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Contents

CONSUMER REPORTS DECEMBER 2013

Volume 78 No. 12

TOP BRANDS Audi is now among the 10 most reliable car nameplates. See page 60.

SPECIAL SECTION

18 | **10 top electronics**

These standouts for performance and innovation make great gifts for everyone on your list.

21 | **Where to shop**

Ratings page 22

23 | **TVs**

Ratings page 25

26 | **Smart phones**

Ratings pages 27-28

30 | **Tablets**

Ratings page 32

33 | **Computers**

Ratings pages 35-36

PLUS Where to buy computers.

37 | **Printers**

Ratings page 38

39 | **Cameras**

Ratings pages 40-41

42 | **Media players**

Ratings page 42

43 | **Headphones**

Ratings page 43

44 | **E-book readers**

45 | **Best brands**

FEATURES



48 | **Holiday cleaning**

Common cures for stains, sap, and other messes.

50 | **Washers & dryers**

How to get the most from your machines.

Ratings page 52

LAB TESTS

53 | **Pro-style ranges**

Two new models arrive at Costco.

54 | **3D printers**

They're cutting-edge but costly.

54 | **Built-in fridge**

What do you get for \$10,000?

55 | **Coffeemakers**

You can skip the glitz and get a good cup of coffee.

Ratings page 55

56 | **Cordless phones**

Four reasons you might still need one.

Ratings page 57



Continued on next page



DEPARTMENTS

5 | Letters

5 | Ask our experts

6 | Viewpoint

Artificial joints need warranties.

6 | From our president

7 | Up front

- Ham for the holidays.
- **CLAIM CHECK** A no-scrub carpet cleaner.
- It pays to seize the sunrise.
- Can No No replace your razor?
- Pack like a pro.
- **CLAIM CHECK** A pot that doesn't require stirring.
- Mall snacks from hell.
- How to prepare a car for winter.
- The Pebble smart watch: Back to the future.



14 | Money

Online shopping dangers to avoid.

15 | Health

Best health developments of the year.

16 | Safety alerts

73 | About us

74 | Index

75 | Selling it

12 | Up front extra

Celebrate the season with our wine picks.

CARS



59 | Holiday car safety

How secure is your car while you are at the mall?

60 | Most reliable new cars

Several non-Japanese makers crack the top 10 list.

67 | Sports sedan face-off

The Infiniti Q50 vs. Lexus IS.

70 | Auto Test Extra

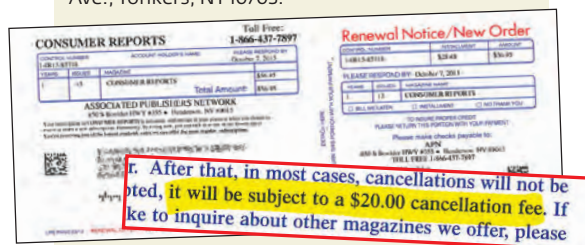
Road tests of the Fiat 500L and the Nissan Versa Note.

Readers beware

As a public-service organization, we take our customers very seriously. So we were concerned to find that some readers have been receiving offers for subscription renewals or new orders from companies that are not authorized to market on behalf of CONSUMER REPORTS. And some have even inflated the price of the annual subscription. These companies go by several different names—Allied Publishers Services, Associated Publishers Network, Magazine Payment Services, National Magazine Services, and Publishers Billing Center, to name a few.

We, along with several other magazine publishers who have experienced similar problems, are looking into the matter and are anxious to get to the bottom of it. For renewal forms, the absence of an expiration date could mean you're dealing with an unauthorized marketer. And if there is an expiration date, it should match the expiration date on your magazine label. Also, check the fine print for cancellation fees, another red flag. CONSUMER REPORTS can't guarantee that third-party agents with whom we have no established relationship will send us the orders they've received.

You can help us by reporting any suspicious mailings (include samples if possible) to us via e-mail at letusknow@cr.consumer.org or by mail to Consumer Reports, Attn: Let Us Know, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703.



TAKE NOTICE Here's a sample of an unauthorized mailing with cancellation fee in small type on reverse.

Coming in January

Best and worst cell-phone carriers, plus top smart phones; last-minute gifts; refrigerators; paper towels; and lightbulbs.

Who we are

Consumer Reports

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

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

How to reach us Write to us at Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703-1057, attn: Customer Service. • To send a letter to the editor, go to ConsumerReports.org/lettertoeditor. • For news tips and story ideas, go to ConsumerReports.org/tips. • E-mail submissions for Selling It to SellingIt@cro.consumer.org. • For subscription information, go to ConsumerReports.org/magazine or call 800-666-5261. See page 73 for more details.

Ratings

We rate products using these symbols:

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor



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



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



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



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

ON YOUR MIND

Drowsy danger

"Crash Course on Safety" (October 2013) was excellent but omitted one major risk: driver drowsiness. That leads to roughly 40,000 non-fatal crashes and 1,550 deaths each year.

—Greg Schwed New York



Car names

As a proud Edsel owner, I must correct some information in the October 2013 issue. The Edsel was a separate nameplate within a division of the Ford Motor Company, and therefore not a Ford. (Your January 1958 issue refers to it correctly.) And the name suggested

by poet Marianne Moore was not "Utopian Turtle" but rather "Utopian Turtletop."

—Glenn Danks Lexington, VA
We stand corrected.

Two names that did get by the people who are supposed

to check are Chevy Nova and AMC Matador (Up Front, October 2013). In Spanish, they mean "doesn't go" and "killer" (not just of bulls), respectively.

—Lawrence Bulk Mullica Hill, NJ

Though the Chevy Nova is sometimes cited as a naming mistake, General Motors says it sold well in key Latin American countries.

Corrections In rankings of health insurance (November 2013), Group Health Cooperative in Washington should have received an overall score of 88, making it the second-highest ranked Medicare plan in the state and the 12th ranked Medicare plan nationally. The error was due to inaccurate data from the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

Our report on generators (October 2013) cited the wrong Briggs & Stratton model as having a voltage drop in our power-quality test. The text of the story should have listed the stationary model 40445 instead of the 30470, a portable.

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO
ConsumerReports.org/lettertoeditor.

Ask our experts

Q In "The Safe Way to Get Rid of Expired Drugs" (Up Front, October 2013), you say first that flushing is a bad idea for a variety of reasons, and then cite an FDA list of medications that should be flushed once expired. Which is it?

—Jeff Dominick Townsend, MA

There are a small number of medicines that may be especially harmful and, in some cases, fatal with just one dose if they are used by someone other than the person prescribed. Thus, a few medicines have specific instructions indicating they should be flushed down the sink or toilet as soon as they are no longer needed, and if they cannot be disposed of through a medicine take-back program.

Q How can I remove the scent of body lotion from cotton clothes? I've tried soaking in white vinegar, Borax, and/or baking soda before washing, but the smell remains. And dry cleaning all of it would cost too much.

—Judy Robin New York

Sorry, but traditional dry cleaning is the way to go—you need a solvent (e.g., PERC) to get the perfume into solution. Sometimes you can get rid of light fragrance by airing the garment outside, but using just water won't do the trick.

Q What is the best rechargeable battery? You mention they're the "greener choice," but does that mean they don't provide value for money compared with buying the best disposable batteries?

—Matt Markovina Greenfield, WI

Rechargeable AA batteries usually score on a par with standard alkaline batteries per charge. A benefit of rechargeables is that you can select the capacity of the battery suitable for its use. For "high drain" applications such as digital cameras, you can buy higher



DRUG SAFETY Most medications can be turned in as part of a medicine take-back program.

capacity rechargeable batteries (2400mAh or more). What is unknown about rechargeables is how many charge/recharge cycles a pair offers—manufacturers claim "thousands." We hope to verify that number in future testing.

Q My husband is 6 feet tall, and we find that the distance between the top of his head and the roof in most sedans is roughly 2 inches. What should the distance be for optimum safety?

—Susan Berowitz Mountainside, NJ

Two inches of head room is fairly typical, and adequate. Keep in mind that seat belt pretensioners deploy during a crash, pulling you down into the seat. And the headliner is designed to provide some protection in case of impact. The best bet is to look for a car

that does well in Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) roof strength testing.

Q I read your article on saving printer ink ("The Case of the Disappearing Ink," August 2013) and will now start leaving my printer on. However, does it make more sense to buy a printer using one black cartridge and one color cartridge, or one that uses a cartridge for each color?

—Mary Carnahan Mingo Junction, OH

Printers with individual color cartridges usually have lower ink costs than ones that use a tri-color cartridge. But check our Ratings for ink cost per month to compare which models are best.

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO
ConsumerReports.org/askourexperts.

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

WHERE WE STAND

Artificial joints should have warranties

THE ISSUE Unlike vacuums and cell phones, the vast majority of hip and knee implants aren't backed by warranties.

OUR TAKE Every major manufacturer of the devices has recalled a product or a line of products during the past decade. In fact, about 18 percent of hip and 8 percent of knee replacements require surgical revisions to fix defects, costing patients and insurers hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

Consumers Union has called on the manufacturers to provide at least a 20-year warranty that would entitle patients to have



defective devices replaced at no cost. There should also be a clear process to follow in the event that the joint fails prematurely.

To learn more or share your implant story, go to SafePatientProject.org.

40 million

That's the number of used cars sold last year, roughly three times the sales of new ones. The tally is a driving force behind a new feature at fuelconomy.gov that allows dealers (and consumers) to print labels detailing the gas economy for vehicles sold since 1984. Consumers Union applauds the new labels and will urge the Environmental Protection Agency to make them a requirement if used-car dealers choose not to use them.

TAKING ACTION

Update: Arsenic in your food

In September, the Food and Drug Administration released results of its tests for arsenic in more than 1,300 samples of rice and rice products. Their findings were similar to what we reported last year—significant levels of inorganic arsenic, a carcinogen, can be found in almost every category of rice product. The results underscore the importance of dealing with the long-term effects of arsenic exposure.

"The FDA's data reinforce the need for a standard to be set for arsenic in rice and rice products," says Urvashi Rangan, Ph.D., director of Consumer Safety and Sustainability at Consumer Reports. "In the meantime, to limit

exposure, consumers can moderate their consumption. We agree with the FDA that consumers should also diversify the grains that they eat, especially children, infants, and pregnant women."

The agency actually found higher levels of arsenic than CONSUMER REPORTS did in some rice beverages. That supports our previous advice that children younger than 5 shouldn't have rice milk as part of a daily diet.

The FDA is currently assessing the health risks posed by arsenic in those products.



ON THE RECORD

"Put simply, Chase was charging consumers for services they did not receive."

—RICHARD CORDRAY, DIRECTOR OF THE CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU, in a Sept. 19 statement regarding enforcement actions taken against Chase Bank and JPMorgan Chase for illegal billing practices surrounding credit-monitoring services.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Speak. Listen. Change.

In the early 1970s, I quit my job and traveled to many parts of the world, engaging with different people, cultures, and living standards. Flying home across the Pacific, I realized what I would do with the rest of my life.



I was thinking about how most people believe that large, powerful institutions are exploiting them, and often, they're right, and I wanted to do something about it. So began a career path that led me to Consumer Reports.

People far too often are still being exploited by large, powerful institutions, but years of work by consumer groups—Consumer Reports among them—have given them a voice and access to critical information that once was hidden.

The more you know. Consumer Reports believes that the more good information you have, the less you'll pay, the healthier and safer you'll be, and the smarter choices you'll make. That's why we've worked so hard for up-front disclosure of terms and fees for banking products, accessible databases of problem products, Ratings of hospitals, and greater transparency generally. Yes, there's a glut of information now, and it can be a burden to wade through it. But tapping reliable sources with current information can mean the difference between a good decision and a bad one.

Do tell. You're the source of much of that critical information, and we hope you'll speak up even more. Your reports to saferproducts.gov help the government and manufacturers investigate hazardous products; your complaints to consumerfinance.gov about financial products help the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau in its goal to see that consumers are being treated fairly; and your reports to nhtsa.gov about car problems help the government determine whether a safety defect exists.

Finally, your experiences are invaluable to Consumer Reports. When the White House wanted to include consumers in a press conference on health care, for example, they turned to us, and we turned to our database of stories. Three of you were invited to stand with the president as he made his address. Talk about impact. To share your story, go to www.stori.es.

Jim Guest
JIM GUEST
President

Up front

Tips, trends, everyday products

Ham for the holidays

WHEN YOU'RE SERVING a holiday dinner, what's better than having the main course arrive dressed up for the occasion? That's the allure of a spiral-cut ham.

We tasted six and found one that was clearly best of the bunch. (Note: It wasn't from Harry & David, a mail-order biggie whose website says that "dinner guests won't be able to help but swoon" at the very scent of its ham. That ham turned out to be somewhat dry and chewy.) Our winner: HoneyBaked, which was flavorful and consistently moist and tender. The Ratings give details from taste tests in which our experts sampled three hams per brand.

A fancy appearance isn't the only reason

these hams are an occasional treat. All score just fair for nutrition, based on calories, fat, sodium, sugars, and other nutrients. Per 3-ounce serving, they have up to 160 calories, 10 grams of fat, and 1 to 4 grams of sugars. Applewood Farms is lowest in calories and fat; Omaha Steaks, highest. (Numbers differ based on how pigs are raised and processed.) The hams' main nutritional problem is sodium—up to 1,020 milligrams per serving in top-rated HoneyBaked, almost half of the recommended daily limit.

All of the tested hams are sold online. HoneyBaked is also sold in 400-plus company stores; Omaha Steaks, in more than 80; Harry & David, in about 50; and Smith-

field, in certain supermarkets. If you can find a store, buy it there: Shipping can more than double a ham's cost. Hams should arrive nestled in cold packs or dry ice. One delivery we received from Applewood Farms wasn't, and we had to request another shipment, which arrived properly chilled.

Bottom line. HoneyBaked was best. Others might please for different reasons. If you like less-sweet ham, consider Smithfield. Want the fruit and brown-spice flavors of apple pie? Try Applewood Farms. Love smoked meats? Pick Hickory Farms. HoneyBaked has a sugary coating; Smithfield has no coating; Applewood Farms and Hickory Farms have glazes that you can add.

Ratings

All tested products In taste order.

HONEYBAKED
The world's best ham

EXCELLENT

✓ **HoneyBaked Half**
PRICE \$74
SHIPPING* \$16 to \$36
WEIGHT 9 lb.

Flavorful and complex, with balanced tastes of clove, fruit, and brown sugar that complement ham's natural flavors. Consistently moist and tender. Reheated well; didn't dry out.

Smithfield

VERY GOOD

✓ **Smithfield Brown Sugar Cured**
PRICE \$80
SHIPPING* \$0 to \$25
WEIGHT 8 to 10 lb.

Fairly flavorful but not especially sweet or complex. Ham flavor complemented by strong salt and smoke. Slightly sour. Texture varied from ham to ham.



VERY GOOD

✓ **Applewood Farms**
PRICE \$35
SHIPPING* \$17 to \$55
WEIGHT 9 lb.

Flavor varied from ham to ham, but moist and (at its best) sweet, with fruit and brown-spice flavors. Low smoke, not very complex. Included glaze enhances flavors and balances salt.



VERY GOOD

✓ **Hickory Farms HoneyGold**
PRICE \$76
SHIPPING* \$10 to \$35
WEIGHT 7 to 9 lb.

Flavor and texture varied from ham to ham. Big, ashy smoke dominates. Included glaze improves flavor and balances smokiness.



GOOD

✓ **Omaha Steaks**
PRICE \$80
SHIPPING* \$18 to \$58
WEIGHT 7 lb.

Sweet, with brown-spice, fruit, and honey flavors. Sweetness more noticeable than subtle smoke and salt. Tough, chewy rind, slight off-taste like warmed-over meat.

✓ Recommended



GOOD

✓ **Harry & David**
PRICE \$70
SHIPPING* \$13 to \$33
WEIGHT 7.5 lb.

Strong smoke and light sweetness indicate a lack of balance and complexity. Dry and chewy, especially in rind. Included glaze adds complexity and balances salt.

*To New York. Costs vary depending on number of hams, delivery speed, and delivery location.



CLAIM CHECK

A no-scrub carpet cleaner

The claim. The website for Stream Clean carpet cleaner promises that you'll need "no bending and no scrubbing" to remove stains and odors, including those from pets. "Just point and stream, and your carpet gets clean!" We paid \$10 plus \$16 shipping for two 15-ounce cans and a mini black light that makes stains "easy to locate!"

The check. We made quite a mess, staining light-colored carpet with red wine, coffee, tomato sauce, French dressing, and permanent marker. On those stains, we pitted Stream Clean against our top-rated stain remover, Bissell OxyPro, about \$7 for a 14-ounce can. We also let two staffers' dogs create their own stains, placing carpet under them at appropriate moments. On those stains, we compared Stream Clean against Bissell OxyPro Pet. We tested the products immediately after the stain occurred and after a duplicate stain had been left untreated for 24 hours. We also checked whether the black light could pinpoint stains.

Bottom line. Stream Kinda-Clean. Stream Clean beat OxyPro on only one stain: permanent marker. It got rid of the color of all of the stains but left a visible residue even after the recommended blotting—which, by the way, required bending. Two expert sniffers said that Stream Clean and Bissell OxyPro Pet reduced or masked odor from pet urine, but again Stream Clean left more-visible residue. And although its black light revealed food stains, it didn't point out pet stains, which can be hard to find after they occur. A black light we have in our labs worked fine.

It pays to seize the sunrise

The early bird catches the worm. A stitch in time saves nine. There are plenty of ways to say "carpe diem" and plenty of reasons to jump-start your day even when winter gloom makes you want to stay in bed. Below, eight activities best done in the a.m. After all, he who hesitates is ... well, you know.

Visit the doctor. Your doctor is less apt to be behind schedule in the morning. If you have to fast before a blood test, you won't wait as long for your next meal. And if you have asthma, your doctor may be more likely to catch problems early in the morning, when lung function is poorest.

Schedule surgery. Morning surgeries may benefit from a fresh surgical team. Earlier in the week can be better, too. Research shows that the death rate for patients having scheduled surgeries is higher later in the week and on weekends. Staffing might be lighter on weekends, nights, and holidays, and it can take longer to get lab results.

Apply sunscreen. It can take 15 to 30 minutes for sunscreen to be absorbed and protect against the sun's rays, so apply it well before you head outside.

Take a flight. Morning flights are less susceptible to delays, according to the Department of Transportation. (According to DOT stats issued in July, domestic flights



leaving between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. had the fewest delays.) Flying early in the week can often save you money. Tuesday is one of the cheapest days to fly, says Rick Seane, CEO of FareCompare. (Booking on a Tuesday afternoon might earn you the cheapest fare because that's when more seats are available.)

Shop. The best time to visit outlet malls and other clothing stores is early in the day, when crowds are smaller and merchandise hasn't been picked over. You'll have the best

Is No No a yes?

Shaving battle scars such as ingrown hairs and bloody cuts might have you ready to try anything other than the usual razor. Enter the No No 8800 hair remover, about \$285, a device that's all but unavoidable if you watch TV. According to its website, it lets users go "weeks without shaving" and is "painless and effective."

How it works. No No, which has low, medium, and high treatment levels, removes hair with a heated wire that stays above the skin. It can be fitted with a wide tip for removing hair on legs, arms, chest, and back, or a narrow tip for smaller areas such as the face or bikini line. You glide the device over skin at a 90-degree angle. A red light glows if you've gotten it wrong. Once done, you use the provided buffer because, the manufacturer says, "without buffing, crystallized hair

remains in place, giving your skin a prickly feel."

How we tested. Six female staffers who normally shave their legs at least three times a week let hair grow for a week. We took pictures (no, you won't find them on Instagram), then asked panelists to shave one leg as usual and use

No No and its buffer on the other leg at least three times a week for six weeks. We compared before and after photos.

What we found. Panelists used words such as "prickly" and "hairy" to describe how their legs felt after No No. All six said the treated leg was never hair- or stubble-free during the six weeks of testing. Something else that panelists noticed: the smell of burned hair. The final straw? Using No No took far longer than shaving—up to 25 minutes per leg. None of the panelists said they'd want to buy the device, though some described it as "cute."



CLOSE-UP

We tested No No units bought at Amazon.com but found out that the manufacturer won't back devices purchased from that retailer. According to the manufacturer, the only authorized

retailers are Drugstore.com, HSN, and No No's website. We then tested No No devices bought at trynono.com and HSN, and they performed similarly.

selection of sizes, colors, and styles.

Focus on important tasks. Morning is prime time for paying attention, according to a study in the *International Review of Neurobiology*. Alertness and concentration improve as your body temperature rises in the early morning and continues to increase through midday.

Take certain medications. Drugs for high blood pressure, for instance, are often best taken in the morning, when blood pressure tends to spike. Asthma drugs, beta blockers, and decongestants are best taken early in the day because they can interfere with restful sleep.

Read a tweet. Twitter users are more likely to send upbeat tweets in the morning, according to a study published in *Science* that analyzed more than 500 million tweets from 84 countries. To start your day on a cheery note, read a few tweets from other early birds.

▶ DID YOU KNOW?

Late risers might have an advantage when it comes to exercise. Muscle strength tends to peak in the afternoon—when body temperature is at its highest and you're most flexible—so consider working out later in the day.

Pack like a pro

Whether you're traveling to Machu Picchu or Buffalo, you don't want to arrive and open your bag only to find wrinkled clothes, mismatched outfits, and ... where's your underwear? Hit rewind. Here are tips to help you pack for a smooth trip:

- Check the weather at your destination.
- Call ahead to where you'll be staying and ask whether a hair dryer and toiletries are provided. (If you'll need toiletries, buy travel sizes.)
- Make a packing list. Seems obvious, but how often have you forgotten something important?
- Before you pack, pile your suitcase's contents on a flat surface and assess. Are you taking too much? Cull. Try to limit shoes—one or two comfortable pairs for walking and a dressier pair.
- Consider packing synthetic clothes, which are apt to wrinkle less than those made of natural fibers. Coordinate colors (preferably dirt-deflecting dark tones).
- Pack a plastic bag for dirty or wet clothes.
- Pack a small flashlight or headlamp for power outages or nighttime reading.
- Wear your bulkiest item—an all-purpose jacket or sweater—in transit.
- Put hanging outfits in dry-cleaner bags. Rolling up other items, inserting them in zip-top plastic bags, and squeezing the air out can save space and reduce wrinkles.



- Put heavy items—toiletries, say—at what will be the bottom of the bag when it's standing.
- Place shoes around the edge of a suitcase or use them to fill gaps between other items; socks can nest inside shoes.
- Charge electronic devices before you leave, and take the chargers you'll need, with adapters that will work where you're going.

▶ CLAIM CHECK

Don't stir the pot

The claim. "You'll never burn your recipe again because the Perfect Sauce and Chowder Pot eliminates the need for stirring!" says the manufacturer of the Pauli Never Burn Stock Pot. Its thick bottom consists of six layers of steel or aluminum around a layer of silicone oil, which "heats evenly to eliminate hot spots, thereby preventing food from burning." Two magnetic-steel layers let the pot work on induction stoves. You are to use the pot only on low to medium heat. It weighs about 11.5 pounds with the glass lid. The price is hefty, too: \$230.

The check. We planned to make "perfect sauce and chowder" using the Pauli and our lab's standard pot, an All-Clad 8-quart. Both pots went onto 15,000-Btu/hr. burners, with the All-Clad on high and Pauli on medium. Cue the chowder. We followed our recipe's first instruction—to sauté diced salt pork in a large pot until translucent.

Oops. Before the pork was cooked, Pauli's silicone oil overheated and expanded, pushing the upper layers of the pot's bottom up and the lower layers down. (The All-Clad worked fine.) The Pauli pot continued to work on our gas stove but wouldn't have functioned correctly



THE PAULI POT Its seven layers make stirring unnecessary.

on a smoothtop stove. We bought another Pauli for our other tasks. It didn't warp, but every recipe took longer to complete with Pauli than with a standard pot.

Bottom line. Misjudge the heat setting and you're cooked. The Pauli pot warped even on medium heat—and what's medium, anyway? Could be 5,000 or 10,000 Btu/hr., depending

on the burner. Moreover, you might want higher heat for browning, deglazing, and other common recipe steps before simmering.

On the plus side, the food inside Pauli didn't burn or stick even after hours of cooking over low heat without stirring. In the same scenario, the contents of the All-Clad pot stuck and became slightly burnt.





Mall snacks from hell

A DAY AT THE MALL could leave your wallet lighter but the rest of you heavier.

How does that work? Let's say you stop at Starbucks for breakfast (frappuccino and a zucchini walnut muffin), Auntie Anne's Pretzels for lunch (pretzel dog and lemonade), and Cinnabon for a pick-me-up (strawberry banana Chillata). We'll play fair and pretend you didn't actually eat a Cinnabon.

Ka-ching! 2,280 calories and 83 grams of fat—more of both than you should have in a day. But choose right and your waistline will pay a far lower price. Our chart shows nutrition figures for some of the best and worst choices from seven food vendors in many of the nation's malls.

What you can do

Avoid temptation by eating before you shop or taking your own snack. Other advice:

Choose reduced fat or light. You'll save 50 calories and 5 grams of fat by buying a

reduced-fat blueberry muffin at Dunkin' Donuts instead of the regular version. At Starbucks, java chip Frappuccino with nonfat milk has 260 fewer calories and 14 fewer grams of fat than the same drink with whole milk and whipped cream. Visit Jamba Juice and you'll save 120 calories by ordering a "light" banana berry smoothie instead of the "classic" version.

Be picky about toppings. Add blueberries, strawberries, or bananas to frozen yogurt: They have 13 to 33 calories per quarter-cup and no fat. By contrast, an ounce of peanuts, almonds, M&M's, or peanut-butter-cup candies adds 137 to 169 calories. Order an Auntie Anne's pretzel and you'll cut 30 calories by skipping butter and 590 milligrams of sodium by leaving out the salt; 60 calories by avoiding sweet-mustard dipping sauce; and 150 calories (and 450 milligrams of sodium) by saying no to melted-cheese dip. You can't do much right at Cinnabon except to pass

on the frosting cup (180 calories).

Choose the right type. At Doc Popcorn, eat "better butter" instead of "caramel kettle" and cut calories in half. At Cold Stone Creamery, do the same by picking vanilla frozen yogurt, not vanilla bean ice cream.

Restrict the size. Yes, a Dunkin' Munchkin is small, but a couple might at least satisfy your sweet tooth; and at 70 calories each, even six chocolate glazed munchkins have fewer calories than one blueberry muffin. Cold Stone's Gotta Have It size of vanilla bean ice cream has 790 calories and 46 grams of fat; its Like It size has 330 calories and 19 grams of fat.

Check figures online before you go. Don't assume you'll know what's most nutritious. Should you always choose something with veggies or fruit? No. The Starbucks zucchini walnut muffin has 490 calories and 28 grams of fat, and fruit smoothies can be wicked.

Eat a real lunch. Don't sample a collection of fattening snacks. Eating a Starbucks ham and swiss panini instead of that pretzel dog can cut calories by almost half and fat by almost two-thirds.

Wear a pedometer or activity tracker. It might encourage you to cover lots of ground—and not give up ground by eating the wrong thing. In our recent tests, the Fitbit One tracker performed very well.

Daily nutrition guidelines

Calories about 2,000

Fat 65 grams or fewer

Sodium fewer than 2,300 milligrams

Sugars fewer than 36 grams (9 teaspoons) added sugars

BOTTOM: GETTY IMAGES

TECH TIPS

How to prepare a car for winter

Very few of us—or our cars—escape winter's chill completely, but if you follow these tips, you can help keep your cold car healthy:

Keep windows clear

Don't use wipers to remove ice or heavy snow from the windshield. That can damage wipers and burn out the wiper motor. Raise your wipers before a forecast freeze to keep them from sticking to the windshield. Be sure your washer solution includes an antifreeze agent—not something that just "protects down to 32°."

Use the right engine oil

Oil thickens when cold, making it more difficult for the engine to turn over. Check your owner's manual for the manufacturer's recommendation. A multi-viscosity oil that has a "W" (for winter) viscosity index is best. Engine oils 5W-20, 5W-30 and 10W-30 provide good oil flow at low temperatures.

Check the engine-cooling system

Extreme cold can cause rubber parts to fail. Check the radiator and heater hoses for cracks and leaks. Hoses should be firm yet pliable when squeezed. Generally, the cooling fluid





Make the right choices

Food store	Calories	Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Sugars (g)
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Dunkin' Donuts

NOT SO HOT

Blueberry muffin	460	15	450	44
Frozen coffee Coolatta with cream, 16 oz.	460	27	75	47

BETTER BETS

Iced caramel latte lite, 16 oz.	80	0	90	10
Reduced-fat blueberry muffin	410	10	650	40

Starbucks

NOT SO HOT

Iced lemon pound cake	500	23	170	46
Caffè Mocha (whole milk & whipped cream), 16 oz.	370	19	135	35

BETTER BETS

Petite vanilla bean scone	120	4.5	75	9
Iced Skinny Mocha (nonfat milk), 16 oz.	100	1.5	90	8

Auntie Anne's Pretzels

NOT SO HOT

Jumbo pretzel dog (original)	610	29	1,150	10
Lemonade smoothie, 14 oz.	300	10	120	47

BETTER BETS

Original pretzel (no butter, no salt)	310	1	400	10
Old-fashioned lemonade, 16 oz.	200	0	10	47

Food store	Calories	Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Sugars (g)
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Cinnabon

NOT SO HOT

Cinnabon classic	880	36	830	59
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BETTER BET

Minibon roll	350	14	330	24
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Doc Popcorn

NOT SO HOT

Caramel kettle, 1 cup	130	5	25	13
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BETTER BET

Better butter, 1 cup	60	3.5	90	0
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Jamba Juice

NOT SO HOT

Banana berry classic smoothie	290	1	65	60
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BETTER BET

Light banana berry smoothie, 16 oz.	170	0	125	32
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Cold Stone Creamery

NOT SO HOT

Apple dumpling dessert	1,050	49	870	83
Hot fudge sundae	900	54	370	86

BETTER BETS

Vanilla frozen yogurt, Like it size	170	0	150	31
Banana strawberry smoothie, 16 oz.	250	3.5	135	37

The Pebble watch: Back to the future

The Pebble smart watch, \$150, resembles a device that people of a certain age might have seen on the wrist of Dick Tracy. Beyond telling time, it channels e-mails, texts, and other notifications from a smart phone or tablet and runs various apps, including fitness apps for cyclists, runners, and golfers. A lot more apps are expected.

When you receive a notification, the Pebble vibrates almost soundlessly. You can then check the watch face to see who's calling (and decline the call if you want), the subject, and a few lines of an incoming e-mail or a text. Feeling too connected? You can choose to stop the buzzes and get visual alerts or temporarily stop getting notifications at all. Battery life is about a week.

What we found. One of our electronics editors tried the Pebble and found it helpful: "It's so much easier to glance at your wrist than to haul out your phone to see who's on the line or whether you need to respond right away to an e-mail." Pebble's online user forum can help new owners who have problems or wonder how others are using the watch.

Other smart watches are sold by Samsung (for now, its Gear watch works only with the Samsung Galaxy Note 3 smart phone) and Sony; and smart watches may yet come from Apple, Google, and Microsoft.



TELLS TIME AND ... The Pebble watch gets e-mails and texts from a smart phone or a tablet.

(a mix of antifreeze and water) should be flushed at least every two years to prevent corrosion buildup. If your vehicle is almost due, have the system flushed before cold weather hits.

► Check the battery

At 0° F, your battery has only half of the cranking power it has at 80°. You can have its life tested at an auto-parts store or a gas station.

► Consider winter tires

Their tread patterns and rubber compounds are designed to grip snow and ice. Winter tires tend to have shorter tread life and generate more road noise than all-season tires, but the

extra safety might be worth the compromise. Michelin X-Ice Xi3 and Michelin X-Ice Xi2 are our highest-rated winter tires.

► Don't get locked out

Use a silicone spray or door-lock lubricant to prevent water from getting inside locks and freezing. Too late? Use a lock antifreeze.

► Preserve the look

Give your car a fresh coat of wax and wash it regularly to prevent road salt from building up. If the car has alloy wheels, coat the metal with wax to help prevent pitting and corrosion. Floor mats will protect the car's carpet from snow and mud.

Celebrate the season

IN BLIND TASTE TESTS of 21 cabernet sauvignons and 19 sauvignon blancs, our experts found a total of 19 wines that are very good or better. (The others tested have off-notes or are a little less bal-

anced, complex, or intense.) More good news: About half cost \$15 or less. Prices are per 750-milliliter bottle. The Ratings describe each of the best, and “Talk the Talk” deciphers common winespeak.

▣ Cabernet sauvignon

This “king of red wines,” the offspring of cabernet franc and sauvignon blanc vines, should be medium- to full-bodied, with a high tannin content that supports rich fruit—plum, cherry, raspberry, blackberry, and black currant—as well as vanilla, and sometimes tobacco, leather, vegetables, herbs, or oak. (Cabernets often require longer wood aging than do other reds.) Bear in mind that those are quick hits of aroma, not how the wine tastes overall. As you sip, cabernet may have a full yet soft mouth feel. Classic cabernets are often called the “iron fist in the velvet glove.”

The finish should be medium to long, with no significant bitterness.

What we found. Most of the recommended cabernets are medium-bodied with black-fruit notes and hints of wood. They're dry, with a medium-length finish. These wines can be drunk now and may improve in the next two to three years.

What foods? Cabernet sauvignon goes well with red meats including game, stews or casseroles, hearty pastas, and strong-flavored cheese—in other words, nothing delicate. Protein can help soften astringent tannins; fat protects your palate against a too-assertive wine. Note to holiday chefs: Stuffing and gravy are chock-full of ingredients such as currants, mushrooms, and herbs including rosemary and sage, all of which can help link the food to the wine.

Bottom line. Louis M. Martini Napa and Raymond Reserve are excellent, with black and red fruit and hints of herbs, spice, and vanilla. Louis M. Martini has a bit of black currant and leather that Raymond doesn't have; Raymond has cherry and plum that Louis M. Martini doesn't have. Louis M. Martini would taste especially good with honey-baked ham (see page 7); Raymond, with duck and plum sauce, braised short ribs, or roasted potatoes.

Crios and 14 Hands taste very good and are CR Best Buys. Both have hints of cherry and black currant. Crios would pair well with barbecued ribs; 14 Hands, with roast chicken.



Ratings Cabernet sauvignon

Recommended only In taste order.

☒ CR Best Buy ☒ Recommended

Product*	Price	Comments
EXCELLENT		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Louis M. Martini Napa	\$25	Intense black and red fruit balanced by acidity/tannin. Complex, with spicy and charry notes. Longer finish than most.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Raymond Reserve	29	Rich, full flavored. Intense black fruit balanced with wood notes. Longer finish than most. Slight bitterness.
VERY GOOD		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Beringer Knights Valley	23	Herbal and black-fruit notes, with a touch of wood. Slight bitterness.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Crios	13	Dried herbs and black cherries evident at first, with more ripe black fruit later. Balance of fruit and acid, trace of bitterness.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educated Guess	20	Strong tannins balanced by acidity and red and black fruit. Longer finish than most, slight “heat” from alcohol.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 14 Hands	11	Soft wood and leather balance an array of black fruit.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chateau Ste. Michelle Columbia Valley	15	Tasty black-fruit flavors and strong, food-friendly acidity.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Buehler	20	Spicy, with lots of tasty black fruit to balance the acidity and tannins.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Milbrandt Traditions	15	Ample wood and vanilla flavors balanced by concentrated black fruit.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robert Mondavi Napa	23	Nice herbaceous cabernet flavors. Less intense than most.

*All are 2010 vintage except Crios, is 2011. All are from California except Crios (Argentina) and 14 Hands, Chateau Ste. Michelle, and Milbrandt (Washington). **Others tested:** Alamos, Catena, Charles Shaw (Trader Joe's), Columbia Crest Grand Estates, Columbia Crest H3, Faust, Lapostolle Casa, Los Vascos Grand Reserve, Red Knot McLaren Vale, Trackers Crossing 365 (Whole Foods), and Wine Cube (Target).

▣ TALK THE TALK

Structure. A combination of alcohol, sweetness, acid, and tannins—the wine's basic taste components—that creates an almost three-dimensional sensation in your mouth.

Tannin. A compound from the skin, seeds, and stems of grapes, and from oak barrels, lending a drying astringency.

Lean. Describes a wine in which structure is more prominent than flavor, and fruit plays second fiddle. In white wine, there may be a slight mineral taste.

Nose. What you smell.

Palate. What you taste. The palate should confirm the nose.

Dry. The opposite of sweet. Little or no sugar is left over after winemaking.

Stylized. Having characteristics derived from winemaking techniques themselves (resulting in light woody or buttery tastes in a chardonnay, for instance).

Finish. How long taste stays after you swallow.

▣ Sauvignon blanc

Usually, this varietal has flavors that are herbaceous or grassy (weeds, wild grasses) and/or vegetal (salad greens, bell peppers, asparagus). It may also have hints of tropical fruit. Some seemingly odd aromas are acceptable, to a certain degree: cat pee (boxwood) or a scent reminiscent of sweat. Sauvignon blanc should be dry, with a crisp acidity balanced by the other components. It should have a medium-length finish.

What we found. The sauvignon blancs we tasted were from California, New Zealand, South Africa, or Washington. Only those from New Zealand, which has a cool climate conducive to this varietal, made our cut. The recommended wines are balanced and medium-bodied. All are dry except Nobile, which is a touch sweeter, and all are somewhat to very tart, with a medium-length finish. Drink them now or within two years.

What foods? Sauvignon blancs such as those we recommend—with crisp acidity and tropical fruit—work well with sushi, goat cheese, spicy Asian food, grilled shrimp, or a fruit salad. A fuller-bodied, more “stylized” sauvignon blanc pairs well with richer foods, including chowders and fried calamari.

Bottom line. Spy Valley and Villa Maria Private Bin are excellent. We’ve judged them CR Best Buys. They are intense, acidic, fruity, and fragrant. Spy Valley has hints of grapefruit and pineapple that Villa Maria lacks. Both are tasty even without food. Spy Valley would pair well with, say, an avocado or Waldorf salad; Villa Maria, with grilled shrimp.



Ratings Sauvignon blanc

Recommended only In taste order.

☒ CR Best Buy ☒ Recommended

Product*	Price	Comments
EXCELLENT		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spy Valley	\$15	Delicious, with herbaceous, citrus, and vegetal notes and sharp, food-friendly acidity. More complex and longer finish than most.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Villa Maria Private Bin	12	Full flavored, complex, with tasty flavors and a touch of sweetness.
VERY GOOD		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whitehaven	17	Vivid herbaceousness and refreshing acidity. Complex, with creamy texture.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kim Crawford	15	Flavors are less evident when sniffed than when tasted. Rich and fairly complex.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saint Clair	17	Intense acidity dominates the flavors. Sharp but pleasing.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Starborough	12	Less pronounced herbaceousness and acidity than others.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nobile Regional Collection	11	Restrained, with less acid than others, but good assortment of aromas.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Momo	15	Restrained, with floral, white pepper, and soft vegetal notes. Slightly bitter.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brancott Estate	10	A little closed on the nose, but the favors come up on the palate.

*All are 2012 vintage and are from New Zealand. **Others tested:** Chateau Ste. Michelle Columbia Valley, Chateau Ste. Michelle Horse Heaven Vineyard, Cloudy Bay, Duckhorn Vineyards, Hall, Honig, Matua, Pomelo, Southern Right, and The Crossings.

Wine clubs prompt some whines

If you’re sending a gift of wines to yourself or a friend every month or so, how would you feel about sipping a selection that lacks freshness or tastes a bit like waxy crayons? Those are among the descriptions our experts supplied after blind tastings of 12 bottles shipped from each of three wine clubs.

Wines sent by Wine of the Month Club Cellar Series ranged from fair to very good; those sent by the Wall Street Journal’s WSJwine Discovery Club, from poor to high good; and those sent by The New York Times Sampler Club, from fair to mid good. The clubs offer refunds if you’re dissatisfied, and you can cancel after one shipment.

Bottom line. You can do better and will probably pay less by using our past Ratings or visiting a good wine store and asking for suggestions from around the world. Note that wine can’t legally be shipped to every state, so not everyone can order from the clubs. They ship to 26 to 32 states.

Ratings Wine club selections

In order of overall taste of the wines received.

Club	What it sends	Cost, 12 bottles	What we got
Wine of the Month Club Cellar Series	Six wines every other month. You choose red, white, or both.	\$132 plus \$40 shipping (\$14.33 per bottle).	Eight varietals (including the uncommon macabeo and negroamaro) and two blends from four countries. Limited breadth of choices, but even the worst wine outscored clunkers from the other clubs. Average: mid good.
WSJwine Discovery Club	Twelve reds, whites, or mixed every three months.	\$150 plus \$20 shipping (\$14.17 per bottle).	Nine varietals, three probable blends from seven countries. The sauvignon blanc drew praise and this collection was best at showcasing the world of wine, but the grenachas smelled musty from contact with moldy or tainted cork. Average: low good.
The New York Times Sampler Club	Four reds and two whites every one, two, or three months.	\$180 plus \$40 shipping (\$18.33 per bottle).	Ten varietals (including the uncommon verdicchio and dolcetto) and two blends from seven countries. Only club to include a pinotage, but experts called it “horsey, burnt, bitter, sour, and strange.” Average: fair to low good.



Online shopping dangers to avoid

IF MALL PARKING LOTS are your waking nightmare this time of year, you're probably planning to do at least some of your holiday shopping online. There are risks, though, that come with the convenience. Rip-off retailers, faulty merchandise, ID theft—last Christmas, online shoppers griped about those and other problems, according to the Plum Tree Group, an e-commerce consulting company, and Infegy, a market-research company. Here are some of the most serious online shopping dangers and how to avoid them:

The website is shady. Just because a website looks legitimate doesn't mean it is. Some are scams set up to steal your identity, your credit-card information, or both. Others sell counterfeit goods. And still others engage in unethical practices, such as luring you in with low prices they honor only if you buy extra items, or quietly adding unexpected charges based on fine-print disclosures they know you won't read.

What to do: Before shopping with an unfamiliar online retailer, look it up at the Better Business Bureau (bbb.org). Check its rating, look for complaints made against it, and confirm that it has an address. Also see what others are saying about the business by searching the Internet with the website name and such terms as "complaints" and "reviews."

Use a credit card rather than a debit card so that you can more easily dispute a charge if there are any shenanigans. And read the retailer's conditions carefully.

The goods you get are defective. The



BUYER BEWARE There aren't any crowds in an online store, but convenience has its trade-offs.

fine print on retail websites typically says that all products are sold as is, something we rarely see in walk-in stores. That means the sites are disclaiming the so-called implied warranty of merchantability, an unwritten assurance that generally gives you the right to reject defective merchandise, even months after purchase.

Many sites we checked say that customers can return defective items during the stated return period, often 30 days. After that, many tell you to deal directly with the manufacturer, which may make you ship the item back at your own expense and wait perhaps weeks

for a refurbished replacement.

About a dozen states and the District of Columbia don't allow retailers to disclaim basic warranty rights. But even if you do have the right to return a defective product to an online store, getting satisfaction when a retailer is far away can be tricky.

Another concern is that a website may not be an authorized dealer for the products it sells. Those "gray market" items probably aren't covered by a manufacturer's warranty.

What to do: Verify that the site is an authorized dealer by reading the product description and terms and conditions, or by asking the manufacturer. The only way to ensure that you'll receive your full warranty rights is to shop in a walk-in store, but if you buy online and discover a defect late, contact the retailer anyway. The store might not want to lose your future business, even if it means stretching the limits of its policy.

The site is loosey-goosey with your personal info. After buying a product online, the last thing you want is a lot of spam from the merchant or from companies to which it sold your info.

What to do: Before giving personal data, read the site's privacy policy. Many retailers let you elect to receive offers or have your info shared. But others make agreement automatic unless you take action, such as clearing checked boxes. So be observant. And limit the info you provide to what's critical for completing the purchase.

Your payments are intercepted or your computer catches a virus. Providing credit-card information over an unsecured connection or surfing the Web with an unprotected computer or smart phone is asking for trouble.

What to do: Verify that the retailer is using a secured connection by making sure that its Web address starts with the "https" prefix (note the "s") and that there is a locked padlock icon on your browser's status bar. That's especially important if you're using a Wi-Fi hot spot, though you are better off not sending financial or personal information via hot spots or on public computers.

And be sure that the operating system, browser, and security software are up to date on your computer and smart phone. If your smart phone doesn't have security software, consider getting it.

Don't get taken by bogus user reviews

Online user reviews can be helpful, but only if they're accurate. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. People might not have adequate knowledge of the product they're reviewing, or they might mislead readers because they have a financial interest in an item or in a competing one. Here's how to protect yourself.

Keep an open mind. If you're really excited about a product, you might subconsciously give more weight to positive reviews than to negative ones. Try to maintain perspective.

Find sources with many reviews. Three people saying that they like or dislike a product doesn't mean as much as dozens

or hundreds who say so. Look for areas where people agree.

Look for facts. Reviews that include factual statements are particularly useful because they can be verified. Does the TV really lack certain useful features? Is that refrigerator truly more expensive than other similarly equipped models?

Focus on balanced opinions. A review that points out the good and the bad is likely to be more trustworthy than one that is all praise or condemnation.

Compare with professional reviews. See how the user reviews compare with those from professionals, including the experts at CONSUMER REPORTS.

The best health news of 2013

This was a big year in health news, and not just because of the Affordable Care Act, though it dominated the headlines. Here is a rundown of trends, regulatory actions, and research findings that could be great for your health—and yes, your wallet, too.

▣ Affordable health care is available for all Americans.

Under the new health-reform law, millions of previously uninsured people are shopping for health plans in the online state marketplaces that opened Oct. 1. And as of January, they will be covered. Even better, premiums are coming in lower than expected, with most people able to buy a plan for less than \$100 a month. Even if you already have an individual insurance plan, it might be worth shopping for a new one, especially if you're not thrilled with your coverage. You can look at the options and register for one at healthcare.gov. Need help navigating the new law? See our interactive tool at HealthLawHelper.org.

▣ You may soon be able to read your doctor's notes.

Under a yearlong pilot program, some 20,000 patients in Boston, Seattle, and rural Pennsylvania were given access through a secure online portal to the notes their providers took during their medical visits. The experiment, called OpenNotes, was a smashing success: 82 percent of patients who were invited to view their notes did, and most said that they took better care of themselves, understood their conditions better, and did a better job taking their medication as a result, according to an analysis of the initiative published in 2012. Perhaps more surprising, doctors also loved the program, reporting little or no difference in their workload and few additional questions or requests due to patients seeing the notes. The Cleveland Clinic, the Mayo Clinic, and the Veterans Administration said this year that they, too, are giving some or all of their patients access to their notes.

▣ Rates of one of the worst hospital infections has dropped.

A report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in February showed that bloodstream infections associated with

central lines—one of the deadliest types of hospital infection—fell by 41 percent between 2008 and 2011. That translates into 12,503 fewer infected patients. (The infection is caused by the mishandling of intravenous catheters used to deliver fluids, medication, and nutrition to patients in intensive care.) The decline follows campaigns by consumer groups to require hospitals to track infections and report them publicly. Thanks to their pressure, that long-resisted practice is now generally accepted as an essential component in keeping patients safe. Another benefit of making infection rates public is that it has enabled us to begin rating hospital safety. You can see our most recent Ratings of more than 4,500 hospitals at ConsumerReports.org/hospitalratings.

▣ Doctors are taking a stand against unnecessary treatments.

Up to 30 percent of the money spent on health care in the U.S. is wasted on tests and treatments that aren't needed or that don't work. That's why Consumer Reports—along with the ABIM Foundation, a group formed by the American Board of Internal Medicine, and more than 50 medical societies—have started a campaign called Choosing Wisely (ConsumerReports.org/cro/choosingwisely). It gives consumers the information they need to avoid overused or unproven treatments. For example, the American Academy of Family Physicians now says that most women don't need a Pap smear every year. And the American Urological Association says that most men shouldn't take supplemental testosterone for erection problems. Fewer Pap smears or prescriptions to fill? We'll take it.

▣ For maintaining a healthy weight, every bit of exercise really does help.

Short bursts of less than 10 minutes of high-intensity physical activity—such as brisk walking, climbing stairs, or jumping rope—reduced the risk of obesity for more than 4,500

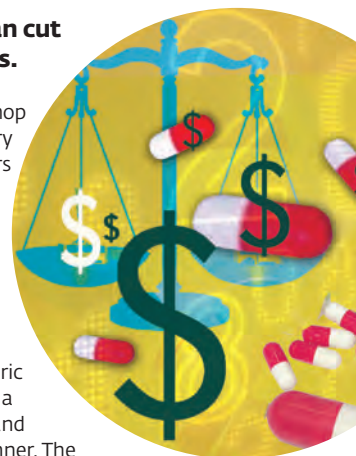
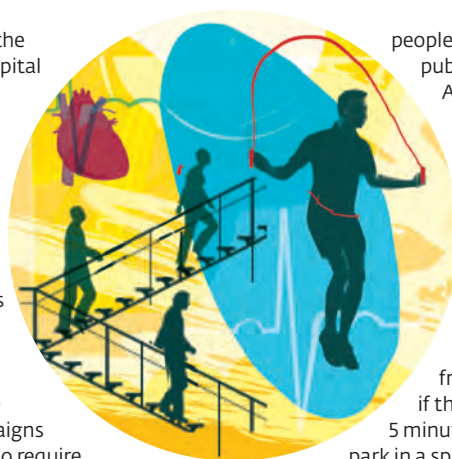
people, according to a study published in September in the American Journal of Health Promotion. That's big news, since exercise recommendations generally focus on workouts of at least 10 minutes (the amount needed to benefit the heart), which might discourage people from becoming active if they have, say, only 5 minutes. It's another reason to park in a space farther from your office and keep a jump rope in your desk.

▣ Fewer nursing-home residents are getting antipsychotic drugs.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services reported in August that 11 states had reduced the use of prescription antipsychotic drugs for people in nursing homes by at least 15 percent over the previous year. That meets a goal set by a national initiative for improving the care of people with dementia. Those powerful drugs are overused in nursing homes, often given to patients with Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia to reduce agitation. But they don't help dementia, and they have been linked to a greater risk of dying in elderly patients. The states that met the goal were Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Vermont.

▣ You really can cut your drug costs.

One of the easiest ways is simply to shop around. In February our secret shoppers called more than 200 pharmacies in the U.S. to ask for the price of a month's supply of five frequently prescribed drugs, including the generic versions of Lipitor, a cholesterol drug, and Plavix, a blood thinner. The result? A whopping difference of \$749, or 447 percent, between the highest and lowest prices. Costco was the least expensive overall, and you don't have to be a member to use its pharmacy. CVS, Rite Aid, and Target had the highest retail prices. For more tips on saving, go to CRBestBuyDrugs.org.



Chicken warning: Our tests find dangerous strain of salmonella in sample of Foster Farms chicken

In our ongoing poultry tests, we have found that one raw chicken sample was contaminated with one of the same dangerous strains of bacteria involved in an outbreak that had sickened almost 300 people in 17 states.

The strains were linked to raw chicken from three Foster Farms processing plants in California. Our sample, purchased in July 2013, came from one of them. "Consumer Reports typically doesn't report findings from an individual test, but the connection to the outbreak prompted us to make the information public," says Urvashi Rangan, Ph.D., executive director of the Consumer Reports Food Safety and Sustainability Center.

The outbreak was particularly severe, according to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: More than 40 percent of people with reported infections were hospitalized, and the implicated salmonella strains were resistant to several antibiotics. Despite that, when we went to press Foster Farms had not issued a recall but instead told consumers to cook their chicken thoroughly.



LABEL CHECK Plants that produced the poultry are identified by a code on the label.

"That's outrageous," Rangan says. "We think that Foster Farms should have issued a quick recall."

The fact that the company did not do so reveals a major hole in the government's efforts to ensure food safety. The Department of Agriculture cannot force companies to recall foods. "They can only ask manufacturers to voluntarily recall products, and are hesitant to do even that," Rangan says. "We think they

need more authority and shouldn't be afraid to use it."

Without that protection, you need to be extra vigilant. Check the plant codes on all raw chicken packages. As of press time, we recommend avoiding raw chicken with any of these codes: P-6137, P-6137A, or P-7632, even if it is not labeled Foster Farms. That's because chicken processed at those plants is also sold under other brand names, such as Eating Right, Kirkland Signature, O Organics, Open Nature, Ralphs, Safeway Farms, and Simple Truth Organic. For updates,

go to ConsumerReports.org. In addition, take the following precautions when handling all poultry:

- Make poultry the last thing you put in your grocery cart, and put it in a plastic bag.
- Store it at 40° F or below. If you're not going to cook it within a few days, freeze it.
- Use a meat thermometer to make sure cooked chicken reaches at least 165° F.
- Wash hands and surfaces after handling poultry, and don't return cooked meat to the plate that held it raw.
- Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Heidi Klum stroller has problem with buckle

ABOUT 75 PERCENT of the 46,200 stroller-related emergency-room visits estimated for a recent four-year period happened because children tumbled out of the stroller. A stroller's harness is supposed to prevent falls by staying securely latched when in use, according to a voluntary safety standard. But one side of the buckle on the Truly Scrumptious Travel System TR252BQR by Heidi Klum, \$220, released intermittently on three samples in our latest tests.

The Truly Scrumptious Travel System is part of a line of strollers and other baby products marketed by the TV star and sold exclusively at Babies "R" Us. Like other travel systems designed for children from birth to 4 years, this one includes the stroller and a detachable infant car seat with its own restraint system and base.

We tested the Truly Scrumptious Travel System as part of our regular stroller tests. The car seat and its restraint performed well in our separate car-seat tests. For the stroller-seat restraint, we applied 45 pounds of force at each harness attachment point, based on the voluntary safety standard. Our tests found no problems with the attachment points that don't involve

the buckle. But when we applied force where the harness attaches to the buckle, the buckle's right side released 10 out of 15 times. It also released seven out of 15 times in our impact test, which is also patterned after the voluntary standard and evaluates important structural components, but not the restraint system. Of more than 100 strollers in our Ratings, the Truly Scrumptious system is the only one with that problem. We know of no injuries associated with the stroller but believe it poses a safety concern and have designated it a Don't Buy: Safety Risk as a result of our tests.

We contacted the Dorel Juvenile Group, which makes the product. Dorel said it disagrees with our conclusions based on its internal and outside tests, and it has had no reports about buckle releases. We notified the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which couldn't comment in time for this issue due to the government shutdown.

If you already own this product, you can continue using the car seat in the car and on the stroller. But don't use the stroller on its own. And consider asking Babies "R" Us for a refund.





RECOMMENDATION REMOVED

The Camry got a Poor score in further testing.

Crash-test results push Camry, 3 other cars off our list

An additional crash test introduced by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has given poor marks to some popular cars, including the Toyota Camry.

This latest test, called the small overlap front crash test, is designed to replicate what happens when only the front corner of a vehicle strikes an object. According to a 2009 IIHS study, that occurs in about a quarter of frontal collisions involving serious or fatal injury to front-seat occupants, even in cars with otherwise good crash protection.

Now that IIHS has put more than 60 vehicles through the test, introduced in 2012, we are removing our recommendation from any vehicle that received a Poor score in the test. Only 13 current vehicles are rated Poor, including the Toyota Camry, Prius V, and RAV4, and the Audi A4. The other vehicles with a Poor score are not recommended for other reasons.

Those four cars that lost our recommendation could regain it if they are retested and their scores improve. Manufacturers are working aggressively to improve performance in the test.

Subscribers to ConsumerReports.org can check our website for the latest Ratings and recommendations for all vehicles we've tested. You can also go to IIHS.org to see how vehicles have been rated in any IIHS test.

We'll also update Ratings in future issues of the magazine as results become available.

BY THE NUMBERS

15 million

That's the number of surge protectors being recalled because of a potential fire hazard.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission says the



manufacturer, Schneider Electric IT, has received 700 reports of overheating and melting for the APC 7 and 8 series SurgeArrest models made before 2003. Consumers should stop using the surge protectors and contact the company at 888-437-4007 for a free replacement.

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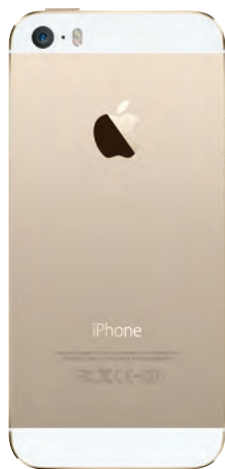
1213PD1



◀ Apple's best iPhone yet

iPhone 5s (16GB), \$100 to \$200
(price and terms vary by carrier)

The pocket-friendly iPhone 5s, which uses Apple's newest operating system, is hard to beat when it comes to intuitive, foolproof access to core smart-phone functions. Its camera takes some of the best stills and videos you can get with a smart phone. Its nifty fingerprint reader, built into the Home button, lets you safely and quickly unlock the phone's screen or authorize an iTunes purchase with a light press of your finger. Just don't expect the giant screen or some of the cutting-edge features being offered by some competing models.



10 Top Electronics

Here's our short list of standouts for innovation and performance

EVERY YEAR we test thousands of electronics products, and in this issue we showcase the best. For starters, here are 10 of the most exciting models we've seen this year, products that push technology or performance to new heights. Inside, we've highlighted great gifts for the folks on your holiday shopping list—or maybe for yourself! Be sure to check our January issue for last-minute gift ideas, and go to ConsumerReports.org for the latest news and product reviews.

INSIDE

Shopping page 21

Televisions page 23

Smart phones page 26

Tablets page 30

Computers page 33

Printers page 37

Cameras page 39

Streaming media players page 42

Headphones page 43

E-book readers page 44

Game consoles page 44

Best brands page 45

▶ Best TV yet

Samsung KN55S9C OLED TV, \$9,000

This 55-inch model is one of the first to use OLED (Organic LED) technology, which combines the best attributes of plasma and LCD TVs but has none of their shortcomings. Incredibly deep blacks, superbright images, vibrant colors, and strong contrast make images jump off the screen. Throw in unlimited viewing angles, great energy efficiency, and an ultrathin design and you have the best TV we've ever seen. The KN55S9C, which has an eye-catching curved screen, also has the best 3D performance to date. Now if only they can work on that price.



▶ The smallest SLR

Canon EOS Rebel SL1, \$750

This camera is almost as small and light as many mirrorless, SLR-like models but offers all of the benefits of a full-fledged SLR, including a through-the-lens viewfinder and a wide choice of compatible lenses. Plus this Rebel has very good image quality, is easy to use, and has a very good LCD. The price includes an 18- to 55-mm kit lens.



▶ Top-notch tablet

Amazon Kindle Fire HDX, \$230 (7-inch, 16GB, Wi-Fi)

The latest Kindle has one of the highest-resolution 7-inch displays available, great for watching videos and reading books and magazines. New X-Ray features let you dig deeper into the videos you watch and the books you read. For example, you can find all of the songs that play during a movie and jump to the spots in the flick to listen to them. Songs you buy from Amazon come with all of the lyrics. You also get live, 24/7 tech support onscreen free when you press the Mayday button. We haven't fully tested the Kindle Fire HDX yet, but prior versions were top-rated, and this one looks promising. A new Apple iPad might be joining the fray soon, and that's sure to give this tablet a run for the money.



◀ Super-slim superzoom camera

Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX50V, \$450

Sometimes you need more than a smart phone to take a great photo but don't want to lug around a bulky camera. This Sony Cyber-shot superzoom may well be the answer. It packs a long, 30x optical zoom lens, with very wide-angle capabilities, into a slim camera body that's only an inch-and-a-half thick. It's speedy, firing off 10-frame-per-second bursts at full resolution, and the quality of still photos and videos is very good. Built-in Wi-Fi lets you connect to hot spots or mobile devices to quickly share your photos.



Brilliant smart phone

LG G2 (16GB), \$0 to \$200
(price and terms vary by carrier)

This phone has a stunning 5.2-inch display and a battery that doesn't know when to quit. The power/volume button cluster is on the back, under the camera, a design LG considers more ergonomic and intuitive (you decide) than the usual top or side mount. You can count on smarter shortcuts for common tasks, such as auto answering when you hold the phone up to your ear. The ultrasmart camcorder can stay focused on your subjects in interesting new ways.

Super-cool streamer

Google Chromecast, \$35

One of the smallest and lowest-priced devices for streaming online video to your TV, this eliminates the need to deal with yet another black box. The thumb-drive-sized device plugs into an HDMI input on your TV and either a USB port or an AC outlet for power. At press time Chromecast supported Hulu Plus, Netflix, YouTube, and Google Play; more services are promised. It also lets you send other Web content

to your TV from a PC or Mac using the Chrome browser. There's no remote; you use a smart phone, a tablet, or a laptop to control it.



Primo portable speaker

TDK Life on Record, \$150

Wireless speakers make it easy to share your music on the go but often sacrifice sound quality for portability. Not this TDK model, one of the best portable speakers we've tested. It sounded equally good whether it was connected to a music source using a wire or via Bluetooth. It's very easy to use: Bluetooth pairing was simple, and controls were intuitive and well marked. This ruggedly handsome speaker is designed to resist the elements, so it can live up a backyard bash. It's a compact 4 inches high by 9½ inches wide.



Highest-definition TV

Sony Bravia XBR-55X900A, \$4,000

A new breed of HD TVs takes high definition to a whole new level. Also called 4K sets, Ultra HD TVs have four times as many pixels as 1080p screens, and the added detail makes 4K images look incredibly lifelike. UHD sets can enhance the quality of regular HD images as well. This 55-inch Sony LCD (which has LED backlighting) has

excellent high-def picture quality, among the best we've seen. It also has very good sound, thanks to large speaker arrays flanking the screen, and it features Sony's smart TV Internet platform. There's not much Ultra HD content yet, but Sony offers a \$700 media player that's loaded with Ultra HD movies, plus a download service that offers additional titles for rent or purchase.



Outstanding sound bar

Sonos Playbar, \$700

Finally, there's a sound bar that gives you great music playback as well as satisfying TV and movie sound. You can use it as a wireless speaker to stream audio from a home network or directly from Internet-based music services such as Pandora and Spotify. Combine it with a pair of Sonos Play speakers and a subwoofer to

create a full, although pricey, 5.1-channel sound system. You can also use it in a multiroom Wi-Fi audio system. It has no remote of its own; you control the Playbar with a TV remote, or an Android or an iOS smart phone or tablet with a free Sonos app.





DOLLAR WISE At warehouse clubs such as Costco, you'll find low prices but little hand-holding.

Where to buy electronics

21,000 shoppers rate major retailers

I F YOU'RE BUYING anything from a tablet to a big-screen TV this holiday season, your best bet might be shopping online. In recent years, the CONSUMER REPORTS readers we've surveyed who shopped online were more satisfied overall than those who shopped at a walk-in store. In fact, websites as a whole outdid walk-in stores for quality, selection, and price in this year's poll, based on more than 27,000 electronics shopping experiences.

Even so, you're likely to hit the mall for many electronics purchases if you're anything like the 21,000-plus consumers we surveyed, who made almost twice as many purchases at walk-in stores as they did online. That might be because retailers are going all out to keep you from browsing in their stores, then buying online, a practice called showrooming.

Best Buy stores will match prices of major online rivals, and it offers diehard online buyers reasons to stick with Best Buy. "Customers can buy at our website, then pick up in a nearby store," says spokesman Jeff Shelman. That eliminates shipping fees and puts gear in your hands quickly.

At Sears stores, associates use tablets with a shopping app to share product information, demos, and reviews with you and to check inventory. If an item is out of stock at the store, Sears will ship it free to your home. The store can also e-mail coupons, along with an electronic receipt that's much less likely to get lost than a slip of paper.

Use the following information to help you decide where to shop this season:

Online retailers

Most have a wide selection of products and attractive prices, and you don't have to put up with crowded aisles and long checkout lines, as you might at a walk-in

store. Customer service isn't always a strong suit, though. The only Web retailer to garner a top mark for customer service was Crutchfield, which offers live chat and phone consultations with "personal advisers." Amazon.com, which accounted for three out of five online purchases made by the readers surveyed, offers lots of user reviews.

Independent local stores

For top-notch customer service, it's hard to beat independent walk-in stores, which were above par in every respect except for price, which was average. Don't let that scare you away. Our survey showed that they're more willing to bargain than the Apple Store, Best Buy, and Sears.

Apple Store

Apple was the only one of the 17 walk-in retail chains in the survey to match independents for customer service and product quality. It's also a great choice if you want advice or support for the life of a purchase. But both the stores (253 in the U.S., 29 in Canada) and website were judged average for selection and got the lowest marks for price, not surprising given their focus on the premium-priced Apple brand.

Warehouse stores

If it's hand-holding you want, shop elsewhere. BJ's, Costco, and Sam's Club got below-par ratings for customer service and selection. Shoppers gave them high marks for price, but the annual membership fee, generally around \$50, could offset savings unless you regularly shop there.

Best Buy

You can expect quality products and average pricing and selection but less willingness to deal than at independent stores. Like certain other chains, Best Buy is likely to push an extended warranty, which we think is a poor investment for most buyers.

Office-supply stores

Staples and Office Depot were rated middling in most categories but above average for product quality. They have a limited selection of cameras, tablets, and e-readers.

Mass merchandisers

You shouldn't be disappointed by product quality and prices at Sears and Target, but don't expect a big selection or great customer service. Walmart was middling or worse on all attributes. *Ratings on next page*

DID YOU KNOW?

It pays to haggle

Whether you're shopping in a store or online, ask for a better deal. Our survey showed that shoppers who bargained with retailers succeeded roughly three times out of five, saving a median of about \$80.

(Online hagglers usually dickered by phone, e-mail, or online chat.) If you're buying a TV at a walk-in store, you could do better—the buyers surveyed saved a median of \$99. On cameras and tablets, the median saved was \$62. It might help to come armed with pricing info from other retailers, user forums, or manufacturer websites, as some readers did.



CRUTCHFIELD

COSTCO
WHOLESALE

amazon.com



Ratings Electronics stores

All retailers rated In order of reader score.

Better ← → Worse
● ○ ● ○ ●

Order	Retailer	Reader score	Survey results				
		0 100	Product quality	Customer service	Price	Selection	Buying ease

A ONLINE STORES

1	Crutchfield.com	96	●	●	○	○	●
2	BHPhotoVideo.com	96	●	○	○	●	●
3	Amazon.com	94	○	○	○	●	●
4	Adorama.com	94	●	○	○	●	○
5	Costco.com	93	○	○	●	○	○
6	Newegg.com	93	○	○	○	○	○
7	Apple.com	92	●	○	●	○	○
8	QVC.com	92	○	—	—	—	—
9	BestBuy.com	89	○	○	○	○	○
10	Walmart.com	88	○	○	○	○	○
11	BarnesandNoble.com	88	○	○	○	○	○

B WALK-IN STORES

1	Independents	93	●	●	○	○	○
2	Costco	92	○	○	●	○	○
3	Apple Store	91	●	●	○	○	○
4	P.C. Richard & Son	90	○	○	○	○	○
5	Army & Air Force Exchange	89	○	○	○	○	○
6	Micro Center	88	○	○	○	○	○
7	BJ's	88	○	○	○	○	○
8	Barnes & Noble	87	○	○	○	○	○
9	Sam's Club	87	○	○	○	○	○
10	Staples	86	○	○	○	○	○
11	Target	86	○	○	○	○	○
12	Sears	86	○	○	○	○	○
13	RadioShack	85	—	—	○	—	○
14	Best Buy	85	○	○	○	○	○
15	HHGregg	84	○	○	○	○	○
16	Fry's Electronics	84	○	○	○	○	○
17	Office Depot	83	○	○	○	○	○
18	Walmart	81	○	○	○	○	○

Guide to the Ratings

Scores are based on 27,037 purchases of TVs, digital cameras and camcorders, DVD and Blu-ray players, GPS devices, video-game consoles, e-book readers, tablets, and MP3 players by 21,394 CONSUMER REPORTS readers between January 2012 and June 2013. Electronics retailers are among the highest-rated services in Consumer Reports National Research Center surveys. Results might not reflect the U.S. population. **Reader score** reflects overall satisfaction with the shopping experience. A score of 100 would mean all respondents were completely satisfied; 80, that respondents were very satisfied on average.

Differences of fewer than 7 points are not meaningful. The scores under **survey results** reflect how each retailer did compared with the ratings of others. Scores for **customer service** and **buying ease** are not directly comparable between walk-in and online retailers. **Customer service** reflects online or phone support for websites and in-store sales help for walk-in stores. Online **buying ease** reflects using the website; in-store, fewer problems such as sale items being unavailable, long checkout lines, and crowded displays. A dash (—) indicates that we didn't have sufficient data to report a rating.



TENDER LOVING CARE Apple Stores got a top mark for service, but don't expect bargains.

Overview

With so many retailers highly rated for overall satisfaction, you can choose largely on the basis of the scored attributes that matter most to you. The following retailers stand out for the reasons noted:

TOP ALL-AROUND ONLINE CHOICES

- A1 Crutchfield.com
- A2 BHPhotoVideo.com
- A3 Amazon.com
- A4 Adorama.com
- A6 Newegg.com

All five websites received high overall satisfaction scores and had high marks across the board. Many customers who bought at **A1** and **A2** did so because of their strong reputation. **A3** stands out for its helpful user reviews.

TOP ALL-AROUND WALK-IN CHOICE

- B1 Independents

These stores were above average in every respect except for price. They received the highest ratings for product quality and customer service, and were the only category of stores other than Apple Store to do so.

GREAT PRICES AND QUALITY PRODUCTS

- A5 Costco.com
- B2 Costco

This membership retailer doesn't offer a huge selection, but it offers high-quality merchandise at competitive prices and has a generous 90-day return policy on electronics.

GREAT PRODUCTS AND SERVICE

- A7 Apple.com
- B3 Apple Store

Though you can't expect low prices from Apple, you can expect high-quality gear and hand-holding.



Panasonic Viera
TC-P65VT60

Televisions

HIGH-DEF TVS just keep getting bigger, better, and more versatile. There are more HDTVs 60 inches and larger. And TVs of all sizes have built-in Wi-Fi and smart TV platforms with access to streaming movies and TV programs, apps, and even full Web browsing. Many can wirelessly connect to a phone or tablet to display videos and photos. Plasma TVs continue to advance, and most new LCD sets use energy-efficient LED backlights. New developments: Ultra HDTVs, with the highest TV resolution so far, and OLED TVs, which use new technology to produce the best images we've seen.

▶ The Internet addict

That supergeek in your life would love a smart TV with built-in Wi-Fi and access to streaming TV shows and movies from Netflix and its rivals, online music services such as Pandora, and social-media sites such as Facebook. Some sets have full Web browsing and access to apps. The 55-inch **Sony Bravia KDL-55W900A** LCD TV, \$2,300, adds a special



Sony Bravia
KDL-55W900A

feature: NFC technology for sharing content from a compatible Sony tablet or smart phone by tapping it on the TV remote. The 47-inch **Panasonic Viera TC-L47WT60** LCD TV, \$2,500, can exchange content with mobile devices using a free app. The **Samsung PN51F8500** 51-inch plasma, \$1,600, can display whatever's on compatible Galaxy phones or tablets.

▶ The sports fan or movie junkie

Big games and blockbuster movies deserve a big screen. Plasma TVs such as the 65-inch **Panasonic Viera TC-P65VT60**, \$3,100, are great for watching play-offs with the gang, thanks to wide viewing angles and the ability to handle fast motion without blurring. A movie lover will appreciate its filmlike images, deep blacks, and detail in shadows. The 60-inch **LG 60LA8600** flagship LCD TV, \$2,300—which has LED backlighting—has a wide viewing angle for an LCD set, and it handles fast motion better than many TVs of this type. It's also one of the few tested TVs that has very good sound quality. The 70-inch **Sharp Aquos LC-70C7500U** LCD/LED TV, \$2,200, has the biggest screen in our Ratings.



Samsung
PN60F5500

▶ The 3D enthusiast

Many new TVs can display 3D, and some movie fans find the effect thrilling. Two plasma TVs, the 64-inch **Samsung PN64F5500**, \$1,800, and its 60-inch sibling, **PN60F5500**, \$1,200, a CR Best Buy, were the only TVs tested this year to earn excellent 3D scores, in part due to minimal ghosting. Each includes two pairs of 3D glasses.



Vizio E291i-A1

▶ The space-challenged ▼

If your 20-something spends the wee hours watching TV while sprawled on the bed, a set that will fit on a nightstand is the way to go. The 32-inch **Samsung UN32F6300** LCD/LED TV, \$600, has an excellent picture and lots of features, including Samsung's full smart TV platform. Want a smaller or cheaper set? The **Vizio E291i-A1**, \$250, **LG 29LN4510**, \$250, and **Toshiba 29L1350U**, \$200, are 29-inch LCD/LED sets with very good picture quality. The Vizio has Internet capability.



Bose VideoWave II
Entertainment System

▶ The sound hound

The sound on many TVs is as thin as their profiles. That may be fine for watching a news or talk show, but it falls flat for movies and music. For a demanding listener, consider the 55-inch **Bose VideoWave II Entertainment**

System, \$5,000, an LCD TV with a sonic wallop as big as its price. (It's in our next TV Ratings.) We were also impressed by the sound on the 60-inch **Sharp Aquos LC-60LE857U**, \$2,000, and 47-inch **LG 47LA6900**, \$1,050, both LCDs.



LG 29LN4510

Overview

In addition to the other models mentioned, these are all good choices.

FULL-FEATURED SETS

A4 **Panasonic** \$3,300

A5 **Samsung** \$2,900

B4 **LG** \$1,500

C12 **Vizio** \$680

A4 is among the best plasma TVs we've tested, with benchmark-setting blacks. **A5**, one of the brightest plasmas we've tested, is loaded with

features, including Samsung's smart TV platform. You can control it using voice commands and hand gestures or the remote. **B4** has a wider viewing angle than most LCDs and very good sound. **C12**, a 50-inch LCD, has very good picture quality, a wide viewing angle, and smart TV features. Like most new LCD sets, **B4** and **C12** have LED backlights.

BARGAIN BUYS

A7 **Panasonic** \$1,500 **CR Best Buy**

A8 **LG** \$1,050 **CR Best Buy**

A14 **Sony** \$1,500 **CR Best Buy**

C9 **LG** \$600 **CR Best Buy**

C10 **Samsung** \$650 **CR Best Buy**

Among bigger screens, **A7** delivers a lot of what we like about Panasonic's VT60-series models—including excellent HD picture quality and a lot of features—at a lower price than others this size. **A8**, a plasma, and **A14**, an LCD/LED set, are 60-inch 1080p sets with great picture quality and a lot of features; **A8** has a wide viewing angle, and **A14** has very good sound. **C9** and **C10** are basic plasmas; **C9** has a lower price, but **C10**'s picture quality is a notch better.

Ratings TVs

Recommended models only From 142 tested.

☒ CR Best Buy ☒ Recommended

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results
		Display type*		0 100 P F G V E	HD picture quality Viewing angle Sound quality Streaming video services

A 60-INCH AND LARGER

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	LG 60LA8600	L \$2,300	76	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung PN64F5500	P 1,800	74	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Panasonic Viera TC-P60VT60	P 3,100	73	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Panasonic Viera TC-P60ZT60	P 3,300	73	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Samsung PN64F8500	P 2,900	73	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Samsung UN60F7500	L 2,200	72	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Panasonic Viera TC-P60ST60	P 1,500	72	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	LG 60PH6700	P 1,050	72	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Sharp Aquos LC-60LE857U	L 2,000	72	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Samsung PN64E550	P 2,100	71	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Samsung PN60F5500	P 1,200	71	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Samsung UN65F8000	L 3,000	70	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	Panasonic Viera TC-L60DT60	L 2,800	69	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	Sony Bravia KDL-60R550A	L 1,500	68	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15	Vizio M601d-A3R	L 1,400	67	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16	Sharp Aquos LC-70C7500U	L 2,200	65	● ● ● ● ●

B 55- TO 59-INCH

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	LG 55GA7900	L 1,500	74	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung UN55E8000	L 2,100	74	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Sony Bravia XBR-55X900A	L 4,000	74	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	LG 55LA7400	L 1,500	73	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Panasonic Viera TC-P55ST60	P 1,350	72	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Samsung UN55E6500	L 1,400	72	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Samsung UN55F7100	L 1,500	69	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Sony Bravia KDL-55W900A	L 2,300	69	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Samsung UN55F6400	L 1,300	67	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Toshiba 58L7350U	L 1,300	67	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	JVC JLE55SP4000	L 1,100	66	● ● ● ● ●

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results
		Display type*		0 100 P F G V E	HD picture quality Viewing angle Sound quality Streaming video services

C 46- TO 52-INCH

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung PN51F8500	P \$1,600	75	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung PN51E490	P 720	72	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	LG 47LA6900	L 1,050	71	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Panasonic Viera TC-L47WT60	L 2,500	69	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Samsung UN46EH5300	L 650	68	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	LG 47LA6200	L 800	68	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Panasonic Viera TC-P50S60	P 700	67	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Sony Bravia KDL-47W802A	L 1,100	66	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	LG 50PN6500	P 600	66	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Samsung PN51F5300	P 650	66	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Panasonic Viera TC-L50ET60	L 1,300	66	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Vizio E500d-A0	L 680	66	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	Samsung UN46EH5000	L 600	65	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	Toshiba 50L7300U	L 850	65	● ● ● ● ●

D 40- TO 43-INCH

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung PN43E450	P 420	68	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	LG 42GA6400	L 850	67	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Panasonic Viera TC-L42E60	L 700	66	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Samsung UN40F5500	L 530	65	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Sony Bravia KDL-40EX640	L 900	65	● ● ● ● ●

E 32-INCH

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung UN32EH5000	L 300	66	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung UN32F6300	L 600	65	● ● ● ● ●

F 29-INCH AND SMALLER

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung UN26EH4000	L 300	64	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung UN29F4000	L 280	60	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Vizio E291i-A1	L 250	58	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	LG 29LN4510	L 250	58	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Toshiba 29L1350U	L 200	58	● ● ● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Philips 26PFL4907	L 300	56	● ● ● ● ●

*L=LCD, P=Plasma.



▶ The app-aholic

An **Apple iPhone** is the hands-down winner for anyone who must have every hot game, song, or TV show on their phone. Whether you give the new iPhone 5s or one of the previous iPhone models that Apple still offers at a lower price, the recipient is sure to be pleased. The selection of music, video, games, and apps from iTunes and the App Store is simply unrivaled for sheer volume and diversity. The range of applications has been expanded to include networked, player-to-player gaming via its Game Center. iPhone owners also have accessories galore—cases, compatible devices, and more—from which to choose.



Apple iPhone 5s

Smart phones

NOW THAT MOST smart phones have large screens, fast 4G data connections, and apps for almost every need, one of the latest trends is simplifying routine tasks. For example, many of the cameras on new smart phones have tools for fixing problems before or after you press the shutter. Wireless technologies such as near-field communication (NFC) make it easy to beam photos, music, or videos to speakers, TVs, and other devices. Some new, tough models can survive a tumble on a trail or a dunk in a pool. (See Ratings for prices of the phones featured here.)



Samsung Galaxy S 4



▶ The geek

Know someone who's dying to have every cool feature available on a phone? The Android-based **Samsung Galaxy S 4** (multiple carriers) won't disappoint. In fact, your friend will be able to perform a lot of common tasks on the Galaxy S 4 without even touching its gorgeous 5-inch, high-definition (1080p) touch-screen display.

For example, she can preview e-mail, calendar appointments, videos, and more by hovering her finger above them. And she can accept a phone call or skip to the next song on her playlist just by waving her hand in front of the screen. The front-facing camera will monitor her eyes while she's reading to prevent the screen from timing out.

The Galaxy S 4's 12.8-megapixel camera can fix photos marred by bad poses, bad timing, and even bad luck. For example, Erase Shot lets you delete a person or any other undesirable object that may end up in your otherwise perfect photo.

A multi-window feature lets you run two apps simultaneously in a split-screen view. For instance, you can watch a video while viewing e-mail, or use Google Maps and messaging side by side.



Casio G'zOne Commando 4G LTE

▶ The adventurer

You know that person. Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night can keep him from the swift completion of his appointments, texts, and e-mail. With its rugged, weather-resistant case, the Android-based **Casio G'zOne Commando 4G LTE** (Verizon) should be just the thing. Frost-fighting explorers will appreciate that the display can be made sensitive enough to be used with gloves. Plus, this phone is brimming with features you can use in the wild, including a compass, thermometer, pedometer, and other apps.

We put this model through its paces, submerging it in about 3 feet of water for 30 minutes. The Commando continued to work, and we saw no visible signs of water intrusion or damage. We also tested the Commando's ability to fend off mechanical shocks using our tumbling equipment, which drops phones in random fashion. Again, the phone continued to work and showed no signs of damage.



Nokia Lumia 1020

◀ The photographer

For the shutterbug who can't resist shooting everything that passes before her eyes, the **Nokia Lumia 1020** (AT&T) is the next best thing to a dedicated camera. In fact, it is essentially a high-resolution camera fused to a very capable smart phone with a dazzling 4.5-inch display. The 38.2-megapixel camera of this Windows-based phone takes the sharpest still photos of any smart-phone camera we've tested, producing very good-quality images at ISO settings up to 3200. At that high a resolution, she'll be able to enlarge small portions of an image and still have lots of detail. The camera is also loaded with advanced features, including a half-dozen controls for manipulating exposure levels and other adjustments. Videos weren't quite as impressive as stills, but they're probably adequate for such casual use as uploading to YouTube or Facebook.

▶ The entertainment buff

Maybe the video your friend took of that aria-singing dolphin would look more impressive on a 55-inch LCD TV. Or his favorite song would sound better on something other than a phone's tiny speakers. No problem—it's a snap, or rather a bump, with an NFC-enabled phone like the Android-based **LG Optimus G Pro** (AT&T) plus one of the better NFC-enabled TVs and wireless speaker systems. It packs an excellent-quality 5.5-inch, high-definition (1080p) touch-screen display and a bevy of compelling capabilities. These include an infrared blaster and a QuickRemote app that, like a universal remote, can be used to control compatible TVs, set-top boxes, Blu-ray players, and more. Its QSlide feature lets you watch video or another app in a resizable window on the phone's display so that you can perform other tasks.



LG Optimus G Pro

Ratings Smart phones

Recommended models only From 89 tested.

☒ Recommended

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price ¹	Overall score	Test results					
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Messaging	Web browsing	Battery life	Camera, image quality ²	Display size (in.)	
				0 100						
				P F G V E						

A VERIZON The most satisfying major carrier.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung Galaxy S 4 (16GB)	\$200	79	●	●	●	●	5.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung Galaxy S III (32GB) D Galaxy S III (16GB)	100	76	●	●	○	●	4.8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Motorola Droid Razr M	0	75	●	●	○	●	4.3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Apple iPhone 5 (16GB)	100	75	●	●	○	●	4.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Samsung Galaxy Note II (16GB)	200	75	●	●	●	●	5.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Nokia Lumia 928	100	75	●	●	●	●	4.4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	BlackBerry Z10	0	74	●	●	○	●	4.2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	LG Spectrum 2	0	74	●	●	○	●	4.7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Pantech Perception	100	73	●	●	●	○	4.8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	HTC Droid DNA	50	73	●	●	○	○	5.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	LG Lucid 2	0	73	●	●	●	●	4.3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Nokia Lumia 822	0	73	●	●	○	●	4.3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	HTC Windows Phone 8X (16GB)	50	73	●	●	○	●	4.3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	Motorola Droid 4	50	73	●	●	○	●	4.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15	Samsung ATIV Odyssey	0	71	●	●	○	○	4.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16	Casio G'zOne Commando 4G LTE	50	71	●	●	○	○	4.0

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price ¹	Overall score	Test results					
					Messaging	Web browsing	Battery life	Camera, image quality ²	Display size (in.)	
				0 100						
				P F G V E						

B SPRINT Unlimited data plans, but 4G service was subpar.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung Galaxy S 4 (16GB)	\$150	79	●	●	●	●	5.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	LG Optimus G	0	77	●	●	●	●	4.7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	HTC One (32GB)	100	77	●	●	●	○	4.7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Samsung Galaxy S III (16GB)	100	76	●	●	○	●	4.8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Apple iPhone 5 (16GB) D iPhone 5 (32GB)	100	75	●	●	○	●	4.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Samsung Galaxy Note II (16GB)	250	75	●	●	●	●	5.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	LG Optimus F3	0	73	●	●	○	○	4.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	HTC Evo 4G LTE	0	73	●	●	○	●	4.7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Motorola Photon Q 4G LTE	0	73	●	●	○	●	4.3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	HTC 8XT	100	73	●	●	○	●	4.3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Sprint Vital	0	73	●	●	●	○	5.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Samsung Galaxy Victory 4G LTE	50	71	●	●	○	○	4.0

Ratings continued on next page



D4 HTC



A14 Motorola

Overview

All rated phones are easy to use; many have excellent displays and good voice quality. Besides the other models mentioned, these phones are fine choices.

FULLY FEATURED MODELS

B2, D3 LG Optimus G \$0 to \$50 (Sprint, AT&T)

C6 Sony Xperia Z \$0 (T-Mobile)

B3, C2, D4 HTC One \$0 to \$200 (Sprint, T-Mobile, AT&T)

The LG's state-of-the-art apps and controls include Quick Memo, a pull-down menu option app that lets you use your finger to scribble notes on anything you see on the phone's screen. That becomes a picture you can easily e-mail, text, or share on social networks. The Sony is built to handle immersion for up to 30 minutes in up to about 3 feet of water. Its Smart Connect application lets you program the phone to start or

shut down apps or features under certain conditions, such as launching the music app when you plug in headphones, or turning off Bluetooth and the ringer after 10 p.m. The HTC has a sleek aluminum unibody, and its front-firing speakers sound better than those on many other phones, providing stereo sound loud enough and rich enough to enjoy without headphones. The HTC One Mini, with a 4.3-inch screen, offers similar benefits for just \$100.

IF YOU NEED A KEYBOARD

A14 Motorola Droid 4 \$50 (Verizon)

B9 Motorola Photon Q 4G LTE \$0 (Sprint)

These models have something for everyone: A top-notch, well-laid-out physical keyboard for heavy text and e-mail users; highly responsive displays; and fast data connections for Web addicts.

Ratings Smart phones

Recommended models only From 89 tested.

☒ Recommended

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price ¹	Overall score	Test results
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Messaging Web browsing Battery life Camera image quality ² Display size (in.)
				0 100	
			P F G V E		

C T-MOBILE Flexible, no-contract plans, but otherwise undistinguished.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung Galaxy S 4 (16GB)	\$ 0	81	● ● ● ● ●	5.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	HTC One (32GB)	0	79	● ● ● ● ○	4.7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Samsung Galaxy S III (16GB)	0	78	● ● ● ● ●	4.8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Apple iPhone 5 (16GB) ^D iPhone 5 (32GB)	100	77	● ● ● ● ●	4.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Samsung Galaxy Note II (16GB)	0	77	● ● ● ● ●	5.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Sony Xperia Z	0	77	● ● ● ● ●	5.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Nokia Lumia 925	0	77	● ● ● ● ●	4.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Google Nexus 4 (16GB)	0	76	● ● ● ● ●	4.7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	LG Optimus L9	0	76	● ● ● ● ●	4.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	BlackBerry Z10	0	75	● ● ● ● ●	4.2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Samsung Galaxy S II	0	75	● ● ● ● ●	4.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Apple iPhone 4S (16GB)	70	74	● ● ● ● ●	3.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	Samsung Galaxy Exhibit	0	71	● ● ● ● ●	3.8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	BlackBerry Q10	100	71	● ● ● ● ●	3.1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15	Nokia Lumia 521	0	71	● ● ● ● ●	4.0

D AT&T A 4G standout but lower-rated for value and support.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung Galaxy S 4 (16GB)	\$200	81	● ● ● ● ●	5.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung Galaxy S 4 Active	200	80	● ● ● ● ●	5.0

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price ¹	Overall score	Test results
					Messaging Web browsing Battery life Camera image quality ² Display size (in.)
				0 100	
			P F G V E		

D AT&T continued

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	LG Optimus G	\$ 50	79	● ● ● ● ●	4.7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	HTC One (32GB)	200	79	● ● ● ● ●	4.7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Samsung Galaxy S III (16GB)	100	78	● ● ● ● ●	4.8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Nokia Lumia 1020	200	77	● ● ● ● ●	4.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Pantech Discover	50	77	● ● ● ● ●	4.8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	HTC One VX	0	77	● ● ● ● ●	4.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Samsung Galaxy Note II (16GB)	200	77	● ● ● ● ●	5.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	LG Optimus G Pro	100	77	● ● ● ● ●	5.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	HTC Windows Phone 8X (16GB) ^D Windows Phone 8X (8GB)	100	76	● ● ● ● ●	4.3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Nokia Lumia 920	50	76	● ● ● ● ●	4.4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	BlackBerry Z10	100	75	● ● ● ● ●	4.2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	Apple iPhone 4S (16GB)	50	74	● ● ● ● ●	3.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15	Pantech Flex	0	72	● ● ● ● ●	4.3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16	Samsung Galaxy Rugby Pro	100	72	● ● ● ● ●	4.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	17	BlackBerry Q10	200	71	● ● ● ● ●	3.1

¹ Price is with a two-year contract as of September 2013 except for T-Mobile, where price is for the first installment based on two-year payment plan. ² Because of testing differences, scores for image quality are not directly comparable to those for cameras, which are judged at a higher standard. ^D Discontinued, but similar model available; price is for similar model.

FIRST LOOKS

Sizzling new smart phones

Here are five promising phones that arrived too late for our Ratings. Some are newer versions of models that have done well previously. A trend worth noting: Rather than setting records for screen size and data speeds, these phones focus on making tasks we routinely perform faster and easier. (Prices and terms vary by carrier and often require a two-year commitment.)

Motorola Droid Maxx \$300 (Verizon)

Motorola phones have usually done well in our Ratings, in some cases because of their large, brilliant displays and near-immortal battery lives. The Droid Maxx and others in a new generation (including the Droid Ultra, Moto X, and Mini)

retain those strengths and add features to make them easier to use. Motorola, now owned by Google, optimized these models to take advantage of Google Now, Android's answer

to Siri, the iPhone's personal assistant, taking voice control to a new level. The Droids are also smart about interpreting simple gestures: Give them a nudge to display the time and other notifications or twist your wrist to launch the camera. Another cool option for the Maxx and the Mini: wireless charging.

The Droid Maxx and Ultra have 5-inch displays, the Moto X has a 4.7-inch display, and the Mini has a 4.3-inch display. The Ultra costs \$200 from Verizon; the Moto X costs \$200 from AT&T, Sprint, and Verizon; and the Mini costs \$100 from Verizon.



Samsung Galaxy Note 3 \$200 to \$300 (AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, Verizon)

The Samsung Galaxy Note 3's 5.7-inch display and fine performance should appeal to note takers, e-book fans, and Web users. Though its display is 0.2 inches larger than that of the Note II, it feels no bigger in the hand. Resolution on its stellar display has been upped to 1080p, great for HD video. Its 12.8-megapixel camera is the first we've seen on a phone that records in Ultra HD (4K) video format.

The phone lets you use two apps on a screen simultaneously, so you can drag a photo from an open album into a text message to attach it.

Pulling the S-Pen stylus out of its holder calls up a semi-circle-shaped menu that gives quick access to cool features such as pecking a phone number to launch the dialer. Air Gestures let you wave a hand to control some

functions. Other noteworthy Samsung phones we're still testing in our labs include the \$150 Galaxy Mega (AT&T), with the biggest display to date, at 6.3 inches.



LG G2 \$100 to \$200 depending on carrier (AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, Verizon)

The LG G2 crams a gorgeous 5.2-inch 1080p display and a massive battery into a slim, curved case. The battery delivered an astounding 24-plus hours of talk time in one of our tests. And in a major ergonomic move, LG placed the G2's power/volume button cluster on the back of the phone instead of on the top or sides.

Other noteworthy points:

smarter shortcuts to common tasks, such as auto answering when you hold the phone up to your ear, clever new ways to juggle open apps, and a 13-megapixel camera. After shooting a video, you can select any person in the crowd, and when you play back the video, it will show more close-ups of that person. The Slide Aside feature lets you stack three active apps one above the other like a deck of cards, so you can easily shuffle them. The camera produced very good pictures at ISO settings up to 800 and in low light. It's among

the first phones we've seen that record 60 frames per second at 1080p, for smoother video.

Other features shared by LG models already in our Ratings include QSlide, a feature that lets you view a video, a Web browser, or other apps on a translucent, resizable window so that you can perform other tasks. Its infrared blaster and its QuickRemote app, like a universal remote, can be used to control compatible TVs, set-top boxes, Blu-ray players, and more. The Verizon version can be charged wirelessly by placing it on an optional mat.



Apple iPhone 5s (16GB) \$100 to \$200 (AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, Verizon)

Apple iPhone 5c (16GB) \$100 to \$200 (AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, Verizon)

These latest iPhones haven't taken the radical leaps in screen size and other capabilities seen on phones from Samsung, LG, HTC, and Nokia. In fact, their Retina displays are still 4 inches, with the same resolution as the iPhone 5. Still, Apple has made some innovations of its own to the iPhone 5s, including a fingerprint reader, a 64-bit processor, and upgrades to the camera. The 5c is like last year's iPhone 5, but has a plastic case in fun colors and the lowest price (\$99 for 16GB, \$199 for 32GB) for a new iPhone. But it's more than half an ounce heavier and 15 percent thicker.

The iPhone 5s's Touch ID fingerprint reader, which is built into the Home button, lets you quickly unlock a screen without typing a PIN. In our initial tests, it worked reliably. The phone's A7 64-bit processor didn't seem much faster than the 32-bit A6 when performing common tasks such as opening apps and downloading Web pages. But the graphics of Infinity Blade 3—one of the first games optimized for the A7—did look spectacular. We found that the phone's upgraded 8-megapixel camera had excellent image quality and was a tad better at taking still pictures under low-light conditions, thanks in part to a digital image stabilizer.

Other noteworthy enhancements include a new, easy way to turn often-used controls on and off, and a quick way to return to recently used apps. And AirDrop lets you wireless share photos, videos, and more with compatible devices.

The 5s costs \$200 for 16GB, \$300 and up for 32GB, and \$400 and up for 64GB.



Apple iPad
(4th gen.)

Tablets

YOU DON'T have to settle for a tablet with a less-than-great display. The iPad started the march to very high-resolution tablets a couple of years ago, but since then, many other models have followed suit. Screens with upward of 300 pixels per inch now grace tablets priced as low

as \$230. Such high resolution means crisper text when reading books and magazines, and sharper images when viewing videos and photos. Portability is also improving with thinner, narrower tablets that are easier to hold in one hand and models that have longer battery life.



Barnes & Noble Nook HD

Nook HD+

▣ The scholar

Apple has a store full of digital textbooks that let you add notes, use interactive features, and more. The **iPad Mini**, \$330, is perfect for a student—it can deliver everything the iBooks store has to offer in a portable package of just 0.7 pounds. If picture quality is more important than portability, try **Apple's iPad (4th gen.)**, \$500. Its display is so sharp it's hard to see individual pixels. Updates for both were expected at press time.

▣ The bookworm

People who love to read want easy access to lots of books. Everything it takes to have the perfect reading experience comes together with **Barnes & Noble's Nook HD+**, \$150, a CR Best Buy. It has a great bookstore, a very high-resolution display for crisp-looking text, and a big screen that makes reading a pleasure. There's also a smaller version, the **Nook HD**, which starts at \$130 for 8GB. It's also a CR Best Buy.



☑ The beachgoer

Spring break will be here before you know it. Help your favorite sun worshipper prepare with **Sony's Xperia Tablet Z**, \$500. It's water-resistant (yes, we dunked it and it passed the test!). It's great in bright sunlight, so it's a perfect choice for someone who spends a lot of time in the surf and sand. One of the thinnest tablets tested, it's comfortable to hold for long periods and is easy to use on the beach till the sun goes down.



Sony Xperia Tablet Z

▶ The workaholic

Show your hardworking spouse that there are other ways to get the job done besides toting around a bulky computer. **Samsung's Galaxy Note 8.0**, \$380, comes with a stylus that's perfect for annotating a presentation. Even better, it has handwriting-recognition capabilities as well as a number of collaborative apps. For serious typing, an optional wireless keyboard will run you about \$30. You can even multitask—certain apps allow you to open two windows at once so, for example, you can check your e-mail while watching a video.



Samsung Galaxy Note 8.0



Google Nexus 7 (2nd gen.)

◀ The film buff

You know her: She likes to watch movies whenever and wherever. Give her a tablet that plays videos with style. **Google's Nexus 7 (2nd gen.)** tablet, \$230, has one of the highest-resolution screens we've seen yet, in a 7-inch tablet large enough to enjoy viewing but, at 0.7 pounds, still thin and light. It's also quite narrow and should easily fit into one hand. And you can't argue with the price, which qualifies this as a CR Best Buy.

Overview

In addition to the models already mentioned, these are all good choices.

BEST-VALUE TABLETS

A5 Samsung (8GB) \$200 **CR Best Buy**

A9 Kobo (32GB) \$250

C2 Amazon (16GB) \$285

A5 is the latest version of the Galaxy Tab, at a great price. Make up for the sparse

storage with a memory card. **A9** provides lots of storage space and long battery life, though it skimps on other features. **C2** has an excellent, large display and is best with an Amazon Prime subscription (\$80 a year).

BEST FOR WINDOWS USERS

D7 Microsoft (32GB) \$350 **CR Best Buy**

If you want your Windows to go, **D7** is a good choice. It comes loaded with Office apps. A new version was released at press time.



A5 Samsung

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

Ratings Tablets

Recommended models only From 70 tested.

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Features
				0 100	Portability	Display
				P F G V E	Battery life (hr.)	Operating system ¹
						Memory-card reader

A 7- TO 8-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, WI-FI-ONLY Weight: 0.7 to 0.9 lb.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung Galaxy Note 8.0 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	\$380	83	● ●	10.0	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 8.0 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	300	83	● ●	11.8	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Google Nexus 7 (Wi-Fi, 16GB) (2nd gen.)	230	80	● ●	13.5	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Apple iPad Mini (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	330	79	● ●	10.5	I	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 7.0 (Wi-Fi, 8GB)	200	78	● ●	9.7	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 (7.0) (Wi-Fi, 8GB)	170	73	● ●	8.3	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Wikipad 7 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	250	70	● ●	8.4	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Acer Iconia A1-810-L416 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	200	70	● ○	9.4	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Kobo Arc (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	250	68	● ●	9.3	A	●

B 7- TO 8-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, 3G/4G+WI-FI Weight: 0.7 to 0.9 lb.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Apple iPad Mini (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB)	460	83	● ●	11.3	I	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung Galaxy Note 8.0 (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB)	500	82	● ●	10.0	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Samsung Galaxy Tab 7.7 (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB)	350	78	● ●	8.3	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 (7.0) (Wi-Fi, 4G, 8GB)	300	74	● ●	8.3	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	T-Mobile SpringBoard (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB)	390	71	○ ●	6.1	A	●

C 7- TO 9-INCH-SCREEN SPECIALTY TABLETS Weight: 0.7 to 1.2 lb.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Amazon Kindle Fire HD 8.9 (Wi-Fi, 4G, 32GB) ²	415	76	● ●	9.1	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Amazon Kindle Fire HD 8.9 (Wi-Fi, 16GB) ²	285	72	● ●	9.1	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Amazon Kindle Fire HD (Wi-Fi, 16GB) ²	215	72	● ●	10.7	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Barnes & Noble Nook HD+ (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	150	67	● ●	9.0	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Barnes & Noble Nook HD (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	150	67	● ●	8.8	A	●

D 9- TO 12-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, WI-FI-ONLY Weight: 1.1 to 1.6 lb.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Google Nexus 10 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	400	82	● ●	11.0	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	450	81	● ●	11.1	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Apple iPad (Wi-Fi, 16GB) (4th gen.)	500	81	● ●	12.9	I	●

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Features
				0 100	Portability	Display
				P F G V E	Battery life (hr.)	Operating system ¹
						Memory-card reader

D 9- TO 12-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, WI-FI-ONLY continued

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 10.1 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	\$400	80	● ●	9.6	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 (10.1) (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	350	80	● ●	12.4	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Sony Xperia Tablet Z (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	500	79	● ●	9.7	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Microsoft Surface with Windows RT (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	350	78	● ●	10.6	WR	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Dell Latitude 10 (Wi-Fi, 64GB)	650	78	● ●	11.5	W8	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Dell Latitude 10 Essentials (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	500	78	● ●	12.6	W8	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Samsung Ativ Smart PC (Wi-Fi, 64GB)	500	78	● ●	13.4	W8	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Apple iPad 2 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	400	78	● ●	11.6	I	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Samsung Ativ Tab 5 (Wi-Fi, 64GB)	700	77	● ●	13.8	W8	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	Asus Transformer Pad Infinity TF700T (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	500	77	● ●	8.0	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	Acer Iconia W510 (Wi-Fi, 64GB)	550	76	● ●	10.0	W8	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15	Acer Iconia Tab A700 (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	450	76	● ●	9.5	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16	Dell XPS 10 (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	450	76	● ●	10.9	WR	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	17	Toshiba Excite Write (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	600	75	● ●	7.0	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	18	Toshiba Excite Pro (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	500	75	● ●	8.4	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	19	Lenovo IdeaTab Lynx K3011 (Wi-Fi, 64GB)	500	75	● ●	10.9	W8	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	20	Asus Transformer Pad TF300T (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	300	75	● ●	8.9	A	●

E 9- TO 12-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, 3G/4G+WI-FI Weight: 1.2 to 1.5 lb.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Apple iPad (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB) (4th gen.)	630	83	● ●	11.7	I	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB)	600	83	● ●	11.4	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Asus VivoTab RT TF600T (Wi-Fi, 4G, 32GB)	300	82	● ●	10.7	WR	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 (10.1) (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB)	350	81	● ●	11.5	A	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Apple iPad 2 (Wi-Fi, 3G, 16GB)	530	81	● ●	11.6	I	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Dell Latitude 10 (Wi-Fi, 3G, 64GB)	750	80	● ●	11.3	W8	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB)	800	77	● ●	8.9	A	●

¹ A=Android; I=iOS; WR=Windows RT; W8=Windows 8. ² Price includes optional wall charger, \$10.



Dell XPS 27 Touch



Computers

FOR SERIOUS WORK, a computer still beats a tablet hands down, and the newest computers are becoming more tabletlike. Some new Windows 8-based laptops can even morph into a tablet on demand. Thanks in part to solid-state drives, laptops have generally become thinner and lighter. Many laptops boast a battery life of 8 hours or longer—enough for a full day's work. Touch screens are almost standard on space-saving all-in-one desktops and fairly common on laptops, too. Hybrid drives use a solid-state drive for faster start-up and a hard drive for more storage.

▶ Your whole family

It's not easy to find the perfect gift for the family room. The kids want to play games and watch TV, your spouse wants a computer that serves as the hub of family activities (calendar, photos, home movies, and more), and you just want a quick and easy way to browse the Internet. Enter the **Dell XPS 27 Touch**, \$1,600. This all-in-one has an excellent 27-inch display that handles everything. The touch screen lets you swipe and tap your way through apps (courtesy of Windows 8), and the big screen and fine sound are great for multimedia and gaming. The speedy processor minimizes wait time, and the



HP Envy 23-d150

wireless keyboard and mouse reduce cord clutter. The 1-terabyte hard drive has room for the whole gang to stash photos, videos, and lots more. If your budget is tighter, consider the **HP Envy 23-d150**, \$1,250, which has excellent performance, can play demanding video games, and has a very good 23-inch touch-screen display.



◀ The dorm dweller

Your freshman's room is what real estate agents call "cozy." Translation: It's cramped! But he wants to squeeze in a TV, a stereo, a computer, and a microwave. You can get all of that in one small device (well, everything but the microwave) by getting him a 17-inch laptop that's compact but mighty, with a screen that's big enough for watching TV and speakers that are good enough for casual listening. One fine candidate: the **Toshiba Satellite S75-A7270**, \$725. It's an excellent performer with enough oomph for demanding video games. The 750-gigabyte hard drive (generous for a laptop) lets you store music, videos, photos, and more. And it can charge other devices while asleep, including a smart phone.

Toshiba Satellite S75-A7270

Acer Aspire
AT3-605-UR20

Asus ET2220IUTI-B019K

◀ The money manager

Someone in the family spends more time than he'd like in the home office paying bills, balancing the checkbook, and doing tax returns. What he'd appreciate most is a capable full-sized desktop without the bells and whistles that would jack up the price and blow the holiday budget. A good candidate: the **Acer Aspire AT3-605-UR20**, at \$650 a CR Best Buy. It's an excellent performer, with 12GB of memory and 2TB of storage. You can save the cost of a monitor by reusing one from your previous desktop. This baby has no dedicated video memory, but it can handle all but the most demanding video games, just in case your number cruncher needs a break. If space is tight and you can spend more, consider an all-in-one such as the **Asus ET2220IUTI-B019K**, \$875, which has 8GB of memory and 1TB of storage.

Where to buy computers

Even the lowest-rated computer retailers pleased most customers, according to a survey by the Consumer Reports National Research Center. Apple received high scores for its website and walk-in stores, primarily because of its product selection and service. Readers gave high scores to independent local stores, and almost four out of 10 shoppers who frequented them did so because of their knowledgeable sales staff and previous positive experiences. Of those who bought directly from manufacturers, 43 percent found the ability to customize features appealing. Return policies and restocking fees vary among stores and sites, so check them out before deciding where to shop.

BEST WEBSITES FOR PCs

- A1 Amazon.com
- A2 Newegg.com
- A3 Costco.com
- A4 TigerDirect.com

All were above average for selection and price, except for **A3**, which doesn't offer as wide a selection. But **A3** gives you 90 days to return an item; **A1** and **A2**, 30 days; **A4**, 15 days. **A2** charges a restocking fee of up to 25 percent for opened computers, higher than most we've seen.

BEST WALK-IN STORES FOR PCs

- C2 Independents
- C3 Costco
- C4 Micro Center

What independent stores lack in selection and price they make up for in service. **C3**

and **C4** earned high marks for pricing among walk-in stores. **C4** also offers above-average selection and service. But there are only 23 stores in 16 states, and computers must be returned within 15 days. **C3** has a skimpy selection and you have to pay a membership fee, but its return policy of 90 days is generous.

BEST PLACES TO BUY A MAC

- B1 Apple.com
- C1 Apple Store

Apple's website and stores offer a superior experience. But the return policy for computers is only 14 days, and they received low ratings for price. You might also consider buying a Mac at an independent computer store.

Ratings Retailers

In order of reader score.

Better ← → Worse
● ● ● ● ● ●

Order		Reader score	Survey results		
			Selection	Price	Service
		0 100			

A WEBSITES/CATALOGS

1	Amazon.com	89	●	●	●
2	Newegg.com	89	●	●	●
3	Costco.com	88	●	●	●
4	TigerDirect.com	86	●	●	●
5	QVC.com	85	○	○	—
6	BestBuy.com	82	○	○	○

B MANUFACTURER WEBSITES/CATALOGS

1	Apple.com	91	●	●	●
2	HP.com	83	●	○	●
3	Toshiba.com	83	●	○	●
4	Dell.com	82	●	○	○
5	Lenovo.com	81	●	○	○

C WALK-IN STORES

1	Apple Store	91	●	●	●
2	Independents	87	○	○	●
3	Costco	85	●	●	○
4	Micro Center	85	●	●	●
5	Sam's Club	81	●	○	●
6	Staples	80	○	○	●
7	Office Depot	80	●	●	○
8	Office Max	79	●	●	○
9	Best Buy	78	○	●	○
10	Fry's Electronics	77	●	○	○
11	Walmart	72	●	●	●

Guide to the Ratings

Reader score reflects overall satisfaction with the shopping experience and is not limited to the factors listed in the **survey results**. A score of 100 would mean all respondents were completely satisfied; 80, that respondents were very satisfied, on average; 60, fairly well satisfied. Differences of fewer than 5 points are not meaningful. The mean reader score for each vendor is presented in the Ratings. Survey results are relative. Respondents rated vendors on their **selection** of computers, **price**, and **service** (including knowledge and helpfulness of staff for walk-ins and usability for websites). Results are based on more than 16,000 responses from subscribers who bought new desktops and laptops from January 2012 through June 2013. Survey results may not reflect the U.S. population as a whole. A dash (—) indicates that we didn't have sufficient data to report a rating.



Samsung Ativ Smart PC Pro XE700TIC-A01US



◀ The multitasker

Give your gadget-loving teenager two for the price of one. The **Samsung Ativ Smart PC Pro XE700TIC-A01US**, \$1,100, is both a tablet and a laptop using Windows 8. Use it as a touch-screen laptop when it's in the keyboard dock, or pull the 11.6-inch screen out and carry it around like a tablet. The 128GB solid-state drive accesses data more quickly than a conventional hard drive and uses less power, extending battery life, though it offers only modest storage. Like many other detachable computers, this one has advantages and disadvantages as a tablet. It's heavier than other tablets, and battery life of 7¼ hours is mediocre. The large, 11.6-inch display makes it bulkier than other tablets, but it also gives you plenty of screen real estate. And you can use all of your Windows applications on this one.

Ratings Desktop computers

Recommended models only From 45 tested.



Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results			Specifications		
					Versatility	Performance	Ergonomics	Display size (in.)	Memory (GB)	Video memory (MB)

A ALL-IN-ONE Sleek and space-saving.

✓	1	Dell XPS 27 Touch	\$1,600	83	●	●	●	27.0	8	2048
✓	2	Asus ET2702-03	1,800	78	●	●	●	27.0	8	2048
✓	3	HP Envy 23-d150	1,250	77	●	●	●	23.0	8	0
✓	4	Toshiba PX35T-AST2G01	1,300	74	●	●	●	23.0	8	2048
✓	5	Lenovo IdeaCentre A730	1,450	73	●	●	●	27.0	8	2048
✓	6	Sony Vaio SVL24147CXB	1,500	73	●	●	●	24.0	8	2048
✓	7	Sony Vaio SVL24125CXW	1,250	72	●	●	●	24.0	8	0
✓	8	Dell XPS One 27	1,350	72	●	●	●	27.0	6	0
✓	9	Samsung DP700A7D-S03US	1,650	69	●	●	●	27.0	8	1024
✓	10	Vizio CA27T-B1	1,450	68	○	●	○	27.0	8	0
✓	11	Vizio CA24T-B1	1,325	67	○	●	○	24.0	8	0
✓	12	Asus Transformer P1801-B037K	1,225	67	●	●	●	18.4	8	2048
✓	13	Asus ET2220IUT1-B019K	875	67	●	●	●	21.5	8	0
✓	14	Apple iMac 27-inch MD095LL/A w/Fusion Drive	2,050	66	○	●	○	27.0	8	512
✓	15	Toshiba PX35T-A2300	900	66	●	●	●	23.0	6	0

B FULL-SIZED Fits under a desk. Requires a monitor.

✓	1	Dell XPS 8700 Special Edition	1,850	82	●	●	●	NA	24	1024
✓	2	Dell XPS 8700	800	77	●	●	●	NA	8	1024
✓	3	Acer Aspire AT3-605-UR20	650	74	●	●	●	NA	12	0
✓	4	Lenovo IdeaCentre K450-57317212	600	73	●	●	●	NA	8	2048
✓	5	HP Envy 700-010	600	72	●	○	●	NA	8	0
✓	6	HP Envy 700-030qe	900	70	●	●	●	NA	12	1024
✓	7	Asus Essentio M51AC-B07	900	69	●	●	●	NA	16	2048
✓	8	Gateway DX4870-UB318	500	65	●	●	●	NA	8	0



A2 Asus

Overview

All of the all-in-one models have a touch screen except A14. In addition to the other models mentioned, these are good choices:

MOST VERSATILE DESKTOPS

A2 Asus \$1,800

B1 Dell \$1,850

B2 Dell \$800

A2 and B1 were excellent performers and have 2TB hard drives and Blu-ray players. All three were powerful enough for playing demanding video games.

BEST DESKTOP VALUES

A15 Toshiba \$900

B4 Lenovo \$600 CR Best Buy

Well-priced for an all-in-one, A15 has a very large 2TB hard drive and a touch screen. Its speakers were better than those on most other all-in-ones. B4 has the latest Intel Core i5 processor and was good for playing demanding video games.

The frequent flier

Is there a road warrior or globe-trotting tourist on your gift list? It's all about portability for her. Weighing in at just 2.3 pounds, the 13-inch **Sony Vaio Pro SVPI3213CX5 Ultrabook**, \$1,250, is the lightest 13-inch laptop we've seen. (Consider the 11-inch sibling, which costs \$100 less, to shave off a few ounces.) It's made of carbon fiber, and it's thin. But you don't sacrifice performance—it's speedy, with great battery life of 10 hours. One trade-off with such a lightweight laptop that uses solid-state storage instead of a hard drive: You get just 128GB storage. For more capacity at a similar price, consider the **Asus Zenbook Prime UX32VD-DH71 Ultrabook**, \$1,100, or **Apple MacBook Pro 13-inch MD101LL/A**, \$1,200, which weigh a pound or two more but offer 500GB of storage.



Apple
MacBook
Pro 13-inch
MD101LL/A

Sony Vaio Pro SVPI3213CX5 Ultrabook

Overview

In addition to the other models mentioned, these are good choices:

MOST PORTABLE

B3 Samsung \$1,100

B4 Apple \$1,100

B6 Toshiba \$1,300

At 2.5 pounds, **B3** and **B6** are among the lightest laptops we've tested. **B4** had the longest battery life among models this size.

BEST LAPTOP VALUES

A6 Lenovo \$750

C12 HP \$750

C17 Toshiba \$675

A6 is a convertible that you can use as a laptop and a tablet. **C12** was a very good performer with long battery life. **C17** was an excellent performer. You can play demanding video games on **C12** and **C17**.

Ratings Laptop computers

Recommended models only From 91 tested.

Recommended

Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Specifications
				0 100	Ergonomics Portability Performance	Battery life (hr.) Weight (lb.) Storage (GB) Touch screen
				P F G V E		

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Specifications
				0 100	Ergonomics Portability Performance	Battery life (hr.) Weight (lb.) Storage (GB) Touch screen
				P F G V E		

A 10- TO 13-INCH LAPTOP/TABLET COMBOS Best for versatility.

1	Dell XPS 12 Convertible Touch Ultrabook (4th Gen. i5)	\$1,200	81	● ● ● ● ●	11½ 3.3 128	●
2	Dell XPS 12 Convertible Touch Ultrabook (3rd Gen. i5)	1,100	75	● ● ● ● ●	8 3.3 128	●
3	Sony Vaio Duo 13 Ultrabook SVD13213CXB	1,400	72	● ● ● ● ●	9¼ 2.9 128	●
4	Samsung Ativ Smart PC Pro XE700T1C-A01US	1,100	68	● ● ● ● ●	7¼ 3.5 128	●
5	Asus Transformer Book TX300CA-DH71 Ultrabook	1,450	66	● ● ● ● ●	5½ 4.2 628	●
6	Lenovo IdeaPad Yoga 11S 59370508	750	65	● ● ● ● ●	6¼ 3.0 128	●
7	Microsoft Surface Pro	920	65	● ● ● ● ●	5¼ 2.5 64	●

B 13-INCH For mobility plus performance.

1	Sony Vaio Pro SVPI3213CX5 Ultrabook	1,250	79	● ● ● ● ●	10 2.3 128	●
2	Apple MacBook Air 13-inch MD231LL/A	1,000	74	● ● ● ● ●	11¾ 3.0 128	●
3	Samsung Ativ Book 9 NP900X3F-K01US	1,100	74	● ● ● ● ●	6¼ 2.5 128	●
4	Apple MacBook Air 13-inch MD760LL/A	1,100	73	● ● ● ● ●	15 2.9 128	●
5	Samsung Ativ Book 7 NP740U3E-K01UB	1,000	73	● ● ● ● ●	8 3.5 128	●
6	Toshiba Kirabook 13	1,300	73	● ● ● ● ●	7½ 2.5 256	●
7	Apple MacBook Pro 13-inch with Retina Display MD212LL/A	1,500	72	● ● ● ● ●	8½ 3.6 128	●
8	Asus Zenbook Prime UX32VD-DH71 Ultrabook	1,100	67	● ● ● ● ●	6½ 3.3 500	●
9	Samsung Ativ Book 9 Lite NP915S3G-K01US	900	67	● ● ● ● ●	8¼ 3.4 128	●
10	Apple MacBook Pro 13-inch MD101LL/A	1,200	66	● ● ● ● ●	8¼ 4.5 500	●

C 15- TO 16-INCH Best balance of size, portability, and price.

1	Apple MacBook Pro 15-inch with Retina display ME664LL/A	\$2,200	78	● ● ● ● ●	10 4.4 256	●
2	Samsung Ativ Book 8 NP880Z5E-X01UB	1,200	76	● ● ● ● ●	10¼ 5.7 1000	●
3	Apple MacBook Pro 15-inch with Retina display MC975LL/A	1,900	76	● ● ● ● ●	12½ 4.5 256	●
4	Acer Aspire R7-571-6858	900	73	● ● ● ● ●	6½ 5.4 500	●
5	Vizio CT15T-B1 Ultrabook	1,300	72	● ● ● ● ●	10¼ 4.8 256	●
6	Asus Q550LF-BBI7T07	1,000	71	● ● ● ● ●	7 5.6 1000	●
7	Apple MacBook Pro 15-inch MD103LL/A	1,800	70	● ● ● ● ●	11¾ 5.6 500	●
8	Vizio CN15-A5	1,000	69	● ● ● ● ●	5½ 5.0 1000	●
9	MSI GT60 20C-022US	1,325	69	● ● ● ● ●	6¼ 7.5 1000	●
10	Dell Inspiron 15R	850	68	● ● ● ● ●	9¼ 5.8 1000	●
11	Toshiba Satellite P50-A52TNX1	800	67	● ● ● ● ●	5½ 4.7 1000	●
12	HP Envy TouchSmart Sleekbook m6-k015dx	750	67	● ● ● ● ●	8¼ 5.7 750	●
13	Samsung Ativ Book 4 NP470R5E-K02UB	700	66	● ● ● ● ●	6¼ 4.4 750	●
14	Vizio CT15-A4 Ultrabook	900	66	● ● ● ● ●	5¼ 4.0 128	●
15	HP Envy TouchSmart 15t-j000	800	66	● ● ● ● ●	6¼ 5.7 1000	●
16	Dell Inspiron i15ZT-2880SLV	850	66	● ● ● ● ●	5¼ 5.3 500	●
17	Toshiba Satellite L55-A5284NR	675	66	● ● ● ● ●	5¼ 5.0 750	●
18	Toshiba Satellite S55T-A5258NR	950	65	● ● ● ● ●	4¼ 5.3 1000	●

Printers

A **LL-IN-ONE** printers continue to innovate with features, such as the ability to print from your smart phone or tablet once you've downloaded the appropriate app. Certain printer manufacturers have expanded the capabilities of printer-related apps, for example, to let you access images on social networks, such as Facebook, and print them directly from those websites. Despite such new bells and whistles, prices on printers remain low. But note that not all models are equally frugal with ink. When comparing models check our Ratings for monthly cost calculations, as well as our rating of maintenance ink use.



Epson Expression Premium XP-800

▣ The shutterbug ▣

The paparazzo in your life should click with the **Epson Expression Premium XP-800 all-in-one inkjet printer**, \$150. It churns out excellent photos, among the best we've seen in our tests, with decent speed and print costs. And he won't need a computer to get his photos to the XP-800, which has a PictBridge port for direct printing from cameras and compatibility with a variety of memory cards. It's no slouch at printing text and color graphics, either, and it offers scanning, copying, and faxing capabilities as well. No need for faxing? Consider the **XP-600**, \$100, a CR Best Buy, which is much the same, minus a few features.



Brother MFC-7360N

▣ The entrepreneur ▣

Here's a great gift for the owner of a home-based business who needs a fast but economical black-and-white printer. The **Brother MFC-7360N all-in-one laser**, \$170, is just the ticket for printing out schedules, invoices, reports, and other documents. It spits out 14.3 pages per minute of black text with excellent quality at a cost of just 1.9 cents per page. It also produces black-and-white graphics well enough for most purposes, such as school reports, and the 250-sheet paper tray minimizes refills. This CR Best Buy also does a great job at copying and scanning and offers faxing capability, too.



Epson Expression Premium XP-600



Ratings on next page

Overview

In addition to the models mentioned on the previous page, these are good choices. Consider operating costs. A low-priced model could be expensive in the long run if it's not very frugal with ink. Most all-in-ones are very good for scanning.

TOP ALL-IN-ONE CHOICES

A1 HP \$200

B1 Canon \$300

A1 offers very good overall performance, particularly for printing photos, and has Wi-Fi. **B1** has a convenient second paper tray and Ethernet and Wi-Fi connectivity.

TOP CHOICES FOR REGULAR PRINTERS

C1 Epson \$150

D1 Dell \$200

E1 HP \$160

C1 might be a bit big and boxy for an inkjet, but it offers very good performance, has very good photo quality, and prints photos quickly. **D1** provides fine overall performance and has Wi-Fi. **E1** prints excellent-quality black text quickly and is a decent choice if all you need is black text and Ethernet connectivity.



A1 HP Photosmart 7520

Ratings Printers

Recommended models only From 91 tested.

☒ CR Best Buy ☒ Recommended

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results
				0 100	Ink cost/month (\$) Maintenance ink use* Photo quality 4x6 photo time Text quality Text speed
				P F G V E	

A ALL-IN-ONE INKJETS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	HP Photosmart 7520	\$200	78	\$6.40	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Epson Expression Premium XP-800	150	76	7.50	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Epson Expression Premium XP-600	100	73	8.00	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	HP Photosmart 6520	150	72	6.50	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Canon Pixma MG3220	80	72	7.30	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Canon Pixma MG6320	200	72	7.60	—	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Canon Pixma MG5420	100	71	6.90	○	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Canon Pixma MX922	130	71	6.50	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	HP Officejet Pro 8600 Plus	230	71	4.20	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Brother MFC-J6910DW	300	70	5.40	—	●	●	○	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Brother MFC-J5910DW	200	70	5.80	—	●	●	○	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Canon Pixma MG2220	70	70	7.30	●	●	●	●	●

B ALL-IN-ONE BLACK-AND-WHITE LASERS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Canon ImageClass MF4890dw	300	76	5.40	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Canon ImageClass MF4770n	200	76	5.40	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Samsung SCX-3405FW	200	76	5.80	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Canon ImageClass MF5950dw	400	76	3.80	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	HP LaserJet Pro 400 MFP M425dn	500	76	2.70	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Dell 2355dn	400	75	2.30	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Samsung SL-M2875FW	300	75	4.65	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Brother MFC-7360N	170	74	2.70	●	NA	NA	●	●

*A dash (—) indicates insufficient data.

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results
				0 100	Ink cost/month (\$) Maintenance ink use* Photo quality 4x6 photo time Text quality Text speed
				P F G V E	

B ALL-IN-ONE BLACK-AND-WHITE LASERS continued

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Brother DCP-7060D	\$160	72	\$2.90	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Brother MFC-7860DW	250	72	2.70	●	NA	NA	●	●

C REGULAR INKJETS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Epson WorkForce Pro WP-4010	150	70	4.40	—	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	HP Officejet Pro 251dw	230	69	4.40	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Canon Pixma iP7220	100	69	6.90	—	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Epson Stylus Photo R2000	600	69	7.50	—	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	HP Officejet 6100	100	69	5.20	—	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	HP Officejet Pro X451dw	500	66	3.50	○	○	●	○	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Canon Pixma iX6520	200	65	8.10	—	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	HP Officejet Pro 8100	100	65	3.90	—	○	●	●	●

D REGULAR COLOR LASERS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Dell C1660w	200	67	22.00	●	●	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Samsung CLP-365w	230	66	12.70	●	●	NA	●	●

E REGULAR BLACK-AND-WHITE LASERS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	HP LaserJet Pro P1606dn	160	78	5.00	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	HP LaserJet Pro P1102w	160	78	5.80	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	HP LaserJet Pro 400 M401dw	450	77	2.70	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Samsung ML-2955DW	150	75	3.40	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Samsung SL-M2825DW	130	74	4.10	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Brother HL-2270DW	140	73	2.70	●	NA	NA	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Samsung ML-2165W	130	73	5.60	●	NA	NA	●	●

Cameras

GET READY FOR lots of innovation. Wireless capability is showing up on all types of cameras, from subcompacts to SLRs. That makes it easy to share images with friends and upload shots

to social-media sites. Built-in zoom is getting longer, even on basic point-and-shoots, so you can capture long-range shots. More waterproof cameras are coming out, including one that accepts interchangeable lenses. Such

bells and whistles haven't come at the expense of image quality. Many cameras we've tested offer very good photos and video. More good news—prices are inching down, especially at the high end.



Canon EOS Rebel SL1

▶ The perfectionist

Every family has one—a shutterbug who wants to control every aspect of a photo but doesn't want to lug around a heavy camera. The **Canon EOS Rebel SL1**, \$750, a CR Best Buy, can do the trick. Small and very light for an SLR, it has very good image quality and performance across the board, and a very good through-the-lens viewfinder. It also shoots sharp photos (even in low light without a flash) and very good video. The swiveling touch-screen LCD is handy when taking hard-to-reach shots. For something more powerful but heftier, consider a new SLR, the 20-megapixel **Canon EOS 70D**, \$1,350 with lens (which we haven't yet tested). There's a lot of buzz about its auto-focus system, which Canon says will offer smooth, precise focusing for videos—a weakness for many SLRs—as well as for still photos. The EOS 70D will quickly refocus on a subject (as a camcorder does), such as a soccer player racing toward the camera, according to Canon. Built-in wireless technology allows easy photo sharing.



Fujifilm
FinePix
XP200W

▶ The outdoor sports fanatic

For an athlete who likes to shoot photos and video while sprinting through the rain, skiing the slopes, or diving into the deep blue sea, there's the **Fujifilm FinePix XP200W**, \$250. This point-and-shoot camera is cheaper than most rugged models but has lots of features, including built-in Wi-Fi for easy sharing

of photos and a burst mode of 10 frames per second. It can also shoot 3D photos. It comes in four colors. For greater versatility in a rugged camera, consider the new **Nikon 1 AW1**, \$800 (which we have not yet tested). It's the first advanced SLR-like model claimed to be waterproof to a depth of 49 feet and able to withstand a drop from 6.6 feet.



▶ The connected traveler

Whether exotic landscapes or a little town on the prairie are on the itinerary, your globetrotter will appreciate a camera with Wi-Fi capability to access wireless hot spots or mobile devices, for quick uploads of photos and video to social networks. Also handy: built-in GPS that can geotag photos to keep track of all those travels. The **Canon PowerShot SX280 HS**, \$300, has all that, plus a long zoom lens (20x optical zoom), and it's portable and lightweight. If being able to zoom great distances is more important than wireless connectivity or light weight, consider a model such as the new **Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ70**, \$400 (which we have not yet tested). Its 60x zoom can photograph even craters on the moon.



Canon PowerShot SX280 HS



Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ70

Continued on next page

▶ The family historian

Here's one for the memory-keeper who fills photo albums with shots of everyone and his uncle—literally. Some of those magic moments take place on a field or stage, so a superzoom such as the **Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX300**, \$450, with its extremely long, 50x optical zoom lens, is just the ticket. Unlike most basic cameras, it has an electronic viewfinder, which makes it easy to compose shots in bright light that would wash out an LCD. Plus, this Cyber-shot can capture 3D photos. If something smaller and lighter would fit the bill, consider the **Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX50V**, \$450, which has a 30x optical zoom. A bonus: It can communicate wirelessly with a smart phone or tablet. By downloading an app to a mobile device, it's also possible to wirelessly control the HX50V from afar—say, if it's placed near the stage or finish line to capture a close-up.



Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX300



A1 Nikon

Overview Basic cameras

Image-quality scores for basic models are based on a lower standard than those for advanced cameras. In addition to the other models mentioned, these are good choices.

TOP CHOICES

A1 Nikon \$320

B1 Olympus \$400

C2 Panasonic \$400

A1 will appeal to advanced users, with its fast f/1.8 lens, for more professional-looking

Ratings Basic cameras

Recommended models only From 108 tested.

CR Best Buy Recommended

Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Specs	Test results
				0 100	Megapixels Optical zoom	Image quality Flash photos Video quality LCD quality
				P F G V E		

A SUBCOMPACT Fits in a purse or pocket.

✓	1	Nikon Coolpix P330	\$320	63	12 5x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	2	Nikon Coolpix S800c	250	60	16 10x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	3	Nikon Coolpix S6500	220	57	16 12x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	4	Canon PowerShot Elph 110 HS	200	57	16 5x	○ ○ ○ ○

B COMPACT Simple to use, with advanced features.

✓	1	Olympus Stylus XZ-10	400	65	12 5x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	2	Nikon Coolpix P310	300	60	16 4.2x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	3	Fujifilm XF1	400	57	12 4x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	4	Nikon Coolpix L610	150	57	16 14x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	5	Canon PowerShot S110	350	55	12 5x	○ ○ ○ ○

C SUPERZOOM Has an extremely versatile zoom lens.

✓	1	Canon PowerShot SX280 HS	300	64	12 20x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	2	Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS30	400	64	18 20x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	3	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX50V	450	63	20 30x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	4	Olympus Stylus SH-50 iHS	270	63	16 24x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	5	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX300	450	63	20 50x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	6	Olympus Stylus SP-820UZ	300	62	14 40x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	7	Leica V-Lux 4	900	60	12 24x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	8	Fujifilm FinePix F900EXR	400	60	16 20x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	9	Nikon Coolpix S9500	280	59	18 22x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	10	Nikon Coolpix S9400	250	59	18 18x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	11	Olympus Stylus SZ-16 iHS	230	59	16 24x	○ ○ ○ ○

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Specs	Test results
				0 100	Megapixels Optical zoom	Image quality Flash photos Video quality LCD quality
				P F G V E		

C SUPERZOOM continued

✓	12	Nikon Coolpix P520	\$400	59	18 42x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	13	Nikon Coolpix L820	230	59	16 30x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	14	Fujifilm FinePix F850EXR	280	59	16 20x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	15	Leica V-Lux 40	700	59	14 20x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	16	Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS8	280	59	14 16x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	17	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-WX300	300	58	18 20x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	18	Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ60	350	58	16 24x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	19	Fujifilm FinePix S8400W	280	57	16 44x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	20	Leica V-Lux 30	680	56	14 16x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	21	Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS15	280	56	12 16x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	22	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX10V	300	55	18 16x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	23	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX200V	480	55	18 30x	○ ○ ○ ○

D RUGGED & WATERPROOF Designed to resist water and shocks.

✓	1	Panasonic Lumix DMC-TS5	400	58	16 5x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	2	Olympus Stylus TG-830 iHS	250	57	16 5x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	3	Nikon Coolpix AW110	280	56	16 5x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	4	Panasonic Lumix DMC-TS4	300	56	12 4.6x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	5	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-TX30	270	56	18 5x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	6	Fujifilm FinePix XP200W	250	56	16 5x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	7	Olympus Stylus TG-2 iHS	330	53	12 4x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	8	Canon PowerShot D20	300	53	12 5x	○ ○ ○ ○
✓	9	Olympus Stylus TG-630 iHS	180	52	12 5x	○ ○ ○ ○

images, plus fast startup time. **B1** includes a hybrid control ring built around the lens, which lets you assign various functions. **C2** is lightweight and thin, includes a long 20x optical zoom lens, and has built-in Wi-Fi.

FOR EXTREME CONDITIONS

D1 Panasonic \$400

D2 Olympus \$250

D3 Nikon \$280

The manufacturer of **D1** claims that it can be submerged to a depth of 43 feet and can withstand a 6.5-foot drop. It also includes NFC (near-field communication) for quickly uploading images and video to a mobile device. **D2's** manufacturer claims that it can be submerged to a depth of 33 feet and can withstand a 5.5-foot drop. **D3** has lots of features, and its manufacturer claims that it can be submerged to a depth of 59 feet. **D1** and **D3** also have wireless capability.

Overview Advanced cameras

Image-quality scores for advanced models are based on a higher standard than those for basic cameras. Prices include the lens listed. In addition to the other models mentioned, these are good choices.

TOP CHOICES

A2 Sony \$750

B2 Panasonic \$750

C1 Canon \$850 **CR Best Buy**

A2 has very good image quality and performance across the board. Plus, it has Wi-Fi and NFC (near-field communication), for easy connection with mobile devices.

B2 combines solid performance and a full complement of features. It also has Wi-Fi and can capture 3D photos, provided you buy the 3D lens. **C1** includes a very good quality touch-screen, swiveling LCD, and a very good through-the-lens viewfinder.



A6 Panasonic

BEST VALUES

A6 Panasonic \$500 **CR Best Buy**

B8 Sony \$450 **CR Best Buy**

C10 Nikon \$550 **CR Best Buy**

A6 has a very good quality viewfinder, which not all advanced point-and-shoots have. **B8** has a very good swiveling LCD that's helpful when composing hard-to-reach shots. **C10** is very versatile, takes very good photos, and has a very good LCD and viewfinder.

Ratings Advanced cameras

Recommended models only From 68 tested.

☒ CR Best Buy ☒ Recommended

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Specifications	Test results
				0 100	Megapixels	Image quality
				P F G V E	Test lens and magnification	Video quality
						LCD quality

A POINT-AND-SHOOT Has a built-in lens and SLR-like features.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Nikon Coolpix A	\$1,100	71	16 28mm	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX100M2	750	71	20 28-100mm	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Fujifilm X100S	1,300	69	16 35mm	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Ricoh GR	800	69	16 28mm	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ200	600	69	12 25-600mm	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Panasonic Lumix DMC-LF1	500	68	12 28-200mm	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX7	450	66	10 24-90mm	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Canon PowerShot G15	450	65	12 28-140mm	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Fujifilm X20	600	65	12 28-112mm	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Pentax MX-1	450	65	12 28-112mm	○ ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Leica X Vario	2,850	64	16 28-70mm	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Olympus Stylus XZ-2	600	64	12 28-112mm	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX100	600	62	20 28-100mm	● ● ●

B SLR-LIKE Smaller and lighter than an SLR; uses removable lenses.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Panasonic Lumix DMC-GH3	1,100	72	16 12-35mm (2.0)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Panasonic Lumix DMC-G6K	750	70	16 14-42mm (2.0)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Panasonic Lumix DMC-G5K	600	69	16 14-42mm (2.0)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Olympus OM-D E-M5	1,000	68	16 12-50mm (2.0)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Samsung NX300	700	68	20 18-55mm (1.5)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6K	600	68	16 14-42mm (2.0)	○ ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Sony SLT-A57K	800	68	16 18-55mm (1.5)	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Sony NEX-3NL	450	67	16 16-50mm (1.5)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Samsung NX20	850	66	20 18-55mm (1.5)	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Sony SLT-A65VK	750	65	24 18-55mm (1.5)	○ ● ●

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Specifications	Test results
				0 100	Megapixels	Image quality
				P F G V E	Test lens and magnification	Video quality
						LCD quality

B SLR-LIKE continued

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Olympus Pen E-P5	\$1,300	65	16 14-42mm (2.0)	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Sony NEX-7K	1,250	65	24 18-55mm (1.5)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	Sony SLT-A77V	900	65	24 18-55mm (1.5)	○ ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	Olympus E-PM2	500	64	16 14-42mm (2.0)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15	Sony NEX-6L	800	64	16 16-50mm (1.5)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16	Samsung NX1100	600	64	20 20-50mm (1.5)	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	17	Sony SLT-A58K	600	63	20 18-55mm (1.5)	○ ○ ○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	18	Samsung NX210	850	63	20 18-55mm (1.5)	● ● ●

C SLR Has the most advanced features and removable lenses.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Canon EOS Rebel T5i	850	73	18 18-55mm (1.6)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Nikon D7100	1,500	72	24 18-105mm (1.5)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Canon EOS 60D	1,000	71	18 18-55mm (1.6)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Canon EOS Rebel SL1	750	71	18 18-55mm (1.6)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Nikon D7000	1,100	70	16 18-105mm (1.5)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Canon EOS Rebel T3i	600	70	18 18-55mm (1.6)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Canon EOS 7D Digital	1,800	69	18 18-135mm (1.6)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Canon EOS Rebel T3	600	67	12 18-55mm (1.6)	● ● ○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Nikon D5200	800	66	24 18-55mm (1.5)	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Nikon D3200	550	66	24 18-55mm (1.5)	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Nikon D3100	450	65	14 18-55mm (1.5)	● ● ○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Pentax K-30	750	65	16 18-55mm (1.5)	● ○ ○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	Pentax K-5	1,250	65	16 18-55mm (1.5)	● ○ ○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	Nikon D5100	600	65	16 18-55mm (1.5)	● ● ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15	Pentax K-50	780	64	16 18-55mm (1.5)	● ○ ●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16	Pentax K-500	600	64	16 18-55mm (1.5)	○ ○ ●



Apple TV, \$100, is great for those with lots of content stored in iTunes, on a Mac computer, or on Apple's iCloud, even though it's not among the recommended models in our Ratings. It sports the usual friendly Apple interface and seamlessly integrates with iTunes and the iCloud storage service. Using AirPlay, it can stream content from an iPad, iPhone, or iPod Touch to a TV, and it mirrors an iOS device's screen on the TV. Its main shortcoming: It supports fewer services than some other models. It works with HBO Go, Hulu Plus, Netflix, and YouTube but not with Amazon.

Streaming media players



- Excellent
 ◐ Very good
 ○ Good
 ◑ Fair
 ● Poor

Recommended models only From 15 tested.

- ☒ CR Best Buy
☒ Recommended

A BASIC									
	1	Western Digital WD TV Play Media Player	\$ 60	68	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	C, HP, N, V			
	2	Roku 3	100	62	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	A, B, HBO, HP, N, V			
	3	Panasonic DMP-MST60	80	61	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	A, C, HP, N, V			
B ADVANCED									
	1	Hisense Pulse w/Google TV (GX1200V)	75	67	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	GP, HBO, N, V			
	2	Netgear NeoTV Prime w/Google TV (GTV100)	100	67	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	A, GP, HBO, N, V			

*A=Amazon Instant Video. B=Blockbuster. C=CinemaNow. GP=Google Play. HBO=HBO Go. HP=Hulu Plus. N=Netflix. V=Vudu.

Headphones



A1 Grado

B16 JBL by Harman

Overview

Many wired models now have in-line remote controls that let you answer and disconnect phone calls. Wireless models (most of which use Bluetooth) often have phone controls on the earpiece or on a cable connecting the earpieces. More-sensitive headphones can provide louder volume from lower-output mobile gear.

GREAT FOR HOME

A1 Grado \$100 **CR Best Buy**
A8 Pioneer \$60 **CR Best Buy**
A12 Vox \$100 **CR Best Buy**

Like **A2** and **A3**, **A1** delivers excellent sound quality, but it costs much less. **A8** has an in-line remote with a

microphone that works with Apple iOS and Android devices and Windows and certain BlackBerry phones. **A12** has a built-in guitar amp that lets players practice without disturbing others.

GREAT FOR TRAVELING

B3 Polk \$100
B4 Westone \$200
B13 Bose \$130
B16 JBL \$60 **CR Best Buy**

B3 has an unusual horizontal design and an attractive tortoise-shell color option. **B4** sports a weatherized design for outdoor use. All four models have a microphone and in-line controls for Apple iOS and Android devices and Windows and certain BlackBerry phones.

Tuned-in traveler

For a music lover surrounded by the din of an airplane or a commuter train, noise-canceling headphones (not in the Ratings) make the perfect gift. They use tiny microphones and electronic circuitry to block out external sounds. The **Beats by Dre Beats Executive**, \$300, has excellent sound and very good noise reduction. The **SMS Audio Street by 50-ANC**, \$280, **Bose QuietComfort 15**, \$300,

and **PSB Speakers M4U 2**, \$400, all have excellent noise cancellation and very good sound. The **Bose QuietComfort 20i**, \$300, was our top noise-canceling model with an in-ear design. The **Monoprice Noise Cancelling Headphone**, \$120, is the lowest-priced model with very good sound and excellent noise reduction.



Bose QuietComfort 15



Ratings

Recommended models only From 118 tested.

☒ CR Best Buy
☒ Recommended

● Excellent
● Very good
○ Good
○ Fair
● Poor

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	
					Sound quality	Sensitivity

A HOME/STUDIO

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Grado Prestige SR80i	\$100	86	●	medium
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	HiFiMan HE-400	400	86	●	low
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Shure SRH1440	400	81	●	low
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Bose AE2	150	76	○	medium
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Bose AE2i	180	76	○	medium
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Grado Prestige SR60i	80	76	○	medium
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Yamaha HPH-200	150	76	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Pioneer Steez 808 SE-MJ7511	60	71	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	Sennheiser Momentum	350	71	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Skullcandy Roc Nation Aviator	150	71	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	TDK ST800	250	71	○	very high/very low
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Vox amPhones Twin	100	66	○	medium-high

B PORTABLE

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Bowers & Wilkins P5	300	80	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Klipsch Image X10i	350	80	○	high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Polk Nue Era	100	80	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Westone ADV Alpha	200	80	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Klipsch Image S4i	100	76	○	high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Monster DNA	170	76	○	high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Nixon MicroBlaster	100	76	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Beats by Dre Beats Solo HD	180	71	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	ClarityOne EB110	130	71	○	high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	Klipsch Image S4i II	100	71	○	high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	Bose IE2	100	66	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	Bose MIE2	130	66	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13	Bose MIE2i	130	66	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	Bose OE2	150	66	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15	Bowers & Wilkins C5	180	66	○	high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16	JBL by Harman J22i	60	66	○	high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	17	Monster Turbine	170	66	○	medium-high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	18	Sennheiser CX 215	40	66	○	high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	19	Sennheiser CX 300-II Precision	60	66	○	high
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	20	Sennheiser Momentum On-Ear	230	66	○	medium
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	21	Velodyne vPulse	100	66	○	high

C WIRELESS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Sennheiser RS 180 ①	330	80	○	medium-high/medium
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Bose AE2w ②	250	76	○	medium

① For at-home use only. ② For home and portable use.

E-book readers

COMPARED WITH TABLETS, e-book readers are generally much lighter than similar-sized models and easier to read in bright light, such as outdoors. And they can run for weeks—some-

times longer—on a single charge. Amazon Kindles and Barnes & Noble Nooks continue to be the leading choices, with fine performance and extensive libraries of titles. Here are a few lower-priced models from each company:



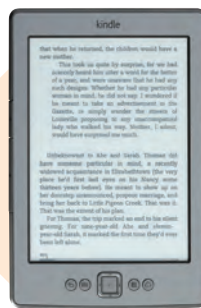
▶ Barnes & Noble Nook Simple Touch, \$80

This Nook, among the best e-book readers we've tested, has become better still because of improved software and even easier-to-read type. Its reduced price now makes it a CR Best Buy, and it's among the least expensive touch-screen readers. An antiglare coating is a worthwhile option that will add \$20 to its price.



▶ Barnes & Noble Nook Simple Touch with GlowLight, \$100

This is essentially the Simple Touch with the added benefit of a lighted screen, which improves visibility when reading in dark environments. It's among the faster models, and page turns are easy. Antiglare coating is included.



▶ Amazon Kindle with Special Offers, \$70

This CR Best Buy is the lowest-priced Kindle, and the one to have if simplicity and portability are priorities—provided you don't mind the rotating ads and offers that appear on the screen saver and along the bottom of the screen. (If you do, you can pay \$20 more for an ad-free version.) It's among the smallest and lightest readers of any brand.



▶ Amazon Kindle Paperwhite with Special Offers, \$120

Amazon's take on a lit-screen e-reader is an excellent performer, with outstanding contrast and resolution that help make it in many ways the best e-ink screen we've tested. It offers easy page turns and very easy search, bookmarking, and navigation. This model has the rotating ads; the ad-free model costs \$140.

Sneak peek: New gaming consoles

Two of the biggest names in video gaming are coming out with new models. New versions of the Microsoft Xbox and Sony PlayStation were expected to hit stores in November. It has been years since either has received a major upgrade, so it's likely

that both will be white-hot holiday products. We'll be testing them as soon as they're available, but in the meantime, here's some information on features. Both are expected to have better graphics, faster processors, and other enhancements.

▶ Sony PlayStation 4, \$400

A new app for Android and iOS devices will allow you to communicate with PlayStation friends and make game purchases on the go. You'll also be able to play PS3 and PS4 games on your PS4 or PlayStation Vita through the cloud. And a Share button will make your gaming sessions more social.



PlayStation 4



Xbox One

▶ Xbox One, \$500

You'll be able to use motion and voice commands via Kinect to browse and control live TV from your cable provider and switch on the fly between gaming and watching television. The Snap picture-in-picture feature will let you have a Skype video call, for example, on one side of your screen while playing a game or watching TV with the other person. The new Kinect is supposed to be everything we hoped the original one would be, detecting more-subtle movements and more players at the same time.



Best brands

Repair & Ratings histories help you choose

EVERY YEAR, WE BUY and test hundreds of electronics products, so there's a good chance you'll find exactly what you want in our Ratings. But what if you're considering a model that hasn't gone through our labs?

Don't worry—we can still help.

By analyzing a few years' worth of our test and survey data, we've compiled a report card on the performance and reliability of major brands of TVs, computers, and a few other products. That lets us give you

some guidance on models that we haven't tested. Of course, brand advice isn't as specific as Ratings of a particular model, but it can minimize your chance of buying a clunker and improve the likelihood that you'll take home a top-notch product.

Keep in mind that our survey and test data are historical and can't predict future reliability or performance. Also, changes in manufacturing can affect both. Still, picking a brand with a good track record can reduce the chance you'll run into problems.

▶ LCD/LED and plasma TVs

Buyers have encouraging news on the reliability of their flat-panel TVs. According to their feedback on almost 162,000 TVs, most major brands have been reliable, with an overall repair rate of just 4 percent for LCD and plasma TVs during the first four years of use. (Our LCD category includes models with LED backlights, which are sometimes called LED sets.) Westinghouse was the most repair-prone of the 16 brands of LCD TVs covered in the survey. (See chart for more details.)

Any problems that did crop up most often occurred early—58 percent of reported repairs took place during the first year of ownership, a period usually covered by the standard manufacturer warranty. That reinforces our advice that extended warranties aren't a good investment for most consumers. The most common problems reported were an inability to power on a TV and a loss of the picture.

We found more variation in TV performance. A number of brands stand out as solid choices based on our tests during the past few years, but we'd urge caution with half a dozen brands that have had hits and misses in our Ratings.

Here are our recommendations based on our reliability data and Rating history for these brands in the past few years.

▶ PERFORMANCE

SAFEST BETS LCD and plasma TVs from Panasonic, LG, and Samsung, and Sony LCD

sets have consistently been among the top performers in our Ratings in the past few years. Given that top-notch track record, we think that other TVs from those brands are likely to do just as well. (And the TV buyers we surveyed reported a low rate of repairs to TVs from those brands.)

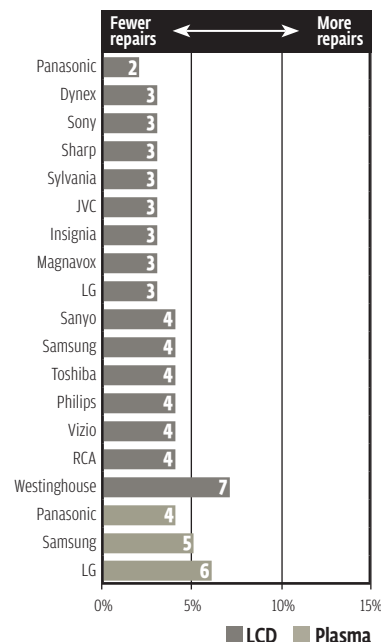
SAFE BETS Vizio and Sharp LCDs have delivered generally strong performance that should satisfy all but the most demanding viewers. Their track record suggests that other models will follow suit. (All of those brands have had a low rate of repairs.)

STICK WITH A TESTED MODEL Other brands have a less-consistent track record in our Ratings. Some LCD TVs from JVC, Toshiba, Insignia, Magnavox, Sanyo, and Philips did quite well, but others had lower scores. We have less confidence that an untested model from one of those brands will offer performance comparable to its best tested siblings. (On the plus side, TVs from all of those brands have had a low rate of repairs.)



▶ RELIABILITY

LCD AND PLASMA TVs



Based on the 2013 Annual Product Reliability Survey, conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center for 143,696 LCD/LED TVs and 18,295 plasma TVs purchased between 2009 and the first half of 2013. Differences of fewer than 3 points are not meaningful.



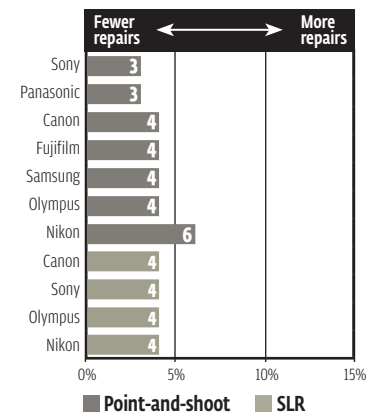
Cameras

Shutterbugs, you can breathe easy—digital cameras have a solid track record for reliability, according to survey data on more than 91,000 camera purchases. Overall, only 4 percent were repaired or had a serious problem during the first few years of use. Among point-and-shoot users who reported repairs, the

power-up function was the problem 17 percent of the time; on SLRs and SLR-like, the lens and autofocus were the trouble spots nearly 20 percent of the time. (Because of changes to our testing, we don't have enough current data to report on brand performance history, but we're working on it.)

RELIABILITY

DIGITAL CAMERAS



Based on the 2013 Annual Product Reliability Survey, conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center, for 91,256 digital cameras purchased between 2009 and the first half of 2013. Differences of fewer than 3 points aren't meaningful.



Tablets and e-book readers

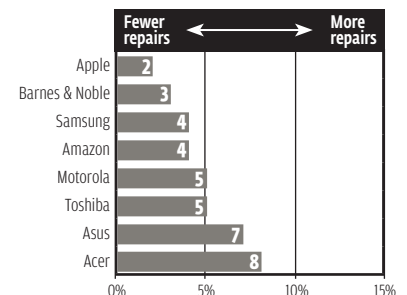
For the first time this year, we asked consumers about the reliability of tablets and e-book readers, and the news on both was good. Most major brands of tablets have been fairly reliable, according to more than 42,600 readers who reported on more than 53,000 tablets. The median repair rate for the eight brands covered in the survey was 5 percent. (All tablets had a 7-inch or larger screen.) Most of the repairs that were reported took place during the first 12 months of ownership.

Similarly, e-book readers weren't especially troublesome. We received responses from

almost 30,000 readers about more than 36,500 e-book reader purchases. (All models had a 5- to 7-inch screen size.) We had enough data to report on four e-book reader brands, which had an overall failure rate of 5 percent. Kobo was the most repair-prone brand.

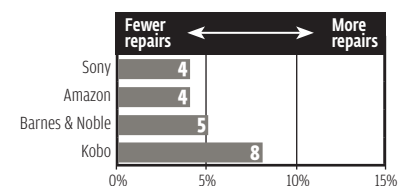
RELIABILITY

TABLETS

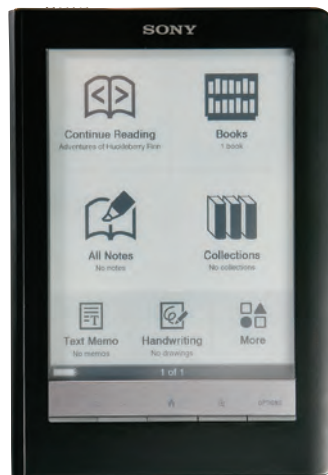


Based on the 2013 Annual Product Reliability Survey, conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center, for 42,689 reader responses about 53,082 tablets purchased between 2011 and 2013. Differences of fewer than 4 points aren't meaningful.

E-BOOK READERS



Based on the 2013 Annual Product Reliability Survey, conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center for 29,853 reader responses about 36,546 e-book readers purchased between 2010 and 2013. Differences of fewer than 3 points are not meaningful.



Computers

It's hard to generalize about computer brands for several reasons, including the fact that the configuration, or the components of a specific model, determines a computer's speed and performance. Both of those factors are heavily weighted when we figure a model's score.

Even so, one brand stands out as the top all-around choice: Apple. Year after year, its laptops and desktops have done very well in our tests, which has led us to recommend those models almost invariably. Apple also excels in tech support. Its laptops have been among the more reliable brands, and its desktops have had lower repair rates than the Windows-based PCs covered in our surveys.

PERFORMANCE

Apple has had consistently high scores, but we've found more variation in performance among Windows-based PCs. A given PC brand might have some top-scoring models and others that scored lower. We're continuing to analyze our Ratings to look for patterns. Depending on your needs, other factors might trump performance. For example, if you travel frequently, size and weight may be more important than having a full-sized keyboard. Or if your budget is tight and your computing needs fairly basic, a low-priced model with a less-powerful processor might make the most sense for you. Generally, we recommend that you stick with one of the brands we regularly test. Then narrow your choice based on reliability and tech support, and choose a configuration that suits your needs and budget.

RELIABILITY

Overall, computers have had a higher rate of repairs than TVs or cameras. Apple has been among the more reliable brands of laptops and the most reliable desktop brand (see charts below). The eight Windows-based laptop



brands in our graph had fairly comparable reliability, with an overall repair rate of 10 percent during the first three years of ownership. Among desktops, the overall repair rate has been 9 percent. For laptops and desktops, about 45 percent of all respondents who had a repair paid nothing because they were covered by a free warranty or service contract. For those who did have to pay, the median out-of-pocket cost was \$136 for laptops and \$145 for desktops.

TECH SUPPORT

In general, this is among the lowest-rated services in all of the surveys conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center. But that doesn't apply to Apple, which walloped all the makers of Windows-based PCs covered in our most recent survey of 6,313 subscribers. Apple solved user problems 82 percent of the time during 2012, compared with 61 percent for its nearest Windows-based

competitor, Dell. Apple was also the only computer brand to receive top marks for both phone and online support. Apple continues to offer unlimited free support at Apple Stores after its 90-day free phone support runs out. Many makers of Windows-based PCs provide free technical support for a year.

Better ← → Worse
● ○ ● ● ●

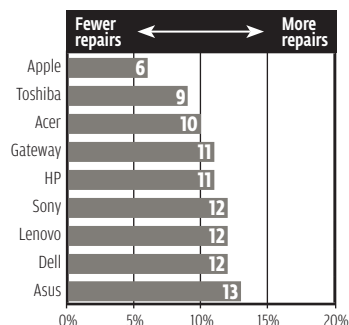
Ratings Tech support

In order of reader satisfaction score.

Manufacturer	Reader score	Survey results		
		Phone support	Online support	Problems solved
	0	100		
Apple	86	● ●	● ●	82%
Local independents	78	●	—	71
Lenovo	63	●	●	54
Asus	62	—	●	46
Dell	60	●	●	61
Toshiba	59	●	●	48
HP/Compaq	58	●	●	53
Acer/Gateway/eMachines	51	●	●	37

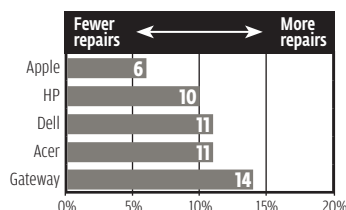
Based on responses from 6,313 owners of 7,571 desktop, laptop, and netbook computers who contacted a manufacturer's tech-support service between January 2012 and January 2013. All respondents were CONSUMER REPORTS subscribers. Reader score reflects overall satisfaction with manufacturer support. A score of 100 would mean all respondents were completely satisfied; 80, that respondents were very satisfied, on average; 60, fairly well satisfied; and 40, somewhat dissatisfied. Differences of fewer than 6 points are not meaningful. Phone support and online support were rated on a scale from very poor to excellent. Online support was rated by those respondents who contacted a manufacturer via a website, e-mail, or online live-chat program. "Problem solved" indicates the percentage of computer problems solved by the manufacturer. Differences of fewer than 10 percentage points are not meaningful. A dash (—) indicates insufficient data to report a Rating.

LAPTOP COMPUTERS



Based on the 2013 Annual Product Reliability Survey, conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center for 24,327 laptop computers (11 inches and larger, with keyboard) and 15,865 desktop PCs purchased between 2010 and 2013. Differences of fewer than 4 points are not meaningful.

DESKTOP COMPUTERS



Cures for common holiday messes

Our experts' tips for fast, easy cleanups

Before everyone arrives

Dealing with dusty decorations, polishing Grandma's beloved silver platter, getting last year's candle wax off menorahs and candlesticks, cleaning stained tablecloths—there's always plenty to do around the holidays. So we asked our cleaning and textile experts how to make the prep work easier and faster. They offered advice about what to do before company arrives and after the last guest has left but their stains, along with the memories, remain.

► Freshening up sheets, towels, and linens

There's no need to rewash clean guest room sheets and towels that haven't been used in months. Just toss them in the dryer on low heat for 15 minutes. And if you don't want fold lines on your freshly ironed tablecloths, roll them up on empty wrapping-paper tubes.

► Removing wax from candlesticks and menorahs

Place silver or other metals in the freezer until the wax hardens, then gently scrape it off with a plastic spatula. If wax remains, pour boiling water over the item or immerse it in a pot of boiling water, making sure any felt covering on the base remains dry. For glass or wood, point a blow-dryer at the wax and then blot the melting wax with a paper towel, but be careful not to overheat wood because it can crack.



► Caring for silver

Remove tarnish with a polishing mitt or by applying silver cleaner with a damp sponge; buff dry. Washing by hand is usually recommended, but there are lots of no-nos to keep in mind.

- Don't soak silver for long periods because non-silver parts can rust. And the salt and acids in leftover food particles can stain or pit the silver.
- Never wash silver and stainless together because a chemical reaction between the metals can cause pitting.
- Avoid lemon-scented detergents because they can damage silver.
- Never pour detergent directly on silver. Instead, add a mild detergent to water, wash and rinse thoroughly, and dry right away with a soft cloth to prevent spots.
- Don't leave silver out; air accelerates tarnishing. Instead, store silver in a clear, heavy, sealable plastic bag.

► Cleaning glass ornaments

Surface decorations are usually applied with water-soluble paint, so avoid treating them with soap, water, and cleaning solutions. Use a soft feather duster instead.

► Dusting an artificial Christmas tree

Set up the tree and spread out a sheet at its base to catch debris. Cover the vacuum's upholstery attachment with a piece of hosiery or mesh netting fastened with a rubber band. Starting from the top of the tree and moving down, gently vacuum on the lowest setting, holding the attachment about an inch away from the branches to remove dust and cobwebs. Still dingy? Check the manufacturer's website for any wipe-down tips.

► Dusting artificial wreaths

Hold a blow-dryer, set on a low speed and the cool setting, about 10 inches from the wreath and then fluff. A soft feather duster may also work, or try the Christmas tree dusting tip.



PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

The aftermath

Once the guests are gone and all the dust has settled, it's time to survey the damage. It pays to act quickly, even with messes that have been there for a while. Another rule of thumb: Always blot stains on carpets, napkins, clothing, and the like, because scrubbing can damage their surfaces. Below are specific treatments for seven common headaches. Whatever the recommended cleaning solution, try it first on an inconspicuous spot, and follow any care-label instructions that apply.

HEADACHE Christmas tree sap on carpet or upholstery

CURE Whether your tree is a pine, fir, or spruce, the sticky sap is basically the same, according to a tree expert at Cornell University. Blot sap with isopropyl rubbing alcohol to dissolve it and then make a detergent solution of 1 teaspoon of a mild clear or white dishwashing liquid without bleach in 1 cup of warm water. Blot carpet or upholstery with the solution, then blot with clean water. Dry with a white cloth.

HEADACHE Gravy on table linens

CURE Scrape off excess with a spoon. Pretreat with a Fels-Naptha paste or Resolve stain remover and wash. Do not put items in the dryer until the stain is gone or it will be even harder to remove it.

HEADACHE Lipstick on cloth napkins

CURE Blot with acetone-based nail polish remover. If the stain remains, apply our homemade detergent solution, then rinse.

HEADACHE Chocolate on carpet or fabrics

CURE Scrape off excess. Blot carpet with our detergent solution. If the stain remains, try this vinegar solution: Mix $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of white vinegar with $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of water. Dry with a white cloth. For washable items, use your washer's soak cycle and one of our top-rated detergents that's tough on chocolate, such as Wisk Deep Clean, then wash.



HEADACHE Cranberry sauce on fabrics or carpet

CURE Scrape away excess. Pretreat washable tablecloths and other fabrics with Resolve stain remover, launder, and line dry. If the stain persists, dab with 3 percent-strength hydrogen peroxide and line dry. For carpet and upholstery, blot with our detergent solution. If the stain remains, use 3 percent-strength hydrogen peroxide. Repeat with clean white cloths until none of the stain transfers to the cloth. Then blot with water to remove cleaning solution. Dry with a white cloth weighted down with a stack of books.

HEADACHE Candle wax on tablecloths

CURE Pour boiling water through the washable fabric from a height of 12 inches (the height increases the velocity of the water, helping separate the wax from the fibers). For fabric that can't be washed, sandwich it between paper towels and apply a warm iron; repeat with a clean towel until the wax is lifted.

HEADACHE Wine and soda on fabrics or carpet

CURE For white wines and clear sodas, launder washable items as soon as possible. Blot carpet with water, apply our homemade

detergent solution, and blot again with water. For red wine, follow the same instructions and then dab with 3 percent-strength hydrogen peroxide. For colas on carpet or fabrics, blot with our detergent solution and, if needed, then try our vinegar solution. Blot with warm water, and if a trace remains, dab with 3 percent-strength hydrogen peroxide.



Washers & dryers

Top models raise the bar for cleaning and efficiency

MORE WASHERS are getting clothes cleaner using less energy and water. As a result, we've updated our Ratings by setting higher standards for cleaning and efficiency. That's why some washing machine scores have changed since we reported on the appliances last summer.

Meanwhile, some manufacturers have updated their washers to better adapt the cycle to the wash load, leading to greater variations in cycle time. And so, we've also adjusted the way we calculate cycle times. The biggest variation occurred with the Maytag and Whirlpool front-loaders we praised for their speed in our last story; the new times are almost double. The Maytag Maxima XL MHW7000AW, \$1,150, and the Whirlpool Duet WFW88HEAW, \$1,000, are still great machines, but their wash times are more in line with other

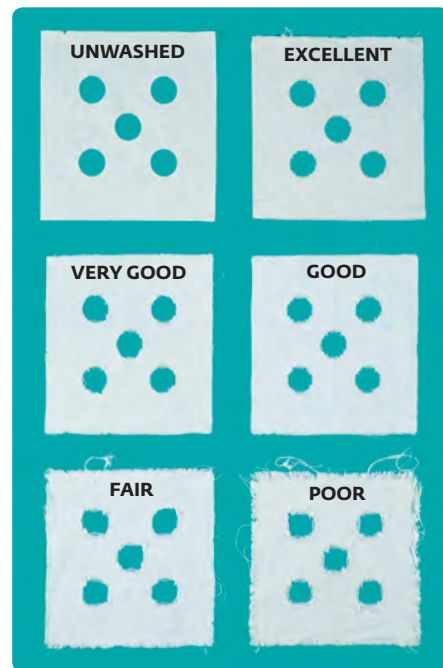
recommended front-loaders, at about 80 to 90 minutes. Regardless of the washer you choose, your cycle time can differ from ours because water temperature, the number of items you wash, and other factors affect cycle length.

So what does excellent cleaning look like now? In this story, we show and explain the differences. We do the same for gentleness, capacity, and efficiency. Some of the differences are startling: For example, the most efficient washers cost roughly \$1,400 less to run over 10 years and use about 110,000 fewer gallons of water.

Whether you're buying a new washer or dryer or simply want to get the most out of the ones you have, our advice will help deliver the best results. And if you're considering relocating your laundry room to a more convenient area near your living spaces, read our expert moving tips.

► Gentleness

We use special cotton cloths designed to accelerate wear and tear to check for gentleness.



► Capacity

EXCELLENT

VERY GOOD

GOOD

FAIR

POOR



How to put your laundry room near a living space

Tired of dragging laundry to a dank and distant corner of your home? You're not alone. More than 75 percent of prospective home buyers say they prefer a first- or second-floor laundry room to one located in the basement or garage, according to the National Association of Home Builders. But before you start sizing up that seldom-used guest bathroom or hallway closet, you need to make sure the location is ready for the retrofit. Here are the essentials:

Check the structure. Have an engineer or architect ensure that floor joists will withstand the extra weight and vibration. Older framing may require reinforcing, and there needs to be a clear path for plumbing, venting, electrical, and, possibly, gas lines.

Filling wall and joist spaces with fiberglass batts, rigid foam, or spray-in insulation will help prevent sound from traveling to adjoining rooms. Walls and ceilings made

from two layers of ½-inch or ⅝-inch gypsum wallboard vs. a single layer will help contain noise further.

Consider the added costs. Running service lines for an upper-floor laundry room can be expensive, especially because building codes require the work to be done by a licensed professional. A plumber will run new water lines, as well as an adequately sized drain line. An electrician will pull dedicated lines for the washer and dryer, including a 240-volt line if your dryer is electric.

Prevent a leak from flooding the rest of the house by building a curb across the laundry room's threshold, waterproof the floor area, and install a floor drain. Another smart option: electronic shutoff valves, which automatically stop the flow of water if they sense a leak. Check local building codes for additional requirements.

Choose the right machines. See our Ratings for machines that score well for noise and vibration. Short cycle times mean less overall disturbance. Front-loaders tend to operate more quietly than top-loaders, though some produce vibrations and a high-pitched whir as they accelerate into final spin. If you're retrofitting a closet or other narrow space, most front-loaders can accommodate a dryer on top; check the "stackable" column in our Ratings.



► Cleaning

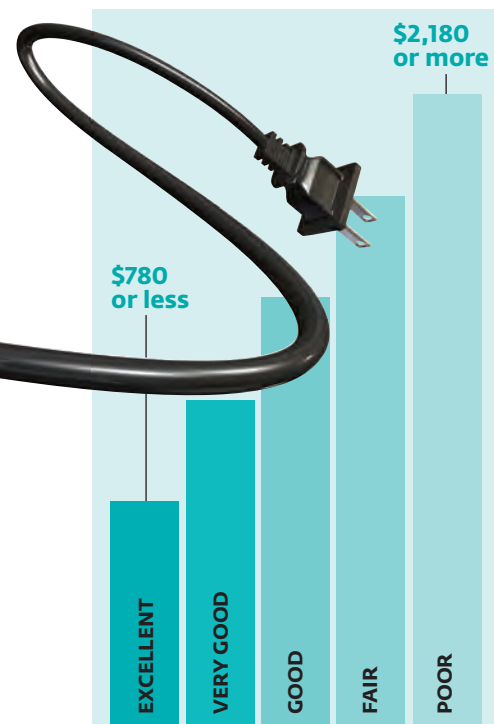
Bloodstain removal after one wash*



*Digital representation; blood is one of five stains tested.

► Energy efficiency

Average cost to run washer over 10 years*



*Based on 300 eight-pound loads, which is the average number and load size a typical family does per year, multiplied by the national average electrical rate, 12 cents per kilowatts per hour, then rounded to the nearest \$10.

► Water efficiency

Average water used over 10 years*



*Based on 300 eight-pound loads per year, rounded to the nearest 100 gallons.

Make it last

Keep your washer and dryer in top shape and enhance performance with these simple steps.

WASHER

- Install on a level and well-supported subfloor to prevent vibration.
- Remove grit from the screens where the hoses attach to the water supply.
- Presoak heavily soiled clothes to avoid washing them twice.
- Washing one large load generally uses less energy than washing two small loads.
- Don't overload beyond the manufacturer's recommended capacity.
- Wash laundry in warm or cold water and rinse in cold, when possible.
- Heed instructions for detergent use. Too much makes the washer work harder and uses more energy.

DRYER

- Clean the lint filter after each use to keep air flowing freely.
- Remove dry laundry, clean the filter, and put in the next load while the dryer is still hot. That trims the energy needed to reheat the dryer.
- Check the exhaust vent often, especially if you find that the dryer isn't sufficiently heating or takes longer than usual to dry items.
- Clean the entire exhaust duct annually to prevent clogging, which poses a fire hazard.

Great dryers costing \$900 or less

What's better, a gas or electric dryer? Our tests have consistently found that both perform comparably. Gas dryers are more expensive than similar electric dryers, but if you have a gas line, the fuel savings should more than make up for the \$50 to \$150 additional initial cost. In addition to the dryers recommended in the Overview on the next page, these dryers cost \$900 or less, performed well, and are roomy and quiet enough to place near bedrooms.

- **Kenmore** 8117[2], \$720 (electric), 9117[2], \$900 (gas)
- **Kenmore** 6800[2], \$800 (electric), 7800[2], \$900 (gas)
- **LG** DLE4870W, \$800 (electric), DLG4871W, \$900 (gas)
- **LG** DLE2250[W], \$800 (electric), DLG2251[W], \$900 (gas)
- **Whirlpool** Cabrio WED8000BW, \$750 (electric), WGD8000BW, \$850 (gas)

Ratings on next page

Best detergents



LIQUID
Wisk Deep Clean
(for all machines)



POWDER
Tide Ultra Plus Bleach Vivid White + Bright HE (for high-efficiency front- and top-loaders only)



POD
Kirkland Signature Ultra Clean Pacs (for all machines)

The best front-loaders usually clean better than the best high-efficiency top-loaders, and they use less water and spin faster, extracting more water and cutting drying time. HE top-loaders outperform standard top-loaders and hold more laundry. Dryer recommendations are for electric models; similar gas versions are available.

☒ **Recommended** These high-performing models are all fine choices and include CR Best Buys.

A12 costs less than most front-loaders and offers superb cleaning. **B4**, a top-loader, is faster, and its wash performance is impressive. Both are relatively quiet.



 CR Best Buy
 Recommended

 Excellent
 Very good
 Good
 Fair
 Poor

D Discontinued, but similar model is available: price is for similar model. **1** Made in the U.S. **2** Wider than most machines.

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



Reports

Pro-style ranges 53

3D printers 54

Built-in refrigerator 54

Coffeemakers 55

Cordless phones 56

Lab tests

Ratings, reviews, recommendations

Pro-style range comes to Costco

Pro-style ranges, with their stainless-steel construction and beefy controls, typically cost \$4,000 to \$7,000. So we were eager to test two new models from NXR, sold at Costco and beyond for about half the price.

Could this upstart brand compete with Viking, Wolf, and other seasoned pros? The answer is yes, though given the relatively low bar set by some pro-style ranges in our tests, that's not necessarily saying much.

The **NXR DRGB3001** 30-inch gas range, \$2,000, earned higher overall scores than the 30-inch **Viking VGSC5304BSS**, \$5,000, and the **Wolf GR304**, \$4,900. It's superb at simmering and its oven has a convection fan.

But the NXR, like other pro models, didn't deliver fast cooktop heat, say for power boiling pasta water, and its baking and broiling were only so-so. The model also lacks a self-cleaning feature, and its oven is small—another common issue with 30-inch pro models. The 36-inch **NXR DRGB3602**, \$3,000, earned similar marks in our tests; its overall score was lower than Viking and Wolf in this category, though better than Kenmore and Jenn-Air.

As for the fit and finish, which are a big part of the pro-style appeal, the NXR trails the competition. Its stainless steel exterior is duller than what you see with Viking and Wolf, and it has lightweight knobs. The 30-inch version lacks continuous grates.

Other pro-style choices that perform well include the **KitchenAid KDRS407VSS**, \$4,000, which tops our Ratings of 30-inch pro-styles, and the **KitchenAid KDRU763VSS**, \$6,000, our leader among 36-inch pros. These sturdy dual-fuel ranges pair a gas cooktop with an electric oven, providing superb simmering, very fast boil times, and impressive baking.

Lower-cost options with style

If you're replacing a 30-inch range and want to spend \$2,000 or less, consider the **LG LRG3097ST** gas range, \$1,900, or the **Kenmore 92163** electric smoothtop range, \$1,550. Both models outperformed most of the pros in our tests, and they offer convection cooking, a warming drawer, and stainless-steel styling that's plenty sleek, if not full-on professional.



NXR DRGB3001



Viking VGSC5304BSS



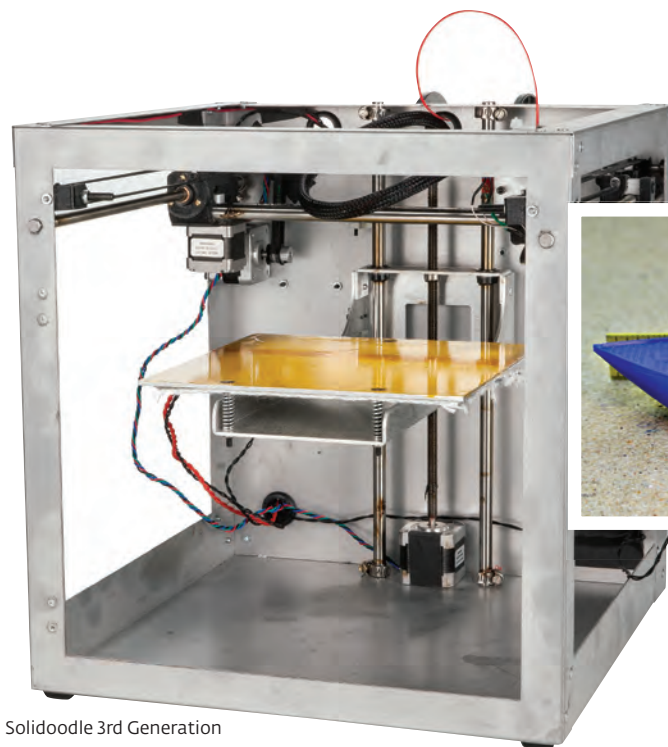
Wolf GR304

3D printing at home

A **3D PRINTER** sounds like something you'd find in a high-tech office—or in the Jetsons' family room—but there are now desktop models you can use to churn out three-dimensional objects such as chess pieces, bracelets, figurines, and much more right in your own home. You can use a program to design your own creations or download countless product designs online, and then watch the printer build the object, layer by layer, from molten plastic.

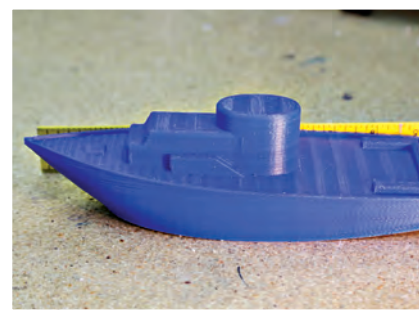
A trio of 3D printers we tested recently wowed our experts. But there are a few things you need to know. Churning out one little object can take hours. Some of our less complex creations took as little as half an hour to complete, others as long as 8 hours. And then there's price. A 3D printer will set you back \$500 to \$3,000, plus \$40 to \$100 for a roll of plastic to feed it. According to one manufacturer, a roll provides enough material to print 100 chess pieces. That would be 40 cents apiece, assuming every attempt is perfect. We wound up with discards. So it can cost you more to make an object than to buy it.

Of the models we tested, the **MakerBot Replicator 2X** (\$2,800 for our tested configuration) had the most intuitive software,



Solidoodle 3rd Generation

and its two print heads enable you to print two colors without changing rolls. The **3DSystems CubeX** (\$2,500 for our tested configuration) had the best construction, but it had only one print head (pricier models have two or three heads). The plastic filament is encased to prevent the spool from unraveling, but the spools cost twice as much as on other models. The **Solidoodle 3rd Generation** is the most affordable, at \$800, but the construction of the machine is less refined. Still, it's a good entry-level choice.



PERSONAL FACTORY
The Solidoodle 3D printer can produce objects from blueprints.

Bottom line. 3D printing takes a lot of patience and ideally some technical savvy. That's why the first devices are most likely to appeal to do-it-yourself enthusiasts, hobbyists, and early adopters. But all that could change as the technology matures and prices come down.

SEE THIS PRINTER IN ACTION

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



Mamma mia! \$10,000 Fhiaba falls flat in our Ratings

Imported from Italy, the **Fhiaba Series MG Stand Plus MG8991TST6/3U** is a sleek built-in with stainless steel on the inside and out, theater-style LED lighting, and a unique triple-evaporator cooling system. But for \$10,000, you might also expect standout performance in our tests. Instead, the Fhiaba ranks last in our built-in refrigerator Ratings.

Its low overall score—about 50 points behind the current leader—is mainly due to the Fhiaba's woeful performance in our energy-efficiency tests, which measure power consumption per cubic foot of usable storage space. Built-ins as a category tend to be less roomy than other types of refrigerators. This Fhiaba bottom-freezer is especially so, with just 13.1 cubic feet of usable capacity, based on our measurements. The lack of space hurt its energy efficiency score, and it could also be a factor if you have big food-storage needs.

Storage capacity aside, Fhiaba's built-in consumed a lot of electricity in our tests—829 kilowatt hours per year, to be exact. That translates into an annual operating cost of



\$98, or about \$1,000 over a 10-year period, making it \$400 more expensive to operate over the same period than the top-scoring built-in in our Ratings, the **Thermador Freedom Collection T36BB820SS**, \$7,400.

Our energy measurements tend to be higher

than what's on a refrigerator's yellow EnergyGuide label, because our tests differ from those mandated by the Department of Energy. The Fhiaba did not come with an EnergyGuide label, however, nor is one posted on the company's website, despite a new federal rule requiring manufacturers and retailers to make labels available online.

Fhiaba informed us that this model is currently going through the third-party certification required for an EnergyGuide label, but the federal law clearly states that appliances should not be sold until this process has been completed. We have notified the DOE, as well as the Federal Trade Commission, which regulates appliance labeling.

Even if energy efficiency isn't your top priority, the Fhiaba still might not be your best bet. Though it offers very good temperature control and exceptionally quiet operation, like many built-ins, it lacks conveniences available on refrigerators costing as little as \$1,500, including gallon door storage, spillproof shelves, and a water dispenser.

Top coffeemakers

Swarovski-studded consoles, heavy stainless construction, and styling that recalls 1930s radios are features you'll get if you spend \$100 or more. But some of the best machines from our tests of more than 60 models deliver the convenience and optimal brewing that count without the high price.

Best for serving a crowd. Conventional drip models fill a carafe you can take to the table. The bejeweled **A1 Cuisinart**, \$200, aced our brew tests, which are based on how closely models reach the industry-standard 195° F to 205° F for roughly 5 minutes. We also found it easy to use and clean, with a well-balanced carafe. But the **A2 Mr. Coffee**, a CR Best Buy, matched that brewing performance for just \$40. Paying \$20 more for the **A3 Kalorik** buys easier cleanup.

For fill-ups at the machine. Brew-and-dispense models trade a carafe for a reservoir that dispenses hot coffee directly into each cup. The **B1 Mr. Coffee**, a CR Best Buy at \$50, offers top-notch brewing and convenient operation at a bargain price. Among helpful features: a washable filter basket, a coffee-level indicator, and a coffee tank you can remove to wash.

For fresher ground coffee. Grind-and-brew models grind the beans and make the coffee in the same machine. Though none made our winner's list, the **Cuisinart Grind & Brew DGB-700BC**, \$150, topped others we tested and offers capable brewing and an easy-to-handle carafe.

When you're in a hurry. Single-serve "pod" coffeemakers (Ratings not shown) brew a cup of joe from sealed, no-mess containers in as

few as 60 seconds. Many can also make tea, hot chocolate, and even cider, with soup on the way. Best overall was the **DeLonghi Nescafé Dolce Gusto Genio EDG455T**, \$130, which matched speed with consistent temperatures and serving sizes. But none of the pod models was a standout in our taste tests. An alternative: to-go models, which brew the usual way with your own loose coffee and dispense into one or two travel mugs. None made our picks, but the **KitchenAid Architect KCM0402ACS**, \$120, beat others in our tests and should serve up a richer brew on those busy mornings.



A1 Cuisinart



B1 Mr. Coffee

Ratings

Recommended models only From 63 tested.

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

	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Features
Recommendation	Rank			Brewing Convenience Carafe handling Programmable Thermal carafe Strength control	
	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		0 100 P F G V E		

A 12- TO 14-CUP DRIP MODELS WITH CARAFES

☑	1	Cuisinart Crystal SCC-1000 Limited Edition Perfec Temp DCC-2800	\$200	87	● ● ● ● ● ●
☑	2	Mr. Coffee BVMC-SJX33GT BVMC-EHX33CP (Costco)	40	83	● ● ● ● ● ●
☑	3	Kalorik CM 38933	60	78	● ● ● ● ● ●
☑	4	Kalorik CM 25282	80	75	○ ● ● ● ● ●
☑	5	Black & Decker CM4000S (Target)	40	74	● ● ● ● ● ●
☑	6	Frigidaire Professional Programmable Drip FPDC12D7MS	90	73	● ● ● ● ● ●

B 10- TO 12-CUP BREW-AND-DISPENSE MODELS

☑	1	Mr. Coffee BVMC-2H1B	50	85	● ● NA NA
☑	2	Viente Brew-N-View CAF-05T	140	81	● ● NA ● NA ●
☑	3	Cuisinart Coffee on Demand DCC-3000	100	78	● ● NA ● NA

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Models that missed the mark

► Flashy with flaws

- **Panasonic** NC-ZF1, \$230
- **Michael Graves Design** (JCPenney), \$115
- **Calphalon** Quick Brew 1838804, \$100

Paying big for the Panasonic drip coffeemaker buys you superb brewing and sturdy construction. But it makes only eight cups at once compared with 12 or 14 for our top picks, and it has a heavy carafe that we found hard to empty. The 12-cup Michael Graves, at right, costs far less and is styled like a 1930s radio but was only so-so in our brewing tests. And Calphalon's 10-cup Quick Brew was only middling for brewing.



► Cheap but hardly a bargain

- **Black & Decker** CM2020B, \$30
- **Proctor Silex** 43672, \$25
- **Better Chef** 91575783M, \$20
- **Hamilton Beach** BrewStation 49150, \$60

The bare-bones Black & Decker and Proctor Silex lost points on brewing, which was just so-so. The Better Chef and Hamilton Beach did, too. And though the brew-and-dispense Hamilton Beach comes with a syrup dispenser, adding grounds and water requires turning the machine around and working from the back.

► Lowest scores overall

- **Bunn** STX, \$135
- **KitchenAid** KCM223CU, \$130
- **Bunn** Phase Brew HT, \$140
- **Breville** You Brew BDC600XL, \$280

Cumbersome carafes and mediocre brewing put the Bunn models and the KitchenAid at the bottom of our scores for conventional drip machines. The grind-and-brew Breville has a stainless finish, an interactive LCD menu, and other helpful features. It also brewed respectably. But we found it to be a chore to clean compared with others we tested, and its thermal carafe was hard to empty.

Cordless phones

Four reasons you might need one

GIVEN THAT YOU have a cell or smart phone to stay in touch with the world, is there any reason to have a landline? The short answer is yes. For starters, our tests of more than 80 cordless phones (with and without built-in answerers) found that they provide better voice quality than their mobile counterparts, so you can enjoy conversations more. They have other advantages, too. Here's the 411:

1 They sound better. In our tests, voice quality for talking and listening was generally better than the best cell phones—important if you suffer from hearing loss, your household is noisy, or you spend a lot of time on the phone, especially in a home office. Most cordless models run on DECT (Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications) technology, which uses the 1.9-GHz frequency band, minimizing interference with devices such as microwave ovens, which use other frequencies. DECT phones also tend to have relatively long talk times, so you won't run out of juice in the middle of ordering take-out. Some models support up to 12 handsets from one base, and handsets can be used as close-range walkie-talkies in large houses.

2 They improve safety. Cell phones use a GPS-based method to report your location in a 911 emergency. That's a very good thing when you're on the road, but they don't indicate which floor you're on in a high-rise building. A home phone is connected to your address, including apartment number, so the 911 operator knows exactly where to send

help even if you can't talk. Traditional copper-wire phone service automatically indicates your precise location. With VoIP service from a cable company or fiber-optic phone service, the provider must get your address when you activate service, but you have to let it know if that changes. So it's worth double-checking to make sure its records are up to date.

(Tip: If you must call 911 from a cell phone, heed this advice from Deputy Chief Charles Dowd of the New York City Police Department's communications division, which handles more than 30,000 911 calls per day. First, say your name and exact location in case you black out or are cut off, then tell them the problem. And always keep at least one cell phone fully charged.)

Another landline advantage: Home-security systems generally require a land-

Cordless phones have advantages cell phones don't.

line phone connection to monitor fire- and burglar-alarm sensors. If you don't have a home phone line, certain alarm companies will install a special device that communicates with their office via a cellular connection, but that will cost extra. ADT's Cell Guard, for example, can cost \$100 or more to install and can add \$15 or more per month to your bill.

To ensure that you'll have a working landline during a power outage, choose a phone with a corded handset on the base or battery backup—and make sure the bat-



teries are charged. If you have cable or fiber-based phone service, that will require a backup battery as well.

3 You don't save much when you cut service. Dropping a phone line from a telecom bundle might save you only \$5 or so a month. That's because the discount for an Internet and TV double play is usually less than for a triple play with phone service. In a recent survey of our readers, 34 percent who thought about switching phone services kept the phone as part of a bundle because of the skimpy savings.

4 Cordless phones can actually help your cell phone. Certain cordless models can stand in for your cell phone. By placing a cell phone near the cordless phone's base, you can access your wireless service using Bluetooth technology and use a cordless handset to make or take cell calls. In addition to the convenience of using one handset for all of your calls, you might get better cell-phone reception at home. (For example, if you don't get cell service in your basement, you might be able to make or take cell calls from there using a cordless handset.) Certain models take that Bluetooth connection even further by notifying you on a cordless handset of incoming texts on your cell phone.

■ DID YOU KNOW?

Answering options

A cordless phone with a built-in answerer is handy for screening calls to see whether you want to pick up. If you prefer to use your carrier's voice-mail service, look for a phone with a visual alert, such as a blinking LED in the handset or on the base, to let you know when you have new voice mails.





A1 Panasonic

A4 Uniden

B1 Clarity

Ratings

Recommended models **only** From 81 tested.

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

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results					Features		
					Voice quality	Phone ease of use	Range	Message quality	Answerer ease of use	Recording time (min.)	Talk time (hr.)	Cordless handsets included
												Corded phone on base

A CORDLESS PHONES WITH ANSWERER

✓	1	Panasonic KX-TG4773B	\$100	78	●	●	●	●	●	22	13	3	●
✓	2	Panasonic KX-TG4732B	60	74	●	●	●	●	●	22	13	2	
✓	3	Panasonic KX-TG7742S	85	74	●	●	●	●	●	19	13	2	
✓	4	Uniden D1788-2T	80	73	●	●	●	●	●	15	7	2	●
✓	5	Uniden D3098	75	73	●	●	●	○	●	15	10	1	●
✓	6	AT&T TL96273	90	72	●	●	○	●	●	46	7	2	
✓	7	Panasonic KX-TG7732S	70	72	●	●	●	●	●	19	13	1	
✓	8	VTech CS6649	50	72	●	●	●	●	●	16	*	1	●
✓	9	Uniden D3588-2	100	72	●	●	○	○	●	15	7	2	●
✓	10	Panasonic KX-TG6592T	70	72	●	●	●	●	●	22	13	2	
✓	11	VTech DS6521-2	55	72	●	●	●	○	●	16	7	2	
✓	12	AT&T CRL32202	60	71	●	●	●	●	●	13	7	2	
✓	13	Panasonic KX-TG9381T	130	70	●	●	●	●	●	39	12	1	
✓	14	VTech DS6671-3	100	70	●	○	●	●	●	21	*	2	
✓	15	Panasonic KX-TG9391T	140	70	●	●	○	●	●	39	12	1	●
✓	16	AT&T CL84102	70	70	●	●	●	●	●	12	7	1	●
✓	17	AT&T CLP99383	110	70	●	●	○	●	●	45	7	3	
✓	18	Panasonic KX-TG9472B	180	70	●	●	●	●	●	39	12	2	●

B CORDLESS PHONES WITHOUT ANSWERER

✓	1	Clarity XLC2	100	67	●	●	●	NA	NA	NA	6.5	1	
✓	2	Uniden D1760	20	66	●	●	●	NA	NA	NA	7	1	
✓	3	AT&T EL51210	40	65	●	○	●	NA	NA	NA	7	2	

*Not specified.

Overview

Most models on the market have an integrated answerer, but some don't (and usually cost less).

BEST FOR LARGER HOMES

A1 Panasonic \$100 CR Best Buy

This phone with answerer, which comes with three handsets and accepts up to six, has a long range. You can add numbers to the Call Block list, so nuisance callers will get a busy signal and your phone won't ring. The base corded phone can work during household AC power loss. It has a side volume control for the handsets, audio equalization settings, a visual ringer (useful for the hard of hearing), and talking caller ID. The answerer has an audible new-message alert. Its lower-priced sibling, **A2**, is much the same but doesn't have a corded base. (CR Best Buys consider the number of handsets that come with a model.)

A4 Uniden \$80

This phone, which can handle up to 12 extensions, has a corded phone on the base—so it works without AC power—plus two cordless handsets. It has a long range.

CELL-PHONE HELPERS

A3 Panasonic \$85

This Bluetooth-capable phone is one of the few with excellent voice quality for talking and listening. Phone and answerer are easy to use. Other features include talking caller ID and a voice-mail indicator.

A6 AT&T \$90

This has one of the largest message-storage capacities we've seen, plus talking caller ID and a voice-mail indicator. The answerer has an audible new-message alert.

BEST FOR USERS WITH IMPAIRMENTS

B1 Clarity \$100

A great choice for someone with impaired hearing or vision. It has audio boost for talking and listening and very good voice quality. It has real knobs and switches and voice assist, announcing each button you press.

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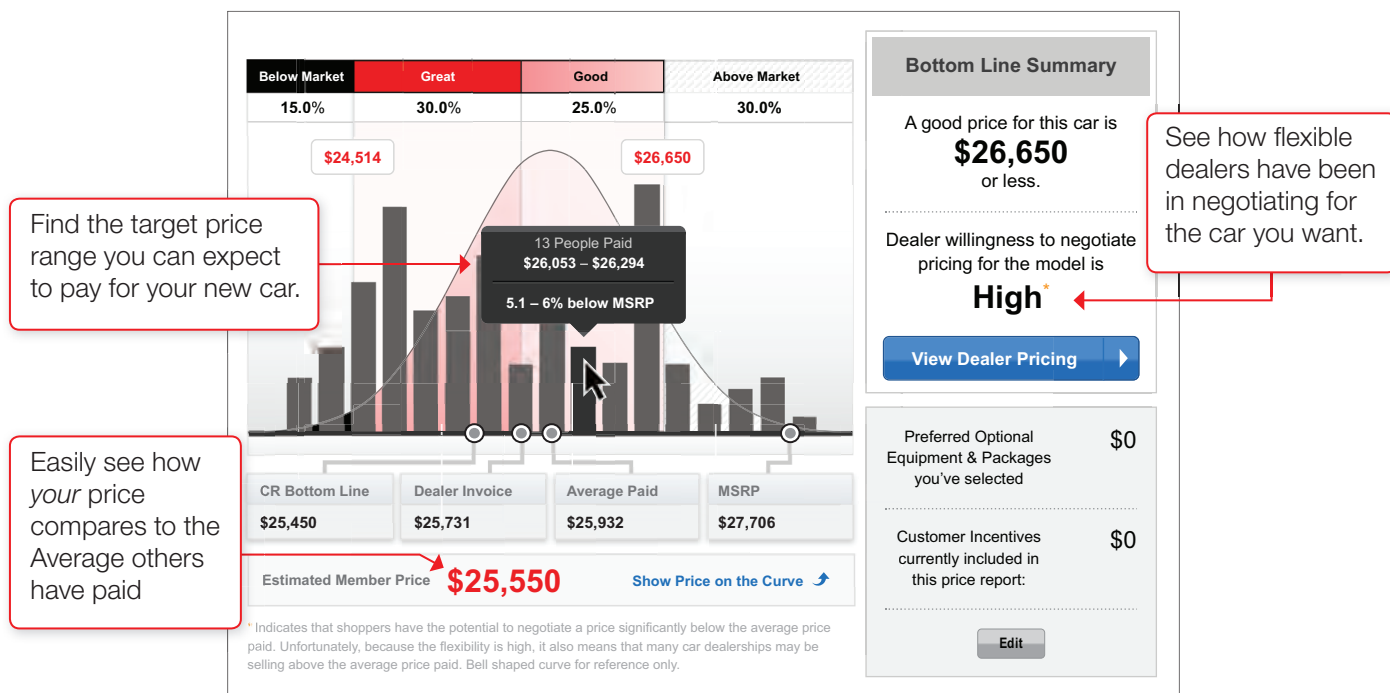
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Reports

Holiday shopping security 59

Most reliable new cars 60

Infiniti Q50 vs. Lexus IS 250 67

Nissan Versa Note 70

Fiat 500L 71

Cars

Road tests, auto products, hot topics

DANGER ZONE Parking lots are where most mall-related crimes occur.

Protect yourself when shopping

AS YOU NAVIGATE the mall parking lots during this holiday season, you may think that squeezing into an open space will be your biggest challenge. Think again. That's because parking lots are where most mall-related crime occurs. Drivers and walkers navigating the lot are vulnerable to theft, and unattended vehicles loaded with packages are often open invitations for break-ins. Here's advice from law-enforcement officials who patrol the country's busiest malls on how to reduce your chances of becoming a victim:

► Be choosy where you park

Sure, that isn't always easy. But it could be worth driving around a little to find a spot in a populated area instead of settling on one in a dark, remote location, especially if you are alone. "Park in a well-lit area because criminals hate light; they don't want to be identified," says Officer Heidi Miller of the Police Department in Bloomington, Minn., home of the Mall of America.

► Lock and stow

Many parking-lot thefts occur because drivers neglect to perform the simplest task: locking the car and closing the windows. Don't allow your car to be an easy

target for thieves. Hide valuables such as GPS devices, cell phones, laptops, and iPods. If your GPS is mounted to your windshield, pull it off and try to clean off the suction marks so that thieves don't break into the car looking for it. "Don't even leave the GPS cable," Miller says, because criminals think you're simply putting the device away in your glove box or center console. In addition, if you have an aftermarket stereo with a removable faceplate, Miller suggests removing the face and taking it with you.

► Stay focused

"People walking through the parking lot don't pay as much attention as they used to," says Capt. Robert Guidetti of the Paramus, N.J., Police Department. Instead they are checking e-mail or making calls. Look to your front, side, and rear when walking to and from a store. Being aware of your surroundings lessens your chances of becoming a victim or getting struck by a car, Guidetti says.

► Assume you're watched

Criminals watch for shoppers who put purchases in their car or trunk, then walk back into the store. Once you're gone, it can take only moments to break in and

grab items. If you need to stow packages while shopping, repark your car in a different location, away from anyone who could have been observing, says Detective Bob Welsome of the New York City Police Department. Other options are to find out whether the mall has storage lockers available or ask security to hold your packages until you're ready to leave.

► Don't dally

"Walk like you have a purpose. Don't wander, even if you don't know where your car is," says Officer Harry Nuskey of the Upper Merion Township, Pa., Police Department, near the popular Mall of Prussia. Have your car key in hand before you leave the store. It can also act as a weapon if necessary, Guidetti says. Once in your car, lock the doors immediately and drive off. Don't sit and do other things. That will lessen the chance of you becoming a target.

► Beware of stranger danger

If you are approached or chased, yell or scream to get attention or go back to the store and alert security. If you are followed while driving, go to an open gas station or a populated area with plenty of light, Miller says. "Your best defense is a well-charged cell phone. Get on the phone and call 911."

Most reliable new cars

Lexus tops our list, but electronic problems plague popular models



Subaru Forester

THE JAPANESE DOMINANCE in auto reliability is showing cracks. In the past decade, brands from Japan typically locked in the top slots in our predicted-reliability rankings, rarely letting another carmaker slip in higher than seventh or eighth place. In our latest subscriber survey, however, Audi, Volvo, and GMC secured places in the top 10.

Audi, which has shown steady improvement in recent years, moved up four places from last year, to fourth overall. Volvo jumped 13 places, to seventh. And GMC emerged as the top domestic brand, finishing ninth, three places higher than last year. Moreover, every model from Audi, GMC, and Volvo scored average or better.

That said, Japanese cars still fare better

overall. Lexus, Toyota, and Acura captured the top three spots, with all Lexus and Acura models scoring above average. And all Japanese makes rank among the first 11 except for Nissan, which sank to 22nd among the 28 brands in our rankings. All Infiniti, Mazda, and Toyota models scored average or better.

At the other extreme, new and redesigned models from Ford and its upscale Lincoln brand continue to show teething pains, putting those nameplates near the bottom of the list, higher than only the niche brand Mini.

Those findings are from our 2013 Annual Auto Survey, which was conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center. They're based on subscribers' experiences with 1.1 million vehicles. We use

that pool of data to compile reliability histories and predict how well new cars that are currently on sale will hold up. (See "Predicted-Reliability Scores," on page 63.)

■ Highs and lows

• The top predicted-reliability score went to the redesigned 2014 Subaru Forester SUV, which hadn't been on the market for very long when we conducted the survey. The Ford C-Max Energi plug-in hybrid got the worst score, and the regular C-Max Hybrid wasn't much better.

• Hybrids and electric cars continue to do well. The Toyota Prius, Lexus ES 300h, Toyota Prius C, and Honda CR-Z hybrids, as well as the Nissan Leaf electric car, were among the top models. Ford's C-Max and Fusion hybrids were the only exceptions.

Tesla earns our recommendation

In addition to getting our top overall test score, the groundbreaking Tesla Model S electric car has had fairly encouraging reliability. We gathered data on more than 600 2012 and 2013 models. Owners of the 2012 model reported very few problems, although 2013 owners reported quite a few more. When combined, the Model S gets an average overall reliability score, which lets us recommend it.

Surprisingly, the problems don't center on the car's exotic, iPadlike touch-screen control

system but mostly on things like wind noise, squeaks and rattles, and body hardware (including the sunroof, doors, and locks). Perhaps there were few electronic problems because of Tesla's ability to download software fixes directly to the car. No one reported problems with the electric drivetrain.

But the growing pains haven't dampened enthusiasm. The Model S also got a near-perfect score in our latest owner-satisfaction survey. Look for the full report next month.



- Mazda slipped from fourth to fifth; still very good. The redesigned Mazda6 debuted with above-average reliability. Subaru and Scion, which also typically rank well in reliability, were torpedoed by their twin sports cars, the Subaru BRZ and the Scion FR-S, which scored below average. This dropped Subaru to 10th place, from last year's fifth. Scion, for which we had only two models with sufficient data, sank from first place to 11th this time.

- The redesigned 2013 Honda Accord V6 scored below average, which means that we can no longer recommend it. The four-cylinder Accord, which earned an average score, is still recommended.

- The redesigned 2013 Nissan Altima also had a lousy debut, with the four-cylinder and V6 models finishing well below average and last in their category. The Altima's problems stem mostly from the transmission, wind noise, and squeaks and rattles. Nissan's troubles also include the Armada and Pathfinder SUVs, and the Titan pickup truck, which scored well below average.

- Of 31 Fords in our survey, only one, the F-150 pickup with the 3.7-liter V6, was above average. Seven achieved an average score.

What's going wrong?

As always, the more gadgets a car has, the greater the chance for things to go wrong. So it's not surprising that one of the key problem areas in our survey results centered on in-car electronics, including the proliferating suite of audio, navigation, communication, and connected systems in newer cars. Of the 17 problem areas we ask about, the category including in-car electronics generated more beefs from owners of 2013 models than for any other category.

In many cases, the touch-screen infotainment systems have been buggy, with frustrating screen freezes, touch-control lag, or a reluctance to recognize a cell-phone, an MP3 device, or a voice command.

That's an area that has plagued Ford and Lincoln models equipped with the MyTouch systems, which have been unusually troublesome since they arrived in 2011. Yes, Ford has issued numerous fixes and software updates, and the survey respondents' complaint rates for new models have fallen by half. But the problem rate is still high, even as Ford has been putting the systems into more of its vehicles.

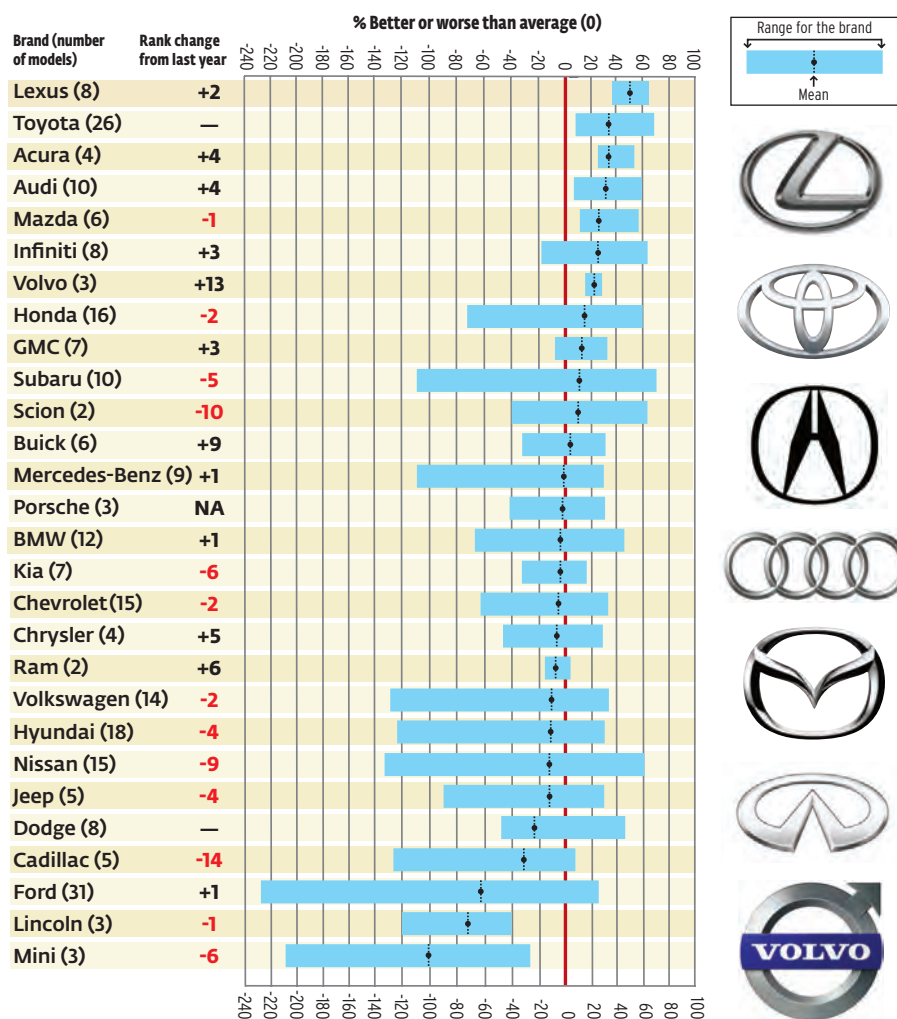
Another car with notable audio-system problems is the otherwise excellent 2013 Honda Accord. Because the problem rates are higher in V6 sedans and coupes, the



Audi A7

How the brands compare

This graph shows how the brands rank based on the average of their models' predicted-reliability scores. That score is calculated as a percentage better or worse than the average of all cars. Each bar shows the range between a brand's best and worst model. The rank change shows how many spots a brand moved up or down compared with last year's survey. To include a brand here we needed sufficient data on at least two of that brand's models. The lack of such data meant that we couldn't include Fiat, Jaguar, Land Rover, Mitsubishi, and Tesla in this year's rankings.



trouble seems to involve the up-level touch-screen infotainment systems in those cars. Cadillac's CUE infotainment system also drew a lot of complaints about the integrated controls and navigation system. Cadillac, Ford, and Honda, however, issued software updates after our survey was completed, which may have addressed some of the problems.

Big Three's mixed results
Ford's problems don't end with the My-Touch systems. Several models with its EcoBoost turbocharged V6 engines have landed on the bottom reliability rung as well. The problems may have more to do with components that go with the engine, such as the fuel pump or the rough-shifting transmission, than the engine itself. Regardless, almost two-thirds of the 34 Fords and Lincolns in our survey got scores that were much worse than average. General Motors fared much better. As mentioned, GMC is the top domestic brand, and Buick climbed nine slots to 12th place over last year. All Buicks except the V6 LaCrosse were average or better. The only dark spots for Chevrolet are the Camaro and Cruze, which are below average; all other Chevys in our survey rated at

least average. Cadillac dropped 14 places, largely because of problems with the new XTS sedan's CUE infotainment system. Chrysler is still below par overall, but a bright spot is the very nice Chrysler 300 C, which now scores above average; last year it was the company's most troublesome

Some General Motors brands rose in our rankings.

vehicle. Unfortunately, some of Chrysler's most reliable models, such as the Jeep Compass and Patriot SUVs, didn't score well in our testing, while the better performing 2014 V6 Jeep Grand Cherokee has fallen well below average in reliability.

Europe on the rise
European automakers have made big strides in the past few years. Audi, whose vehicles tend to score well in our road tests, was the top European brand. The three Volvo models in our survey were average or better, although not having sufficient data on the historically problematic XC90 could have helped Volvo's score.

BMW and Mercedes-Benz remained around midpack among all brands. Most models from those German marques are average or better, with each company having a few problem children: the BMW 335i and turbocharged six-cylinder X3, and the diesel-powered Mercedes M-Class. Volkswagen, which turned in a middling performance, was especially hampered by the trouble-prone Beetle, GTI, and Touareg. All three Minis in our survey made a very poor showing.

Asia scores—mostly
As a group, the nine Japanese brands in the survey produce a remarkable number of reliable cars. Of the almost 100 models, 90 percent were average or better and almost a third of them received top marks. Ten of those highest scorers were Toyotas. Of the eight Lexus models in our survey, six got top marks. In recent years, the South Korean automakers Hyundai and Kia were beginning to challenge the Japanese at the top of our reliability rankings. In 2011, they scored well ahead of Detroit and most European companies. But they slipped a bit in the 2013 survey, with Kia ranking midpack and Hyundai sliding to 21st place.

What's up, what's down

Along with our test scores and independent safety tests, reliability predictions play a key role in whether or not we recommend a car. Here we show how our recommendations have changed based on our latest reliability results. We listed models that are newly recommended or no longer recommended, based on improved or declining reliability.

We also listed models for which we have just acquired enough data to make a judgment one way or the other.

Models that have changed status are those that turned out better or worse than we thought they would at this time last year. That happens largely because some predictions are based only on a single year's data and can be somewhat tentative. Many problems don't emerge right away, while others are addressed by the carmaker during production. That uncertainty is one reason we advise people not to buy a car during its first year in the production run. Models marked with an asterisk (*) indicate that our data was based on one model year only.

Newly recommended

Models with improved reliability

- Buick LaCrosse (4-cyl., eAssist)
- Buick Verano
- Chevrolet Silverado 2500 (diesel)
- Chrysler 300 C
- Ford Mustang (V8)
- GMC Sierra 2500 (diesel)
- Mercedes-Benz M-Class (V6)
- Porsche Cayenne

Models that now have sufficient data

- BMW X1 (2.0 turbo)
- BMW X3 (2.0 turbo)
- Cadillac ATS (2.0T)
- Chevrolet Malibu*
- Ford Fusion (2.0L EcoBoost, FWD)*
- Hyundai Azera
- Hyundai Santa Fe (V6)*
- Hyundai Santa Fe Sport (4-cyl.)*
- Kia Sorento (V6)*
- Porsche Boxster*
- Tesla Model S


Not recommended

Models with declining reliability


- Chevrolet Camaro (V8)
- Chevrolet Cruze (1.4 turbo)
- Chevrolet Cruze (1.8)
- Dodge Durango (V6)
- Ford F-150 (3.5L EcoBoost)
- Honda Accord (V6)*
- Hyundai Veloster
- Jeep Grand Cherokee (V6)*
- Kia Optima (2.0 turbo)
- Kia Sedona
- Mini Cooper
- Nissan Altima (4-cyl.)*
- Nissan Altima (V6)*
- Scion FR-S*
- Subaru BRZ*
- Volkswagen CC

Models that now have sufficient data but are below average

- Cadillac XTS*
- Ford C-Max Hybrid*
- Ford Escape (1.6L EcoBoost)*
- Ford Escape (2.0L EcoBoost)*
- Ford Focus ST*
- Ford Fusion (1.6L EcoBoost)*
- Ford Fusion Hybrid*
- Nissan Pathfinder*



Chrysler 300 C



Ford Escape

Predicted-reliability scores

Every spring Consumer Reports sends out a comprehensive questionnaire asking subscribers about any serious problems they've had with their vehicles in the preceding 12 months. These scores are based on the data we received from that survey.

The following charts show our predicted-reliability scores for 2014 models by vehicle type. Each bar represents a percentage better or worse than the average for all surveyed cars. Our latest survey gathered information on about 260 models, in some cases including multiple variants of the same model, such as a four-cylinder, V6, or hybrid. Our minimum sample size is about 100, although we often get many more.

To rate each model we calculate an overall score for each of the latest

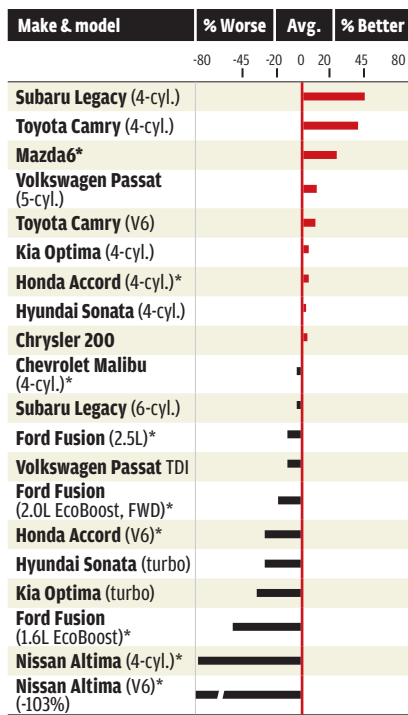
three model years, provided that there were no major changes in that time. Then for each of those three model years we compare the vehicle's overall reliability score with the average for all models of the same age. Yearly differences are combined to give the predicted reliability as a percentage better or worse than the average.

In these charts, the zero line is the overall average for all cars, and an "average" rating includes scores within 20 points on either side of that line. A bar with a break in it indicates that the score was outside the range of the chart. If a model was new or redesigned in the past year, or if we lacked sufficient data for some years, we might derive a score using only one year's data. Those models are marked with an asterisk (*).



Subaru Legacy

Midsized cars

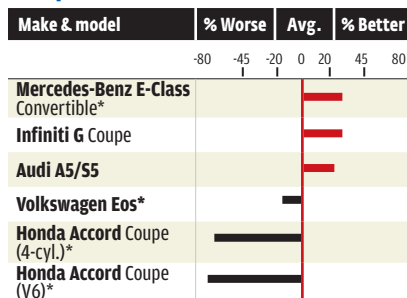


PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●



Audi A6

Coupes/convertibles

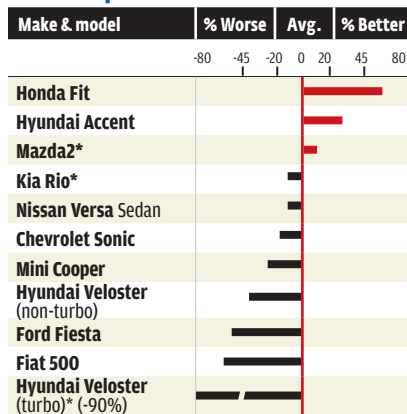


PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●



Honda Fit

Subcompact cars

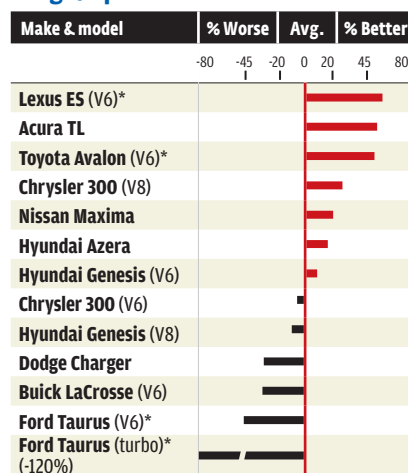


PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●



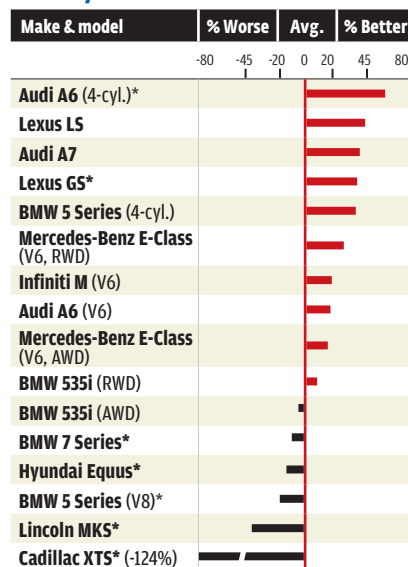
Toyota Avalon

Large/upscale cars



PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●

Luxury cars

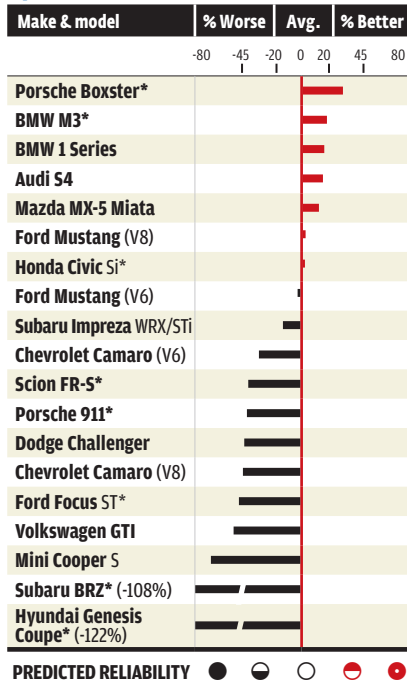


PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●

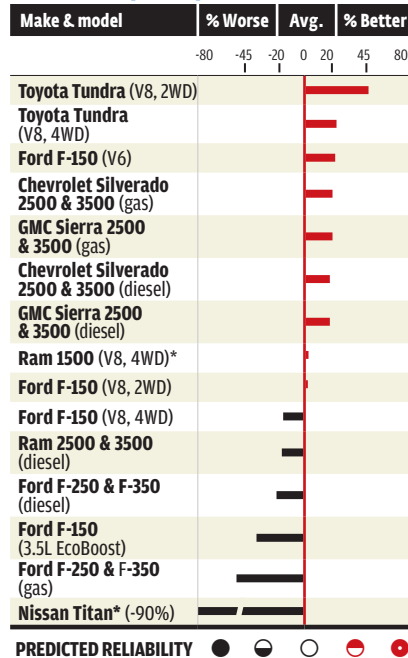


Porsche Boxster

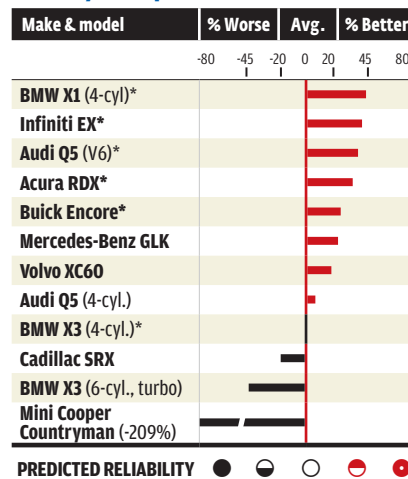
Sports cars



Full-sized pickups

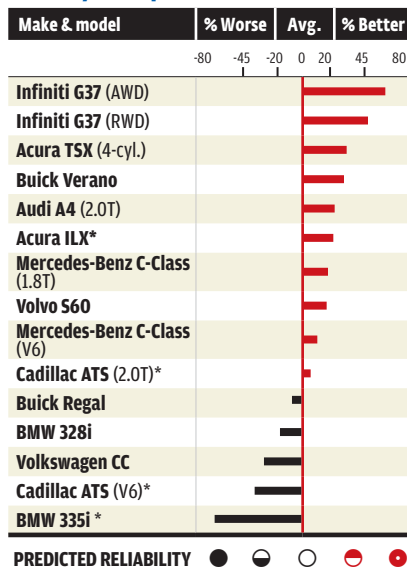


Luxury compact SUVs



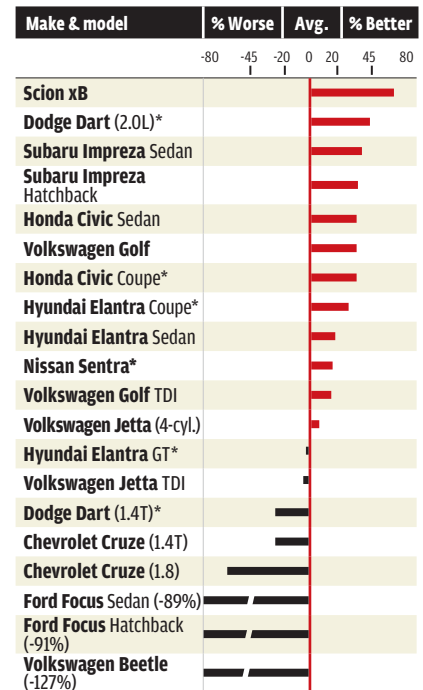
BMW X1

Luxury compact cars



Scion xB

Compact cars

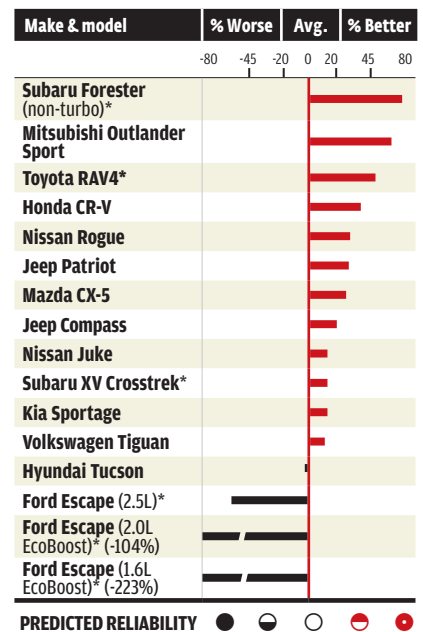


PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●



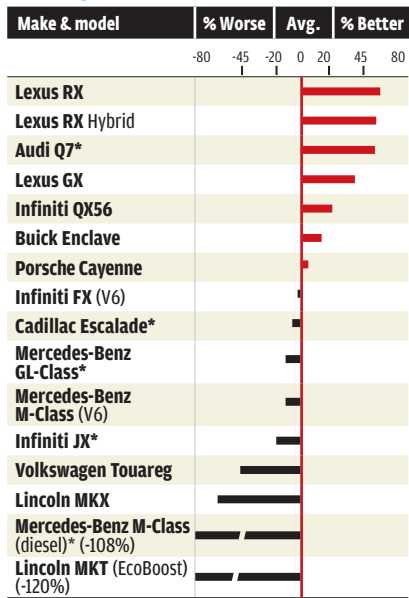
Mitsubishi Outlander Sport

Small SUVs



PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●

Luxury SUVs

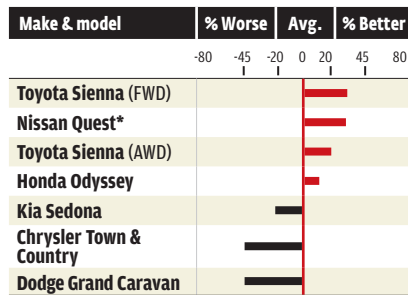


PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●



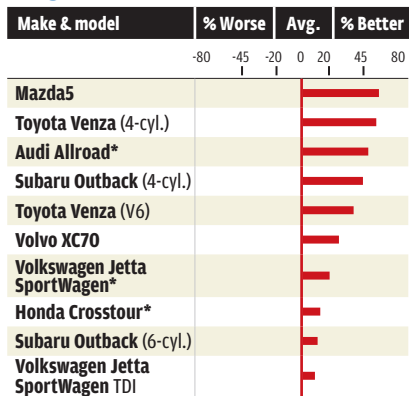
Honda Odyssey

Minivans



PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●

Wagons

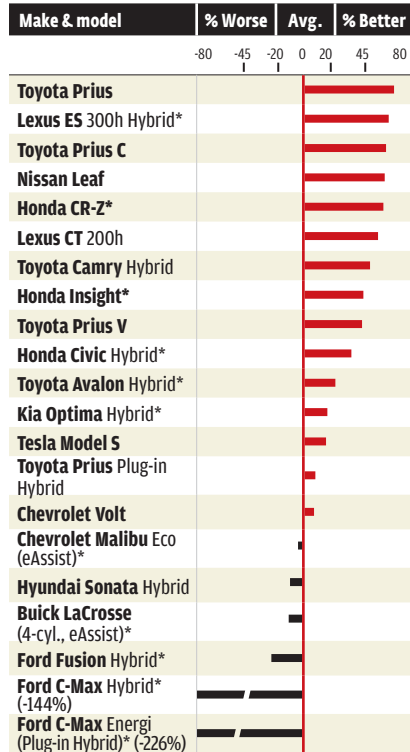


PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●



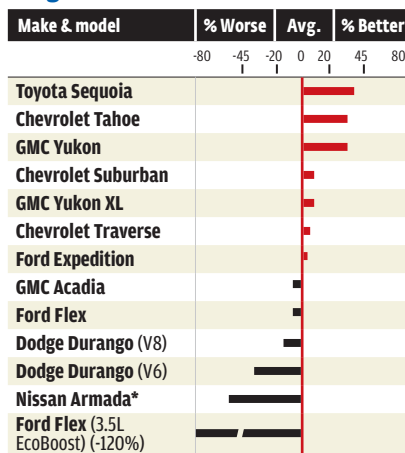
Toyota Prius

Hybrids/electric cars



PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●

Large SUVs

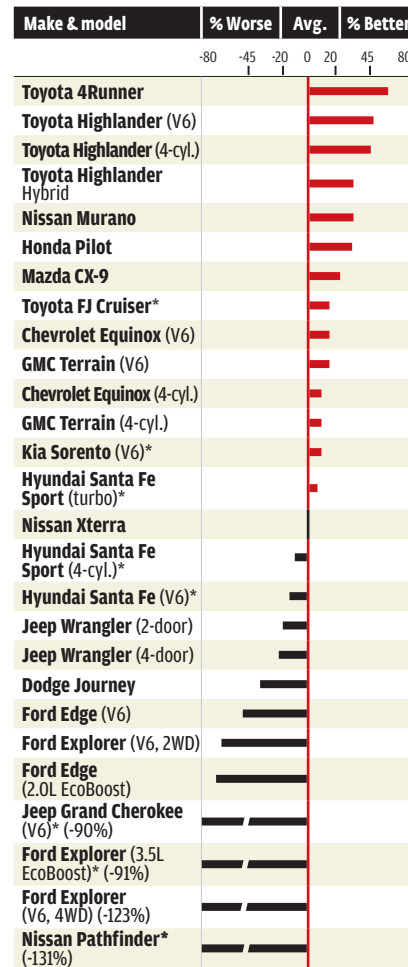


PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●



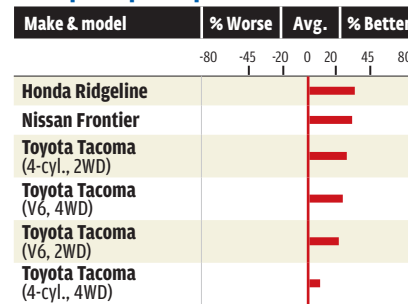
Chevrolet Tahoe

Midsize SUVs



PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●

Compact pickups



PREDICTED RELIABILITY ● ○ ● ○ ●

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Infiniti Q50

Lexus IS 250

Infiniti Q50 vs. Lexus IS 250

Redesigned for 2014, neither model hits the mark

INFINITI VS. LEXUS is the Japanese luxury auto equivalent of the Hatfields vs. McCoys—or perhaps Chevy vs. Ford, with higher price tags. Both marques rolled into the market in 1989 and have gone head-to-head ever since.

So, on paper, the sports-sedan showdown between the redesigned Infiniti Q50 and Lexus IS 250 promised to generate some real spark. But in our testing, neither model lived up to expectations, and both

ended up anchored at the bottom of our upscale-sedans category.

Most perplexing, however, is that the class leader—by a sizeable margin—is still the Infiniti G37, which the Q50 was designed to replace. What happened?

The G has been one of our highest-rated sedans for some time, earning a coveted spot in our annual Top Picks list for six of the past seven years. It delivers an inviting blend of sportiness, luxury, and comfort. But after its 2014 redesign and transition to Infiniti's new Q designation, this car seems to have lost its way.

With mundane handling, due in part to its dull steering, the Q50 isn't as much fun to drive as the G37. And, despite aiming for a more luxurious persona, it doesn't match the G's ride comfort or easy-to-use controls. Yes, the Q50 is quick and relatively roomy. But, overall, it doesn't measure up to the higher-rated models in this class.

Still, the Q50 is much better than the IS 250, which is neither sporty nor luxurious. Its acceleration lacks punch, handling is lackluster and short on finesse, the cabin is cramped and not particularly quiet

or well finished, and the ride is neither plush nor tied-down.

The good news? The Infiniti G37 will remain on sale for the near future, at a lower price than the Q50, but in limited numbers. And there are several other models in this class that are better choices than either the Q50 or the IS 250.

We tested both models with all-wheel drive because we've found most buyers choose it over rear-wheel drive in today's upscale and luxury sedans. In fact, it can be hard to find two-wheel-drive versions in many regions of the country. To reflect this preference, when a sedan offers rear- or all-wheel drive, we will buy the AWD version. So equipped, our Q50 and IS 250 cost \$44,855 and \$43,823, respectively.

How they compare

Rec.	UPSCALE SEDANS	0	100
		P	F G V E
✓	Infiniti G37 Journey	95	
✓	BMW 328i	86	
✓	Mercedes-Benz C250	85	
	Lincoln MKZ 2.0 EcoBoost	81	
✓	Volvo S60 T5	77	
	Audi A4 Premium Quattro	76	
✓	Cadillac ATS Luxury (turbo)	76	
	Infiniti Q50 Premium (AWD)	73	
	Lexus IS 250 (AWD)	52	



Infiniti G37



Infiniti Q50

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
73

Borrowing a naming cue from Audi, Infiniti is phasing out the top-notch Infiniti G37 in favor of a model called the Q50. But, unfortunately, the 2014 iteration has taken a step back from its excellent predecessor.

The Q50 is quick and relatively roomy, but its underwhelming driving experience strips the car of much of its sporty legacy. The Q is fairly nimble, with good turn-in response and well-contained body lean. But it's let down by vague steering. Overall, the Q50 was less capable while negotiating our handling course, and it has lost the fun-to-drive agility that was a G37 hallmark.

We also tried the much hyped dynamic active steering option, but we found that it feels artificial.

The potent 328-hp, 3.7-liter V6 engine delivers very quick acceleration, but it lacks the refinement of the V6s in some competitive models. And its 21 mpg overall is nothing special for this class; the larger Audi A6 gets 22 mpg. A more fuel-efficient hybrid version of the Q50 is also available.

Most Q50s sold in snow country come with all-wheel drive, which provides added traction over the standard rear-wheel drive.

With the redesign, Infiniti intended to steer the Q50 more toward the luxury end of the sports-sedan equation. But that result isn't very convincing, either.

The ride is a bit unsettled and stiff, due partly to the car's run-flat tires, with their rigid sidewalls. The front seats aren't particularly supportive or as comfortable as we expect in a luxury sedan. In addition, cabin quietness and interior fit and finish fall short for this category. The rear seat is fairly hospitable, but the trunk is too shallow and has a small opening.

Infiniti's new dual-screen InTouch control system misses the mark as well. The touch screen responds agonizingly slowly and can be unintuitive to use.

After starting the car, for example, you can't change radio stations until the system slowly loads. Likewise, the system struggles to catch up after several voice commands in a row. Early buyers should expect frequent software updates as Infiniti works to debug this system.

We'll hold off on recommending the Q50 until we get reliability data from owners.

Best version to get. We'd get a Q50 Premium, which starts at \$39,550 with rear-wheel drive or \$41,350 with AWD. The base 3.7 version is well equipped, including Bluetooth and a backup camera. But it's missing such common features as leather upholstery, heated seats, and Homelink compatibility for your garage door opener. Most cars on dealers' lots are likely to have the navigation and leather packages, which tack on another \$2,400.

Beyond that, getting such expected features as seat memory, folding rear seats, or blind-spot warning requires buying big-ticket options packages, which can drive the car's price up toward \$50,000. And we don't think this car is worth that much.



DATA DELAY We found the lower touch-screen display was agonizingly slow to react, forcing us to wait for it to catch up.



Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Acceleration, braking, visibility, relatively roomy cabin
LOWS	Steering feel, ride, road noise, some controls, fuel economy, restrictive options packages, small trunk, turning circle
TRIM LINE	AWD Premium
DRIVETRAIN	328-hp, 3.7-liter V6; seven-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Navigation, leather seats, spare tire
TESTED PRICE	\$44,855

More test findings

BRAKING	Very short stops.
HEADLIGHTS	Superbright, they provide good visibility forward and to the sides.
ACCESS	Easy, thanks to large doors.
VISIBILITY	Generous, with thin pillars and large windows. A backup camera is standard.
CABIN STORAGE	Very minimal, front and rear.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	The center rear restraint is not tall enough, even when raised.
CHILD SEATS	The cushion's contour and buckle spacing make it difficult to install any child seat in the center-rear position.



Scan for video.

Lexus IS 250

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
52

The 2014 IS is Lexus' latest attempt to design a BMW 3 Series fighter, which has long been considered the benchmark for upscale sports sedans. But, alas, the IS 250 isn't very sporty, fun to drive, or luxurious. Add in a cramped interior and mediocre fuel economy, and the IS ends up with a road-test score of only 52, which is too low for us to recommend it.

The IS 250's high points include eye-catching styling and a silky smooth 2.5-liter V6 that's quiet and refined, especially when compared with the turbocharged four-cylinder engines in many competing models. But its performance is rather pokey, and its 21 mpg overall is comparable to a midsize SUV.

Handling is nothing special. Body roll is fairly well contained, but the car isn't particularly agile. The steering is appropriately weighted, but it feels vague and doesn't telegraph much feedback. When pushed to its handling limits at our track, the IS was secure and forgiving, but overly pronounced understeer diluted the handling finesse and enjoyment that drivers expect from a sports sedan.

Moreover, the car's ride comfort doesn't compensate for its lack of agility; it's neither plush nor tied down.

You'll also be disappointed if you expect the quietness of a typical Lexus interior. The road noise penetrating into the cabin creates a din that's not befitting a \$40,000-plus car.

The interior is very tight, even by the modest

standards of this class. The narrow cabin, wide center console, and large overhanging dashboard caused many of our drivers to feel cramped and closed-in. Making matters worse is a lump on the floor protruding into the driver's space on all-wheel-drive versions.

Other gripes: In-cabin storage is inadequate. Simply getting in and out is an ungraceful chore. And rear-seat passengers must put up with very tight confines. Fit and finish is decent, but it's not up to today's top-flight standards.

The IS controls now include the fussy, distracting mouse-like controller found in other Lexus models. You select items in the display by moving the controller, but it's easy to overshoot your intended target.

This redesigned model is too new for us to have reliability data, but historically, most Lexus models have been very reliable.

Best version to get. We bought the IS 250, which accounts for about 80 percent of IS purchases. But if you want quicker acceleration, get the IS 350. With more than 100 additional horsepower and an excellent eight-speed automatic transmission, its powertrain is much more satisfying. Still, it isn't a sporty handler, and it suffers from the same cramped packaging and other demerits of the 250. We suggest buyers get the optional backup camera (\$350) and blind-spot warning system (\$600), which are available individually or as part of option packages.



HOLD STEADY The sensitive, mouse-like controller makes it tricky to perform audio and navigation functions while driving.



Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Powertrain refinement, Lexus' reputation for reliability and customer service
LOWS	Acceleration, ride, road noise, lackluster handling, fuel economy, driving position, controls, tight quarters, access
TRIM LINE	250 AWD
DRIVETRAIN	204-hp, 2.5-liter V6; six-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Blind-spot monitor, 18-inch alloy wheels, navigation with backup camera, LED headlights, ventilated seats
TESTED PRICE	\$43,823

More test findings

BRAKING	Fairly short stopping distances.
HEADLIGHTS	Despite the wide, even, and superbright spread of light from the optional LED headlamps, the low beams only illuminate a fair distance straight ahead, where it is needed most.
ACCESS	Difficult, due to the low-slung roof and small doors.
VISIBILITY	Decent, thanks to plenty of glass area and moderately wide pillars. Most packages include a backup camera.
CABIN STORAGE	Very limited.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	The rear-center restraint isn't tall enough, even when raised.
CHILD SEATS	The contour of the seats and the positioning of the buckles make installing child seats difficult with the seat belt.



Scan for video.





Nissan Versa Note

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
63

Sporting a new name, the Note is a redesigned version of the subcompact Versa Hatchback. And as a fuel-efficient runabout, it's hard to beat for the price. The Note is extremely easy to park, its wide doors make it simple to hop in and out, and its tall stance lets you see over other cars in traffic.

In addition, the Note delivers an amazing amount of room and versatility for a subcompact car. The rear seat is very roomy for this class. And folding down the seat opens up plenty of space for carrying sports gear, plants, and other bulky items.

Complementing its practical side, the Note also drives reasonably well. The ride feels comfortable and relaxed. Handling is more responsive than in the Versa Sedan and is very secure in emergency maneuvers. But it's less agile than a Honda Fit.

Acceleration feels spunky off the line, but it flattens out quickly after that. Going from 0 to 60 mph takes a leisurely 10.9 seconds, but that's on a par with rivals such as the Fit and Mazda2. The continuously variable transmission is mostly unobtrusive, but it can magnify engine noise when merging or climbing a hill. At 31 mpg overall, fuel economy is behind only the low-scoring Toyota Yaris in this class, although some

larger family sedans do even better.

Interior furnishings are very plain, but some nice features such as a backup camera, navigation, and smart-phone connectivity can be added as inexpensive options. Controls are very easy to use.

Our biggest gripes are that the driving position is awkward and the front seats are unsupportive, especially on longer trips. The steering wheel lacks a telescoping adjustment that's practically standard on most modern cars. That created a long reach for several drivers, and some complained that it was mounted at an odd angle. The front seats also lack a lumbar adjustment.

With a fairly quiet interior, the Note feels more relaxed to drive than most other subcompacts, which are typically loud. The Honda Fit, which is also super-flexible and spacious, is more fun to drive but suffers from much more road noise. That said, the Fit will be redesigned for spring 2014. The Hyundai Accent and Kia Rio feel more substantial but can't compete with the Note's space and versatility.

The Versa Note is too new for us to have reliability data; the Versa Sedan is average.

Best version to get. The Versa Note SV with the optional convenience package offers the best balance of features and price. Starting at \$16,800, the SV includes power locks and windows, keyless entry, and Bluetooth capability. Opting for the convenience package, which is a bargain at \$540, gets you a backup camera, a USB connection, satellite radio, and a clever two-level cargo floor. Bargain-hunters and those who want a stick shift will be drawn to the base \$14,800 S version. But it's very spartan, lacking cruise control or power locks or windows.



Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Space, access, versatility, fuel economy, controls
LOWS	Driving position, unsupportive front seats, acceleration, quirky transmission
TRIM LINE	SV
DRIVETRAIN	109-hp, 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine; continuously variable transmission; front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	SV convenience package (rear camera, color radio display, adjustable cargo floor)
TESTED PRICE	\$17,495

More test findings

BRAKING	Short stops on dry pavement.
HEADLIGHTS	Low- and high-beam lights cover the bare minimum distance.
ACCESS	Super-easy, with large doors and flat sills.
VISIBILITY	Quite good, thanks to lots of glass, roof pillars that aren't too thick, and an inexpensive backup camera. Unusual in this price range is Nissan's optional surround-view system, which simulates an overhead view of the car and the area around it.
CABIN STORAGE	Minimal. Two glove boxes help.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	Rear-center seatback lacks a head restraint.
CHILD SEATS	Rear-facing seats can be difficult to install in the center-rear position.



Scan for video.

How they compare

Rec.	SUBCOMPACT HATCHBACKS	0	100
		P	F G V E
✓	Honda Fit (base)	68	
	Kia Rio EX	63	
	Nissan Versa Note SV	63	
	Mazda2 Touring	60	
	Scion xD	60	
	Toyota Yaris LE	41	



REARWARD-BOUND A backup camera is an inexpensive option. Nissan's more advanced surround-view system is also available.

Fiat 500L

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
52

What happens when the ultra-cute Fiat 500 is stretched more than 2 feet in length? OK, it takes on some adolescent-like gawkiness, which dilutes some of the cute factor. But more important, it becomes a much more practical car, with rear doors, a roomy rear seat, and decent cargo space.

Fiat's new wagon, which is based on a different platform from the 500, provides impressive interior space for its size, as well as good visibility, super-easy access, and a commendable 27 mpg overall. But several significant flaws keep it from scoring high enough in our testing to be recommended.

A primary shortfall is the uneven power delivery from the 500L's turbocharged four-cylinder engine and herky-jerky six-speed "Euro Twin Clutch" automated manual transmission.

The Euro Twin Clutch is a manual transmission that shifts automatically without a clutch pedal. It's meant to enhance fuel economy and provide quick, crisp shifts. But it's unrefined at low speeds, causing vibration while idling. Stepping on the throttle often brings a disconcerting delay, especially when pulling out into an intersection. The

transmission also lets the engine lug along in higher gears, then hesitates to downshift when you need to accelerate. Once it does, the turbo engine's power comes on in a rush. Fiat promises a better conventional six-speed automatic for 2015. For now, we think the six-speed manual is a better choice.

The 500L's handling is responsive and secure, but the ride is stiff and jittery.

Inside, the cabin is tall and fairly quiet, and getting in and out is as easy as it gets. But the driving position is awkward, forcing drivers to sit with stretched arms and bent knees, and the front seats are too flat and squishy to be comfortable.

Rear passengers can stretch out, enjoying a well-shaped seat and flat floor. Cargo space is relatively roomy, with two tiers for stacking items or hiding valuables.

Some creative details, such as a two-tone steering wheel rim, liven up the interior. Chrysler's Uconnect touch-screen system is quite intuitive, but its small onscreen buttons can be hard to hit precisely.

A compact spare tire is optional; otherwise the 500L comes with an air compressor and tire sealant kit. The 500L is too new for us to have reliability data.

Best version to get. The mid-level Easy trim line is the sweet spot. It includes automatic climate control and other niceties. For \$1,000 more, the Trekking trim adds larger 17-inch wheels and body cladding for a rugged look. If you don't want to wait for the six-speed automatic, we suggest getting the manual transmission instead of paying extra for the jerky Euro Twin Clutch transmission. Unfortunately, the only way to get leather seats is in the top-of-the-line Lounge version.

How they compare

Rec.	COMPACT WAGONS	0	100
		P	I F G V G E
	Ford C-Max Hybrid SE	83	
	Toyota Prius V Three	80	
✓	Volkswagen Jetta SportWagen SE (2.5)	78	
	Mini Cooper Clubman	64	
	Fiat 500L Easy	52	



Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Distinctive looks, roomy interior, handy size, access
LOWS	Jerky transmission, stiff ride, touchy brake pedal, uncomfortable front seats, driving position
TRIM LINE	Easy
DRIVETRAIN	160-hp, 1.4-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine; six-speed sequential transmission; front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Popular equipment group (automatic climate control, power driver lumbar), Beats audio, Premier package (Uconnect system with navigation, backup camera), heated seats, white-painted roof
TESTED PRICE	\$24,595

More test findings

BRAKING	Short stopping distances, but the pedal feel is touchy.
HEADLIGHTS	Good low beams, but the high beams' distance falls short.
ACCESS	As good as it gets, with plenty of height and tall, square doors.
VISIBILITY	Good overall, thanks to large windows. But multiple front pillars can create blind spots on the sides of the windshield.
CABIN STORAGE	Modest.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	Center-rear restraint is not tall enough to provide adequate protection.
CHILD SEATS	Rear-facing seats can be difficult to install with seat belts.



Scan for video.



PARENTAL AID A clever overhead mirror lets you monitor what's going on in the rear seat.

Compare



VERSION	Infiniti Q50	Lexus IS	Nissan Versa Note	Fiat 500L
TRIM LINE	Premium	250	SV	Easy
PRICE: BASE/TESTED ①	\$41,350/\$44,855	\$38,485/\$43,823	\$15,990/\$17,495	\$20,195/\$24,595
DRIVETRAIN				
Engine	3.7-liter V6 (328 hp)	2.5-liter V6 (204 hp)	1.6-liter 4-cyl. (109 hp)	1.4-liter 4-cyl. (160 hp) turbo
Transmission	7-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	CVT	6-speed sequential
Drive wheels	AWD	AWD	Front	Front
TIRES TESTED				
Model & size	Bridgestone Potenza RE97 AS, size P225/55R17 95V	Bridgestone Turanza EL400-O2, size 225/40R18 88W front and 255/35R18 90W rear	Bridgestone Ecopia EP422, size P185/65R15 86H	Continental ContiProContact, size 205/55R16 91H
RATINGS				
PERFORMANCE				
Acceleration	●	●	○	○
0 to 60 mph, sec.	5.6	8.7	10.9	9.5
45 to 65 mph, sec.	4.3	5.7	6.6	5.8
Quarter-mile, sec.	14.1	16.7	18.2	17.4
Transmission	●	●	●	●
Routine handling	●	●	●	●
Emergency handling	●	○	●	○
Avoidance maneuver, speed, mph	54.0	53.5	54.5	51.5
Braking	●	●	●	●
From 60 mph, dry/wet, ft.	126/135	138/142	135/149	132/138
Headlights	○	●	●	○
COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE				
Ride	○	○	○	○
Noise	○	●	○	○
Driving position	●	●	○	○
Front-seat comfort	●	●	○	○
Rear-seat comfort	○	●	●	●
Access	●	○	●	●
Controls and displays	○	○	●	○
Interior fit and finish	●	●	●	○
Trunk/cargo area	●	●	●	●
PREDICTED RELIABILITY	New	●	New	New
FUEL				
Overall mpg	21	21	31	27
City/highway mpg	14/30	14/29	22/40	18/37
Type	premium	premium	regular	regular
Capacity, gal./Cruising range, miles	20.0/420	17.5/365	10.9/330	13.1/350
Annual cost, 12K miles	\$2,120 @ \$3.70/gal.	\$2,120 @ \$3.70/gal.	\$1,375 @ \$3.50/gal.	\$1,580 @ \$3.50/gal.
SAFETY				
CRASH TESTS				
IIHS frontal offset	NA	Good	NA	Good
IIHS side	NA	Good	NA	Good
IIHS rear	NA	NA	NA	Good
IIHS roof strength	NA	NA	NA	Good
NHTSA front, driver/passenger	NA/NA	●/●	○/●	NA/NA
NHTSA side, driver/rear	NA/NA	●/●	●/●	NA/NA
NHTSA rollover 2WD/4WD	NA/NA	●/●	●/NA	NA/NA
AIR BAGS				
Side, front/rear	std./no	std./std.	std./no	std./no
Head protection	standard	standard	standard	standard
SPECIFICATIONS				
DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHT				
Length/width/height, in.	188/72/57	184/71/56	164/67/61	167/70/66
Wheelbase, in.	112	110	102	103
Turning circle, ft.	42	38	37	37
Ground clearance, in.	4.5	4.5	5.0	4.0
Curb weight, lb. (% front/rear)	3,835 (56/44)	3,715 (55/45)	2,470 (60/40)	3,330 (61/39)
Maximum load, lb.	900	825	850	860
Luggage, suitcases+duffles/cargo volume, cu. ft.	2+0	2+1	23.0	22.5
Towing capacity, lb.	NR	NR	NR	NR
INTERIOR ROOM				
Front shoulder room, in.	55.5	55.0	51.0	56.0
Front leg room, in.	41.5	42.5	41.0	41.0
Front head room, in. ②	3.5	3.0	6.0	7.0
Rear shoulder room, in.	54.5	51.5	48.5	52.5
Rear leg room, in.	28.0	28.0	31.0	28.5
Rear head room, in. ②	2.0	2.5	4.0	3.5

① Based on sticker price at time of purchase. ② Above a person 5'9" tall.



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A			
Activity trackers	Nov 13, 8		
Advertising			
false & misleading	Nov 13, 6		
Air conditioners	Jul 13, 53		
Airlines	Jul 13, 17		
Appliances			
fire risks	Mar 13, 34		
repairs	Aug 13, 40		
Apps, automotive	Mar 13, 51		
Arsenic, federal guidelines	May 13, 14; Oct 13, 15; Dec 13, 6		
AUTOMOBILE RATINGS:			
Acura MDX	Oct 13, 53		
Acura RLX	Sep 13, 52		
Audi TT	Jun 13, 52		
BMW X1	May 13, 50		
BMW Z4	Jun 13, 52		
Buick Encore	Aug 13, 52		
Cadillac ATS	May 13, 50		
Cadillac XTS	Jan 13, 50		
Chevrolet Cruze Turbo Diesel	Oct 13, 53		
Chevrolet Equinox	Aug 13, 52		
Chevrolet Impala	Sep 13, 52		
Chevrolet Malibu	Feb 13, 50		
Chevrolet Silverado 1500	Nov 13, 58		
Chevrolet Spark	Jan 13, 50		
Dodge Dart	Jan 13, 50		
Fiat 500L	Dec 13, 67		
Ford C-Max Hybrid	Mar 13, 52		
Ford Focus Electric	Mar 13, 56		
Ford Focus ST	Nov 13, 58		
Ford Fusion SE	Mar 13, 52		
Ford Fusion SE Hybrid	Mar 13, 52		
Ford Fusion Titanium	Mar 13, 52		
Honda Accord EX-L	Feb 13, 50		
Honda Accord LX	Feb 13, 50		
Honda Civic	May 13, 50		
Honda Crosstour	Nov 13, 58		
Honda Odyssey	Nov 13, 58		
Hyundai Santa Fe	Feb 13, 50; Sep 13, 52		
Infiniti Q50	Dec 13, 67		
Jaguar XF	Sep 13, 52		
Jeep Grand Cherokee	Aug 13, 52		
Kia Cadenza	Oct 13, 53		
Kia Forte	Sep 13, 52		
Kia Sorento	Aug 13, 52		
Lexus ES 350	Jan 13, 50		
Lexus ES 300h	Jan 13, 50		
Lexus IS 250	Dec 13, 67		
Lincoln MKS	Jan 13, 50		
Lincoln MKZ	Jul 13, 56		
Mazda6	Jun 13, 52		
Mazda CX-5	Jun 13, 52		
Mercedes-Benz GL350 Bluetec	Oct 13, 53		
Mercedes-Benz SLK	Jun 13, 52		
Mitsubishi i-MiEV	Mar 13, 56		
Mitsubishi Outlander	Oct 13, 53		
Nissan Pathfinder	May 13, 50		
Nissan Sentra	May 13, 50		
Nissan Versa Note	Dec 13, 67		
Porsche Boxster	Jun 13, 52		
Ram 1500	Nov 13, 58		
Subaru Forester	Jul 13, 56		
Subaru Legacy	Feb 13, 50		
Subaru XV Crosstrek	Feb 13, 50		
Tesla Model S	Jul 13, 56		
Toyota Avalon	Jul 13, 56		
Toyota Prius Plug-in	Aug 13, 52		
Toyota RAV4	Jun 13, 52		
Volkswagen Jetta Hybrid	Aug 13, 52		
AUTOMOBILES AND AUTOMOTIVE EQUIPMENT:			
accident reporting	Sep 13, 15		
batteries	Jul 13, 52; Nov 13, 54		
best & worst for 2013	Apr 13, 3		
Bluetooth kits	May 13, 49		
buying tips	Apr 13, 22		
crash-test results			
changed recommendations from	Dec 13, 16		
dashboard distractions	Sep 13, 6		
fatalities, preventing	Oct 13, 48		
fuel economy			
inaccurate claims	Aug 13, 50		
speed and	Aug 13, 8		
standards	Aug 13, 6		
GM recall	Sep 13, 16		
headlight bulbs, halogen	Jan 13, 47		
insurance	Jun 13, 25		
Jeep voluntary recall	Sep 13, 16		
key replacement	Jul 13, 55		
manufacturers	Apr 13, 15		
model year 2013 review	Oct 13, 46		
music	Apr 13, 18		
names	Oct 13, 7		
new for 2013	Apr 13, 13		
new for 2014	Oct 13, 43		
owner satisfaction	Jan 13, 48		
profiles, 2013	Apr 13, 40		
Ratings, 2013	Apr 13, 26		
reliability	Apr 13, 86; Dec 13, 60		
repair satisfaction	Aug 13, 49		
safety equipment	Nov 13, 49		
safety ratings	Apr 13, 72		
safety trends	Oct 13, 6		
tires	Apr 13, 24		
high- and ultra-high-performance	Nov 13, 50		
top picks for 2013	Apr 13, 10		
used cars	Apr 13, 80		
common problems	Apr 13, 78		
flood-damaged	Feb 13, 49		
winter preparation	Dec 13, 10		
B			
Bacon	Nov 13, 8		
Banks & financial institutions, small	Nov 13, 12		
Beef			
labeling	May 13, 6		
safety	Jun 13, 17		
Beer, craft	Aug 13, 10		
Best products of 2013	Nov 13, 15		
Bison meat	Aug 13, 11		
Blenders	May 13, 46; Sep 13, 50		
Calphalon XL 9 Speed, safety risk	Oct 13, 15		
Blood glucose monitors	Nov 13, 43		
Blood pressure monitors	Jun 13, 44		
Breakfast makers	Aug 13, 9		
Broth & stock, chicken	Nov 13, 10		
C			
Cameras			
cleaning	Jul 13, 51		
digital	Aug 13, 26; Dec 13, 39		
Cancer screening	Mar 13, 28; <i>May 13, 5</i>		
Carpet cleaners, Stream Clean	Dec 13, 8		
Cereals	Sep 13, 18		
Chain saws	Oct 13, 26		
Chemicals, toxic, EPA ban	Sep 13, 6		
Chips and crunchy snacks	Oct 13, 8		
potato & vegetable	Feb 13, 7		
Chocolates	Feb 13, 8		
Cleaners, quirky	May 13, 8		
Cleaning, holiday	Dec 13, 48		
Cleaning robots, Winbot	Jun 13, 9		
Cleaning tools, by object cleaned	Sep 13, 8		
Clothes, storing	Oct 13, 9		
Clothes dryers	Feb 13, 40; Aug 13, 42; Dec 13, 50		
Clothing repair gadgets	Nov 13, 10		
Coffeemakers	Dec 13, 55		
single-serving	Jan 13, 43; Mar 13, 11; Sep 13, 48		
Colds	Jan 13, 7		
Computers	Sep 13, 47; Dec 13, 33		
laptop	Mar 13, 50		
convertible & detachable	Aug 13, 39		
printers	Dec 13, 37		
ink wastage	Aug 13, 40		
software, security	Jun 13, 23		
tablet	Jan 13, 20; Feb 13, 44; Aug 13, 24; Dec 13, 30		
Consumer advocacy	Dec 13, 6		
Consumer advocates			
Diane Birmingham	Jul 13, 6		
Kim Witzczak	Jun 13, 6		
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau,			
directorship	Oct 13, 6		
Consumer information, <i>consumer.data.gov</i>	Jun 13, 6		
Consumer Reports Food Safety			
and Sustainability Center	Jun 13, 6		
Consumers International	Aug 13, 6		
Consumers Union			
HealthLawHelper.org	Nov 13, 6		
Cooktops	Jul 13, 36		
Thermador Freedom	Sep 13, 46		
Cookware, Chinet nonstick paper pans	Oct 13, 11		
Countertops, kitchen	Jul 13, 31		
Crackers, healthy	May 13, 10		
Credit scores	Jul 13, 15		
free	Jul 13, 6		
D			
Debit cards, municipal, fees	Aug 13, 6		
Diet plans	Feb 13, 26		
Dietary supplements			
glucosamine & chondroitin	Oct 13, 12		
safety	Mar 13, 6; Nov 13, 6		
survey findings	Oct 13, 8		
Dish detergent	Oct 13, 40		
Dishwashers	Feb 13, 39; Jul 13, 46		
Fagor LFA-65SS: Don't Buy	Sep 13, 46		
Doctors, alternatives to	Aug 13, 34		
Drugs			
disposal	Oct 13, 10		
saving on	Sep 13, 26		
E			
E-book readers	Dec 13, 44		
Egg-yolk extractor, Pluck	Jul 13, 9		
Electronics			
best brands	Dec 13, 45		
portable	Aug 13, 18; Aug 13, 30		
shopping for	Dec 13, 21		
10 top	Dec 13, 18		
Energy boosts, personal	Sep 13, 14		
Energy conservation	Oct 13, 28		
Exercise equipment	Feb 13, 30		
gadgets	Feb 13, 34; Jun 13, 44		
Eyeglass stores	Aug 13, 31		
F			
Facial tissue	Aug 13, 9		
Flame retardants, safety	Feb 13, 15		
Flooring	Jul 13, 28		
Flu	Jan 13, 7		
Food			
fast, unusual	Sep 13, 7		
frozen, restaurant brands	Sep 13, 11		
labeling	Aug 13, 12		
Food and Drug Administration website	Aug 13, 6		
Food processors	Oct 13, 39		
401(k) plans	Sep 13, 22		
G			
Generators	Oct 13, 24		
Government Accountability Office website	May 13, 6		
GPS units	Mar 13, 41; Sep 13, 51		
Grills, gas	Jun 13, 32		
H			
Haggling	Aug 13, 15; <i>Oct 13, 5</i>		
Hair remover, No No	Dec 13, 8		
Ham	Dec 13, 7		
Headphones	Dec 13, 43		
Health			
2013 news	Dec 13, 15		
U.S.	May 13, 6		
Health care			
long-term care	Nov 13, 13		
patient-centered	Jul 13, 20		
Health insurance	Nov 13, 34; Dec 13, 5		
reform law	Nov 13, 30		
Health products, questionable claims	Nov 13, 7		
High chairs			
Babyhome Eat: Don't Buy	May 13, 40		
BeBeLove: safety risk	Nov 13, 14		
Hoses, garden	Jun 13, 45		
I			
Ice cream	Jun 13, 8		
Insider's guide	May 13, 15		
Irons	May 13, 41		
J			
Jams & jellies	Jan 13, 10		
Jerky	Mar 13, 10		
Joints, replacement	Dec 13, 6		
K			
Kitchen remodeling	Jul 13, 24		
Knife sharpener, Edge of Glory	May 13, 8		
L			
Labels			
cancer warning, California	Mar 13, 10		
Laundry detergents	Aug 13, 46		
pods, candlelike	Aug 13, 48		
Lawn care	May 13, 28		
Lawn mowers & tractors	May 13, 30		
Leaf blowers	Nov 13, 41		
Lightbulbs	Oct 13, 30		
LED	Feb 13, 38; Jun 13, 45		
M			
Mattresses	May 13, 42		
Meat sticks	Mar 13, 10		
Media & music players	Mar 13, 39		
streaming	Sep 13, 45; Dec 13, 42		
Medical care			
complaints	Jun 13, 11		
Money mistakes	Feb 13, 21; <i>Mar 13, 5</i>		
Morning activities	Dec 13, 8		
Motorcycle reliability	May 13, 58		
N			
Nursing homes	Jun 13, 14		
O			
Online privacy, kids'	Oct 13, 6		
P			
Packaging			
deceptive	Jun 13, 12		
problems, long-standing	Oct 13, 10		
smart	Sep 13, 12		
Packing	Dec 13, 9		
Paints & stains			
exterior	Jun 13, 36		
interior	Mar 13, 46		
Paper, FreshPaper fruit & vegetable preserving	Jun 13, 10		
Pasta, Ronzoni quick-cooking	Jul 13, 11		
Pill bottles, oversized	Aug 13, 7		
Pizza, frozen	Sep 13, 10		
Pomegranate juice, POM Wonderful, claims	May 13, 6		
Pots, Pauli Never Burn Stock Pot	Dec 13, 9		
Produce safety regulations	Jul 13, 6		
R			
Ranges	July 13, 36		
Pro-style	Dec 13, 53		
reliability	Mar 13, 40		
Refrigerators	Jul 13, 42		
compact	Jun 13, 43		
Fhiaba Series MG Stand Plus	Dec 13, 54		
Relaxation drinks	May 13, 8		
Restaurant-chain calorie claims	May 13, 7		
S			
Safety, spring	May 13, 14		
Savings, high yield	Jun 13, 15		
Scams			
computer-virus warnings, fake	Oct 13, 11		
senior-targeted	Aug 13, 13		
sweepstakes	Jul 13, 8		
Security, vacation	Jun 13, 10		
Shopping			
grocery survey	Sep 13, 9		
online	Dec 13, 14		
safety	Dec 13, 59		
Snack bars	Jul 13, 13		
Snacks, mall	Dec 13, 10		
Snow blowers	Feb 13, 37		
Speakers, sound bars	Feb 13, 38		
Store brands	Oct 13, 16		
Stores			
appliance	Jul 13, 34		
Best Buy	Jun 13, 8		
sporting goods	Jun 13, 39		
Storms	Oct 13, 21		



NEVER sit, stand, or climb on this product. Doing so could result in serious personal injury.

Ouch!

So ... what should the owners do with this object?



Rosé cough medicine, please

A Texas Walgreens was clearly excited about those new flavors.



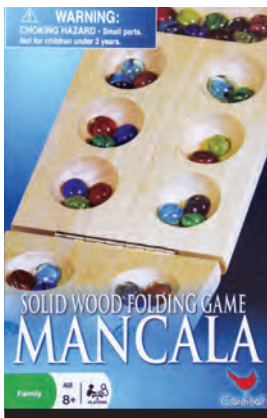
Htanhks!

"When we bought this banner from Walmart," writes a Massachusetts reader, "we sort of expected it to say, well, 'Happy Birthday.'"



Armed and dangerous

Thank goodness this potato gun is "completely harmless." Unless you're an animal ... or a person. Maybe it's harmless when used on potatoes.



Rock on, Mancala

Back in February, we mentioned a reader who bought a similar game only to find that the "colorful playing pieces" advertised on his box were clear glass. Now this, from an Arizona reader. "The rocks play just about as well as the glass," he writes, "but lack the style."



Koala on holiday

Lands' End may have forgotten where koalas live. Hint: It's not in the Aloha State.



Do no harm?

This CVS might want to buy a "p" lest shoppers flock to another drugstore.

The Consumer Reports New Car Price Report includes access to the Build & Buy Service. Purchasers save an average \$2,791 off MSRP using this program.*



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*Between 04/01/13 and 04/30/13, the average estimated savings off MSRP presented to program users by participating based on user new vehicle configurations was \$2,791.

Canada Extra

Information from CONSUMER REPORTS® for Canadian readers

In this special section

Washers	38A
Basic cameras	38B
Advanced cameras	38B
TVs	38C
Computers	38C
Tablets	38D
Autos	38D

How to use the Canada Extra section


Every month, Canada Extra provides Canadian pricing and availability information about products tested for that issue. The Ratings in this section are based on this month's reports, but they narrow your choices to the products that are sold in Canada.


You can use this section in either of two ways: Start with the main report, read about the products that interest you, and turn to this section to find whether they're sold—and for what price—in Canada. Or start here, find products sold in Canada whose price and overall score appear promising, and read more about them in the main report and full Ratings chart; page numbers appear with each Canadian

report. (For some products, the Canadian model designation differs slightly from the one used in the U.S.)

In most cases, the prices we list here are the approximate retail in Canadian dollars; manufacturers' list prices are indicated by an asterisk (*). Check marks identify CR Best Buys or recommended products in the U.S. Ratings. "NA" in a chart means that information wasn't available from the manufacturer.

We appreciate your support, but we don't take it for granted. Please write to CanadaExtra@cu.consumer.org and tell us what you think. We can't reply to every e-mail message or implement every suggestion, but with your help we'll try to keep growing to serve your needs.

 **CR Best Buy** Products with this icon offer the best combination of performance and price. All are recommended.

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

Washers

Report, page 50; Ratings, page 52

Recommended models only, from 110 tested.










Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

A FRONT-LOADERS All have large capacities.

	1	Maytag Maxima XL MHW8000AW ¹	\$1,400	86
	3	Samsung WF457ARG5[GR]	1,600	85
	5	Maytag Maxima XL MHW6000AW ¹	1,200	84
	6	Whirlpool Duet FWF88HEAW ¹	1,200	83
	7	LG WM8000H[V]A ²	1,500	83
	8	Whirlpool Duet FWF70HEBW	900	83
	9	Samsung WF435ATGJ[WR]	1,300	83
	10	Whirlpool Duet FWF86HEBC	1,100	83
	11	LG WM3470H[W]A	1,300	82
	12	LG WM3070H[W]C	1,200	82
	14	Whirlpool Duet FWF94HEX[W]	1,200	81
	16	Whirlpool Duet FWF96HEA[W] ¹	1,400	81

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

B TOP-LOADERS All have large capacities.

	1	LG WT1101CW	\$ 850	77
	2	Samsung WA422PRHD[WR]	900	76
	3	LG WT5070C[W]	1,100	75
	7	Samsung WA50F9A6DSW	1,100	74
	8	Samsung WA50F9A8DSP	1,200	74
	9	Samsung WA400PJHD[WR]	800	73
	10	Maytag Bravos XL MVWB750Y[W] ¹	1,000	73
	11	Samsung WA456DRHD[WR]	1,000	73
	12	GE GTAN8250DWS ¹	1,150	72

¹ Made in the U.S. ² Wider than most machines.

Basic cameras

Report, page 39; Ratings, page 40

Recommended models only, from 108 tested.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

A SUBCOMPACT Fits in a purse or pocket.

✓	1	Nikon Coolpix P330	\$400	63
✓	2	Nikon Coolpix S800c	330	60
✓	3	Nikon Coolpix S6500	230	57
✓	4	Canon PowerShot Elph 110 HS	190	57

C SUPERZOOM Has an extremely versatile zoom lens.

✓	1	Canon PowerShot SX280 HS	340	64
✓	2	Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS30	400	64
✓	3	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX50V	450	63
✓	4	Olympus Stylus SH-50 iHS	300	63
✓	5	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX300	500	63
✓	8	Fujifilm FinePix F900EXR	370	60
✓	10	Nikon Coolpix S9400	300	59
✓	11	Olympus Stylus SZ-16 iHS	200	59
✓	12	Nikon Coolpix P520	450	59

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

C SUPERZOOM continued

✓	13	Nikon Coolpix L820	\$280	59
✓	15	Leica V-Lux 40	700	59
✓	17	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-WX300	350	58
✓	18	Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ60	400	58
✓	19	Fujifilm FinePix S8400W	300	57
✓	20	Leica V-Lux 30	800	56

D RUGGED & WATERPROOF Designed to resist water and shocks.

✓	1	Panasonic Lumix DMC-TS5	400	58
✓	2	Olympus Stylus TG-830 iHS	280	57
✓	3	Nikon Coolpix AW110	380	56
✓	5	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-TX30	300	56
✓	7	Olympus Stylus TG-2 iHS	380	53
✓	8	Canon PowerShot D20	350	53
✓	9	Olympus Stylus TG-630 iHS	200	52

Advanced cameras

Report, page 39; Ratings, page 41

Recommended models only, from 68 tested.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

A POINT-AND-SHOOT Has a built-in lens and SLR-like features.

✓	3	Fujifilm X100S	\$1,300	69
✓	4	Ricoh GR	800	69
✓	5	Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ200	600	69
✓	6	Panasonic Lumix DMC-LF1	525	68
✓	7	Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX7	480	66
✓	8	Canon PowerShot G15	530	65
✓	9	Fujifilm X20	600	65
✓	10	Pentax MX-1	450	65
✓	13	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX100	700	62

B SLR-LIKE Smaller and lighter than an SLR; uses removable lenses.

✓	1	Panasonic Lumix DMC-GH3	1,300	72
✓	3	Panasonic Lumix DMC-G5K	800	69
✓	4	Olympus OM-D E-M5	1,300	68
✓	5	Samsung EV-NX300ZBSTCA	900	68
✓	8	Sony NEX-3NL	500	67
✓	9	Samsung EV-NX20ZZBSBCA	1,100	66
✓	11	Olympus Pen E-P5	1,300	65

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

B SLR-LIKE continued

✓	12	Sony NEX7KB	\$1,250	65
✓	13	Sony SLT-A77V	1,000	65
✓	15	Sony NEX6LB	900	64
✓	17	Sony SLT-A58K	600	63

C SLR Has the most advanced features and removable lenses.

✓	1	Canon EOS Rebel T5i	1,000	73
✓	2	Nikon D7100	1,550	72
✓	3	Canon EOS 60D	1,330	71
✓	4	Canon EOS Rebel SL1	930	71
✓	5	Nikon D7000	1,300	70
✓	6	Canon EOS Rebel T3i	700	70
✓	7	Canon EOS 7D Digital	2,200	69
✓	8	Canon EOS Rebel T3	550	67
✓	9	Nikon D5200	930	66
✓	10	Nikon D3200	650	66
✓	11	Nikon D3100	530	65
✓	12	Pentax K-30	730	65
✓	14	Nikon D5100	650	65

TVs

Report, page 23; Ratings, page 25

Recommended models only, from 142 tested.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Display type ¹	Price	Overall score
					0 100
					P F G VG E

A 60-INCH AND LARGER

✓	1	LG 60LA8600	L	\$3,200	76
✓	3	Panasonic Viera TC-P65VT60	P	4,200	73
✓	4	Panasonic Viera TC-P60ZT60	P	4,300	73
✓	6	Samsung UN60F7500	L	3,100	72
✓	7	Panasonic Viera TC-P60ST60	P	1,900	72
✓	8	LG 60PH6700	P	1,275	72
✓	10	Samsung PN64E550	P	2,400	71
✓	12	Samsung UN65F8000	L	4,000	70
✓	13	Panasonic Viera TC-L60DT60	L	2,700	69
✓	14	Sony Bravia KDL-60R550A	L	1,850	68
✓	16	Sharp Aquos LC-70C7500U	L	2,800	65

B 55- TO 59-INCH

✓	2	Samsung UN55ES8000	L	3,000	74
✓	3	Sony Bravia XBR-55X900A	L	5,500	74
✓	4	LG 55LA7400	L	1,745	73
✓	5	Panasonic Viera TC-P55ST60	P	1,550	72
✓	6	Samsung UN55ES6500	L	1,700	72
✓	7	Samsung UN55F7100	L	2,300	69
✓	8	Sony Bravia KDL-55W900A	L	2,600	69
✓	9	Samsung UN55F6400	L	2,000	67
✓	10	Toshiba 58L7350U	L	1,600	67
✓	11	JVC JLE55SP4000	L	1,150	66

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Display type ¹	Price	Overall score
					0 100
					P F G VG E

C 46- TO 52-INCH

✓	3	LG 47LA6900	L	\$1,025	71
✓	4	Panasonic Viera TC-L47WT60	L	2,500	69
✓	5	Samsung UN46EH5300	L	1,050	68
✓	6	LG 47LA6200	L	870	68
✓	7	Panasonic Viera TC-P50S60	P	850	67
✓	8	Sony Bravia KDL-47W802A	L	1,500	66
✓	9	LG 50PN6500	P	700	66
✓	11	Panasonic Viera TC-L50ET60	L	1,400	66
✓	13	Samsung UN46EH5000	L	850	65
✓	14	Toshiba 50L7300U	L	1,150	65

D 40- TO 43-INCH

✓	1	Samsung PN43E450	P	500	68
✓	2	LG 42GA6400	L	1,040	67
✓	3	Samsung UN40EH6000	L	750	67
✓	4	Panasonic Viera TC-L42E60	L	850	66
✓	5	Samsung UN40F5500	L	750	65
✓	6	Sony Bravia KDL-40EX640	L	1,000	65

E 32-INCH

✓	2	Samsung UN32F6300	L	680	65
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F 29-INCH AND SMALLER

✓	1	Samsung UN26EH4000	L	300	64
✓	2	Samsung UN29F4000	L	330	60
✓	4	LG 29LN4510	L	320	58
✓	5	Toshiba 29L1350U	L	240	58
✓	6	Philips 26PFL4907	L	300	56

¹ L=LCD, P=Plasma.

Computers

Report and Ratings, pages 33-36

Here are the brands of computers from our testing with the phone numbers and websites where you can reach the manufacturers for information about models and prices.

BRAND	PHONE	WEBSITE
Acer	800-910-2237	acer.ca
Apple	800-692-7753	apple.com/ca
Asus	NA	asus.com/ca-en
Dell	800-999-3355	dell.ca
Gateway	NA	ca.gateway.com
HP	877-231-4351	hp.com/ca

BRAND	PHONE	WEBSITE
Lenovo	855-253-6686	lenovo.com/ca/en
MSI	888-447-6564	ca.msi.com
Samsung	800-726-7864	samsung.com/ca
Sony	888-289-7669	store.sony.ca
Toshiba	800-867-4422	toshiba.ca
Vizio	NA	store.vizio.com/en-ca

Tablets

Report, page 30; Ratings, page 32

Recommended models only, from 70 tested.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

A 7- TO 8-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, WI-FI-ONLY Weight: 0.7 to 0.9 lb.

✓	1	Samsung Galaxy Note 8.0 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	\$400	83
✓	2	Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 8.0 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	300	83
✓	3	Google Nexus 7 (Wi-Fi, 16GB) (2nd gen.)	270	80
✓	4	Apple iPad Mini (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	300	79
✓	5	Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 7.0 (Wi-Fi, 8GB)	200	78
✓	6	Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 (7.0) (Wi-Fi, 8GB)	170	73
✓	9	Kobo Arc (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	180	68

B 7- TO 8-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, 4G+WI-FI Weight: 0.7 to 0.9 lb.

✓	1	Apple iPad Mini (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB)	460	83
✓	2	Samsung Galaxy Note 8.0 (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB)	550	82

C 7- TO 9-INCH-SCREEN SPECIALTY TABLETS Weight: 0.7 to 1.2 lb.

✓	2	Amazon Kindle Fire HD 8.9 (Wi-Fi, 16GB) ²	295	72
✓	3	Amazon Kindle Fire HD (Wi-Fi, 16GB) ²	225	72

D 9- TO 12-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, WI-FI-ONLY Weight: 1.1 to 1.6 lb.

✓	1	Google Nexus 10 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	400	82
✓	2	Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	450	81

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E

D 9- TO 12-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, WI-FI-ONLY continued

✓	3	Apple iPad (Wi-Fi, 16GB) (4th gen.)	\$500	81
✓	4	Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 10.1 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	400	80
✓	5	Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 (10.1) (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	350	80
✓	6	Sony Xperia Tablet Z (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	500	79
✓	7	Microsoft Surface with Windows RT (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	350	78
✓	9	Dell Latitude 10 Essentials (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	770	78
✓	11	Apple iPad 2 (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	400	78
✓	12	Samsung Ativ Tab 5 (Wi-Fi, 64GB)	850	77
✓	13	Asus Transformer Pad Infinity TF700T (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	500	77
✓	14	Acer Iconia W510 (Wi-Fi, 64GB)	600	76
✓	17	Toshiba Excite Write (Wi-Fi, 32GB)	600	75
✓	20	Asus Transformer Pad Infinity TF300T (Wi-Fi, 16GB)	NA	75

E 9- TO 12-INCH-SCREEN TABLETS, 3G/4G+WI-FI Weight: 1.2 to 1.5 lb.

✓	1	Apple iPad (Wi-Fi, 4G, 16GB) (4th gen.)	630	83
✓	5	Apple iPad 2 (Wi-Fi, 3G, 16GB)	530	81

² Price includes optional wall charger, \$10.

Autos

Report and Ratings, pages 67-72

All of the tested vehicles are available in Canada.

Make & model	Price range	Acceleration (sec.)				Fuel economy (liters per 100 km)		
		0-50 km/h	0-100 km/h	80-100 km/h	500 meters	City driving	Highway driving	Overall
SUBCOMPACT HATCHBACK								
Nissan Versa Note	\$13,348-\$19,018	4.2	11.5	4.8	20.9	10.8	5.8	7.7
COMPACT WAGON								
Fiat 500L	19,995-27,445	4.0	10.0	4.2	19.9	12.9	6.4	8.9
UPSCALE SPORTS SEDANS								
Infiniti Q50	37,500-49,500	2.4	5.9	3.2	16.1	16.9	7.9	11.2
Lexus IS	37,300-73,900	3.3	9.2	4.4	19.2	16.4	8.2	11.2