date gas expense estimates can be on new-car window stickers. The prices, which are calculated based on driving 15,000 miles a year, are sent by the EPA to automakers up to two years in advance. So figures for the 2023 model year are based on lower gas prices from November 2021. For more up-to-date costs, scan the QR code on the window sticker.

## RECALL



### General Motors

GM is recalling 484,155 Cadillac Escalade and Escalade ESV, Chevrolet Tahoe and Suburban, and GMC Yukon and Yukon XL SUVs from model years 2021 and 2022. Buckle on their third-row seat belts may have been installed with a deformed rivet and might not properly restrain an occupant in a collision. **WHAT TO DO:** Dealerships will inspect, then replace any faulty parts with upgraded ones, free of charge. For more information, call GM at 866-694-6546.

## MONEY SAVER

### Credit Cards Can Provide Roadside Assistance

You never know when you might get a flat tire, face mechanical difficulty, or just run out of fuel. While a AAA membership is often the go-to for roadside assistance, you may find similar benefits from your current credit card. For example, most

cards from Visa and Mastercard—including some with no annual fee—offer roadside assistance, charging a per-event flat fee that varies depending on the service offered (e.g., locksmith, fuel delivery, tire changes).

**BOTTOM LINE:** Find out what services are available with the card or cards you already have and how much they cost. Of course, keep in mind that AAA offers many other benefits, such as travel planning and hotel discounts.

# Why Hybrids Are a Smart Choice Right Now

If you're not ready for a full-on EV but still want to save on gas, a hybrid is your best bet.

BY KEITH BARRY

I

**IN 2008**, I bought my first hybrid—a used Toyota Prius. I drove more than 400 miles a week for my job, so I welcomed its 43 mpg overall fuel economy. I also loved its geeky charm and rock-solid reliability—so much so that I

bought another, and then another.

Still, I have to admit my Prius had a lot of drawbacks common to early hybrids. It took forever to accelerate onto the highway, cost thousands more than a comparable Corolla, and was too small for a big family.

Since those early days, hybrid technology has improved quite a bit. As an autos reporter at CR, I can assure you that many of the latest hybrid cars, trucks, and SUVs are more affordable, versatile, and fun to drive than their gas-only counterparts, let alone my poky old Prius. Hybrids also offer lower emissions than a gas-only car and without the charging hassles of a pure EV. Sound intriguing? With our expertise, we'll help you determine whether a hybrid is right for you, and share some models we really like.



Ford Maverick Hybrid







## HYBRID BENEFITS

### HIGHER MPG

Most hybrid SUVs get more than 35 mpg, and most hybrid sedans get more than 45 mpg. That's about a 40 percent improvement over non-hybrids, on average.

### EASY TO USE

Unlike a pure electric vehicle, you don't have to plug in a hybrid. Simply refuel at any gas station.


### BETTER TO DRIVE

CR's tests show that the hybrid versions of many cars have more power and smoother acceleration than the gas-only models.




Lexus NX350h

## HYBRID vs. NON-HYBRID



**✓ Kia Sportage**

The Sportage SUV is faster, more efficient, and quieter as a hybrid. An added turbocharger improves pickup when needed, too.

| HYBRID  | ROAD-TEST SCORE | NON-HYBRID      |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>82</b>   |                 | <b>78</b>       |
| <b>35</b> MPG   | FUEL ECONOMY    | <b>25</b> MPG   |
| <b>7.7</b> SEC.   | 0-60 MPH        | <b>10</b> SEC.  |
|  | GREEN CHOICE    | -               |
| <b>\$32,905</b>   | PRICE           | <b>\$31,220</b> |

### How They Work

Hybrids combine a battery pack, an electric motor that drives the car at low speeds, and a gas engine that kicks in for higher speeds, climbing hills, or recharging the battery. Regenerative braking uses the car’s momentum as it slows down or coasts to create extra electricity. “Hybrids are so fuel-efficient because they utilize energy that would otherwise be wasted,” says Jake Fisher, senior director of CR’s Auto Test Center.

On the road, the electric motor adds smooth power, even when the gas engine is doing most of the work. This helps the car feel responsive, especially during around-town driving. The hybrids we’ve tested achieve higher road-test scores, on average, compared with non-hybrids.

Hybrid emissions are also up to one-third lower, according to our calculations. “That saved energy means less gasoline needs to be burned to travel the same number of miles,” says Chris Harto, senior energy policy analyst at CR.

Pure EVs are more efficient, but hybrids will play a key role over the next decade as EV charging infrastructure is built, he says. “They can be a transition technology that helps lower emissions today.”

If the option exists, car buyers should pick the hybrid version, says Fisher. “They get better fuel economy, and are often quicker and quieter, too. In nearly every case, the hybrid version is the better option.”

### The Affordability Factor

Hybrid technology has generally meant comparatively higher sticker prices, though fuel savings can defray costs over time. Today’s average hybrid costs about \$1,700 more, but the Ford Maverick pickup and Lexus NX SUV hybrids actually have lower sticker prices than gas-only versions.

In 2015, CR calculated that most hybrids took eight years to pay for

themselves through fuel savings, with some, including the 2015 Volkswagen Jetta Hybrid and Lexus RX450h, taking more than a decade. Today, improved technology and higher gas prices mean the average payback is four years with \$4-a-gallon gas and 12,000 miles driven a year. At \$3 a gallon, the payback period increases to five years. The more miles driven, the quicker the payback.

You may also save money on repairs and maintenance. Case in point: The Prius is often in the top spot in our reliability surveys. A hybrid’s regenerative brakes create less wear and tear, so braking components can last longer, too. It’s true that replacing a hybrid battery can be a big expense, costing on average around \$7,400, according to RepairPal, but our surveys show such replacements are rare. “Hybrid technology has been very reliable in our studies,” Fisher says.

Hybrid owners tell us in surveys that they’d buy their same car again, and 84 percent of the hybrids we’ve tested

are recommended by CR, compared with 53 percent for all tested models.

### What About a Plug-in Model?

Most hybrids don’t need to be plugged in, but there are a few plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) that can be charged to run on mostly electric power for around 25 to 50 miles before the gas engine takes over. Examples include the BMW X5 xDrive45e, Ford Escape PHEV, Hyundai Tucson PHEV, and Toyota RAV4 Prime. They can be charged at a normal household outlet, and some qualify for federal tax credits, unlike regular hybrids.

They’re ideal for drivers who take short trips and can do most of their driving on electricity, reserving the gas engine for longer trips. PHEV owners who charge every day save money because they can avoid using the gas engine. But a PHEV doesn’t make sense for long commutes.

“If you don’t plug it in, you’re better off buying a regular hybrid, which will usually cost less up front and get slightly better gas mileage than a PHEV after its electric range is depleted,” Harto says.

### The Many Sizes of Hybrids

Those in the market for a larger vehicle will see the most savings from a hybrid. Big SUVs, pickups, and minivans tend to get the worst fuel economy among all gas-powered vehicles, so efficiency improvements can become more meaningful. “Going from 20 mpg to 25 mpg saves a lot more fuel than going from 30 mpg to 35 mpg,” Fisher says.

And there are some great options out there, such as the Toyota Sienna minivan, which seats eight people and registers 36 mpg overall.

#### KEITH BARRY

As a *Consumer Reports* autos journalist, Keith reviews cars and reports on the auto industry.







**TRUCK**

✓ **Ford Maverick Hybrid**

**76** OVERALL SCORE |  SATISFACTION SCORE | **\$27,005** PRICE, WHEN COMPARABLY EQUIPPED

**WHEN YOU'LL START SAVING**


**DAY ONE.** The gas-only Maverick costs more, so you save right away buying the standard hybrid. The gas-only version has greater towing and AWD.

**37** OVERALL MPG | **\$792** FUEL SAVINGS PER YEAR

**THE MAVERICK IS** the first pickup truck to come standard as a hybrid. The ride is civilized, and handling is very secure. Maneuverability, access, and visibility are commendable, and the utilitarian interior has super-easy controls. The 4.5-foot-long bed is deep enough to be useful for weekend chores. FCW and AEB with pedestrian detection come standard. BSW and RCTW are available.



**MID-SIZED SUV**

✓  **Toyota Highlander Hybrid**

**87** OVERALL SCORE |  SATISFACTION SCORE | **\$44,463** PRICE, AS TESTED

**WHEN YOU'LL START SAVING**


**TWO YEARS.** The Hybrid XLE costs \$1,620 more than a comparable gas-only XLE with a V6, but the hybrid version gets 13 mpg more overall.

**35** OVERALL MPG | **\$810** FUEL SAVINGS PER YEAR

**THE HIGHLANDER HYBRID** benefits from the same responsive handling, comfortable ride, pleasant interior, and abundant cargo space that all Highlanders boast—but its overall mpg is a major improvement over the gas-only V6. The downsides of the hybrid are more engine noise and tepid acceleration at highway speeds, and longer braking distances. On any version, the Highlander's third row is pretty tight.



**HATCHBACK**

✓  **Toyota Prius**

**82** OVERALL SCORE |  SATISFACTION SCORE | **\$26,170** PRICE, AS TESTED

**WHEN YOU'LL START SAVING**

**ABOUT SEVEN YEARS.** The hybrid-only Prius costs \$2,810 more than the gas-only Corolla Hatchback, but the Prius gets 16 mpg more and is the one recommended by CR.

**52** OVERALL MPG | **\$410** FUEL SAVINGS PER YEAR

**TODAY'S PRIUS**, the car that made hybrids famous, is leaps and bounds ahead of the original version. It gets a class-leading 52 mpg and has a ton of interior space for people and cargo. Not everyone loves its tech-focused interior, and the payoff period from gas savings is long among comparables, but cheaper, hatchbacks. It often tops our reliability surveys. FCW, AEB, LDW, LKA, and ACC come standard, while BSW and RCTW aren't available on the base trim.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS; TOYOTA

# Hybrids We Don't Love

## 'MILD HYBRIDS'

You might see automakers using the term "mild hybrid" or "48-volt hybrid." These vehicles have advanced electrical systems that may be able to power accessories, recapture energy from braking, or shut off the engine before the car comes to a stop, but they can't be driven on just battery power. Mild hybrid systems include BMW's eBoost, Ram's eTorque, and similar offerings from Audi, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo. The technology provides only minor fuel savings compared with a true hybrid. We don't count them as hybrids in our ratings.



### SMALL SEDAN

## Hyundai Elantra Hybrid

**76** OVERALL SCORE | **76** SATISFACTION SCORE | **\$24,900** PRICE, AS TESTED

#### WHEN YOU'LL START SAVING

**ABOUT FOUR YEARS.** The Elantra Hybrid costs \$1,900 more than the gas-only version, but the hybrid version gets 15 mpg more overall.

**THE ELANTRA STANDS** out in its class for nimble handling, a roomy interior, and simple controls. The ride is a bit stiff and seat comfort is so-so, unless you opt for the Limited trim. And adding fancy options, such as heated seats and adaptive cruise control, won't break the bank. The hybrid version we tested had a smoother ride and a quieter cabin than the gas-only version. FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, and RCTW are all standard.

**48** OVERALL MPG | **\$455** FUEL SAVINGS PER YEAR



## FORD F-150 HYBRID

Both F-150 versions suffer from below-average reliability. The F-150 PowerBoost hybrid we tested registered 20 mpg overall, just 1 mile better than the 2.7-liter turbo V6 non-hybrid, even though it costs \$3,300 more. On the plus side, there's additional towing capacity, and the battery can be used as a generator for job site tools, campsite luxuries, and home appliances during outages.

## FORD ESCAPE AND HYUNDAI SANTA FE HYBRIDS

These SUVs are better with hybrid drivetrains, but they lag behind the competition for predicted reliability and don't receive our recommendation.



## KIA SORENTO HYBRID SUV

At 28 mpg overall, this version gets only 3 mpg more than the conventional Sorento, and it will take 11 years to pay off the initial price difference.



### MIDSIZE SEDAN

## Honda Accord Hybrid

**87** OVERALL SCORE | **87** SATISFACTION SCORE | **\$29,780** PRICE, AS TESTED

#### WHEN YOU'LL START SAVING

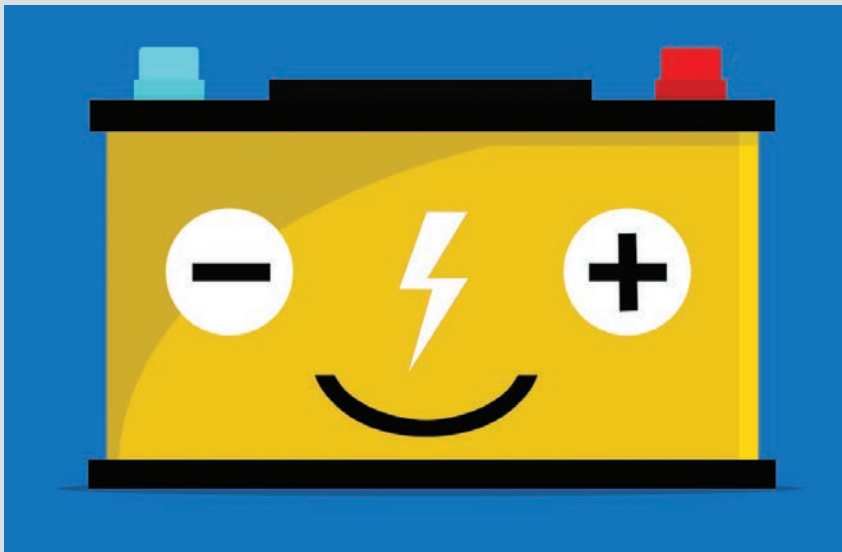
**THREE YEARS.** The Accord Hybrid EX we tested got 47 mpg overall, and it costs \$1,435 more than a comparable gas-only version. The hybrid got 16 mpg more overall.

**47** OVERALL MPG | **\$527** FUEL SAVINGS PER YEAR

**ALL ACCORDS HAVE** a comfortable interior, a spacious trunk, and handling that blends sportiness and smoothness. But the hybrid also benefits from an initial burst of electric power from stops, and does a better job than the gas-only model at isolating road and wind noise. Trunk space is excellent. The only downside is an unintuitive push-button gear selector that's hard to operate quickly or by feel. FCW and AEB are standard, but BSW and RCTW aren't available on lower trims.



# Best Car Batteries for the Money



**IT'S EASY TO** take your car battery for granted—until you try to start your engine and it won't turn over. Heat is harder on batteries than cold, so drivers in southern and southwestern states should have a mechanic test their battery annually after it's two years old. Others should have their battery tested annually after four years. The results will tell you when it's time for a new one.

Letting a battery drain down from lack of use can shorten its life. Keep your battery healthy and extend its life by using a battery maintainer if you don't drive regularly. These affordable devices (prices start at about \$20) plug into an outlet and connect to the battery to keep it fully charged.

Below are the top-performing and best-value batteries from CR's tests in several popular sizes. For full ratings, go to [CR.org/carbatteries](http://CR.org/carbatteries).

## SIZE 24/24F

FITS Many Acura, Honda, Infiniti, Lexus, Nissan, and Toyota vehicles.

### BEST BATTERY

#### NAPA Legend Premium 8424F

Approximate retail \$130

OVERALL SCORE **90**

LIFE

CCA

RESERVE CAPACITY

### BEST VALUE

#### EverStart Maxx-24FN (North)

Approximate retail \$90

OVERALL SCORE **86**

LIFE

CCA

RESERVE CAPACITY

## SIZE 35

FITS Many Japanese nameplates, including Honda, Mazda, Nissan, Subaru, and Toyota vehicles.

### BEST BATTERY

#### Odyssey Extreme Series 35-PC1400T\*

Approximate retail \$305

OVERALL SCORE **99**

LIFE

CCA

RESERVE CAPACITY

### BEST VALUE

#### Bosch 35-640B

Approximate retail \$125

OVERALL SCORE **85**

LIFE

CCA

RESERVE CAPACITY

## SIZE 48 (H6)

FITS Many Audi, BMW, Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, GMC, Jeep, Mercedes-Benz, Mini, Volkswagen, and Volvo vehicles.

### BEST BATTERY

#### Odyssey Performance 48-720\*

Approximate retail \$260

OVERALL SCORE **91**

LIFE

CCA

RESERVE CAPACITY

### BEST VALUE

#### Interstate Mega-Tron Plus MTP-48/H6

Approximate retail \$160

OVERALL SCORE **78**

LIFE

CCA

RESERVE CAPACITY

## SIZE 51R

FITS Many models from Honda, Mazda, and Nissan.

### BEST BATTERY & BEST VALUE

#### Duracell 51R

Approximate retail \$105

OVERALL SCORE **81**

LIFE

CCA

RESERVE CAPACITY

This traditional lead-acid Duracell is a rare example of a battery being both the top-ranked and the best value in the category. The second-ranked in this category is the Super Start Premium 51RPRM, with an Overall Score of 80. It's available exclusively at O'Reilly Auto Parts.

## SIZE 65

FITS Large cars, trucks, and sport/utility vehicles, including those from Dodge, Ford, and Lincoln.

### BEST BATTERY

#### Delphi BU9065 MaxStart AGM Premium 65\*

Approximate retail \$200

OVERALL SCORE **91**

LIFE

CCA

RESERVE CAPACITY

### BEST VALUE

#### ACDelco Professional Gold 65PG

Approximate retail \$125

OVERALL SCORE **89**

LIFE

CCA

RESERVE CAPACITY

ILLUSTRATION: KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS



### SMALL SUVs

## ✓ Honda HR-V

Pleasant and Practical, but Lacks Pep

69

OVERALL SCORE

### ROAD-TEST SCORE 69

**HIGHS** Straightforward controls, fuel economy, roomy interior for its size

**LOWS** Stiff ride, noisy cabin, slow acceleration

**POWERTRAIN** 158-hp, 2.0-liter 4-cylinder engine; continuously variable transmission; all-wheel drive

**FUEL** 27 mpg on regular

**PRICE** \$23,650-\$28,950 base price + \$1,245 destination charge  
**Total MSRP as tested** \$28,790

**WE LIKE THE** redesigned HR-V's roomy interior, user-friendly controls, and strong fuel economy. But it accelerates slowly, the cabin is noisy, and the ride is stiff. These shortcomings make it a far cry from the Subaru Crosstrek, a main rival.

The cabin has been significantly upgraded with more soft-touch pieces throughout. Controls, including the touchscreen infotainment system, are easy to use, thanks to physical buttons and knobs. We love the solid "click-click" when we turn the climate knobs.

There's tons of headroom up front, and the elevated driving position gives a good view out over the hood. The front seats are initially comfortable, but the bottom cushion loses support after about 30 minutes. The rear seat has lots of knee room and decent leg support; fold

it down and there's enough space to fit a mountain bike without taking the wheels off—impressive.

That's where the good stuff ends. The biggest sticking point is the little SUV's severe lack of oomph. It works fine when you're not in hurry, but trying to accelerate quickly results in high (and loud) engine revs with minimal propulsion. The HR-V took 11.1 seconds from 0 to 60 mph. That's really slow.

Ride comfort has improved, but that's faint praise considering how rough the old HR-V rode. The new version does well over smaller bumps, but the suspension gets overwhelmed by larger hits and higher-speed impacts.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, LDW, and LKA are standard. BSW and RCTW are standard on higher trims, but they are not offered on the base LX.

### COMPACT LUXURY CARS

## Mercedes-Benz C-Class

Sporty Sedan Hurt by Controls and Ride

61

OVERALL SCORE

### ROAD-TEST SCORE 73

**HIGHS** Handling, acceleration, fuel economy, front-seat comfort, quality fit and finish

**LOWS** Stiff ride, long stopping distances, unintuitive controls

**POWERTRAIN** 255-hp, 2.0-liter turbo 4-cylinder engine; 9-speed automatic transmission; AWD

**FUEL** 29 mpg on premium

**PRICE** \$43,550-\$49,500 base price + \$1,050 destination charge  
**Total MSRP as tested** \$59,770

**THE NEW C-CLASS** builds on the sportiness of the previous version, adding a polished powertrain and honed handling. We appreciate the beautiful cabin, comfortable front seats, and improved fuel economy. But the gimmicky controls and a spongy brake pedal mar what is otherwise a splendid-driving sedan. The below-average reliability of new Mercedes models also pulls down its Overall Score.

We certainly enjoyed our C300's smooth, punchy turbo four-cylinder. It gives plenty of invigorating power anytime you need it. The powertrain benefits from a 48-volt mild-hybrid system that contributes to the car's commendable 29 mpg overall, albeit on more expensive premium fuel.

The C-Class feels tight and controlled through turns, aided by our tested car's optional sport suspension. We found the steering effort a

bit light, though, and the car proved short on outright tire grip, with stopping distances a good 10 feet longer than comparable sports sedans. The downside to the stiffer AMG suspension is an uncomfortably firm ride, with some bumps feeling like they punch right into the cabin.

The interior ambience comes close to Mercedes' more expensive sedans, with lots of padded areas and chrome accents. But the brand's latest infotainment system gives you tech overload. Just about every media and climate function runs through the large screen, and the finger-sliding controls on the steering wheel for volume and cruise control require too much dexterity to adjust while driving.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, and BSW come standard. RCTW and LDW are only optional, which we find disappointing.



SPORTS CARS

**✓ Toyota GR86**

Redesigned, but Still a Corner-Carving Joy

**77**

OVERALL SCORE

**THE SECOND-GENERATION** GR86 has curvier styling, a slightly more powerful engine, and even more enthusiast-focused suspension tuning. But given the little sports coupe's harsh ride and elevated road noise, this is a car for someone who prizes sharp handling above all else—not a person who just wants cute transportation.

Agility is the main event: The GR86 takes on the twisties with ease, thanks to its small size, taut suspension, and direct steering. Its rear-drive layout lets you drift through corners “steering” with the throttle, which is great fun on a track. Plus, the GR86 transmits tons of feedback to the driver about grip limits, making it an easy car to drive with vigor.

The GR86 doesn't shine on long-distance road trips, however. The ride is stiff and choppy, and hitting larger

**ROAD-TEST SCORE 83**

**HIGHS** Handling, acceleration, braking, controls, fuel economy

**LOWS** Stiff ride, noise, minuscule rear seat, difficult to get in and out, compromised outward views

**POWERTRAIN** 228-hp, 2.4-liter 4-cylinder engine; 6-speed manual transmission; rear-wheel drive

**FUEL** 28 mpg on regular

**PRICE** \$27,900–\$32,000 base price + \$1,095 destination charge  
**Total MSRP as tested** \$32,206

bumps will feel like someone just punched you in the gut. There's also an unrelenting barrage of tire rumble and engine drone—good luck talking to your passenger while you're cruising on the highway. Small-item storage is scarce, and the center armrest is poorly placed.

The new, larger four-cylinder delivers greater thrust and better throttle response at lower revs. The six-speed manual enhances the fun quotient vs. the available automatic, even though the shifts are a bit notchy and the clutch takeup point requires concentration.

There's a tiny rear seat that only a child would want to use. Outward visibility is challenging due to short windows, thick rear pillars, and the optional ducktail spoiler. Only versions equipped with the automatic get FCW, AEB, and LDW.



FIRST DRIVE

FULL-SIZED PICKUP TRUCKS

**Ford F-150 Lightning**

A Shockingly Quick and Capable EV

**WE LIKE** Quick acceleration, quiet cabin, mostly smooth ride, large front trunk

**WE DON'T LIKE** Slow steering, complex infotainment screen

**POWERTRAIN** 580-hp, dual electric motors; 1-speed direct drive; four-wheel drive

**RANGE** 320 miles

**PRICE** \$46,974–\$96,874 base price + \$1,795 destination charge  
**Total MSRP as driven** \$79,269

**AFTER A WEEK** of driving an F-150 Lightning electric pickup, we came away impressed. It accelerates with serious force and rides better than any F-150 before it. At the same time, it's utterly quiet, and most of the controls aren't overdone with high-tech gimmicks. We rented this version from Ford for our First Drive review. We just purchased our own Lightning and will soon begin testing it.

With 580 hp at our disposal, we figured the Lightning would be quick. But we were struck by its pin-you-in-your-seat thrust off the line. There's even decent power left in reserve for bursts of speed on the highway, which isn't always the case with EVs.

Thanks to an independent rear suspension with coil springs, the Lightning delivers a smoother ride than the regular F-150, with its simpler

solid rear axle and leaf springs. The Lightning also hugs the road better, due to a lower center of gravity from the large battery. Still, the slow steering remains.

The regular F-150 already stands out for its quiet cabin, but the Lightning is even more hushed, with only faint road noise and electric-motor whine. Most of the controls are common F-150 stuff, but the 15.5-inch infotainment touchscreen takes some getting used to, with many tasks requiring two or more taps on the screen. Lower trims get a smaller screen with more physical buttons, which we prefer. A large front trunk occupies the space where the gas engine would normally reside.

All Lightnings come with FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, reverse automatic emergency braking, LDW, and LKA.



**Ratings** > **Diverse Choices** This month's group covers lots of ground, from a pleasant small SUV and a thrilling sports car to a luxury compact sports sedan.

| Make + Model | Overall Score | Survey Results        |                    | Road-Test Results |             |                          |           |       |      |              |                  |                               |                              | Active Safety Features     |  |     |                 |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-----------|-------|------|--------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--|-----|-----------------|
|              |               | Predicted reliability | Owner satisfaction | Road-test score   | Overall mpg | Seat comfort, front/rear | Usability | Noise | Ride | Fit + finish | Routine handling | Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph | Acceleration, 0-60 mph, sec. | Dry braking, 60-0 mph, ft. | Suitcases + duffels/ Cargo volume, cu. ft. | FCW | AEB, pedestrian |

**SUVs \$25,000-\$35,000**

|                              |    |   |   |    |    |       |   |   |   |   |   |      |      |     |      |   |   |   |   |
|------------------------------|----|---|---|----|----|-------|---|---|---|---|---|------|------|-----|------|---|---|---|---|
| ✓ Subaru Crosstrek 2.0L      | 86 | ↑ | ↑ | 87 | 29 | ↑ / ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | 54.5 | 10.2 | 125 | 27.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ✓ Nissan Rogue Sport 2.0L    | 77 | ↑ | ↓ | 72 | 26 | ↑ / ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | 52.5 | 10.3 | 134 | 24.5 | S | S | S | S |
| ✓ Chevrolet Trailblazer 1.3T | 76 | ↑ | ↓ | 66 | 27 | ↑ / ↑ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | 54.0 | 9.5  | 133 | 24.0 | S | S | - | 0 |
| ✓ Mazda CX-30 2.5L           | 70 | ↑ | ↓ | 64 | 27 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | 54.0 | 8.7  | 133 | 21.5 | S | S | S | 0 |
| ✓ Honda HR-V 2.0L            | 69 | ↓ | ↓ | 69 | 27 | ↑ / ↑ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | 54.0 | 11.1 | 130 | 28.5 | S | S | S | 0 |
| ✓ Toyota Corolla Cross 2.0L  | 68 | ↓ | ↓ | 67 | 28 | ↑ / ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | 58.0 | 9.3  | 128 | 26.0 | S | S | S | 0 |
| ✓ Hyundai Kona 2.0L          | 67 | ↓ | ↓ | 71 | 26 | ↑ / ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | 56.0 | 11.1 | 129 | 22.5 | S | S | 0 | S |
| Volkswagen Taos 1.5T         | 55 | ↓ | ↓ | 74 | 26 | ↑ / ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | 53.0 | 9.4  | 130 | 31.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jeep Compass 2.4L            | 45 | ↓ | ↓ | 56 | 24 | ↑ / ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | 53.5 | 9.8  | 137 | 27.5 | S | S | S | S |
| Kia Seltos 2.0L              | 43 | ↓ | ↓ | 72 | 28 | ↑ / ↑ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | 55.0 | 9.0  | 128 | 28.0 | S | S | S | 0 |

**SEDANS \$45,000-\$55,000**

|                         |    |   |   |    |    |       |   |   |   |   |   |      |     |     |     |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------|----|---|---|----|----|-------|---|---|---|---|---|------|-----|-----|-----|---|---|---|---|
| ✓ Infiniti Q50 3.0T     | 87 | ↑ | ↓ | 85 | 22 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | 56.0 | 5.7 | 126 | 2+1 | S | - | S | S |
| ✓ Audi A4 2.0T          | 85 | ↑ | ↓ | 88 | 27 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | 53.5 | 6.3 | 135 | 2+2 | S | S | 0 | 0 |
| ✓ Lexus ES350 3.5L      | 83 | ↑ | ↓ | 84 | 25 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | 53.0 | 6.9 | 132 | 3+1 | S | S | S | S |
| ✓ BMW 330i 2.0T         | 80 | ↓ | ↑ | 86 | 29 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | 54.0 | 6.4 | 129 | 2+2 | S | S | 0 | 0 |
| ✓ Acura TLX 2.0T        | 75 | ↑ | ↓ | 67 | 23 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | 54.0 | 6.5 | 136 | 2+2 | S | S | S | 0 |
| Mercedes-Benz C300 2.0T | 61 | ↓ | ↑ | 73 | 29 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | 53.0 | 6.7 | 141 | 2+2 | S | S | S | S |
| Cadillac CT5 2.0T       | 57 | ↓ | ↓ | 78 | 24 | ↑ / ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | 54.0 | 7.7 | 127 | 2+1 | S | S | 0 | S |
| Volvo S60 2.0T          | 57 | ↓ | ↓ | 71 | 26 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | 53.5 | 7.3 | 125 | 2+1 | S | S | S | S |
| Alfa Romeo Giulia 2.0T  | 50 | ↓ | ↑ | 70 | 27 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ | 53.0 | 6.7 | 136 | 1+2 | S | S | S | S |

**SPORTY CARS \$25,000-\$35,000**

|                          |    |   |   |    |    |       |   |   |   |   |   |      |     |     |     |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------|----|---|---|----|----|-------|---|---|---|---|---|------|-----|-----|-----|---|---|---|---|
| ✓ Toyota GR86 2.4L       | 77 | ↓ | ↑ | 83 | 28 | ↑ / ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | 59.0 | 6.3 | 119 | 1+2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ✓ Honda Civic Si 1.5T    | 72 | ↓ | ↑ | 74 | 32 | ↑ / ↑ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | 57.5 | 7.3 | 134 | 3+1 | S | S | S | 0 |
| Volkswagen Golf GTI 2.0T | 67 | ↓ | ↑ | 85 | 28 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | 56.0 | 6.4 | 127 | 1+3 | S | S | S | S |
| Mini Cooper S 2.0T       | 65 | ↓ | ↓ | 80 | 30 | ↑ / ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | ↑ | 56.0 | 7.2 | 130 | 1+1 | S | S | - | - |
| Subaru WRX 2.4T          | 64 | ↓ | ↑ | 83 | 25 | ↑ / ↓ | ↑ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↑ | 59.0 | 5.8 | 124 | 2+2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

> Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at [CR.org/cars](https://www.cars.com). When you're ready to buy, configure the vehicle and find the best price in your area by clicking the green "View Pricing Information" button on the model's dedicated page.

**HOW WE TEST:** Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score**, which factors in **road-test results**, **predicted reliability**, **owner satisfaction**, and

**advanced safety**, which includes crash-test results and the availability of crash-prevention features, such as forward collision warning, automatic

emergency braking, pedestrian detection, and blind spot warning. A dash (-) means no such safety system is offered; 0 means that it's optional on at least some

trim levels; S means that the feature is standard on all trims. We deduct points if a model's gear selector lacks fail-safes to prevent the vehicle from rolling away.

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# Holiday Feast Fails

We're saying 'thanks, but no thanks' to these Turkey Day treats.

## (Very) Rare Birds

This gives a whole new meaning to the words "frozen dinner."

Submitted by Andrea Bitterling, El Cajon, CA



## The Not-So-Great Pumpkin Deal

Even Charlie Brown would laugh at these savings.

Submitted by Fred Mackler, Easthampton, MA

SAVE \$0.00



## Where's the Pumpkin?

We'd like more than just a touch of it in our pie, please.

Submitted by Barry C., Lansing, MI



## Our Cows Don't Take a Holiday

No worries that this store will run out of milk on Thanksgiving.

Submitted by Victor Soukoulis, Charlottesville, VA



Be on the lookout for goofs and glitches like these. Share them with us—by email to [SellingIt@cro.consumer.org](mailto:SellingIt@cro.consumer.org) or by mail to Selling It, Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703—and we might publish yours. Please include key information, such as your name and location.

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