

OCT 13

SNEAK PEEK:
2014 CARS
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TOP DISHWASHER
DETERGENTS
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STORM SURVIVAL GUIDE

Best & worst
generators,
chain saws



PLUS
5 insurance
myths that
can cost
you

OCTOBER 2013 | CONSUMERREPORTS.ORG
Consumer Reports

Bright Ideas to Save You Money

Up to \$1,000 a year

- Slash your energy bills in half
- Sneaky scams to skip
- Better bulbs, smart appliances & more



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**Guaranteed Savings currently not available in all states. See site for details.

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This issue by the numbers

What's the score?

86
Kia
Cadenza



16
Green Mission
Organic
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Savings this issue

\$1,550

Buy a Troy-Bilt XP 7000 30477 portable generator for \$900 instead of a Yamaha EF6600DE and save this much.

\$125

Use a top-rated LED bulb instead of an incandescent light and save this much over the life of the bulb.

\$70

Get a Stihl MS 180 C-BE gas-powered chain saw for \$230 and save this much over an Echo CS-400-18.

Coming in November

Best products of the year: TVs, tablets, appliances, and more; plus tires, auto batteries, vacuums, blood glucose meters, and health insurance.

Check out our iPad app

Look for expanded Ratings, videos of road tests and lab tests, plus more photos and interactive navigation. Now included with your paid magazine subscription.



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.

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• To send a letter to the editor, go to ConsumerReports.org/lettertoeditor.
• For news tips and story ideas, go to ConsumerReports.org/tips.
• E-mail submissions for Selling It to SellingIt@cro.consumer.org.
• For subscription information, go to ConsumerReports.org/magazine or call 800-666-5261. See page 61 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

Who's covered?

An important consideration was left out of "Dr. Who?" (August 2013): insurance coverage. When my physician was not available, I was scheduled to see his certified physician assistant. I was shocked to discover that his care was considered "out of network," subject to a higher deductible and paid at a lower percentage. My insurance plan did not state that for an "in network" clinic, physician assistants are not covered at the same level as a doctor is.

—*Su Hartung DeKalb, IL*

Editor's note Network coverage of non-M.D. practitioners may vary from practice to practice. If there's any doubt, check with the practice and/or your insurance company first.



Ringing idea

Regarding your advice to hang up to avoid scams and frauds ("These New Scams Target Seniors," August 2013), I have found it most effective to just not answer my phones. The landline has an answering machine, and my cell has voicemail. Unsolicited calls will not leave a message in their insatiable quest for a human mark. It is very satisfying to see that zero on the message screen after the phone stops ringing.

—*Paul Katz Panhandle, TX*

Turn the car off

Regarding the Ford recalls (Safety Alerts, August 2013), people who smell gas or see it on the ground should not take their vehicle to the

dealership—they should be towed. Such conditions could result in a fire at any time, and even a short drive could become deadly.

—*Tom Hartshorn Martinsburg, WV*

Tough tissue

One criterion that makes Puffs Plus the top rater (Up Front, August 2013) in our house is "washability." If a tissue is left in a pocket on washday, Puffs come out as single whole sheets while other brands produce annoying confetti, which the dryer cannot remove completely.

—*Maxine Iverson Kansas City, MO*

Clarification In "Let's Make a Deal" (August 2013), we should have made clear that the patient who needed surgery was referred by her optometrist to an ophthalmologist colleague, not to another optometrist.

Ask our experts



DRIVERS' AID Blind-spot monitoring systems, on side mirrors, are useful safety features.

Q Have you tested the new blind-spot warning and lane-departure systems that are available on new cars? Are they worth the cost?

—*Gary Roodman Leeds, MA*

Usually blind-spot monitoring systems work well, illuminating a warning when a vehicle lurks in your side blind spot. Some systems can also sound an alert if you switch on the turn signal when there's an adjacent vehicle. Lane-departure systems warn if you deviate at all from your lane. They work well but are often oversensitive, giving too-frequent warnings, especially on rural roads.

Q Many years ago I read that grinding bones is good for garbage disposers; it "hones the blades and scours the pipes." But a more recent article said that bones and eggshells are the worst things—other than fat—to put down a disposer. Which is it?

—*Royall Whitaker Annapolis, MD*

Because bone and eggshell are items that are slow to decompose even when they're ground up, they will deposit in sections of piping that have low flow or velocity, such as traps or pipe sections with little or no pitch, and potentially cause a blockage.

Q It seems more common with junk mail these days that the "unsubscribe" function requires that you type in your e-mail address to confirm it. Is it OK to do this or is it just a phishing scam? And if it isn't a good idea, how do you get rid of this type of mail?

—*Paul Nau Nashville, TN*

We don't recommend that you type your e-mail into an unsubscribe box. It may well be used as a way to confirm that your address is valid, and most legitimate mailers will automatically enter your e-mail address on the unsubscribe page. Otherwise, just ignore the junk mail.

Q In addition to the explanation of how you test at CONSUMER REPORTS, could you also provide some information on your policy regarding what and why you select what you do (i.e. types of products and which models to test)?

—*Thomas David Brooklyn, NY*

We select categories to test that are most relevant to consumers who need unique, expert advice in making purchases, especially in dynamic markets where technology changes and products vary in performance and price. Our model selection process is based on research and analysis to identify the most representative products that consumers are likely to find in stores and online. We try to capture the newest products, features, and technology that are currently available.

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

A better cable TV bill

THE ISSUE To get your favorite channels, you may have to pay for dozens or even hundreds of others that you never watch.

OUR TAKE Consumers should have more options and flexibility in paying for cable TV. The average amount of a typical monthly cable television bill rose by about \$12 between 2008 and 2012. Prices shot up almost 5 percent in 2012 alone.

There is a new bill in Congress that would let consumers buy cable channels individually, or “à la carte,” so you could pick the channels you want and possibly lower your monthly bill. The Television Consumer Freedom Act, now in the Senate, would



encourage cable companies to unbundle their channels and offer à la carte programming. It would also eliminate the TV blackout rule for sports events that are held in publicly financed stadiums. We believe this bill would help deliver greater choices for consumers who have grown weary of cable price hikes.



Web watch

The Federal Trade Commission recently updated the rules for protecting children's online privacy. The revisions to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) seek to keep pace with technology as more children use mobile apps and social media at earlier ages. Under the rules, a website must get verified consent from a child's parent before collecting personal information from anyone under the age of 13. The FTC has a website devoted to kids' online safety, covering everything from parental rights under the new rules to cyberbullying. Go to www.consumer.ftc.gov and click on “Privacy & identity,” then “Kids' Online Safety.”

Come to our annual meeting

Please join us on Saturday, Oct. 19, at our national headquarters, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY. Doors open at 9:45 a.m. and the meeting begins at 10 a.m. An expo and a select lab visit will run from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For details, go to ConsumerReports.org/annualmeeting.



► FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Safe travels

My first car was a used 1960 Ford Falcon, barely functional, but it did the job. Auto safety that year was primitive. Seat belts weren't standard, and few drivers who did have them buckled them. One reason: The dye job was lousy, and the color rubbed off on clothing. CONSUMER REPORTS advised car owners to buy the lightest color belt available and to wear it faithfully, and we prodded regulators to make seat belts standard equipment.



In 1960 we also condemned “bayonet-shaped hood and fender ornaments,” brakes that failed, and power steering that died if the single belt driving it broke. Today we continue our commitment to auto safety, influencing automakers and regulators to make it a priority.

Moving forward. Our Ratings alone can help shape safety. We were fans of electronic stability control from its early days in the late 1990s, when we witnessed its unequivocal benefits on our test track. From 2008 on, only vehicles that had it would get our “top pick” label. By the 2010 model year, ESC was standard on almost 90 percent of cars and on all SUVs. In part because of our relentless advocacy, it's now mandatory on all passenger vehicles.

Moving backward. The rear blind zone, in which a child or pet is invisible to the driver, can be as long as 50 feet. For years, we advocated for backup cameras to be standard on all new cars and supported legislation, passed in 2008, that required them. But this summer that rule was delayed for the fourth time. It's odd that carmakers have problems with the rule—they cite cost and driver responsibility—because the cameras are already in about half of vehicles on the market.

Not moving at all. In 2002 it took only one commute in a new BMW to see that the iDrive control was a problem. Just changing radio stations pulled the driver's attention away from the road for too long. We called it a disaster. BMW simplified the system, but other companies keep bringing out controls that are much too complex.

Our experience helps us identify what makes a vehicle unsafe and has earned the respect of automakers, regulators, and you, the consumer.

Jim Guest
JIM GUEST
President

► CONSUMER VICTORY

Money matters

The win There's finally a Senate-confirmed director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.



What's in it for you The CFPB is an independent watchdog that polices banks, lenders, and other financial service providers and products and cracks down on rip-offs such as shady loans and hidden credit-card fees. The CFPB was created in 2010 as part of a Wall Street reform law. But in an attempt to muzzle this watchdog, some senators refused to allow a vote on a director unless the bureau's authority was drastically weakened. Richard Cordray, a former Ohio attorney general, was appointed interim director in 2011, and he helped refund \$425 million to 6 million consumers hit by deceptive financial practices.

But the clock was ticking on Cordray's temporary term, and the CFPB itself was at risk. Consumers Union generated about 180,000 signatures, e-mails, and phone calls in support of Cordray. In July, senators from both parties agreed to allow a vote with no changes to the bureau's powers.

Upfront

Tips, trends, everyday products

What's in a (car) name?

HAVE YOU EVER driven a Ford Hep Cat or a Chevrolet Panther? No? That's because those monikers never made it to the showroom floor. Hep Cat was one of 5,000 names considered for the 1955 Thunderbird; Panther was the code name for the 1967 Camaro.

Chevy's planned reintroduction of the Stingray name for the 2014 Corvette, last used in 1976, got us thinking about how car names are chosen—a job that is equal parts art and science.

Susan Pacheco, director of global advanced product marketing for the Ford Motor Company, led us through Ford's naming process. A team from the company's marketing, design, and communications departments comes up with, say, 150 suggestions, considering the images

and feelings each evokes. Contenders are checked for inappropriate or negative meanings. (Life Dunk, a Honda van sold in Asia, would not have worked in the U.S., for instance.) External brand-naming companies are sometimes used, and focus groups may provide feedback on how likable a name is and whether it "fits" the car.

A winnowed list is submitted for legal and trademark clearance. (This stage can be tricky, as Ford has learned. The Mustang was originally sold in West Germany as the T-5 because an industrial equipment company held the rights to the Mustang trademark.) Last, the name is approved by Ford's CEO.

Sometimes a car name isn't a real word but is chosen for its sound and connota-

tion, such as Lexus, which, a Toyota rep told us, "combines word roots evoking images of luxury and technology." Volkswagen's Routan, says a company rep, is "a play off of other multipurpose vehicle names in the VW brand globally: Sharan, Touran ... Routan." Jetta was named for the jet stream, and Passat is the German word for trade wind. If a "name" is an alphanumeric stew, as is the case with BMW and Mercedes models, it still must be easy to pronounce. Another challenge is to have a name that works internationally. The Ford Focus and Fiesta are each known by a single name around the world, but the Fusion and Escape are Mondeo and Kuga in Europe and elsewhere.

"There's no limit to the places we can use for inspiration, including other languages, astronomy, and mythology," Pacheco says. Astrology can come into play, too. The Ford Taurus was named for the sign of the wives of two company executives.

Mark Dzewit, Chevrolet's global product manager, says he maintains a database of about 750 names, narrowing the list to six to 10 for a new car. In the end, though, the quality of the car is what matters. "The product makes the name," Dzewit says, "not the other way around."

Proposed ... and picked

Match the suggested name to the final choice:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| A. Lafayette | 1. Ford Edsel |
| B. Panda | 2. Dodge Dart |
| C. Pegasus | 3. Plymouth Barracuda |
| D. Utopian Turtle | 4. Pontiac Fiero |
| E. Zipp | 5. Ford Mustang |



Ford Edsel



Plymouth Barracuda

Answers: A: 5; B: 3; C: 4; D: 1; E: 2



Pop goes the snack

“A CHIP LIKE no snack aisle has seen (or taste bud has tasted),” says the website for Popchips, one of a burgeoning breed of salty-snack alternatives and pitched by Katy Perry and Bruno Mars. Popped snacks are made of corn, rice, potato, chickpeas, or a mix of those, and most are subjected to heat and pressure until they pop. No frying, no baking, “no wiping your greasy chip hand on your jeans.” The clear message: Popped snacks are more healthful.

But are they? Not really. Although all have less fat per serving than typical fried potato chips, some have more fat than do baked potato chips and about the same number of calories. Olde Cape Cod multigrain has 420 milligrams of sodium, more than the amount in typical cheese puffs, potato chips, or pretzels. (The chart at right pits the nutrition of a popped snack against that of other snack foods.) Hummus popped snacks at least have slightly more fiber than most others in the category: 3 grams per serving.

The tested popped snacks weren’t different enough in quality for our tasters to rank

all of them by taste. But among kettle chips, PopCorners and Popchips are better than the rest, and Quaker is worse. The barbecue snacks are very similar, so buy by price. The hummus and multigrain snacks taste mostly of their seasonings. The Ratings include scores for nutrition (based on calories, fat, sodium, sugars, and other factors) as well as taste descriptions of each product.

Bottom line. Popped snacks may sound good for you, but they’re still a member of the snack aisle. Buy one whose taste appeals, and check prices, which range from 35 cents to \$1 per serving.

Numbers crunch In order of calories.

Product*	Per serving			
	Calories	Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)
Salt-free rice cakes	35	0	0	<1
Mini pretzels	110	0	250	<1
Baked potato chips	120	2	135	2
Katy's Popchips	130	4	125	2
Regular tortilla chips	140	7	115	1
Cheese tortilla chips	140	8	210	1
Air-popped popcorn	150	9	200	3
Cheese puffs	150	10	300	<1
Fried potato chips	160	10	170	1

*Nutrition for products varies from brand to brand; we've chosen one major player per snack food. Serving is about an ounce except for rice cakes, one-third ounce.

Vitamin and supplement do's and don'ts

Three-quarters of Americans who take multivitamins and/or other dietary supplements use one or more of the pills in the regimen “to stay healthy,” according to a nationally representative survey of 1,022 U.S. adults conducted in May 2013 by the Consumer Reports National Research Center. But there’s little evidence that supplements help prevent disease in already healthy, well-fed people. The survey turned up other behavior that was unhelpful at best and risky at worst. Among our findings:

- Sixty-nine percent of respondents have told their doctor what they’re taking. Main reasons others didn’t: They hadn’t noticed any problems since starting vitamins or supplements, or just didn’t think sharing was necessary. But patients should provide a list of all supplements at every visit as part of their medical history, says Pieter Cohen, M.D., an internist at Cambridge Health Alliance in Massachusetts with a special interest in supplements. “There’s no question that high

doses of vitamins can hurt you,” he says. Too much vitamin E, for example, can increase the risk for prostate cancer.

- Just over a third of those taking multivitamins and/or other supplements along with prescription medications said they checked with a pharmacist before taking at least one of those drug combinations. But combinations can be dangerous. The popular herbal supplement St. John’s wort, for example, can make birth control pills and heart medications less effective, research shows. Help prevent potential interactions by asking your pharmacist to add the supplements you take to your patient profile, says Sophia De Monte, R.Ph., a spokeswoman for the American Pharmacists Association.

- Forty-eight percent of people with a child under 18 at home said that their youngest child was taking multivitamins at least occasionally. Of those, 73 percent said one of the main reasons was to help kids “stay healthy in general,” and 39 percent said it was “to balance



their diet.” But the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) believes that “supplemental vitamins are probably unnecessary for the healthy child who is more than 1 year of age and is consuming a healthy, varied diet,” says

Ratings

All tested products In alphabetical order, within types.



- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Product	Nutrition	Per 1-oz. serving				Comments
		Cost	Calories	Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	
KETTLE OR SWEET AND SALTY						
Kellogg's Special K Popcorn Chips (baked)	●	\$0.77	120	2.5	105	Corn-flavored triangles with varied texture and flavor; mild overall. Slightly salty and sweet.
Olde Cape Cod Popped Corn Crisps	●	0.38	130	4.5	130	Small, crunchy corn-flavored rounds. Balance of sweetness and saltiness.
Popchips Katy's Kettle Corn	●	0.66	130	4	125	Crispy/crunchy triangles with roasted-corn flavor. Sweet, salty, slight caramel flavor.
PopCorners	●	0.35	120	3.5	105	Crispy/crunchy triangles with big corn flavor. Slightly more sweet than salty. Slight roasted note.
Quaker Popped Rice Snacks	●	0.67	110	1	290	Crispy/crunchy mini rice cakes. Sweet, with caramel and artificial-maple impression.
BARBECUE						
Olde Cape Cod Popped Potato Crisps	●	0.47	110	2.5	280	Sweet, spicy, puffed rounds with potato flavor and moderate heat and cayenne flavor.
Popchips Potato	○	0.77	120	4	190	Puffed rounds with earthy potato flavor, barbecue seasoning, slight heat, slight smoke.
Quaker Popped Rice Snacks	●	0.77	130	4.5	330	Puffed, round mini rice cakes with slightly smoky barbecue flavor and notable paprika flavor. Slight corn flavor.
Trader Joe's Popped Potato Chips	○	0.66	120	4	190	Puffed rounds with earthy potato flavor, barbecue seasoning, very slight heat, slight smoke.
HUMMUS						
Quaker Popped Chips Salsa Fresca	○	0.75	130	5	350	Crunchy rounds with herb specks. Lime, chili powder, cilantro, cumin, garlic flavors. Salty.
Smartfood Selects Feta Herb Popped Chips	○	1.00	140	5	210	Crunchy rounds with herb specks. Flavors of dehydrated Italian seasoning, garlic, onion, tomato, cheese.
MULTIGRAIN						
Olde Cape Cod Popped Zesty Ranch Crisps	○	0.47	110	3	420	Round, slightly airy; sour cream and onion impression. Some heat.



TECH TIPS

The right way to store summer clothes

Wash everything. Stains can lurk even in clothes that look clean. Left to linger, some invisible stains, especially from white wine or clear sodas that contain corn syrup or sugar, may show up later as permanent brown spots. Among the best detergents on a range of stains including grass, blood, and "ring around the collar": Tide Ultra plus Bleach Vivid White, Wisk Deep Clean (a CR Best Buy), and Kirkland Signature Ultra Clean Pacs. All are for front-loaders or high-efficiency top-loaders. For standard top-loaders, try Tide Plus Bleach Alternative Vivid White + Bright. Bleach is effective on white garments, but don't use it on spandex—it can break down the fibers. Pre-treating grass, dirt, and sunscreen stains is key. Follow clothing manufacturers' laundering directions.

Let clothes breathe. Don't store clothes in plastic. If even a little moisture accumulates inside, it can cause mildew. Use bags or boxes made of fabric or with breathable panels.

Keep shoes in shape. When storing shoes, gravity is the enemy. Help retain the shape of summer shoes by balling up acid-free tissue paper in the toes. As with clothes, store shoes in a dry place.

Avoid wrinkles. Roll clothes instead of folding them. Next spring, hang them in the bathroom and let shower steam smooth any wrinkles.

Be creative. You needn't banish all summer clothes to an attic at the stroke of Labor Day. If you have empty space in a dry, clean closet, use it. Fabric sweater organizers are a quick, inexpensive way to add shelf space to a closet.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sunlight is a great oxidizer. To help faded whites look new again, wash them and hang them in the sun. That may reverse yellowing.

Neville Golden, M.D., chief of adolescent medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine and a spokesman for the AAP. "A multivitamin containing the recommended daily allowance is not harmful but can be expensive."

• Fifty-five percent of American adults think that supplement labels must warn about potential dangers and side effects. Wrong. The Food and Drug Administration doesn't require warnings on supplements, with one exception: Those that contain iron must warn about accidental overdosing and fatal poisoning in children. What's more, 47 percent of Americans think the FDA must review products before they're sold to the public, and 45 percent think that claims about safety or effectiveness must be based on solid scientific evidence. But federal law does not require that dietary supplements be proved safe to the FDA's satisfaction or that supplement companies show that most label claims are accurate.

BY THE NUMBERS

56% vs. 76%
of men take multivitamins or supplements. of women take multivitamins or supplements.

31% vs. 34%
said multivitamins were recommended by a doctor. said multivitamins were recommended by a family member, friend, or co-worker.

26% vs. 43%
said supplements were recommended by a family member, friend, or co-worker. said supplements were recommended by a doctor.

Packages that need a makeover

SOME PACKAGES have been annoying for so long that it seems as if manufacturers are teasing us all. Why, in 2013, must consumers open a box of farina pretty much as they have for decades, by pushing in a cutout on the side of the box? How many times have you opened a bag of chips only to have it split and spill the contents?

Patrick Reynolds, editor of the trade publication *Packaging World*, blames economics. "These are mostly low-margin, commodity products that yield small profits," he says. "There isn't a lot of motivation for companies to rip out equipment in their plants that's bought and paid for and invest in new machinery, no matter how horrible the packaging." Frito-Lay, for instance, abandoned an experiment to outfit snack bags with a resealable zippered closure because of cost, says Joe Angel, publisher of *Packaging World*, and besides, "they want people to eat all the chips all at once."

We've rounded up some familiar culprits and contacted companies to find out why they couldn't do better.



Comet Cleanser

The issue. The cardboard container and metal top deteriorate in moisture, and powder kicks up through holes in the nonclosable lid when you set it down.

The company's response.

The limitations of the container are by design, to make it recyclable.



Gold Medal Flour

The issue. The flour is tightly packed into a delicate paper sack that's tricky to handle without tearing or making a mess.

The company's response. "It's very classic and the way it's always been," a customer-service rep said. "And flour is an openly traded commodity. We don't make much money on it."



The safe way to get rid of expired drugs

Medicine is good. Once it has expired? Not so much. Hence the reason for National Take-Back Day on Oct. 26, 2013, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At designated sites—a pharmacy, police station, or school, for instance—you can drop off unwanted, unused, or expired medications. The program is free and anonymous, and accepts most prescription drugs. (To find a collection site near you, go to dea.gov and click on Drug Disposal, then Got Drugs?) In three years of semiannual collections, more than 1,400 tons of

prescription meds have been collected and incinerated, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Why turn in old drugs?

They may have lost effectiveness or directions for their use may have changed (for example, the Food and Drug Administration no longer recommends that kids under 2 years old take cough or cold medicines). And it's just a bad idea to have leftover painkillers hanging around—they could contribute to a family member's or friend's drug-abuse problem.

"Everything we do is geared toward protecting American families and communities," DEA Administrator Michele Leonhart says. "By removing unwanted prescription drugs from their homes, the public helps prevent experimentation, addiction, overdose, and even death."

There are reasons to go to a take-back site instead of tossing the medications yourself. Throwing drugs in the trash lets kids and pets get at them, and a wastebasket is a likely place for drug abusers to check after they've looked in the medicine cabinet. Flushing drugs down a toilet? Generally a bad idea. Some organizations cite human health concerns; others cite evidence that flushed

drugs can cause deformities in fish, such as reproductive abnormalities among smallmouth bass. There's no definitive evidence to suggest adverse human health effects, but the FDA wants to minimize drug residues in the public water supply.

Proposed rules by the DEA would expand disposal options to include mail-back programs and receptacles at pharmacies or long-term-care facilities. But although the public comment period closed last February, those rules have yet to become permanent.

If you miss a take-back day and want to dispose of pills on your own, follow these suggestions:

- Remove all personal information and drug names from the label.
- Take medications out of their original bottles and mix them in another container (like an empty margarine tub) with an undesirable substance, such as cooking oil, coffee grounds, or cat litter. Then seal the container and throw it in the trash outside.
- To see an FDA list of medications so potentially harmful to others that they should be flushed once expired, go to fda.gov, click on Drugs, and type "flush drugs" into the search window.





■ Cream of Wheat

The issue. The paperboard box has a spout you create by poking a finger through a precut template. When you pour, cereal tends to get stuck inside the box, and you can't reseal the carton.

The company's response. "We are sure your suggestion for a metal pour spout for the Cream of Wheat cereals would be a great success. In fact, many of our consumers have requested this. Unfortunately we currently do not have the machinery to apply this type of packaging."



■ Kettle chip bag

The issue. You need a strong but delicate touch to pull the bag open without causing it to split apart and spill chips.

The company's response. "It's always great to hear from a fan.... We want you to know that we are always looking to improve based on feedback from our consumers." Then the company offered us coupons.



■ CLAIM CHECK

Can you bake in paper?

The claim. Chinet Bakeware nonstick paper pans are "the first disposable baking dishes that let you take your food from oven to table to freezer to microwave," the product's website says. The pans, along with plastic lids, come in square, rectangular, and oval shapes, in various sizes. We paid \$4.95 per pack, consisting of two or three pans.

The check. At the risk of expanding our waistlines, we cooked casseroles and brownies in Chinet and in similar-size metal and aluminum-foil pans.

Bottom line. Chinet panned out. It's a disposable yet tough baking dish that can migrate to a microwave oven, and it was more rigid than the disposable aluminum pans we used. A bonus: You won't need pot holders when you pick up the heated dish. That said, because the bakeware is flexible, the lids may pop off; and the paper pan seems to extend baking time. Brownies in a metal pan were done in 40 minutes; those in Chinet required 55.

■ SCAM ALERT

Beware of fake computer-virus warnings

It's bad enough dealing with real viruses, worms, and other malware on your computer. Now scammers are charging to remove threats that aren't even there.

The Federal Trade Commission recently announced settlements with two operations that it accused of tricking people into believing their computers had viruses and then charging up to \$429 to fix the imaginary infection. The outfits called people or used Google paid search to lure them to websites that claimed an association with reputable antivirus software makers such as McAfee and Symantec and computer titans such as Dell and Microsoft.

But there are other ways you can be bamboozled. Some websites launch pop-up windows saying that your computer is infected and offering to scan it or remove the virus—for a fee. Even more insidious are sites that stealthily install antivirus software that mimics the real thing, creating fake scan results that show widespread infection. The bogus programs often have authentic-sounding names. (We've seen System Care Antivirus and Antivirus Agent Pro.) Such "ransomware" can disable many of your machine's functions or hide programs and data files, making it seem as though they've



been deleted. Then it notifies you that it can repair the problems—again, for a fee.

What you can do

Make sure you have a current, legitimate antivirus program installed. (It still may not protect you completely: A staffer had his PC infected twice in the past year while online, though he has up-to-date antivirus software.) Back up personal files often to minimize the amount of information you'll lose if you have

to erase your hard drive. If you receive phone calls or e-mails warning that your computer may be infected, ignore them, no matter how legitimate they seem. Don't click on any link in an unsolicited e-mail from a stranger.

If your computer becomes infected with a rogue antivirus program, don't pay anything, no matter how frustrating the symptoms. Instead, disconnect the computer from the Internet so that the software can't steal personal information. Then note the name of the fake software (visible in the pop-up box) and other details. Using a separate computer, search for info on how to remove it. There's lots of advice on websites such as Badwarebusters.org and on the sites of legit antivirus software makers.

Some tech sites offer free utilities, including the RKill application from BleepingComputer.com, that temporarily disable ransomware so that you can remove it using legitimate antivirus software, such as Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free (malwarebytes.org). You should be able to download the utilities to a USB thumb drive and run them on the affected computer. If those fixes seem overwhelming, ask a computer-savvy friend for help or obtain professional tech support.

The facts about joint supplements

U.S. CONSUMERS spent \$753 million in 2012 on supplements of glucosamine and chondroitin in an attempt to relieve pain and stiffness from arthritis, according to the Nutrition Business Journal. But the scientific jury is still out as to whether those products work. And on top of that, our new tests of 16 widely sold joint supplements found that some contained less chondroitin than they said they did, and two didn't dissolve sufficiently.

All of the tested products contain a combination of glucosamine salt (either hydrochloride or sulfate) and chondroitin sulfate, ingredients that occur naturally in and around the cartilage that cushions the joints. Some research has suggested that the combination might reduce pain in certain people with osteoarthritis, the

degenerative joint disease that affects 27 million Americans. But the evidence is far from conclusive.

In a large, multicenter trial published in 2006, researchers found some evidence that glucosamine and chondroitin alleviated pain in patients with moderate to severe knee osteoarthritis, the most common type. But subsequent studies have not confirmed that finding. And treatment guidelines issued in May 2013 by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons don't recommend glucosamine and chondroitin supplements, citing lack of efficacy.

Inside our tests

We bought the supplements online or from stores in the New York area between August and October 2012. We had outside

labs test samples representing three lots of each product. To meet our quality criteria, a product had to contain, on average, at least 90 percent of its labeled amounts of glucosamine and chondroitin; pass our dissolution test, based on the test used by the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP), a nongovernmental standard-setting organization, where applicable (it applies only to tablets and caplets); and fall within acceptable limits for four heavy-metal contaminants: arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury. Those limits are set by the Environmental Protection Agency, the USP, and California's Proposition 65.

All of the products contained their labeled amount of glucosamine. And none contained worrisome amounts of lead or other heavy metals.

But six products—CVS Triple Strength, Finest Natural Triple Strength (Walgreens), Natural Factors Glucosamine & Chondroitin Sulfates, Spring Valley Triple Strength (Walmart), Trigosamine Max Strength, and 365 Everyday Value Extra Strength (Whole Foods)—fell below their claimed levels of chondroitin, averaging only 79 to 87 percent of the labeled amount. A seventh product, Nature Made Triple Flex Triple Strength, averaged only 65 percent of its claimed chondroitin in our tests. The 365 Everyday Value and Trigosamine pills also didn't dissolve sufficiently, which suggests that their ingredients might not be fully available for absorption in the body. We think there are better choices than those two.

What to consider

Glucosamine and chondroitin have shown a good safety record in studies of up to three years, but they may interact with some drugs, particularly blood thinners. So check with your doctor first if you take warfarin (Coumadin and generic) or another blood-thinning drug. If you get the green light, pick from among the nine that met our quality criteria, listed in the table. At recommended daily doses, most provide about 1,500 milligrams of glucosamine salt and 1,200 milligrams of chondroitin sulfate. People who are allergic to shellfish should consider avoiding glucosamine derived from crustacean shells, a common source.

Keep a daily pain diary to gauge whether the supplements are helping. If you've seen no improvement after three months, it's unlikely that you will, our experts say.

▶ How they stacked up

All of the products in the table below contained their claimed levels of glucosamine hydrochloride or sulfate (defined as at least 90 percent of the labeled amount), and none had worrisome levels of contaminant metals. The products in the top section also met their label claims for chondroitin and dissolved sufficiently. ^① Because they fulfilled all of our quality criteria, we think it makes the most sense to choose from among those nine products. Within groups, products are listed in order of cost per day.



Product	Type	Pills or oz./bottle	Pills or oz./day ^②	Cost/max. daily dose
Met all of our quality criteria.				
Kirkland Signature Clinical Strength (Costco) ^③	tablet	220	2	\$0.17
GNC Triple Strength ^③	caplet	120	2	0.37
Now Extra Strength	tablet	240	2	0.38
The Vitamin Shoppe Joint Solutions	tablet	240	3	0.50
Schiff Move Free Advanced Triple Strength	tablet (coated)	80	2 ^④	0.63
Nature's Bounty Extra Strength Complex	softgel	120	3	0.75
Nutramax Cosamin DS ^③	capsule	230	3 ^⑤	0.78
Joint Juice Blueberry Acai	liquid	6 8-oz. servings	1 single-serve bottle	0.79
Elations Cranberry Apple	liquid	6 8-oz. servings	1 single-serve bottle	1.42
Contained less chondroitin sulfate than claimed.				
Spring Valley Triple Strength (Walmart) ^③	tablet	170 ^⑥	2	0.24
Finest Natural Triple Strength (Walgreens)	caplet	240	2	0.42
CVS Triple Strength	caplet	240	2	0.46
Nature Made Triple Flex Triple Strength	caplet	120	2	0.47
Natural Factors Glucosamine & Chondroitin Sulfates	capsule	120	3	0.60
Contained less chondroitin sulfate than claimed and did not dissolve sufficiently.				
365 Everyday Value Extra Strength (Whole Foods)	tablet	240	2	0.33
Trigosamine Max Strength	caplet	90	3	0.87

^① To pass our dissolution test, at least 75 percent of labeled amounts of glucosamine and chondroitin must dissolve in water within 1 hour. Test not applicable to liquid, softgel, and capsule dosage forms. ^② Maximum daily dose recommended on label, usually equivalent to the amount used in clinical trials: 1,500 milligrams glucosamine salt and 1,200 milligrams chondroitin sulfate. ^③ Label claims that the product is USP Verified or NSF Certified or company claims product meets one or all USP quality standards or specifications. ^④ Manufacturer suggests two pills twice daily for the first two weeks and two pills once daily thereafter. ^⑤ Manufacturer suggests three pills per day in the initial one to two months and one to two pills per day thereafter. ^⑥ All lots came in twin packs of two bottles with a total pill count of 340, at a cost of \$40 per twin pack.

■ CLOSE-UP

Other options to ease arthritis pain

There's no known cure for osteoarthritis, short of a knee or hip replacement for people with advanced disease. And treatments to reduce symptoms—including nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and injections of steroids—offer limited benefits and can cause side effects. So it makes sense to rely on nondrug measures when you can. Here are some of the most effective:

Weight loss. Every pound of excess weight you shed can take about 4 pounds of pressure off the knees when walking, research suggests.

Physical activity. Strength training helps build up the muscles that support the affected joint. Aerobic exercise, particularly weight-bearing activities such as walking, can ease stiffness by keeping joints flexible and lubricated. But check with your doctor before starting any new workout regimen.

Mechanical aids. A cane, crutch, or walker can take a load off painful knees, and insurance usually covers them if they're medically necessary.

Heat and cold. A heating pad can ease ongoing stiffness and soreness in joints. For acute pain and swelling, switch to ice packs.

Acupuncture. Real acupuncture—the insertion of fine needles at specific points on the body—provided modest benefits over a sham procedure for chronic pain due to knee osteoarthritis and other ailments, according to a review published in the Oct. 22, 2012, issue of Archives of Internal Medicine.

Massage. The deep-tissue variety got high marks in a 2010 survey of CONSUMER REPORTS online readers who tried it for osteoarthritis. Half said it "helped a lot."



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Truths financial pros won't tell

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission did investors a favor in 2011 when it made financial advisers explain their compensation in plain English instead of industry jargon. Now when you request Form ADV Part 2, you can more easily see whether an adviser gets commissions from the investments he sells, charges a flat fee or a percentage, or is paid another way. The form also mentions disciplinary actions, conflicts of interest, and other background information.

But Form ADV Part 2 doesn't tell the whole story. Advisers won't necessarily volunteer everything about the scope of the services they provide or all that you'll pay to work with them. Those sins of omission—some inadvertent and some intentional—can cost you. Here's what might be left unsaid.

I'm more expensive than you think.

Fee-only planners, the kind we generally recommend, often charge an investment-management fee equal to a percentage of your assets. Annual fees for assets of \$1 million or less can range from 0.7 percent to more than 2 percent, with 1 percent being average. But we recommend that you ask.

Even a seemingly small difference in that fee—say, 1.5 percent a year instead of 1 percent—can cost you substantially. In 20 years, a \$500,000 nest egg growing at 8 percent would be worth \$1,934,842 with a 1 percent fee but only \$1,761,823 with a 1.5 percent fee.

If a prospective adviser charges more than 1 percent, seek someone else. Certified financial planners at the mutual-fund giant Vanguard charge 0.7 percent to manage accounts of \$1 million or less. On that \$500,000 balance, a 0.3 percent differ-

ence would save \$111,435 in 20 years.

I might not have your interests at heart. Your adviser is required to tell you what she charges for her services, but she may not be required to compare the cost of her recommendations with alternatives. Whether she works for a brokerage house, bank, or an insurance or mutual-fund company, she may hawk her employer's proprietary financial products first because they're more profitable to the company.

If your adviser charges a commission—typical for professionals called broker-dealers—she need only identify investments that are "suitable," not necessarily the cheapest. She could recommend a mutual fund that fits your portfolio and risk tolerance but isn't the least expensive and—no coincidence—pays her well. In contrast, a registered investment adviser

is legally required to act as a fiduciary by putting your interests first. A certified financial planner is not bound by law but by similar professional standards.

To avoid conflicts, ask the adviser for written confirmation that her relationship to you is as a fiduciary. If she doesn't, find someone else. If your adviser works for a brokerage, her recommendations no doubt will include at least some, if not all, mutual funds sold only by her company. Ask about comparable funds and their costs.

I might recommend investments you don't need or understand. Variable annuities, for instance, promise retirement income in exchange for a lump sum or periodic premium payments. Their fees can trim more than 8 percent off returns and end up losing you money.

Exchange-traded notes (ETNs) are arcane investments that are backed not by actual assets but by a promise from the issuer to pay an amount based on a benchmark. Issuers can arbitrarily delist their ETNs; it's also not so easy to redeem shares in an ETN. Even the purchase of tax-free products such as municipal bonds might not make sense if your tax rate is fairly low.

Ask about potential negative outcomes from any investment. Have the adviser back up his pitch with data, and take your time deciding. Or get a second opinion. At Garrett Planning Network, for instance, you can find advisers who will review investment plans of other advisers for a few hundred dollars.



What you can do on your own

If you're not close to retiring, focus on saving enough and properly allocating holdings. Your retirement-plan sponsor may offer online tools and personal services to help. Here are other aids:

Calculate your net worth with a download or CD from Quicken (quicken.com) or Yodlee MoneyCenter (yodlee.com; search "net worth"), or with a spreadsheet downloaded from Google docs (google.com/google-d-s/spreadsheets).

Assess your retirement readiness with

T. Rowe Price's Retirement Income Calculator (troweprice.com/ric) or Analyze Now's Free Retirement Planner (analyzenow.com). Or find an adviser working for a flat or hourly fee at the website MyFinancialAdvice.

Figure your Social Security payout at various ages at ssa.gov/estimator.

Closer to retirement, hire a pro to advise on drawing down retirement accounts and claiming Social Security benefits if you're married, divorced, or widowed.

Calphalon blender blade breaks off in tests

When blenders flunk our tough durability test, it's usually because their motors burn out or their gears fail. But the Calphalon XL 9 Speed 1832449 failed for a far more troubling reason: A knife-sharp fragment broke off from the same place on the blade assembly on three samples of this model. Worse, the broken piece was small enough to hide in a smoothie, shake, and other foods and drinks. We've rated the Calphalon XL 9 Speed a Don't Buy: Safety Risk as a result.

Our durability test involves crushing seven ice cubes 45 times to simulate long-term use. Of the roughly 50 full-sized blenders in CONSUMER REPORTS' latest Ratings, the Calphalon is the only one to have this problem.

Though we're not aware of any injuries caused by a broken blade from this model, which costs \$130, we notified the Consumer Product Safety Commission of our findings. We also contacted Calphalon, which issued this statement: "The safety of our consumers is our top priority. We take this report seriously. While we received no previous reports of this issue, we will thoroughly

investigate this matter. We have full confidence in Calphalon products and stand by our products when used as directed."

Bottom line. If you already own the Calphalon XL 9 Speed, we suggest you stop using it immediately. Contact the manufacturer at 800-809-7267 and ask for a refund. Calphalon's website offers a 100 percent satisfaction guarantee. If you're shopping for a new blender, consider one of the models on our recommended list. The Ninja Professional NJ600, \$100, is durable and delivers excellent blending.

Remember that any blender must be used safely to avoid injury. Never put your hand inside, especially if it's plugged in. And instead of washing the blender by hand, add soapy water and run the blender until the container and blades are clean. Then unplug it and rinse the container under the faucet.

Don't Buy:
Safety risk
Calphalon XL
9 Speed



FDA aims to limit arsenic in apple juice

Taking a significant step to reduce Americans' exposure to arsenic, the Food and Drug Administration has proposed limiting the amount of arsenic in apple juice to a level comparable to the federal limit for public drinking water. Arsenic in its inorganic form is known to cause bladder, lung, and skin cancer in humans, and has also been associated with heart disease and diabetes.

The FDA's move comes after CONSUMER REPORTS released a report in November 2011 based on our tests that revealed varying and worrisome levels of arsenic in apple juice and grape juice. Consumers Union, the policy and advocacy arm of Consumer Reports, urged the FDA to set standards for juice. In a blog post explaining why the agency was making its proposal, FDA Deputy Commissioner Michael Taylor specifically cited CONSUMER REPORTS' "important story," along with the agency's increased testing of apple juice in 2011.

The FDA set its proposed "action level" at 10 parts per billion (ppb) of inorganic arsenic. The agency's tests found that inorganic arsenic was the main form of arsenic in apple juice, but its latest analysis of 94 samples indicated that all of the samples contained less than 10 ppb, suggesting the proposed

limit is feasible for manufacturers to meet. Higher levels have shown up. An earlier FDA analysis found inorganic arsenic levels of 18 ppb in one apple juice sample and a level of 43 ppb in a sample of apple juice concentrate that was rejected from entering the U.S. market.

Manufacturers are expected to test their products to ensure they conform, and the FDA also will continue its routine market sampling. If the agency finds apple juice products exceeding the proposed limit, it can take steps that include recalls and product seizures.

The FDA is considering whether further regulatory actions are needed for other juices, such as grape juice, which CONSUMER REPORTS' testing found had inorganic arsenic levels of 15 ppb in one sample and 20 ppb in another. The agency is finalizing its analysis of 150 juice samples, including pear and grape, collected since December 2011, and it plans to test more samples.

Urvashi Rangan, Ph.D., director of consumer safety at CONSUMER REPORTS, said, "We look forward to the agency finalizing the guidance and using it as a tool for enforcement. We continue to press the government to ban deliberate uses of arsenical-based products in the environment."



RECALLS

HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

Kenmore dehumidifiers

Dehumidifiers can overheat, smoke, melt, and catch on fire, posing risks of burns and fire damage.

PRODUCTS 795,000 35-, 50-, and 70-pint dehumidifiers sold at Sears and Kmart stores and online from 2003 to 2009 for \$140 to \$220. This is a reissue of an original recall from August 2012; Sears has received seven additional reports of shorting and fire, including a severe burn wound and three fires resulting in more than \$300,000 of property damage.

WHAT TO DO Unplug the dehumidifier and call 855-400-4641 or go to kenmoredehumidifierrecall.com to get a gift card or refund check in the amount of the card (amount depends on capacity and year of the dehumidifier).



Soleil portable fan heaters

Plastic housing can melt, deform, and catch fire during use.

PRODUCTS 107,000 fan heaters with model number LH-707, sold at Home Depot from September 2012 through May 2013 for about \$15. Home Depot has had 464 reports of the fan melting but no injury or property damage reports.

WHAT TO DO Stop using the fan and return it to Home Depot for a full refund.



Viking built-in refrigerators with bottom freezers

Doors can detach, posing a risk of injury.

PRODUCTS 31,000 Viking 36-inch-wide refrigerators sold at appliance and specialty stores from November 2005 through October 2012 for \$5,100 to \$7,700. This is an expansion of an original recall in 2009; Viking has had 39 new reports of falling doors, including 12 reports of injuries involving a fracture, bruises, strains, and cuts, and 25 reports of minor property damage.

WHAT TO DO Contact Viking immediately at 877-546-0136 for a free home repair. Do not use the fridge if the door doesn't appear to be sealed properly, is sagging, or doesn't open or close normally.





HOW DIFFERENT? After our experts found store-brand taste-alikes for Heinz ketchup and Hellmann's mayo, we asked employees to do a blind tasting.

Store brands to savor

Private-label foods often meet or beat the big brands

IT'S ONE THING to save money by buying store-brand paper towels or trash bags, but do you dare replace a name-brand favorite—Heinz ketchup, say—with a store brand? Sure. Our expert tasters judged 33 of 57 store-brand foods as good as or better than the national brand.

In categories such as ice cream, trail mix, mozzarella, mixed vegetables, and more, we found at least one store brand from the national grocers Costco, Kmart, Sam's Club, Target, Trader Joe's, Walmart, and Whole Foods that was equal in quality to the big name. Every store-brand jar of

cashews was better than the national brand, for example; and among frozen shrimp, every store brand was at least as good. To be sure that our results weren't an anomaly, we tested two samples of each brand. (Note that products that are equal in quality don't necessarily taste the same: They may have different seasonings or a different mix of ingredients.)

When we pitted store brands against Heinz ketchup and Hellmann's mayonnaise, we found at least one near-twin for each: Market Pantry (Target) ketchup and Market Pantry, Great Value (Walmart),

and Kirkland Signature (Costco) mayos. All are more than one-third cheaper than the name brand.

Moreover, when we had about 50 staffers who usually use Heinz or Hellmann's do a blind taste-off of their brand against the two Market Pantry brands, 45 percent of staffers preferred Market Pantry ketchup (13 percent had no preference) and 41 percent preferred Market Pantry mayo (4 percent had no preference).

Store brands account for about one of every four products in a supermarket—and they're branching into niches that

lack national-brand competition: balsamic vinegar, for instance, or chocolate-covered raisins. Their popularity is understandable, considering that they typically cost 15 to 30 percent less than name-brand counterparts, according to an industry expert. As the table below shows, some of the store brands we tested were more than 30 percent cheaper. The name-brand premium is largely the result of advertising and promotional costs that are passed on to consumers.

Costco, Sam's Club, Target, or Walmart were among the low-price winners in every category. Most of the Sam's Club products were 50 percent or even 60 percent cheaper than the name brands, but you'll need to buy warehouse-size packages.

However, store brands aren't always a bargain. Trader Joe's and Whole Foods usually contended for most-expensive store brand. In fact, five of the 10 tested Whole Foods products—cranberry juice, trail mix, ice cream, shrimp, and nuts—actually cost more than the national brand. That's no surprise to CONSUMER REPORTS survey respondents, who have told us that Whole Foods has some of the highest prices of any major chain.

Rising commodity costs may ultimately lead to a narrowing of price gaps between store and name brands, says Neil Stern, senior partner with Chicago-based retail experts McMillanDoolittle. In the meantime, take advantage of the lower prices. After all, if you're not satisfied with a store brand, most supermarket chains will return your money. Based on our tests, though, that shouldn't be necessary.

Price comparison

Product	Cost per serving	
	NAME BRAND	STORE BRANDS
Cranberry juice	\$0.38	\$0.25-\$0.50
Ketchup	0.05	0.02 - 0.05
Trail mix	0.38	0.18 - 0.40
Mixed vegetables	0.43	0.20 - 0.34
Maple syrup	1.26	0.81 - 1.25
Mayonnaise	0.08	0.03 - 0.06
Ice cream	0.39	0.28 - 0.43
Frozen shrimp	1.54	1.25 - 3.00
Cashews	0.64	0.39 - 0.75
Shredded mozzarella	0.39	0.14 - 0.38

Trail mix



Planters



Whole Foods



Target, Costco, Sam's Club, and Walmart

TAKE-AWAY The Planters is a flavorful mix of peanuts and some almonds, plus raisins and mild milk-chocolate pieces. The Whole Foods mix should attract lovers of dark chocolate. It also has raw almonds, toasted peanuts, white chocolate, chocolate-covered raisins, and dried cherries. Those as good as Planters tend to be flavorful, with peanuts, almonds, tender raisins, and tasty candy-coated chocolate pieces. Sam's Club and Kirkland Signature (Costco) are the clear bargains—about half as expensive as Planters and Whole Foods. Per ounce, most products have 150 to 170 calories, 9 to 10 grams of fat, and 25 to 60 milligrams of sodium. Planters, which has no added salt, has just 5 milligrams of sodium per serving. **Also-rans** Kmart Smart Sense Chocolate & Nut and Trader Joe's Rainbow's End.

Maple syrup



Maple Grove



Target

TAKE-AWAY All of the syrups (medium or dark amber Grade A) are very good and would be delicious over pancakes. But Maple Grove and Target are slightly thicker than others and have bigger, bolder, more complex flavors—caramel, vanilla, and roasted notes, with a hint of coffee. Pure maple syrup is expensive regardless of brand, so let price be your guide. Costco, costing 36 percent less than the name brand, is a good value. All of the syrups have 200 calories, 50 grams of sugars per quarter-cup, and negligible sodium. **Also-rans** Whole Foods 365 Everyday Organic, Great Value (Walmart), Kirkland Signature (Costco), and Trader Joe's.

▶ Shredded mozzarella



Sargento



Walmart and Sam's Club

TAKE-AWAY The Sargento is creamy and slightly sweet, with fresh dairy notes. Sam's Club and Walmart cheeses also taste fresh. Sam's Club is slightly firmer than Sargento, and Walmart is somewhat crumbly. When melted, even the also-rans are close to Sargento in quality. Sam's Club and Costco are cheapest—less than half the price of Sargento per serving.

Also-rans Whole Foods, Kirkland Signature (Costco), and Trader Joe's.

▶ Vanilla ice cream



Breyers



Walmart, Target, and Trader Joe's

TAKE-AWAY Breyers melts cleanly in the mouth and is moderately sweet, with a strong vanilla-bean flavor. Walmart is closest in taste and costs almost 30 percent less. Costco has a host of problems: It's overly sweet, tastes slightly medicinal, and is gummy. Most of the products have 130 to 160 calories and 7 to 8 grams of fat per half-cup. Trader Joe's, a superpremium French vanilla, is denser and carries more nutritional baggage (260 calories, 16 grams fat, 23 grams sugars).

Also-rans Whole Foods and Kirkland Signature (Costco).

▶ Cranberry juice cocktail



Ocean Spray

Kmart

TAKE-AWAY Ocean Spray has balanced sweet and tart flavors with some fresh notes; Kmart has good cranberry flavor and fresh notes, and is a touch less bitter—but it costs more. Walmart and Costco are decent and about 30 percent cheaper than Ocean Spray. It's harder to make a case for the other also-rans, which taste watery, slightly bitter, or prune. Nutritionally, most juices are similar, with 110 to 140 calories and 26 to 35 grams of sugars per cup. Trader Joe's, which is sweetened with stevia, has just 40 calories and 10 grams of sugars per cup.

Also-rans Whole Foods 100% Juice Cranberry Cocktail, Great Value (Walmart), Kirkland Signature (Costco), Market Pantry (Target), and Trader Joe's Low Calorie.



► Mayonnaise

TAKE-AWAY

Hellmann's is well blended, creamy, slightly sweet and salty, and eggy, with a hint of vinegar. The better store brands are cheaper by at least 25 percent, and you'd be hard-pressed to taste a difference in a sandwich. The also-rans have a big pickle-relish taste or other drawbacks. **Also-rans** Sam's Club Bakers & Chefs and Trader Joe's.

NAME
BRAND



Hellmann's



JUST AS
GOOD

Whole Foods, Walmart, Costco, and Target

► Shrimp

NAME
BRAND



Taster Choice



BETTER

Costco, Trader Joe's, and Whole Foods

TAKE-AWAY You'd be unlikely to mistake frozen shrimp for fresh, though neither is cheap. Per pound, prices range from about \$6.50 (Walmart) to \$15 (Whole Foods). Taster shrimp are soft and watery; Costco, Trader Joe's, and Whole Foods shrimp have a firmer, chewier texture and aren't waterlogged. At \$7.25, Costco offers the best mix of price and quality. The products have 75 to 100 calories per 3-ounce serving and about 1 gram of fat. Costco and Whole Foods have the least sodium, about 175 milligrams.

Also-rans None.

JUST AS
GOOD



Sam's Club, Target, and Walmart



► Ketchup



Heinz

Sam's Club and Target

TAKE-AWAY Heinz has a full flavor that balances sweetness, saltiness, and sourness. There's also a hint of onion powder. Target is remarkably similar; Sam's Club tastes a bit more cooked and a bit less spicy. Sam's Club and Target are about half the price of Heinz. We'd steer clear of Whole Foods (thin and dark, with harsh flavors) and Trader Joe's (low tomato taste, with unbalanced flavors). Per tablespoon, most products have 15 to 20 calories, about 160 milligrams of sodium, and 4 grams of sugar. Sam's Club has a bit more sodium; Trader Joe's, slightly less sugars.

Also-rans Great Value (Walmart), Whole Foods, and Trader Joe's Low Calorie.

► Mixed vegetables



Birds Eye



Trader Joe's



Target

TAKE-AWAY Birds Eye vegetables (carrots, peas, corn, and green beans) are crisp, with fresh notes; Trader Joe's are even crisper and fresher, as if they've been quickly blanched in hot water. And they're about 10 cents less per serving. The also-rans just tasted a little less fresh. The products have about 60 calories per serving and 20 to 70 milligrams of sodium. All are fat-free.

Also-rans Whole Foods, Sam's Club, and Great Value (Walmart).

► Cashews



Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, Sam's Club, Walmart, Costco, Kmart, and Target

TAKE-AWAY With nuts, freshness is key. Emerald fared worse than store brands because some of its cashews tasted slightly stale. The roast level varied slightly among products but not enough to matter. Let price be your guide. A serving of nuts contains about 160 calories and 14 grams of fat. Walmart, Costco, and Kmart have the most sodium, about 115 milligrams; Trader Joe's the least, 60.

Also-rans None.



Four ways to weather the next big storm

What you can do to safeguard your home and family



THERE'S NO TELLING whether the rest of this hurricane season will bring anything like Superstorm Sandy, which flooded more than 150,000 homes, killed more than 140 people, and left about 8.5 million homes in 20 states without power. A relatively minor storm can also cause major damage if it includes high winds, heavy rain, or tree-snapping ice or snow.

Even a simple blackout can happen at any time and last for days. More than a half-million New Jersey residents were still without power two weeks after Sandy. And if you think most home-insurance policies cover disasters, think again: Flood insurance is just one of the “extras,” assuming it’s available in your area.

This special section lays out the essentials you’ll need to help protect your home and the people in it before disaster strikes.

It also includes a winners list of portable and stationary generators from our latest tests, along with gas and electric chain saws that can make after-storm cleanup faster and safer. Here’s where to start:

1 Protect people and property

Cover windows properly. Experts used to recommend taping windows to limit breakage to a few large pieces, rather than many smaller ones. But small and large pieces can be equally deadly. A safer bet: Keep windows shut and close blinds, shades, and drapes. Longer-term, consider impact-resistant windows or hurricane shutters (about \$40 per square foot), which might also net you an insurance discount.

Secure outdoor items. High winds can turn lawn chairs, potted plants, trash cans, and other outdoor items into deadly

projectiles. Move whatever you can into a garage, a shed, or a basement.

Park cars on high ground. Two feet of floodwater can carry a car away. What’s more, driving in water just 8 inches deep can ruin the engine if the water seeps in through the air intake. Park at a high elevation or on a hill—but not beneath trees.

Protect your valuables. Move what you can to higher floors if you expect flooding. Also think ahead by documenting

■ DID YOU KNOW?

Disasters don’t always bring out the best in people: The National Insurance Crime Bureau screened more than 26,000 fraud complaints after Hurricane Katrina. Phony charities and contractor scams topped the list in the wake of Superstorm Sandy.

INSIDE Generators: 14 winners start at \$600 page 24 Chain saws: Six top picks for storm cleanup page 26

and photographing items you'd include in an insurance claim if lost or ruined.

2 Stock up on essentials

Build an emergency kit. It should have a whistle to attract help, dust masks, duct tape, a wrench or pliers to turn off water if needed, flashlights and batteries, and local maps. Plan on 1 gallon of water per person per day for at least three days. Include moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation. Also consider changes of clothing and sleeping bags or blankets.

Be prepared for injuries. A first-aid kit should be stocked with bandages in various sizes, sterile dressings and gloves, hand sanitizer and antibiotic towelettes, a thermometer, pain medicines, tweezers, and scissors.

Fuel up. Fill all of your vehicles' tanks, because gas stations could lose power. Remember that most gas generators require roughly 12 to 20 gallons of gas per day. Also figure on at least a gallon of gas for extensive chainsawing. Store all fuel away from the house.

Have the right phones. Keep at least one corded phone because cordless phones require AC power. Our post-Sandy survey also found that traditional-landline-phone users were twice as likely to keep service as cable-phone subscribers. Be sure cell phones are charged. And have an out-of-town contact you can call for help or up-



Protect your papers

You'll want important documents handy, especially if your home is uninhabitable after a storm. Store these in a waterproof bag in a locked file or a fireproof box. And have extra copies and backup disks in a safe-deposit box or with your lawyer.

- Birth certificate(s)
- Adoption papers
- Social Security card(s)
- Passports or green cards
- Marriage certificate
- Will and living will
- Power(s) of attorney
- Health-insurance cards
- Mortgage or real-estate deeds
- Homeowners or renters insurance
- Vehicle registrations and titles
- Auto-insurance cards
- Life-insurance documents

dates, because long-distance phone service can be more reliable than local service during and after a storm.

Get the right foods. Frozen food may last two days without power, but refrigerated items can spoil after 4 hours. Keep at least a three-day supply of nonperishable

foods such as crackers, whole-grain cereals, and canned foods. And don't forget the manual can opener.

Check your fire extinguishers. You should have one with a minimum classification of "2-A:10-B:C" on each floor. Check the dial or pop-up pin for adequate pressure each month. Professionally repressurize extinguishers older than six years, and replace any older than 12 years.

Prepare for special needs. Tell your utility and local fire department before a storm if someone in your home uses an oxygen concentrator, ventilator, or medical bed; your power could be restored sooner. And keep a one-month supply of medication during hurricane season.

Tune in. A battery-powered or hand-cranked radio will keep you connected if your computer or the Internet is down. NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) weather radios are also handy for emergency information.

Have some ready cash. Banks and ATMs could be out of service, assuming you can get to them.

3 Stay safe during the storm

Find the safest place. Stay in a central room without windows. Have kids? Ease the fear factor with books, a toy or two, and if you have power or a generator, some movies and video games.

Avoid electrocution risks. Don't use

Home insurance: Are you really covered?

Based on the ad slogans, you'd think home insurers were everything from good neighbors to lifelong friends sworn to be "on your side" come hell or high water. But of the more than 8,000 CONSUMER REPORTS subscribers we surveyed who endured Superstorm Sandy, just 54 percent of those who filed claims were highly satisfied with how they were handled. That's just a notch above the 51 percent who told us that after Hurricane Katrina.

Knowing what is—and isn't—covered before the next big storm can help you make sure you aren't stuck for the bulk of any repairs. Here are some of the most common home-insurance myths, and steps that can help put you in good hands:

Myth: A standard home-insurance policy includes disaster coverage.

Reality: Coverage for floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes usually costs extra, assuming you can get it. Flood damage was

the most frequent problem cited by our Superstorm Sandy survey respondents, yet 30 percent lacked that coverage. And most who had it didn't have enough.

What to do: Ask to see any policy exclusions or limits in writing now. Then consider adding separate coverage for some or all of the risks your policy excludes before the next major storm. Premiums average \$600 per year for flood insurance alone. Expect a hefty deductible for, say, earthquakes in a high-risk area such as San Diego, where the amount for a \$317,000 house can come to \$31,700.

Myth: I'll get my home's current market value if it's destroyed.

Reality: Most homeowners who suffer catastrophe are underinsured, according to United Policyholders, a San Francisco nonprofit that has surveyed and assisted disaster survivors nationwide since 1991. It's up to you to boost coverage as needed to be sure you get



what your home is really worth, especially when home prices are rising, because insurers compete on lower premium prices.

What to do: Ask your insurer for a customized estimate of your home's



IT'S ON YOU Damage from a neighbor's tree is usually covered by your insurer, not your neighbor's.

any plug-in device if flooding or wetness is nearby. Landline phones can also be a shock hazard in an electrical storm. If you must make a call during a storm, use a cell or cordless phone if possible—or use a landline phone's speaker mode to reduce contact with the handset. Avoid baths and showers until the storm passes. And watch out for downed power lines and live wires.

Use cars safely. Obey emergency crews and follow designated routes. If your vehicle stalls in water, shut off the ignition and seek higher ground; the leading cause of Sandy-related deaths was drowning.

4 Do some damage control afterward

Do a mold check. Mold can start in as little as 24 hours after a flood and will keep growing as long as relative humidity stays above 55 to 60 percent. Put soaked items outdoors and save what's ruined for

the insurance adjuster. Run a dehumidifier, and clean affected areas with detergent and water or a bleach solution. You'll need a mask and protective gloves if you do that yourself. For serious mold, hire a pro.

Inspect heating equipment. If any part of your furnace, boiler, or gas heater was submerged, have a pro check and recondition the equipment before you switch it back on. Internal damage could cause a fire, explosion, or shock hazard.

Check your vehicle. Suspect flood damage? Don't try to start it until it has been professionally inspected. Salt water is especially corrosive, but even freshwater that's high enough to reach carpeting can damage computers and other electronics.

Try to make only one claim. One larger claim is better than two small ones because multiple claims within the same year are likelier to get you dropped or reasigned as high-risk.

replacement cost. You can also run your own check for \$8 at accucoverage.com. Then consider checking other insurers to see which offers the most coverage for the lowest monthly premium. And consider buying an extended-coverage rider, which compensates for the surges in material and labor costs that often follow a serious storm.

Myth: I can expect a quick and friendly payout like the kind in the commercials.

Reality: Be prepared for a fight, especially with large claims. Fully 20 percent of home claims were still pending for homeowners we surveyed six months after Sandy—with almost 50 percent of them for \$40,000 or more. You'll also need plenty of documentation, including details such as cost, purchase dates, and serial numbers for appliances, furniture, and other items.

What to do: Get the Know Your Stuff home-inventory app or software for smart

phones or computers from the Insurance Information Institute at iii.org/software. We also suggest getting your own contractor estimates for repairs. Another option is a public adjuster, who usually charges 10 percent of the payout but could get you far more. Find one at napia.com, the website of the National Association of Public Insurance Adjusters. Still having problems? Try griping to your state's insurance commissioner—or threatening to. Half of complaints to insurance commissioners through June of this year have related to delayed, denied, or otherwise unsatisfactory settlements.

Myth: My neighbor's insurer pays if his tree falls on my house or car.

Reality: Your neighbor's policy pays for damage to your home only if the tree was obviously rotted or dead before it fell, making it a neglected hazard. Otherwise, your homeowners policy covers your home and

your auto policy covers your car, whether the tree was yours or your neighbor's. Expect to foot most or all of the bill to remove the tree if it's yours and it simply blew over without hitting anything.

What to do: Keep a watchful eye on your neighbor's trees. Send a friendly e-mail if any look sick or damaged so that you can document the problem for later if necessary. Also have trees on your property inspected at least yearly by an arborist.

Myth: My landlord's policy covers me if I'm a renter.

Reality: No dice. A landlord's insurance policy covers only the landlord's building and personal liability, not yours.

What to do: Buy renters insurance to protect your possessions and cover the extra expense of temporary housing if your home is uninhabitable, along with potential injury and other personal-liability costs.

Emergency sites: Where to go online

Here's how to stay connected to late-breaking news and other essential data. All apps listed are compatible with at least the iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

(ready.gov). The site has storm-related tips. You can download a free app with tips and a map of FEMA Disaster Recovery Center locations and shelters.



American Red Cross

(redcross.org). It assists families after storms and, at safeandwell.communityos.org/cms, helps family members reconnect after a storm. Hurricane by American Red Cross is one of several of its free apps with tips specific to storm type.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (noaa.gov). Its weather.gov website hosts weather alerts searchable by ZIP code. The \$3 NOAA Weather Radar app can send weather alerts via push notifications directly to your device.

Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (flash.org). Its \$8 FlashWx Alerts app has GPS-guided weather warnings with notifications in English and Spanish.

Gas Buddy (gasbuddy.com). The site helped users find working stations after Superstorm Sandy. Its free Gas Buddy app lists stations by proximity and price.



POWER TRIP
Tester Dave Trezza
fires up the latest
crop of portable
generators.

Generators

14 top picks make blackouts more bearable

POWER-ZAPPING STORMS like Superstorm Sandy have helped generators join hardwood floors and granite countertops on homeowners' wish lists. Our tests of almost 30 generators include a 7,000-watt portable that can power most needs for just \$600. But even this one can't match a brawnier stationary model if you want it all.

Stationary generators install permanently and can switch on automatically when needed. That helps explain why stationary sales are growing fastest. Kohler's newly tested 14RESAL, \$3,700, topped two others that deliver more than 11,000 watts—enough for the usual essentials plus a central air conditioner and more.

Our tests also include a new Generac portable generator that isn't affected by gasoline shortages, along with an ultra-quiet new Honda. But less noise and friendlier

fueling can come at a hefty price. And one new Briggs & Stratton stationary generator could put appliances at risk when the lights go out. Here are the details:

A propane portable falls short. Sealed canisters with a long shelf life make propane easier to store than gasoline. Generac's LP5500, \$800, is one of the few portable generators that run on it without a conversion kit (about \$200). But each 20-pound tank yields relatively little run time. And while a wheel-style "Power Dial" puts key controls in one place, its starting procedure was not intuitive.

Peace at a price. Inverter technology that varies engine speed with the load made Honda's portable EU6500iSIT roughly half as noisy as other generators. Freedom from voltage spikes and dips that can overheat appliances and electronics also helped the Honda ace our power-quality tests. But

at \$4,500, it's pricier than the largest stationary models we tested. Better surge wattage for items that cycle on and off also put many portables above it in our power-delivery tests.

Voltage for two plummeted. All of the stationary generators met their advertised power claims, including the ones for surge wattage. But voltage dropped nearly as much for the stationary \$2,200 Briggs & Stratton 30470 as it did for the \$1,200 Generac XG7000E 5798 portable.

How to choose

Stationary generators were also a hit with subscribers we surveyed after Superstorm Sandy, especially for fueling: Only 9 percent who owned one complained about closed gas stations and long waits compared with nearly 70 percent of portable owners. Here's what else to consider:

Include a transfer switch. About \$500 to \$900 installed, it safely connects a generator to your circuit panel (letting you power hard-wired appliances) and avoids the risk and hassle of extension cords.

Plan ahead for fuel. Most portables use roughly 12 to 20 gallons of gasoline a day or four to eight 20-pound propane tanks. For stationary models, figure on 8 to 15 days for a 250-gallon propane tank. And be sure any gasoline is stored away from the house and preserved with a fuel stabilizer.

Look for smart features. All but the portable Troy-Bilt 6000 and Briggs & Stratton 30468 turn themselves off when engine oil is low. A fuel shutoff on the gasoline models also makes it easier to run the engine dry before storage.

Try rolling it. Portables we tested weigh up to 350 pounds with fuel, but front-heavy models make rolling easier using the handle; small wheels and poor weight balance made moving the low-priced Predator a wrestling match.

Generators with mobile control

Stationary generators routinely check themselves and display any issues on their control panels. But what if there's a problem while you're away? We looked at three from Briggs & Stratton, Kohler, and Generac that let you check on them remotely—and can even e-mail or text you or a servicing dealer if something goes awry.

Briggs & Stratton InfoHub. Optional on Briggs & Stratton, GE, and some other models, this add-on module monitors the generator and alerts your cell phone if service

is needed. A smart-phone app also lets you check the generator and schedule service from afar. All of that added convenience. But you pay for it: \$280 initially plus \$13 a month (\$10 monthly for a three-year deal).

Generac MobileLink. Like InfoHub, Generac's \$280 system uses cellular signals to send data. But it first goes to a website, StandbyStatus.com, which relays it to a phone or computer. You can also check the generator yourself on the site. Service for the first year is free; after that, you pay \$12.50

a month (or \$100 per year in advance).

Kohler OnCue. At \$475 for three years, this is the cheapest option. But it's the only one that requires a hard-wire Ethernet connection to a router or switch in your home. And it requires software (above) that works only on a Windows PC. The good news: You can still get text alerts by phone or e-mail.



TOP: MICHAEL SMITH

Ratings

All tested models In performance order, within types.

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

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Specs	Overall score	Test results	Features
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model. All stationary models include transfer switch unless noted.		Claimed output (watts)	Weight with fuel (lb.)	Run time (hr.)	Power delivery Power quality Noise Ease of use Fuel shutoff Oil shutoff Electric start

A PORTABLE All are wheeled and run on gasoline unless footnoted. They require manual starting.

✓	1	Troy-Bilt XP7000 30477	\$ 900	7,000	270	15	72	●	○	●	●	●	●
✓	2	Honda EM6500SXK2	2,800	5,500	273	10	70	●	●	○	●	●	●
✓	3	Briggs & Stratton 30470	900	7,000	270	10	69	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	4	Honda EU6500iS	4,500	5,500	286	8	69	○	●	●	●	●	●
✓	5	Predator 68530 [2] 68525	600	7,000	243	11	68	●	●	●	●	●	[3]
✓	6	Generac GP5500 5939	700	5,500	212	11	67	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	7	NorthStar 165603 [2]	1,500	6,600	252	10	66	●	○	○	●	●	●
✓	8	Champion 41537	1,000	7,500	245	9	66	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	9	Troy-Bilt 6000 30475	700	6,000	204	13	65	●	●	○	○	●	●
	10	PowerStroke P5906025	700	6,000	215	9	63	●	●	●	●	●	●
	11	Briggs & Stratton 30592	800	6,250	239	11	62	●	●	●	●	●	●
	12	Yamaha EF6600DE [2]	2,450	6,000	291	10	62	●	○	○	●	●	[3]
	13	Ridgid RD905712	700	5,700	218	11	59	○	●	●	●	●	●
	14	Champion 41535	1,000	7,500	248	9	57	●	○	●	●	●	●
	15	Champion 41135	700	5,500	202	9	53	○	●	●	●	●	●
	16	Generac XG7000E 5798	1,200	7,000	262	15	49	●	●	○	●	●	[3]
	17	Generac LP5500 [4]	800	5,500	222	5	47	○	●	●	○	●	●
	18	All Power APG3560 [4]	850	5,000	218	5	41	●	●	●	●	●	[3]
	19	Gentron GG3203 [5]	1,400	5,000	358	9	38	●	●	○	●	●	●
	20	Briggs & Stratton 30468	800	5,500	199	9	35	●	●	●	○	●	●

B SMALL STATIONARY These install permanently and run on propane or natural gas. They start automatically.

✓	1	Kohler 8.5 RES-QS7 [6]	3,200	7,000 [7]	NA	224 [8]	92	●	●	●	●	●	[3]
✓	2	Generac 6237 6245	2,250	7,000 [7]	NA	336 [8]	91	●	●	○	●	●	[3]
✓	3	Generac CorePower 5837	1,800	6,000 [7]	NA	296 [8]	77	●	●	○	●	●	[3]
	4	Briggs & Stratton 40445 40351	2,200	6,000 [7]	NA	274 [8]	73	●	●	●	●	●	[3]

C LARGE STATIONARY These install and run like smaller models but can handle more needs.

✓	1	Kohler 14RESAL 14RESA, 14RESAL-200	3,700	12,000 [7]	NA	182 [8]	93	●	●	●	●	●	[3]
✓	2	Generac 6241 6247	3,500	13,000 [7]	NA	178 [8]	91	●	●	○	●	●	[3]
	3	GE 40324	3,300	11,500 [7]	NA	215 [8]	83	●	●	○	●	●	[3]

[1] The average we measured over various loads. [2] Price includes optional wheel kit. [3] Has feature but requires optional battery, about \$50. [4] Runs on propane. [5] Runs on diesel fuel. [6] Lacks a transfer switch. [7] Claimed output is with natural gas; output with propane is 1,000 to 2,000 watts higher (as tested). [8] With 250-gallon liquid-propane tank; runs indefinitely with natural gas. NA=not applicable; stationary unit.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is based on power delivery, power quality, run time, noise, and ease of use. Scores for previously tested models may have changed due to changes in methodology. **Claimed output** is maximum wattage for continuous operation, as per manufacturer. **Weight with fuel** is weight to the nearest pound with fuel; natural-gas models are fueled externally. **Run time** is average over various loads on a full tank of gasoline or diesel fuel, a 20-pound propane tank, or a 250-gallon propane tank for stationary models. **Power delivery** is wattage delivered and ability to meet surge-watt demands over various loads. **Power quality** is ability to deliver power smoothly with consistent voltage. **Noise** is at 23 and 50 feet from the generator. **Ease of use** is starting, transport for portables, low-oil and fuel shutoff, and other features. **Price** is approximate retail.



A1 Troy-Bilt

Overview

Generators that made our winners list produce smooth, steady power without losing voltage under load. We focus below on models with specific strengths, value, or both.

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

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

PORTABLE GENERATORS

A1 Troy-Bilt \$900 **CR Best Buy**

A3 Briggs & Stratton \$900 **CR Best Buy**

A5 Predator \$600 **CR Best Buy**

A6 Generac \$700 **CR Best Buy**

A1 and **A3** offer top performance at a reasonable price; choose the Troy-Bilt for its longer run time, the Briggs & Stratton for its smoother power. **A5** and **A6** are both top values; the Predator has electric start, but proved especially hard to move and maneuver. Also consider **A4** if you want the ultimate in quietness—and money's no object.

STATIONARY GENERATORS

B2 Generac \$2,250 **CR Best Buy**

C1 Kohler \$3,700

These run on propane or natural gas. **B2** roughly matched the top-scoring Kohler among smaller models for roughly \$1,000 less. **C1** did best overall and delivers enough wattage to power an entire house.

■ DID YOU KNOW?

Generators were involved in at least 755 carbon-monoxide deaths between 1999 and 2011, with several more deaths after Superstorm Sandy. Power safely by running any generator outside, at least 15 feet from the house—never indoors or in a garage.

GENERATORS BUYING GUIDE

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





SPEED RACER Testers gauge how quickly a model cuts through a dense, 10x10-inch oak beam.

Chain saws

Six top picks make storm cleanup easier

IF ALL CHAIN SAWS cut quickly, safely, and easily, you could simply buy what's left on the shelves after the next big storm. But our latest tests of 20 gas and electric saws found that some should clear driveway-blocking branches much more briskly than others. Weeks of slicing through dense oak beams also show that certain saws are more likely to kick back toward the operator—a major contributor to the roughly 30,000 chain-saw injuries each year. The details:

Two gas saws are top values. Gas-powered saws cut quickest and work during a power outage. Speed and balance help make Stihl's MS 180 C-BE, \$230, a CR Best Buy and our top saw overall. Also good for less: Craftsman's 34190, \$150, which gives up some speed for a much lower price.

Corded electric beats cordless. Electric saws spare you from fueling, pull-starting, and tuneups. The corded Worx WG303.1, \$100, sawed as quickly as some gas models. Battery-powered saws add the mobility of a gas model. But Oregon's CS250S and Ryobi's RY40510 were the slowest we tested. And at \$200 for the Ryobi and \$400 for the Oregon, they're also pricey for their performance. Neither got through more than eight cuts of our 10x10-inch beam before needing a recharge.

Some kick back. All of these saws have the narrow-tipped bar and less-aggressive chain teeth that most consumer models use to help keep the saw from kicking up and back toward the operator while cutting. The gas Poulan Pro PP4818 and Remington RM5118R snapped back more than the others when we rammed their tips into an oak beam to measure kickback. But like most we tested, both have a brake that stops the chain from spinning if kickback occurs.

How to choose

The fastest gas models are best for extensive clearing or frequent cutting. But light-duty gas saws should handle most tasks. So should corded-electric saws, provided you're near an outlet or a generator. Here's what else to keep in mind:

Look for safety features. Along with a chain brake, look for some form of vibration dampening if you're considering a gas saw; all we tested except the light-duty gas Poulan P3816 have it.

Get the right gear. Essentials include Kevlar chaps, gloves, steel-tipped boots, and a helmet with a face shield. You'll also need hearing protection: Even most electric saws tested were loud enough to cause hearing damage over time. For corded electrics, check the manual to be sure your extension cord is long and thick enough.

Inspect before you buy. This spring, our secret shoppers found several saws at three Home Depot stores that had been used and returned but were back on shelves, coated with oil and sawdust. We later rechecked those locations, along with some Lowe's and Sears stores, and found another well-used saw at a Home Depot. Open the box to be sure the saw really is new. Refurbished saws sold at Home Depot should be labeled as such and discounted, according to store policy.

Use it carefully. Start a gas model on the ground or another secure surface at least 10 feet from a fuel source. Hold all chain saws with two hands while sawing. Don't lean into the cut or saw above shoulder level. And avoid cutting with the tip of the bar and chain to help minimize the chance of kickback.

Maintenance 101

Chain saws need some upkeep to cut as they should:

Keep the chain properly tensioned.

One that's too tight will wear quickly; if it's too loose, it can slip off. With the engine off or the motor unplugged, adjust it after every 10 to 15 minutes of sawing by loosening the bar, placing a dime between the bar and chain, then retightening the bar before removing the dime.



SNUG

The chain should snap back when pulled but slide easily.

Keep it sharp, clean, and oiled.

Have a pro sharpen the chain (about \$10) if you don't want to do it yourself—you'll see fine sawdust instead of chunks when it's time. Oregon's PowerSharp bar-and-chain system, \$60, fits most saws and sharpens the teeth as they spin. Refill the bar-oil reservoir when needed; most saws today show the level at a glance. And remove the chain cover, chain, and bar for cleaning after each major use.

Keep the engine up to snuff. Gas saws usually require a mix of gas and oil. Consider buying premixed fuel without ethanol, which can harm small engines, according to industry experts. Price: about \$5 to \$8 a quart. Periodically brush sawdust off the air filter. And replace the spark plug annually.

BY THE NUMBERS 20 models tested 500 pounds of sawdust created 55,000 square inches of red oak cut



A1 Stihl

A2 Husqvarna

C1 Worx

Ratings

All tested models In performance order, within types.

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

	Brand & model	Price	Specifications	Overall score	Test results	Features
Recommendation	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		Bar length tested (in.) Engine cc/amps/volts Weight (lb.)	0 100 P F G V G E	Cutting speed Safety Ease of use Handling Noise	Chain brake Tool-free chain adjustment

A GAS Best for bigger jobs and frequent cutting on heavily wooded properties.

✓	1	Stihl MS 180 C-BE MS 181 C-BE	\$230	16	32 CC	11.0	81	●	○	○	○	○	●	●
✓	2	Husqvarna 435 440E	270	16	41	11.5	75	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
✓	3	Echo CS-352-16	270	16	34	10.5	75	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	4	Echo CS-400-18	300	18	40	12.0	74	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	5	Poulan Pro PP4818	180	18	48	15.5	73	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	6	Blue Max 6595	180	18	45	13.0	69	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	7	Remington RM5118R	200	18	51	16.0	59	○	○	○	○	○	○	●

B LIGHT-DUTY GAS These offer gas-saw mobility for light- to medium-duty work.

✓	1	Craftsman 34190 Poulan Pro PP4218A	150	18	42	14.0	68	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	2	Homelite UT10589A UT10680A	160	18	42	12.0	63	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	3	Earthquake CS4116	170	16	41	12.0	55	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	4	Poulan P3816	140	16	38	13.0	54	○	○	○	○	○	○	●

C CORDED ELECTRIC Best for post-storm cleanup and other light-duty work near an outlet.

✓	1	Worx WG303.1	100	16	15 amp	11.0	68	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
✓	2	Worx WG304.1	130	18	15	12.0	66	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	3	Makita UC4030A	230	16	15	12.0	60	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	4	Craftsman 34119 Poulan P3516	80	16	12	10.0	57	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	5	GreenWorks 20032	100	18	13	12.0	54	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	6	Homelite UT43122	75	16	12	9.0	52	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	7	Remington RM1635W	70	16	12	10.0	49	○	○	○	○	○	○	●

D BATTERY-POWERED These offer push-button starts but are strictly light-duty and have limited run time.

	1	Oregon CS250S	400	12	40 volt	12.0	47	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	2	Ryobi RY40510	200	9	40	9.0	34	○	○	○	○	○	○	●

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is based on cutting speed, safety, ease of use, and handling. **Cutting speed** is speed through a 10-inch-square oak beam. **Safety** includes resistance to kickback and burn risk from hot mufflers, and whether saws have a bar or chain sheath or cover to prevent cuts during carrying or storage. **Ease of use** is primer or choke access, average number of pulls to start, checking and adding fuel, and air-filter and spark-plug access for gas saws, and ease of operation, chain adjustment, and checking bar oil for all saws. **Handling** reflects horizontal and vertical cutting, weight, and freedom from vibration. **Noise** is at the operator's ear when cutting; scores lower than Good mandate hearing protection. **Price** is approximate retail.

Overview

Chain saws that made our picks have a chain brake that stops the saw if kickback occurs. They also resisted kickback in our tests and cut quickly with little vibration. Those below stand out from the pack.

✓ **CR Best Buy** These combine value and performance and are recommended.

✓ **Recommended** These are top performers and often have particular strengths.

BEST FOR MOST

B1 Craftsman \$150 **CR Best Buy**

C1 Worx \$100 **CR Best Buy**

B1 offers the performance of a gas saw at a relatively low price. **C1** is a corded saw with tool-free chain adjustment.

FOR HEAVIER-DUTY SAWING

A1 Stihl \$230 **CR Best Buy**

Paying more for **A1** buys faster, smoother sawing with less weight.

Alternatives for smaller jobs

You don't have to watch horror movies to be afraid of chain saws. Two new electric loppers allay some of that fear by mounting the chain roughly 2 feet away within a pair of jaws.



But both limit you to 4-inch branches, and just one is worth a second look.

Black & Decker's LP 1000, \$75, above, is the better of the two. It's faster than the \$120 **Worx WG307** and, at just 7 pounds, weighs about 2 pounds less. With both models it's safe to cut above shoulder level—a risky move with chain saws.

But even the Black & Decker is slow compared with a regular chain saw. Its tiny bar-oil reservoir requires frequent stops for refills. And getting to the recessed chain for service is a challenge on either machine.

Bottom line. Consider the Black & Decker LP 1000 if chain saws give you the willies and your work is strictly light-duty.



CHAIN SAWS BUYING GUIDE

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



Bright ideas to save energy

Slice your bills without sacrificing comfort

FORGET THE MEDIA ROOM and the whirlpool tub. Energy efficiency tops the list of home features that today's savvy consumers want. And they're willing to pay for it—an extra \$7,100 for a home that will reduce annual energy costs by \$1,000, according to a recent report from the National Association of Home Builders.

But you don't have to buy a new house to

reap the latest energy savings. Our expert tips could cut your energy bills in half. Simply screwing in one of our top LED lightbulbs will save you more than \$125 in electricity bills over its life.

We've also included some "energy savers" to skip, because the surge in energy efficiency has spawned a plethora of bogus claims, questionable come-ons, and outright scams. Here's where to begin:

Plug air leaks

Many homes have small leaks in the foundation, walls, ceilings, and roof that let out as much heated air in the winter (and cool air in the summer) as an open window.

Some air-sealing tasks are DIY-friendly, such as plugging leaks around windows, doors, and electrical outlets with caulk, expandable sealant, and weather stripping. Insulating and sealing ductwork, found in homes with forced-air heating and cooling, is best left to the pros, but it could lower your energy bills by about \$400 a year. And rebates can save you more on the cost of the job; go to dsireusa.org for details.

Watch out for: Hard-selling window manufacturers. Last year the Federal Trade Commission ordered five companies to stop promising inflated, 40 to 50 percent savings on utility bills with their replacement windows. Savings of 7 to 15 percent are more realistic. Our tests have found that energy-efficient windows could take about 20 years to pay for themselves.

Give LEDs a look

The latest thing in lightbulbs, LEDs improve on compact fluorescent bulbs in many ways, including longer life, enhanced light quality, and better dimming.

The downside is cost—about \$18 to \$35 for a 60-watt replacement LED bulb vs. \$1.25 to \$1.50 for a similar CFL. Even at those prices, LEDs will lower your electrical bills. And some manufacturers predict that prices will drop to \$10 by next year and less than \$5 in a couple of years.

Plus, LEDs should only get

better, thanks in part to the California Quality LED Lamp Specification, a voluntary measure designed to guarantee better color accuracy and drive innovation. To qualify for utility rebates in that state, a bulb needs a Color Rendering Index (CRI) of 90, compared with Energy Star's requirement of 80 CRI.

Watch out for: Dim bulbs. For all their promise, not all LEDs are up to snuff. (Turn to page 30 to see the winners and losers from our latest tests.)

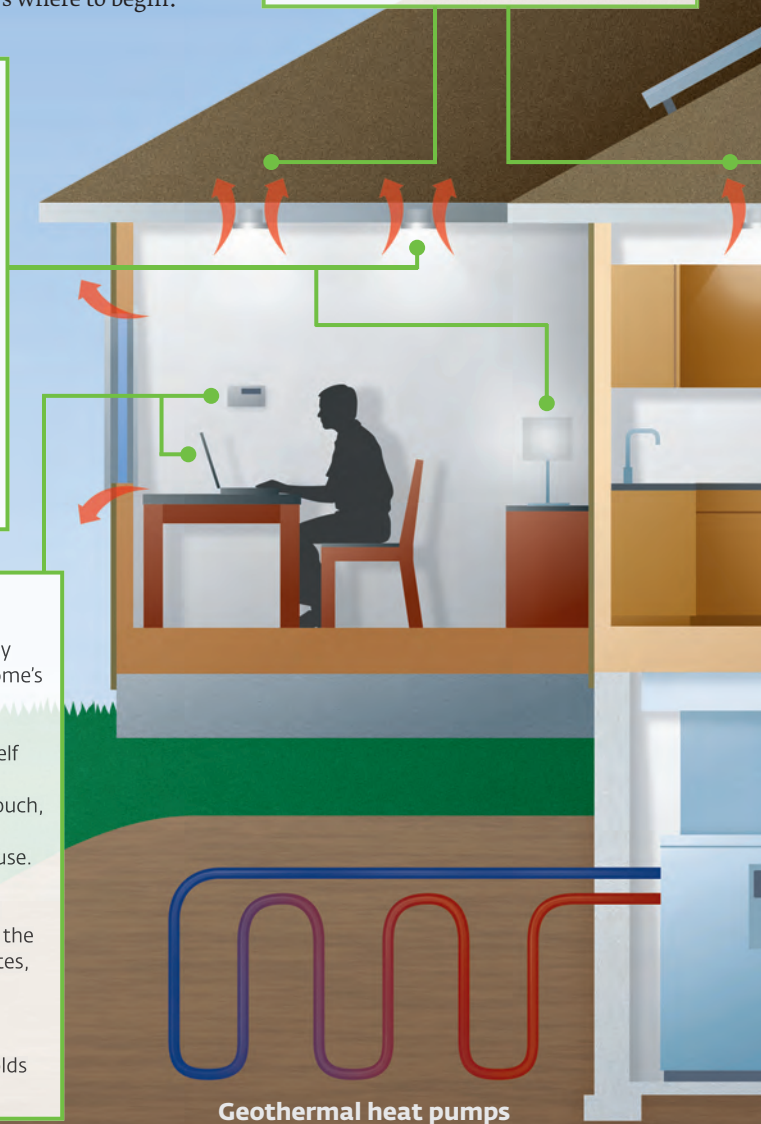
Make technology work for you

Call it the Watt Watchers Effect: Consumers who see how much energy they're using and what it's costing them end up consuming about 7 percent less than those who simply get a bill. Almost 40 utility companies have created or plan to create a "green button" on their website that allows customers to easily view their energy-use info. Go to greenbuttondata.org to see whether your utility participates.

Wi-Fi-enabled, programmable thermostats, including several models that scored well in CONSUMER REPORTS' tests, also make energy use more transparent and convenient. That's on top of the

10 percent savings they deliver by automatically adjusting your home's temperature when you're away or asleep. The Nest Learning Thermostat, \$250, programs itself based on your habits and preferences. The Venstar ColorTouch, \$170, Honeywell Prestige, \$250, and Ecobee, \$300, were easy to use.

Watch out for: Utilities that promise big energy savings with a smart meter. You'll save only if the utility also offers time-of-use rates, which let you control costs by running appliances during less expensive off-peak hours. Only about 2 percent of U.S. households currently have that option.



Geothermal heat pumps

Consider alternative energy sources

More consumers are looking beyond fossil fuels to heat and cool their home, taking advantage of the renewable-energy tax credits that extend through 2016. Geothermal heat pumps are now installed in about 50,000 U.S. homes each year. Those systems use the earth's relatively constant temperature to provide heating, cooling, and hot water. Costing \$17,000 on average, they're pricey to install, though the Energy Department puts the payback period at a brisk 5 to 10 years.

Solar is another alternative. Even higher up-front costs—\$20,000 or more for photovoltaic roof panels—have created a market for solar leasing. You rent the system from a provider and pay a fixed monthly fee that's supposed to be lower than your current electric bill.

Watch out for: Unbelievable offers. Get a bid from at least three licensed and insured contractors. If leasing, make sure you're guaranteed a minimum amount of power at a fixed rate for the term of the contract. SolarCity, the nation's largest full-service solar provider, promises a refund if their system falls short.

Reputable companies will also cover any damage to your property during installation as well as ongoing repairs and maintenance, which could be substantial. And be sure that the contract clearly lists your options if you move before it expires, usually after 15 or 20 years. Leases are usually transferable to new owners. The company may let you pay to have the system reinstalled on your new home.

Upgrade your appliances

Swapping out a 15-year-old refrigerator for an energy-efficient model could lower your annual electric bill by \$60. A high-efficiency top- or front-loading clothes washer might save you another \$130. What's more, a recent study by two leading consumer advocacy groups found that most energy-saving appliances outperform less-efficient models without costing more at the store, when adjusted for inflation. Along with industry and government data, the study analyzed decades of CONSUMER REPORTS Ratings. Our latest tests bear that out.

Watch out for: Misleading energy claims about smart appliances. Wi-Fi-enabled models offer certain conveniences, such as the ability to check the status of your laundry from your smart phone, but they won't lower utility bills unless time-of-use rates apply, as some manufacturers admit.

Get an energy audit

Home-performance contractors, as they're known, will do a blower-door test and use infrared cameras to pinpoint air leaks, assess your heating and cooling equipment, and even review your utility bills. They can also detect safety hazards, such as indoor air pollutants and carbon monoxide leaks. Energy audits usually cost \$250 to \$800, depending on the size of your home. But state and utility rebates apply. In New York, for example, utilities offer free audits to most homeowners.

What to watch for: Fly-by-night companies—"blow and go" is the industry term—who charge a hefty fee for an audit, promise major upgrades, then disappear. Choose a contractor certified by the Building Performance Institute. They're required to do an audit before and after any work to guarantee results.

Get a hybrid water heater

If your electric water heater is near the end of its life—13 years is average—switching to a hybrid heater could lower your water-heating bills by \$350 a year. They meld a standard electric water heater with a heat pump that captures warmth from the air. Those we've tested could lower bills by about 60 percent compared with an electric heater. (You should stick with gas if your heater uses that relatively cheap fuel.) With the \$300 federal tax credit you'll get through the end of the year, a hybrid heater can pay for itself in roughly five years. But they're usually taller and must be installed in a room that's at least 12x12 feet with a 7-foot ceiling to capture enough heat from the air. And if there isn't a floor drain nearby, you'll need to add a condensate pump to divert water.

Watch out for: Tankless water heaters sold with promises of big savings and endless hot water. Our tests found they're expensive to buy and install, and limitations on hot-water flow rates could be a problem in large households.



Energy-saving bulbs

A room-by-room guide to choosing the best LEDs and more

THEY'VE HAD a good long run, 134 years, but come January most screw-in incandescent lightbulbs will have been phased out because they use too much energy. There's no need to hoard bulbs. Our tests found that new LEDs and CFLs are light-years ahead of earlier versions.

Standard 60- and 40-watt bulbs are the last to be phased out, though remaining stock can be sold; 75- and 100-watt bulbs faded away in 2012 and this year. Their replacements, compact fluorescent lightbulbs and light-emitting diode bulbs, are bright, use 75 to 80 percent less energy, and can save you \$60 to \$125 dollars per bulb, compared with a traditional 60-watt incandescent. Because homes have about 50 bulbs, the savings can be significant.

But so is the investment. LEDs are expensive, up to \$60 a bulb for some floodlights in our Ratings. Even at that price, these LEDs can still save you about \$170 over its lifetime compared with a similar incandescent. Increased competition is helping to lower prices. Manufacturers told us that more \$10 LEDs are coming next year, and there are already several bulbs in our Ratings for \$20 or less.

Starting at \$1.25 per bulb, CFLs are a budget-friendly choice. They're almost as energy efficient as LEDs but take at least 30 seconds to reach full brightness, don't last as long, and most aren't dimmable. Halogen bulbs, a type of incandescent, remain an option but will cost you more than twice as much to power as LEDs and CFLs and don't last anyway near as long.

LED technology is evolving rapidly. The Philips Prize Winner A19 LED, \$44, would have been our top 60-watt replacement but was discontinued shortly after we completed our 3,000 hours of testing, though you may find it in stores and online. The new Cree 60-watt Replacement, \$13, instantly provided a bright, warm light in our initial tests. We'll add it to the Ratings when testing is done.

Those changes have made buying a bulb more challenging. Use our expert advice, plus tips we've received from other lighting pros, to find the right bulb for every room, and save money and energy.



Family or living room

Getting the lighting right in these rooms can be complicated because there are so many activities going on. Standard ceiling fixtures and recessed or track lights provide general lighting. Table and floor lamps deliver task and accent light. If your recessed lights or track heads are adjustable, they also can be used to accent art or concentrate light in a specific area. Aim accent and task lights away from shiny surfaces, such as TV screens and glass-framed artwork, to prevent reflected glare. Remember, most CFLs aren't dimmable, though halogen bulbs and many LEDs are.

Shopping tip For the biggest savings, replace the most frequently used bulbs first. Buy just one or two bulbs to try them out. If you like

the light, buy more. If you turn that fixture on and off a lot, use an LED. On/off cycling will shorten the life of a CFL.

Bulbs to consider The Samsung A19 LED (that's A1 in the Ratings on page 32), \$30, and Great Value 14W CFL (A7), \$1.25, replace 60-watt bulbs in lamps and ceiling fixtures with open shades. The CFL can also be used in an enclosed fixture. If you prefer brighter light, use the Philips LED (C1), \$31, in lamps and open shades instead of a 75-watt bulb. The Utilitech CFL (D1), \$2.50, replaces a 100-watt bulb for lamps and enclosed fixtures. The GE LED (E1), \$37, is a narrow-beamed floodlight for recessed or track lights. The Feit Electric LED (E2), \$18, has a wider beam.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

Kitchen and dining

A centrally placed ceiling fixture or recessed lights usually provide general lighting here, supplemented by undercabinet lighting for tasks. A fixture or two over the island and the table boost general lighting, and dimming lets you switch moods and move from homework to dining. If you have recessed lighting, the color of the can's interior, which surrounds the bulb, affects light output and light color. A shiny metal reflector casts the most light but increases glare. A black interior reduces glare but absorbs light, so you might need a brighter bulb.

Shopping tip Some CFLs and LEDs are bigger or heavier than incandescents. Bring your old bulb with you when you shop to prevent getting a bulb that will stick out.

Bulbs to consider In addition to the living room choices, consider the EcoSmart LED (E3), \$25, for 6-inch recessed lights.



■ Bathrooms

Task lighting is tricky in the bathroom. Cool light is often recommended, but it can distort colors when applying makeup. So you may have to choose one characteristic over the other or consider halogen bulbs here.

Decorative incandescents, such as some globe lights, aren't part of the phase-out. Remember that lights over the sink can cast unpleasant shadows on your face; lights on either side of the mirror or medicine cabinet are better. Recessed lights designed for wet areas are fine over the shower.

Shopping tip Excessive heat can shorten the life of LEDs and CFLs, so check our Ratings for bulbs that can be used in fully enclosed fixtures. On/off cycling, common in bathrooms, will shorten a CFL's life.

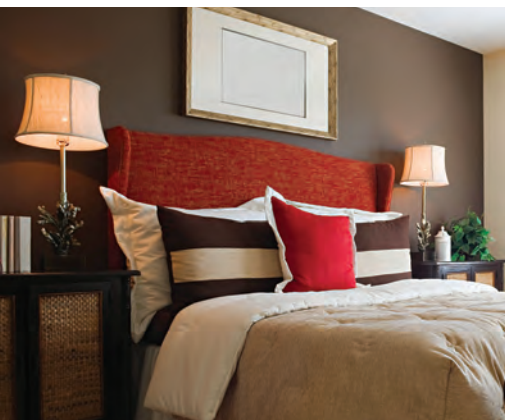
Bulbs to consider The Ikea Ledare (B2), \$14, and EcoSmart 6-inch downlight (E3), \$25, have the best color accuracy of all the LEDs



we've tested, though the Ikea is best for ceiling fixtures or fixtures where the bulb is facing downward because it casts most of its light from the top of the bulb. The EcoSmart can be used in wet areas.

■ Bedrooms

Relaxation and romance are key. Dimmers and warm lighting can help, so look for bulbs in the 2700 to 2900 Kelvin (K) range. You'll see this noted in our Ratings and on the bulb packaging. Consider cooler lighting,



which has a higher Kelvin number, for reading lamps or fixtures. Position those higher than the bed to minimize shadows. Skip CFLs in lamps in children's rooms, where rough-housing is more likely to lead to broken bulbs. CFLs release small amounts of mercury when they're broken.

Shopping tip Reduce noticeable differences in the light color in a room by choosing CFLs or LEDs within a 200-degree Kelvin range of other bulbs in the room. Incandescents usually are 2700 to 2900K. When you're replacing a few bulbs at a time in fixtures that are side-by-side, such as a row of floodlights, the new bulbs should have the same K number as the bulbs that are already installed.

Bulbs to consider For lamps and enclosed fixtures the Feit Electric CFL (A8), \$2.50, casts a warm light and replaces a 60-watt bulb. The Samsung LED (A1), \$30, does too and can be used in a lamp or open shade.

■ Outdoors

Safety, security, and ambience are important, but you'll also need to consider climate. CFLs take longer to brighten the colder it gets and may not work in frigid temperatures. Check the packaging. On the other hand, cold temperatures don't affect LEDs. Use floodlights or spotlights on the eaves or on the ground to illuminate dark areas for added security. Bulbs in the 2700 to 3000 Kelvin range emit a warm light that's flattering to warm-colored exteriors, and cooler light 3500K or higher complements grays and can appear brighter.

Shopping tip Save energy with a motion sensor or a photocell that turns lights on at dusk and off at dawn. The Ratings show which bulbs work with those features.



Bulbs to consider The Samsung PAR38 LED spotlight (F1), \$55, replaces a 75-watt bulb. The Utilitech Soft White Par38 CFL floodlight (G2), \$7.50, is as bright but is very slow to fully brighten.

ConsumerReports

Lightbulb buying guide

Lumens = brightness

450+ = brightness of 40-watt bulb

800+ = 60-watt

1,100+ = 75-watt

1,600+ = 100-watt

Higher Kelvin (K) number = cooler light

2700K = warm yellow

3000K = white

3500 to 4100K = bright white

5000 to 6500K = bluer white

Higher Color Rendering Index (CRI) = truer colors

Ranges from 0 to 100. Choose a CRI of at least 80 for bulbs used inside the home.

LED

- Uses slightly less energy than a CFL.
- Claimed life ranges from 18 to 46 years at 3 hours per day.
- Brightens instantly.
- Many are dimmable.
- Many work with photocells and timers; some work with motion sensors.
- Most are OK but not great at accurately showing the colors of objects.
- Some can't cast light in all directions.
- May be bigger or heavier than other types of bulbs.

CFL

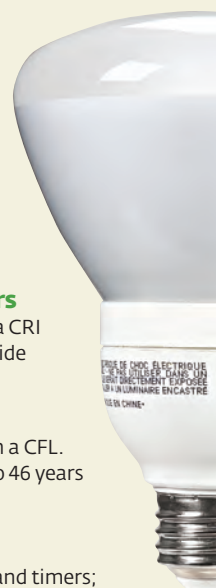
- Uses about 75 percent less energy than a standard incandescent.
- Claimed life ranges from 7 to 14 years at 3 hours per day.
- Brightens slowly, especially outdoors in cold temperatures.
- Most are OK but not great at accurately showing the colors of objects.
- Frequent on/off cycles shorten its life.
- Most don't work with dimmers, photocells, timers, and motion sensors.
- Mercury is released when a bulb breaks.
- Recycle to keep mercury out of the environment.

Halogen

- Uses about 25 percent less energy than a standard incandescent.
- Can be used in any location or fixture.
- Instant brightness.
- Dimmable.
- Accurately shows the colors of objects.
- Usually white light.
- Short life of a year or two.

■ DID YOU KNOW?

When the bulb box says "daylight," images of a sunny day may come to mind. But the light will actually appear bluish white.



Clip and save





A1 Samsung



A7 Great Value



E2 Feit Electric

Ratings Lightbulbs

All tested models in performance order, within types.

● Excellent
 ● Very good
 ○ Good
 ○ Fair
 ● Poor

✓ CR Best Buy
 ✓ Recommended

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Type	Claimed life (hr.)	Brightness (lumens)	Test results	Light color	Dimmable	Works in fully enclosed fixture	Works with electronic timer	Features
				0 P F G V E 100				Brightness Warm-up time Frequent on/off performance Light distribution					Works outdoors, not exposed to moisture

A 60-WATT REPLACEMENTS GENERAL PURPOSE

Except where footnoted, most have a Color Rendering Index (CRI) between 81 and 84.

✓	1	Samsung A19 60-Watt Warm White	\$30.00	99	LED	25,000	895	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		1	●
✓	2	Feit Electric A19/OM/800/LED 2	35.00	99	LED	25,000	925	● ● ● ● ●	white	●	●	●	●
✓	3	Utilitech A19 13.5 60-W Warm White LED (Lowe's) 2	20.00	98	LED	25,000	910	● ● ● ● ●	white	●	●	●	●
✓	4	GE A19 Dimmable 60W 2	35.00	98	LED	25,000	805	● ● ● ● ●	white	●	●	●	●
✓	5	3M LED 60W	20.00	97	LED	27,375	850	● ● ● ● ●	white	●		1	●
✓	6	Insignia A19 60-Watt Dimmable LED	18.00	88	LED	25,000	745	● ● ● ● ●	white	●	●	1	●
✓	7	Great Value 14W 60W Soft White CFL (Walmart)	1.25	85	CFL	10,000	820	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		1	●
✓	8	Feit Electric Ecobulb Plus 60W CFL 2 3	2.50	82	CFL	10,000	865	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●	●	●	●
	9	EcoSmart 60Watt Soft White (Home Depot)	1.50	75	CFL	12,000	725	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		●	●
	10	Philips 60W Soft White Mini	2.00	74	CFL	12,000	765	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		●	●
	11	GE Soft White 60W 97689	1.67	71	CFL	10,000	690	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		●	●
	12	XLEDIA A19 X60L Soft White	28.00	70	LED	40,000	865	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		1	●
	13	GE Mini Spiral 13-60W Soft White 85383	5.00	67	CFL	12,000	750	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		●	●
	14	EcoSmart 60 Watt Soft White A19 (Home Depot)	3.00	66	CFL	8,000	685	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		●	●
	15	LG A19 12.5 60W 36514 2 3	17.00	62	LED	30,000	735	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●	●	●	●
	16	ArmorLite Safety ECO CFL	7.50	60	CFL	10,000	700	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		●	●
	17	Utilitech Soft White Mini 13W-60W (Lowe's)	1.50	58	CFL	8,000	635	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		●	●
	18	MiracleLED Un-Edison 60W Equivalent Frost 2 3	20.00	51	LED	30,000	360	● ● ● ● ●	bluer white	●	●	●	●

B 40- TO 50-WATT REPLACEMENTS GENERAL PURPOSE

Except where footnoted, most have a CRI between 82 and 85.

✓	1	Toshiba A19 40W LDAB0827WE6USD	40.00	99	LED	25,000	550	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		●	●
✓	2	Ikea Ledare E26 LED1014G9 (Ikea) 4	14.00	90	LED	20,000	435	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●	●	1	●
	3	LG A19 7.5 40W 2 3	10.00	67	LED	29,000	435	● ● ● ● ●	white	●		●	●
	4	GeoBulb 3 A19 Soft White LED 5 6	25.00	44	LED	50,000	445	● ● ● ● ●	bright white	●		●	●

C 75-WATT REPLACEMENTS GENERAL PURPOSE

All have a CRI between 81 and 83.

✓	1	Philips A21 17W 75W Soft White	31.00	99	LED	25,000	1195	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		●	●
✓	2	Sylvania 14W A19 75W LED Dimmable	40.00	99	LED	25,000	1100	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		1	●
	3	GE 75W Hybrid Halogen-CFL	5.50	59	Hybrid	8,000	1010	● ● ● ● ●	NA warm yellow	●		●	●
	4	Great Value A19 19W 75W Soft White CFL (Walmart)	2.00	57	CFL	8,000	960	● ● ● ● ●	warm yellow	●		1	●

D 100-WATT REPLACEMENTS GENERAL PURPOSE

Except where footnoted, most have a CRI between 81 and 83.

✓	1	Utilitech 100W Soft White CFL (Lowe's)	2.50	68	CFL	10,000	1380	● ● ● ● ●	NA warm yellow	●		●	●
✓	2	Feit Electric Ecobulb Plus 100W CFL	2.35	68	CFL	10,000	1410	● ● ● ● ●	NA warm yellow	●		●	●
✓	3	EcoSmart 100W Soft White CFL (Home Depot)	1.50	63	CFL	10,000	1280	● ● ● ● ●	NA warm yellow	●		●	●
	4	Great Value 23W 100W Soft White (Walmart)	1.25	60	CFL	10,000	1320	● ● ● ● ●	NA warm yellow	●		1	●
	5	GE 100W 73864	3.20	57	CFL	12,000	1280	● ● ● ● ●	NA warm yellow	●		●	●
	6	Sylvania A19 Soft White 72W 100W Dimmable 4 2	1.75	54	Hlgn	1,000	1540	● ● ● ● ●	white	●	●	●	●

Overview

CFLs and LEDs that make our recommended list offer impressive performance after 3,000 hours of testing. That's almost 3 years if the bulbs are on for 3 hours a day. Most are Energy Star qualified and may be eligible for utility rebates.

- ✓ **CR Best Buy** These bulbs offer the best combination of price and performance.
- ✓ **Recommended** All are top performers.

BEST FOR LAMPS AND CEILING FIXTURES

- A1 Samsung** LED, \$30
- A2 Feit Electric** LED, \$35
- A3 Utilitech** LED, \$20 **CR Best Buy**
- A7 Great Value** CFL, \$1.25 **CR Best Buy**

- B2 Ikea** LED, \$14 **CR Best Buy**
- C1 Philips** LED, \$31
- D2 Feit Electric** CFL, \$2.35

Among 60-watt replacements **A1**, **A2**, and **A3** are brighter and last longer than the CFLs. **A1** casts a warm yellow light. **A2** and **A3** produce white light. **A7** offers the warmest yellow light of the group, but as with all CFLs, it takes a moment to fully brighten. **B2** replaces a 40-watt bulb, so it isn't as bright and casts light in one direction; it works better in a fixture in which the screw-in part of the bulb is facing up or horizontal, not down. **A1** and **B2** are not Energy Star qualified. **C1** replaces a 75-watt bulb, so it's much brighter than the others here. **D2** is the brightest general purpose CFL we've tested. But CFLs need time to fully brighten.

BEST FOR RECESSED AND TRACK LIGHTS

- E2 Feit Electric** LED, \$18 **CR Best Buy**
- E3 EcoSmart** LED, \$25

These replace 65-watt incandescents. **E2** is brighter. **E3** fits in a 6-inch can and installation involves more than just screwing it in, but colors appear more accurate under its light.

BEST FOR OUTDOOR LIGHTS

- F1 Samsung** LED, \$55
- G1 TCP** LED, \$40
- G2 Utilitech** CFL, \$7.50 **CR Best Buy**

F1 is the brightest of the 75-watt replacements. Among 90-watt replacements, **G1** is claimed to last about 46 years when used 3 hours a day. **G2**, a CFL, is brighter but needs more than 7 minutes to fully brighten and isn't dimmable.

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Type	Claimed life (hr.)	Brightness (lumens)	Test results	Light color	Dimmable	Works in fully enclosed fixture	Works with electronic timer	Features
				0 P F G V E 100				Brightness Warm-up time Frequent on/off performance Light distribution					Works outdoors, not exposed to moisture

E 65- TO 75-WATT REPLACEMENTS FLOOD/REFLECTOR Except where footnoted, most have a CRI between 80 and 84.

✓	1	GE 12W 65W BR30 LED 65389 ^[2]	\$37.00	99	LED	25,000	770	• • • • NA	warm yellow	• • • •			
✓	2	Feit Electric BR30 Dimmable LED ^[2]	18.00	96	LED	25,000	820	• • • • NA	warm yellow	• • • •			
✓	3	EcoSmart 6-in. 9.5-Watt 65W LED Downlight ECO 575L (Home Depot) ^{[4] [6]}	25.00	89	LED	35,000	585	• • • • NA	warm yellow	• • • •			
	4	Sylvania 15W BR30 LED Dimmable	30.00	87	LED	25,000	1005	• • • • NA	warm yellow	• • • •		^[1]	
	5	GE 65W R30 Dimmable 21710	12.00	72	CFL	6,000	815	• • • • NA	warm yellow	• • • •			
	6	Utilitech R30 Reflector Soft White 65W (Lowe's)	5.00	69	CFL	8,000	685	• • • • NA	warm yellow	• • • •			
	7	Feit Electric Ecolbulb Plus Soft White R30 65W CFL ^{[2] [3]}	2.00	66	CFL	8,000	660	• • • • NA	warm yellow	• • • •			
	8	Philips R30 Dimmable	12.00	34	CFL	8,000	525	• • • • NA	warm yellow	• • • •			

F 60- TO 75-WATT PAR38 REPLACEMENTS FLOOD/REFLECTOR All have a CRI between 81 and 86.

✓	1	Samsung PAR38 LED 75W	55.00	99	LED	40,000	1255	• • • • NA NA	white	• • • •		^[1]	
✓	2	GE PAR38 20W 61927 ^{[2] [3]}	60.00	98	LED	25,000	1125	• • • • NA NA	white	• • • •			
✓	3	LG PAR38 E26 Warm White ^{[2] [3]}	43.00	89	LED	50,000	990	• • • • NA NA	white	• • • •			
	4	Sylvania LED 18W PAR38 Dimmable ^{[2] [3] [6]}	50.00	66	LED	50,000	875	• • • • NA NA	white	• • • •			

G 90- TO 110-WATT PAR38 REPLACEMENTS FLOOD/REFLECTOR All have a CRI between 82 and 85.

✓	1	TCP 17W PAR38 Flood LED ^{[2] [3]}	40.00	72	LED	50,000	1070	• • • • NA NA	white	• • • •			
✓	2	Utilitech Soft White PAR38 90W 75232 (Lowe's) ^[2]	7.50	70	CFL	8,000	1220	• • • • NA NA	warm yellow	• • • •			
	3	Utilitech PAR38 LED 20W 90W Warm White (Lowe's) ^[2]	30.00	65	LED	30,000	1025	• • • • NA NA	white	• • • •			
	4	GE PAR38 CFL 26W 90W	13.00	61	CFL	9,964	1125	• • • • NA NA	warm yellow	• • • •			
	5	Toshiba PAR38 LDRB2030WE6USD2	60.00	54	LED	40,000	1150	• • • • NA NA	white	• • • •		^[1]	
	6	EcoSmart Soft White PAR38 90W (Home Depot)	7.00	30	CFL	8,000	965	• • • • NA NA	warm yellow	• • • •			

^[1] Manufacturer did not respond for request for information. ^[2] Works with photocell. ^[3] Works with motion sensor. ^[4] CRI is much higher than typical 81 to 86 for other tested bulbs. ^[5] CRI is much lower than typical 81 to 86 for other tested bulbs. ^[6] Test results based on 12,500 hours of testing; others tested to 3,000 hours.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score combines life, brightness, and frequent on/off performance after 3,000 hours of use, and warm-up time, light distribution, and efficiency. NA indicates that the attribute was not rated. **Claimed life** is how long the manufacturer says the bulb will last. **Brightness** is the average of 10 bulb samples after life testing for 3,000 hours, and 12,500 hours for three bulbs that are footnoted. None of the recommended bulbs failed during life testing. **Warm-up time** is how long the bulb took to reach near-full brightness. **Frequent on/off performance** reflects the average number of 2-minute-on and 2-minute-off

cycles each bulb survived. **Light distribution** measures how well a tested bulb duplicates the light distribution of an equivalent incandescents. **Light color** is the average measured color temperature of 10 bulb samples. Bulbs 2700K are warm yellow and closest to incandescents in light color. Bulbs 3000K are white and similar to halogen bulbs; 3500 to 4100K are bright white; 5000 to 6500K are bluish white. **Color Rendering Index (CRI)** is average measured color rendering of 10 bulbs. Bulbs closer to 100 are better at accurately showing the colors of objects, as if viewed under incandescent light. **Price** is approximate retail per bulb.

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The Hot List

A monthly guide to the top products our testers recommend

These pages feature recommended models in many categories, updated every month. (We'll usually feature 10 products per category, though not as many if fewer models are recommended.) So no matter when you're buying appliances or electronics, you'll find good choices in every issue.

Your
cheat sheet
to the best
models



Garmin Nuvi 2250LT



Garmin Nuvi 3490LMT



TomTom GO 2535 M Live

GPS

MODEL

SCORE

3- TO 5-INCH SCREEN

Garmin Nuvi 2250LT, \$150 **64**

Garmin Nuvi 2250, \$130 **63**

4.3-INCH SCREEN

Garmin Nuvi 3490LMT, \$400 **82**

Garmin Nuvi 3450, \$330 **80**

Garmin Nuvi 3790T, \$350 **77**

4.7-INCH SCREEN

Garmin Nuvi 3590LMT, \$380 **85**

Garmin Nuvi 3597LMT HD, \$380 **83**

Garmin Nuvi 3550LM, \$350 **83**

TomTom GO 2535 M Live, \$350 **77**



Apple MacBook Pro 15-inch with Retina display MC975LL/A

Laptops

MODEL

SCORE

15- TO 16-INCH

Apple MacBook Pro 15-inch with Retina display ME664LL/A, \$2,200 **78**

Apple MacBook Pro 15-inch with Retina display MC975LL/A, \$1,900 **76**

Vizio CT15T-B1 Ultrabook, \$1,500 **74**

Acer Aspire R7-571-6858, \$1,000 **72**

14-INCH

Lenovo ThinkPad X1 Carbon Touch Ultrabook, \$1,400 **70**

Vizio CT14T-B1, \$1,400 **69**

Lenovo ThinkPad X1 Carbon Ultrabook, \$1,200 **69**

13-INCH

Sony Vaio Pro SVP13213CXS Ultrabook, \$1,250 **79**

Apple MacBook Air MD231LL/A, \$1,000 **74**

Apple MacBook Air MD760LL/A, \$1,100 **73**

Toshiba Kirabook 13, \$1,600 **72**

11-INCH

Acer Aspire S7-191-6447 Ultrabook, \$1,050 **74**

Apple MacBook Air MD711LL/A, \$1,000 **73**

Sony Vaio Pro SVP11213CXB Ultrabook, \$1,150 **73**



Panasonic Viera TC-P65VT50

TVs

MODEL

SCORE

60-INCH AND LARGER

Panasonic Viera TC-P65VT50, \$2,900 **81**

Panasonic Viera TC-P60GT50, \$1,800 **77**

Panasonic Viera TC-P60ST50, \$1,700 **77**

Panasonic Viera TC-P65VT60, \$3,400 **73**

Samsung PN64F8500, \$3,400 **73**

Samsung UN60F7500, \$2,500 **72**

Panasonic Viera TC-P60ST60, \$1,500 **72**



Samsung Galaxy S 4

LG Optimus G

HTC One

Smart phones

MODEL	SCORE
AT&T	
Samsung Galaxy S 4 (16GB), \$200 (and similar 32GB, \$250)	81
Samsung Galaxy S 4 Active, \$200	80
LG Optimus G, \$50	79
HTC One (32GB), \$200 (and similar 64GB, \$300)	79
Apple iPhone 5 (16GB), \$100 (and similar 32GB, \$200, and 64GB, \$300)	77
SPRINT	
Samsung Galaxy S 4 (16GB), \$150	79
LG Optimus G, \$0	77
HTC One (32GB), \$100	77
Apple iPhone 5 (16GB), \$100 (and similar 32GB, \$200, and 64GB, \$300)	75
LG Optimus F3, \$0	73
T-MOBILE	
Samsung Galaxy S 4 (16GB), \$100	81
HTC One (32GB), \$100	79
Apple iPhone 5 (16GB), \$150 (and similar 32GB, \$250, and 64GB, \$350)	77
VERIZON	
Samsung Galaxy S 4 (16GB), \$200	79
Motorola Droid Razr Maxx HD, \$200	79
Motorola Droid Razr HD, \$100	77
Motorola Droid Razr M, \$0	75
Apple iPhone 5 (16GB), \$200 (and similar 32GB, \$300, and 64GB, \$400)	75

Prices include a two-year commitment and rebates.

Maytag Maxima XL
MHW7000AW

LG WT1101CW

Clothes washers

MODEL	SCORE
FRONT-LOADERS	
Maytag Maxima XL MHW7000AW, \$1,150 (and similar MHW6000AW, \$1,100)	90
Whirlpool Duet WFW88HEAW, \$1,000	90
Whirlpool Duet WFW70HEBW, \$800	89
Samsung WF457ARG5[GR], \$1,550 (and similar WF455ARGSWR, \$1,400)	89
TOP-LOADERS	
LG WT1101CW, \$700	82
Samsung WA422PRHD[WR], \$800	82
LG WT5070C[W], \$1,000	81
Samsung WA484DSHA[WR], \$1,000	81



Samsung DV50F9A8EVP



GE GFDR485GFMC

Clothes dryers

MODEL	SCORE
ELECTRIC	
Samsung DV50F9A8EVP, \$1,100	83
GE GFDR485EFMC, \$1,400	81
Maytag Maxima XL MED8000AG, \$1,450	79
Kenmore Elite 81073, \$1,350	79
GAS	
Samsung DV50F9A8GVP, \$1,200	83
GE GFDR485GFMC, \$1,500	81
Maytag Maxima XL MGD8000AG, \$1,550	79
Kenmore Elite 91073, \$1,450	79

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Watch TV free

With cable and satellite TV bills going nowhere but up, many viewers are rediscovering TV antennas. You can enjoy free over-the-air TV broadcasts in high definition, sometimes with better picture quality than with cable TV. Plug an antenna into the input on the TV, scan for channels, and you're good to go.

Cable channels such as CNN, Disney, and ESPN aren't available over the air, but there's a good chance you'll be able to get local stations from networks such as ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, PBS, and Telemundo. Along with the main network channels, you might also pull in subchannels that have other programming, such as vintage TV shows, news, and weather.

Rooftop antennas generally offer the best reception, especially if you're miles from a broadcast transmitter. But an indoor antenna is an easier option, so we asked a dozen New York-area residents to try out 10 models priced from \$10 to \$80. The models included classic rabbit-ear antennas and new ones with sleek, ultra-flat designs, which can be attached to a window, hidden behind the TV, and sometimes painted to blend in with your décor. All are designed to pull in VHF (channels 2-13) and UHF (channels 14-69) HDTV signals.

Performance varied considerably. The number of channels an antenna can receive depends on your distance from TV towers, obstructions around your house, where the antenna is placed in a room, and more. Amplified antennas, which can boost signal strength, might pull in more-distant stations.

Digital antennas

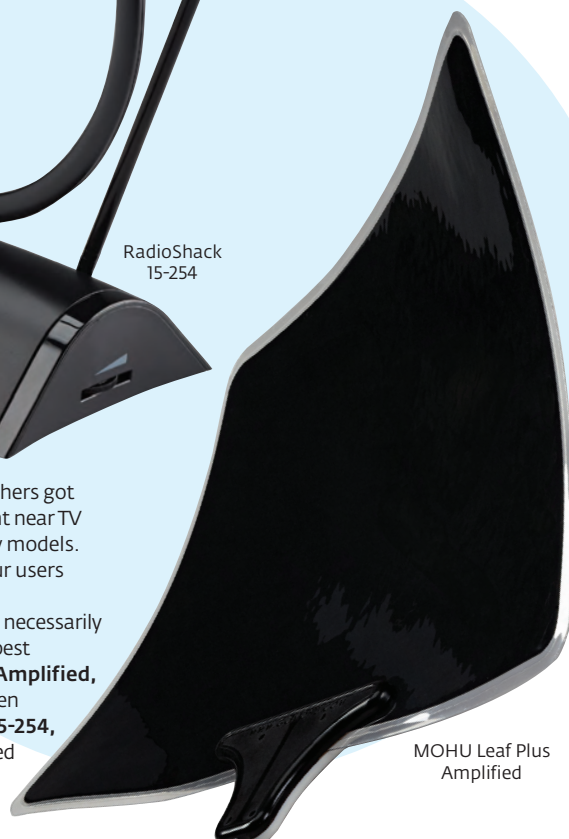
Brand & model (in alphabetical order)	Amplified	Price
Antennas Direct CSM1-XG	yes	\$60
MOHU Leaf	no	40
MOHU Leaf Plus Amplified	yes	50
MOHU Leaf Ultimate Amplified	yes	80
RadioShack 15-254	yes	35
RCA ANT111	no	10
RCA ANT1650 Amplified	yes	50
Terk FDTVIA	yes	50
Terk FDTV2	no	35
Winegard FL-5000 Flatwave	no	40



Antennas Direct CSM1-XG



RadioShack 15-254



MOHU Leaf Plus Amplified

Some testers got a few channels, others got 10 to 20, and a New York City resident near TV towers got more than 40 with a few models. No model did best for everyone. Four users got no reception with any antenna.

Paying more for an antenna won't necessarily get you more channels. Among the best performers was the **RCA ANT1650 Amplified**, \$50. One model that did well was even lower-priced: the \$35 **RadioShack 15-254**, an amplified antenna. You might need to try a few to see which works best in your house, so buy from a retailer with a no-hassle return policy.

Tip: All TV signals are digital, so you need a digital tuner (standard on all TVs since 2007) to work with an antenna. With older TVs, you might need a digital converter box to receive over-the-air broadcasts.

Why you might want an antenna

The notion of saying bye-bye to cable bills is appealing, but even if you can't bear to give up "The Walking Dead" or "Anderson Cooper 360°," there are still good reasons to use an antenna.

- ▶ You can keep cable service on a main family TV, but stop paying for a set-top box for a bedroom TV you use mostly to watch late-night talk shows.
- ▶ You'll be able to get broadcast programming if your cable company drops a channel during a dispute with a network.
- ▶ If your cable service goes down, say, in a storm, you can get network TV by antenna (assuming you have power, possibly from a generator, and stations are broadcasting).
- ▶ When you're recording several programs on your DVR at the same time and can't watch something else live from cable, switch to the antenna input to catch the nightly news on your local network.



WOW! The first big OLED sets, from Samsung (left) and LG, have curved screens and lots of features, but the high prices are as stunning as the picture quality.



FIRST LOOK

New OLED TVs deliver the best picture quality yet

A NEW TV TECHNOLOGY that could push LCD/LED and plasma TVs to the sidelines is emerging, and our first impressions suggest it's a game-changer.

OLED (which stands for organic light-emitting diode) has all the pluses of plasma and LCD/LED technology. It combines the deep blacks, strong contrast, and unlimited viewing angles of plasma TVs with the image brightness, ultra-thin design, and energy efficiency of LCD sets that use LED backlights. The result: the best all-around TV performance we've seen so far.

Two 55-inch TVs using OLED display

technology arrived in stores this summer: the **Samsung KN55S9C** and **LG 55EA9800**. Both have gently curved screens designed to create an immersive, panoramic effect, but we didn't find it that dramatic on this screen size. There's another curve potential buyers won't like—the price: \$9,000 for the Samsung, \$15,000 for the LG.

We were able to evaluate the Samsung in our labs, but the LG wasn't available as we went to press. (We'll have detailed test results for both TVs soon.) We were wowed by Samsung's spot-on colors and incredibly deep blacks that make images pop. The set also had the best 3D performance of any TV

we've seen, with full 1080p resolution and truly ghost-free images.

These aren't the first OLED sets. The Sony XEL-1, which came out a few years ago, impressed us but had a tiny 11-inch screen and a \$2,500 price. Getting OLED onto larger screen sizes has taken time. There appear to be other manufacturing challenges, so it's not clear when (or whether) OLED will become mainstream, with lower pricing. But we hope that happens. And while we're hoping—we can't wait to see TVs that combine OLED performance and Ultra HD 4K detail. Several were previewed at the Consumer Electronics Show this year.

Google Chromecast gives you cheap, easy Netflix streaming and more

Looking to transform your "dumb TV" into a smart one? You can do just that with Google Chromecast, a \$35 thumb-drive-sized device that lets you stream some online video services to your TV and use your laptop to send other Internet content to your set.

When using the apps it supports—initially Netflix (which requires a subscription), YouTube, and Google Play video and music, with more apps expected—Chromecast pulls content directly from the cloud. You use a laptop, smart phone, or tablet as the remote control. You can also "cast" other Web

content (say, from Hulu.com) to a TV from a PC or Mac using the Chrome browser, but not from a phone or tablet.

In our tests, we found Chromecast very easy to use. Just plug the drive into a TV's HDMI port and connect it to an electric outlet (using the included AC adapter) or to a TV's USB port. Then follow onscreen prompts to connect to your home network. Not surprisingly, this Google product works a bit better with Android devices than with iPads and iPhones.

Chromecast doesn't yet match the video offerings of Apple TV and Roku, but it's a great budget choice for Netflix fans.



PLUG & PLAY Stream Netflix by plugging tiny Chromecast into your TV's HDMI port.

Best food processors

You often don't have to pay top dollar to get top performance. Food processors are an exception, according to our latest tests of 20 models. Still, if you can live with less-than-perfect results in one or two areas, you can save hundreds and get a machine that does well at most tasks. Here are the details:

Breville raises the bar. The 1 Breville is truly an exceptional machine, outscoring the next best, 2 Cuisinart, by more than 10 points in our Ratings. But at \$400, it's also the most expensive by far. Chopping, slicing, shredding, and grating are all superb, and it's one of the quietest models we've tested, which Breville attributes to the unit's insulating die-cast housing and soft-sound induction motor.

Cuisinart is still a contender. The brand that invented the food processor in the 1970s continues to dominate our Recommended list, even if it no longer claims the top spot. The 3 Cuisinart, \$180, delivers size and performance comparable to the Breville, but its chopping results weren't quite as uniform. We also like the 4 Cuisinart, \$100, though high-volume processing—say, for family-sized stir-fries or big batches of coleslaw—will take longer in the 7-cup bowl.

One note about “max liquid fill lines,” which denote how much liquid can be added to a processor before it will leak. The smaller Cuisinart puts the limit at 5 cups; it's 2 to 3 cups for many other models. We tested the claim with water and observed some leaking, though results could be better with thick liquids, such as soups and sauces.

Low-priced models cause a racket.

Several models in the lower price range might have made our winner's list if not for their noisy operation. That includes the 8 Hamilton Beach, \$50, which was superb at shredding and very good at chopping, grating, and slicing. But its motor emitted a high-pitched whine, especially on its top speed.

The 13 Farberware, \$60, also did most things well and it has a roomy 12-cup processing bowl, plus a mini-bowl for chopping nuts, herbs, and other smaller items. But it, too, makes a shrill noise that could grate over time if you're sensitive to sound.



Ratings

All tested models In performance order.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Specs		Test results						
				0100	Weight (lb.)	Claimed capacity (cups)	Chopping	Slicing	Shredding	Pureeing	Grating	Noise	
													Mini-bowl insert
✓	1	Breville Sous Chef BFP800XL/A	\$400	81	19	16	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	2	Cuisinart DLC-2011CHB	180	70	13	11	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	3	Cuisinart DFP-14BCN	180	67	14	14	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
✓	4	Cuisinart MFP-107BC	100	65	5	7	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
✓	5	Cuisinart Pro Custom II DLC-8S	170	64	13	11	○	○	●	●	○	○	●
	6	Hamilton Beach Big Mouth 70573	70	58	8	14	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	7	Oster FPSTFP4010	30	56	3	4	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
	8	Hamilton Beach 70730	50	54	5	10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	9	Magimix 3200XL (Williams-Sonoma)	300	54	15	11	○	●	○	○	○	○	●
	10	KitchenAid KFP1333	220	52	12	13	○	●	●	●	○	○	●
	11	Black & Decker FP1600B	40	52	5	8	○	●	●	●	○	○	○
	12	Omega Food Pro 0660	170	51	12	11	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
	13	Farberware FP3000FBS (Walmart)	60	51	7	12	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	14	Villaware NDVLP1000	70	49	8	12	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	15	Hamilton Beach ChefPrep 70670	50	49	6	10	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	16	Hamilton Beach Big Mouth Duo Plus 70580	70	47	6	12	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	17	Cuisinart FP-14DC	300	46	19	14	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
	18	DeLonghi DFP950	300	39	11	12	○	●	●	●	○	○	○
	19	Kalorik HA 31535	80	38	5	5	○	●	●	○	○	○	○
	20	Black & Decker FP2500B	50	36	6	10	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Food choppers can make short work of small jobs

These mini-processors are perfect for chopping, grating, and pureeing small batches of food that would be challenging to handle in a larger bowl. Think chopped almonds and herbs, and grated Parmesan cheese. But they don't slice or shred.

Not all choppers are up to the task, however. Indeed, just two of the 14 models we tested made our picks list. The Ninja Master Prep Professional QB1004, \$60, performs very well at all three tasks, and it's part of a multipurpose

system that includes our top-rated blender. The 3-cup Cuisinart Mini Prep Plus DLC-2A, \$40, combines very good value with solid performance but is slightly less effective at pureeing.

Note that some full-sized food processors come with a mini-bowl attachment that functions as a chopper. Among them is our top-rated Breville Sous Chef—one more reason to give this pricey processor a look.



Dishwasher detergents

Cascade and Finish top our tough tests

DISHES THAT SPARKLE and metal pans that shine: Dishwasher detergents have come a long way in reliably producing clean loads. In fact, two-thirds of the 35 tablets, packs, powders, and gels in our latest tests were excellent at resisting the buildup of white film that consumers have complained about since phosphates were banned from dishwasher detergents for environmental reasons.

Most of the detergents we tested aced our hard-water performance test, which uses water with a hardness level well above that of most American homes. What separated the best from the rest was the ability to vanquish a baked-on mash of pudding, peanut butter, and a dozen other ingredients from dishes, flatware, and glassware. Our pot-washing test uses 1-quart pots encrusted with cooked-on macaroni and cheese. Only one detergent excelled at removing that mess, the top-

rated Cascade Complete ActionPacs. Here are the details:

Finish takes three of four top spots. Three of its versions join Cascade Complete ActionPacs: Finish Powerball Tabs, Finish Gelpacs, and Finish Quantum Powerball Capsules. Finish Powerball Tabs, 18 cents per load, and Finish Gelpacs, 21 cents, are CR Best Buys. But not all Finish products cleaned equally; Finish Powder and Finish Gel were lackluster performers.

Packs and tablets clean up. Single-dose detergents dominate the market and hold most of the top spots in our Ratings as well. But they usually cost more to use—up to an additional \$17 a year. Our top-performing powder, Cascade Complete Powder, cleaned almost as well as our top-scoring tablets and packs and cost just 21 cents per load.

Best for green cleaning. Seventh Generation had the two best green cleaners in our tests: Seventh Generation Powder and the

Seventh Generation Natural Packs. (The packs are pricey at 30 cents per load.) Both were very good at cleaning dishes; the powder edged out the packs in resisting food deposits but was only so-so at cleaning pots.

Washouts in our tests. BabyGanics was the worst performer in our tests for resisting white film (a residue of minerals). The Laundress, which the company claims can be used in a dishwasher or as a dish liquid, was mediocre overall and, at \$1.37 per load, by far the most expensive. Green Mission from Whole Foods scored poorly at cleaning dishes and pots and at preventing food deposits. But it was excellent at resisting film buildup.



DISHWASHER DETERGENT TEST

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



Great choices for quiet cleaning

When you buy select Bosch dishwashers, the manufacturer throws in a 100-day supply of Finish Quantum Powerball Capsules, emphasizing the point that to get the cleanest dishes you need both a good dishwasher and a good detergent. Although Bosch dominates our list of top dishwasher picks, Kenmore recently knocked it from the top spot with a winning combination of cleaning and quietness.

The best dishwashers in our tests excel at cleaning, meet Energy Star requirements, and come from reliable brands. Here are some top models that offer good performance, value, or both.

▶ Quiet and convenient

Kenmore Elite 12793, \$1,350. In addition to top-notch performance, this machine offers an industry first—a motorized spray arm that reverses direction if a dish or utensil blocks the arm's rotation. Other pluses include a stainless-steel tub and an adjustable upper rack.

Bosch SHX98M0[9]UC, \$1,500. This energy-efficient model is more expensive than many we've tested but delivers top performance. It aced our wash test and

was among the quietest models during the fill, wash, and drain cycles.

KitchenAid KDFE454CSS, \$1,500. Another pricey choice, this dishwasher delivers stellar performance. It excelled in our wash test and was among the quietest models. It's also an energy and water miser.

▶ Save without sacrificing

Bosch Ascenta SHX3AR7[5]UC, \$700, a CR Best Buy. This machine delivers top performance at a competitive price. It excelled at washing and was very good at drying plastic items. It's also among the quietest models in our tests and was especially energy-efficient.

Bosch 800 Series SHE68R5[2]UC, \$900.

Very good overall, this model offers a lot for the price. It did great in our wash test and was pretty quiet. Pluses include a soil sensor and a stainless-steel tub.

Bosch 300 Series DLX SHX53TL5UC, \$850.

This dishwasher has plenty going for it, but other models were quieter. It did well in our wash test and was very energy-efficient. Other pluses include a "speed perfect" cycle that uses more water and energy to finish sooner.



Kenmore Elite 12793



1 Cascade



2 Finish



3 Finish

Ratings

All tested products In performance order.

Recommendation	Rank	Product	Price per load	Type	Overall score	Cleans		Resists	
						Dishes	Pots	Food deposits	Water spots
					0				Film/discholoring
					100				
					P F G V G E				
✓	1	Cascade Complete ActionPacs	\$0.29	packs	84	●	●	●	●
✓	2	Finish Powerball Tabs	0.18	tablets	82	●	○	●	●
✓	3	Finish Gelpacs	0.21	packs	82	●	○	●	●
✓	4	Finish Quantum Powerball Capsules	0.24	tablets	80	●	○	●	●
	5	Cascade with Dawn ActionPacs	0.23	packs	79	●	○	●	●
	6	Cascade Complete Powder	0.21	powder	79	●	○	●	●
	7	Cascade Platinum ActionPacs	0.29	packs	78	●	○	●	●
	8	Kirkland Signature Dishwasher Pacs (Costco)	0.10	packs	78	●	○	●	●
	9	Nice Packs (Walgreens)	0.25	packs	77	●	○	●	●
	10	Seventh Generation Powder	0.19	powder	77	●	○	●	●
	11	Sunlight with LemonOxi Complex Power Pacs	0.19	packs	76	●	○	●	●
	12	Seventh Generation Natural Packs	0.30	packs	74	●	○	●	●
	13	Nice Powder (Walgreens)	0.10	powder	71	●	○	●	●
	14	Method Smarty Dish Tablets	0.27	packs	70	●	○	●	●
	15	Ecover Zero	0.30	powder	70	●	○	●	●
	16	Palmolive Eco+	0.06	gel	70	●	○	●	●
	17	Ecover Tablets	0.24	tablets	68	●	○	●	●
	18	Up & Up Dish Packs (Target)	0.17	packs	67	●	○	●	●
	19	Sun Powder	0.04	powder	66	●	○	●	●
	20	Up & Up Powder (Target)	0.06	powder	65	●	○	●	●
	21	Cascade Complete Gel	0.12	gel	64	○	○	●	●
	22	Smart Sense Powder (Kmart)	0.07	powder	63	●	○	●	●
	23	Ajax Triple Action Dish Packs	0.15	packs	56	●	○	●	●
	24	Biokleen Powder	0.35	powder	48	○	○	●	○
	25	GrabGreen Pods	0.33	Pods	44	○	○	●	○
	26	Trader Joe's Powder	0.11	powder	42	○	○	●	○
	27	Method Smarty Dish Plus Packs	0.31	packs	40	○	○	●	○
	28	Finish Powder	0.08	powder	38	○	○	●	○
	29	Wave 2X Ultra High Performance	0.20	gel	37	○	○	●	○
	30	DuoDish Organic Lavender	0.26	gel	36	○	○	●	○
	31	Finish Gel	0.09	gel	35	○	○	●	○
	32	Kirkland Signature Gel (Costco)	0.06	gel	34	○	○	●	○
	33	BabyGanics Dish Dazzler	0.27	powder	30	○	○	●	○
	34	The Laundress Dish Detergent	1.37	liquid	28	○	○	●	○
	35	Green Mission Organic Dishwasher Gel (Whole Foods)	0.23	gel	16	○	○	●	○

● Excellent
○ Very good
○ Good
○ Fair
● Poor

✓ CR Best Buy
✓ Recommended

Overview

Sparkling dishes and glassware and aluminum pots free of discoloration—even after we added baked-on food—helped make these detergents top picks in our tests. And all were clear winners in our hard-water tests, resisting the white residue that has vexed dishwasher owners for the past few years. Among the picks, we focus on performance, value, or both.

- ✓ **CR Best Buy** This product blends top cleaning and value and is recommended.
- ✓ **Recommended** These top-scoring detergents performed well. Products stand out for the reasons noted.

FOR ANY DISHWASHER

- 1 Cascade Complete ActionPacs** 29 cents per load
- 2 Finish Powerball Tabs** 18 cents per load
CR Best Buy
- 3 Finish Gelpacs** 21 cents per load **CR Best Buy**
- 4 Finish Quantum Powerball Capsules** 24 cents per load

1 cleaned best overall. **2** is our top tablet and excelled at cleaning dishes. **3** is our top-value pack, and **4** is a top-value tablet. If you prefer powder, consider **6**. Also consider **10** (a powder) or **12** (a pack) if you want a green detergent.

Get cleaner dishes with less effort

A top-notch dishwasher and a top-rated dishwasher detergent can make cleaning up after a big dinner a cinch. If your dishwasher is working properly, you don't need to rinse dishes before loading it; just scrape off the leftover food and let the machine do the rest. Loading it correctly is also important. Here are some other tips from our experts:

- Make sure that the water going into the dishwasher is 120° F.
- Use a rinse agent even if your detergent is a "complete" or "all-in-one" product.
- Load the dishwasher properly. In general, put large items along the sides and back so that they don't block the flow of water; face the dirtier side of dishes toward the water spray; don't let dishes or utensils nest; place items with baked-on food on the bottom rack, facedown toward the spray arm; and put plastics and other light, dishwasher-safe items on the top rack.
- If your dishes already have a film build-up, try one of the detergent additives that did well in our tests: Lemi Shine Original, Finish Power Up Booster Agent, or Glisten Dishwasher Cleaner & Hard Water Spot Remover.

Find out **how much to pay for a new car** with our expanded local pricing information

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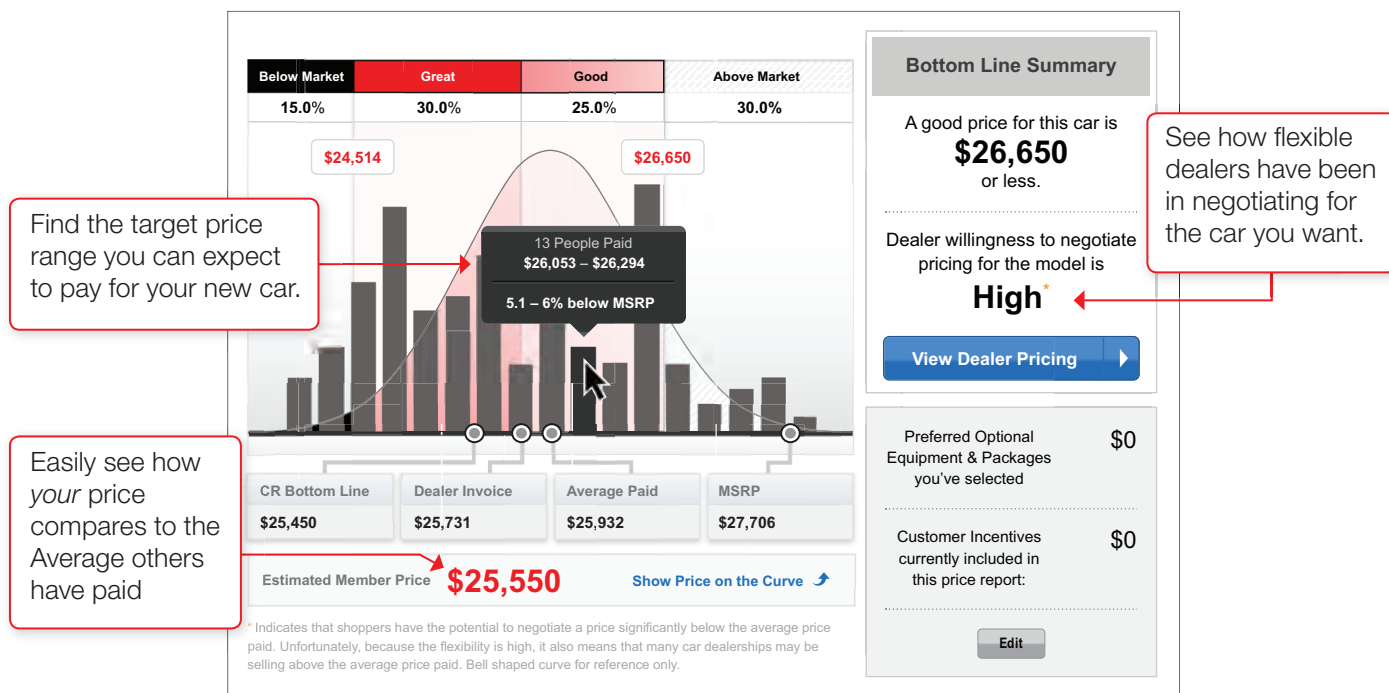
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Cars

Road tests, auto products, hot topics



Sneak peek

New SUVs and small cars coming for 2014

FUEL EFFICIENCY remains a critical focus for 2014, with consumers demanding better gas mileage and automakers trying to squeeze more miles out of every gallon of fuel. We're seeing more advanced technology in the conventional internal-combustion engines of small cars as well as large SUVs, and in new diesels, hybrids, and plug-in electric cars.

But car buyers also want comfort, con-

venience, performance, and increasingly, high-tech electronic features. Those include new ways of staying connected inside the car and luxury vehicles, such as the BMW X5, that virtually drive themselves in congested traffic.

At the same time, luxury is coming in smaller, more efficient packages: the Audi A3 sedan, BMW i3 electric car, and Cadillac ELR plug-in hybrid. Here are some notable cars to watch in coming months.

BMW i3 Spring 2014

BMW is betting that urban buyers are ready for a small, distinctive electric car with sporty driving dynamics and quick acceleration. The i3 will include lightweight carbon-fiber construction to optimize driving range. And the lithium-ion battery's location under the floor helps keep the center of gravity low for agile handling. The car is tall and compact yet easy to access and relatively roomy. It provides seating for four people. An optional 34-hp gasoline engine acts as a generator and can extend the driving range from approximately 80 to 100 miles up to 160 to 180 miles.

CR's take: We were impressed with the performance of BMW's Active-E coupe, which uses a similar powertrain. But the aggressive motor braking that aids battery charging took some getting used to.



Toyota Highlander Early 2014

This midsize three-row SUV has perennially been one of our highest-rated SUVs, and the Hybrid model has delivered the best fuel economy of any SUV we've tested. With its 2014 redesign, the Highlander's wheelbase has grown 3 inches. That translates into a more spacious second-row seat, for which you can choose captain's chairs or a bench. The third-row seat, although still tight, is now wider, allowing room for three passengers. New features include a standard backup camera, a one-touch height-adjustable automatic tailgate, and Toyota's versatile Entune infotainment system.

CR's take: This solid SUV has always delivered good fuel economy and excellent reliability. For 2014, new electronic features and room for eight passengers should add to its appeal, and the styling is, well, less bland.



▲ Toyota Corolla Fall 2013

The words "sporty" and "fun to drive" have rarely been linked to the prosaic Corolla. But excellent fuel economy and top-notch reliability have helped make it one of the best-selling compact sedans. With its redesign, Toyota is mixing in more rear-seat room and better interior finish, while attempting to stir in some excitement with more contemporary styling. Most trim levels will now get a new continuously variable transmission to help improve fuel economy, although base L models will stick with a four-speed automatic. And a new LE Eco model uses various efficiency-boosting tweaks to deliver a claimed 40-mpg-plus on the highway. All models get eight air bags, and Bluetooth connectivity is standard. A backup camera is optional.

CR's take: More interior space is welcome, and the new styling adds some spice to the Corolla. But we wish the backup camera was standard.



▲ Volkswagen Golf Early 2014

The Golf's agile handling and responsive steering lend it a sporty character that's missing from most compact cars. The seventh generation of this iconic hatchback is slightly larger, lower, and lighter. VW says those changes, combined with improved aerodynamics, result in a 15 percent fuel-economy improvement, as well as more interior room and cargo space. Thankfully, the coarse five-cylinder engine has been given the axe and replaced with a more



▲ Audi A3 Early 2014

With today's luxury car buyers seeking better fuel economy, small upscale models are becoming increasingly common. Enter the new 2015 A3 compact sedan, which is loaded with luxury and high-tech features. Compared with the previous-generation hatchback, this sedan has gained 2 inches at the wheelbase and about 6 inches overall. That should give the A3 some badly needed rear-seat leg room. Front- or all-wheel drive will be available, with a choice of two turbocharged four-cylinder gasoline engines. A diesel arrives later, along with high-performance S3 and hybrid hatchback versions. Electronic features include a cellular phone signal amplifier and antenna, 3D instrument panel and touch-screen graphics, optional Internet-based navigation and travel information, and passenger Wi-Fi access.

CR's take: Though the A3 name remains, this model promises a very different experience. The roomier interior is welcome. And if it performs as much like the A6 as it looks, this A3 could be a hit.

efficient 170-hp, 1.8-liter turbocharged four. Diesel Golfs also get a new engine and slight power boost, while sporty GTI models continue with a 200-hp, 2.0-liter turbocharged four. A new touch-screen radio features swipe controls and proximity sensing.

CR's take: The new base engine is a welcome change. But the new "high-tech" radio controls sound a little too similar to Cadillac's complicated Cue system. Let's hope VW has executed a better design.



▲ BMW X5 Fall 2013

If you spend a lot of time in congested, stop-and-go traffic, the redesigned X5 may be what you've been waiting for. BMW's new Traffic Jam Assist system uses a combination of electronic wizardry to effectively drive the vehicle at low speeds, automatically accelerating and slowing with traffic and keeping the X5 centered in its lane. OK, you'll need to keep a hand on the wheel and make any turns, but BMW says the X5 can pretty much handle the rest. With this redesign, BMW is also promising increased passenger and cargo room, and improved performance, ride comfort, and fuel efficiency. Also handy, the navigation system can tell the driver to reduce throttle when approaching a speed zone or turn.

CR's take: Systems such as BMW's Traffic Jam Assist are helping to bring the self-driving car closer to reality. We'll let you know how well it works when we buy and test our X5.



▲ Mitsubishi Mirage Fall 2013

Mitsubishi is hoping to get back on buyers' radar with this four-door, five-passenger subcompact hatchback. Even base models will come with such inviting features as keyless entry, a USB/iPod input, automatic climate control, and seven air bags. Higher-trim versions add Bluetooth and push-button ignition. And the option list includes a navigation system with backup camera, LED interior illumination, and parking assist, which adds front and rear sensors. Gas mileage will be another draw. Power comes from a small 74-hp, 1.2-liter three-cylinder engine that's paired with either a CVT or five-speed manual transmission. The CVT-equipped Mirage is claimed to deliver 40 mpg combined, 37 in city driving, and 44 on the highway.

CR's take: The fuel economy claims are impressive, and even base models of the Mirage appear to be relatively well-equipped. But Mitsubishi is facing an uncertain future in a small though competitive segment.

▼ Mazda3 Fall 2013

The Mazda3 may fly under the radar of many buyers, but its sporty handling makes it one of our favorite compacts to drive. With its 2014 redesign, it gets more aggressive styling, a host of new features, and a longer wheelbase that allows for more rear-seat room. New safety features include lane-departure, blind-spot, and forward-collision warning systems. Plus, you can now get a heads-up windshield

display and up-to-date smart-phone integration, with voice controls for audio and communication. The Mazda3 will again be available as a sedan or hatchback.

CR's take: So far, we've gotten excellent fuel economy from every Mazda model we've tested with the company's SkyActiv technology. And SkyActiv doesn't use any gimmicky tech or tricks. So this Mazda3 should be frugal at the pump.



▼ Cadillac ELR Late 2013

The ELR is a more stylish, upscale version of the Chevrolet Volt. It shares the Volt's plug-in electric motor and backup gasoline powertrain, but it wraps them in a sleek, two-door coupe design with an opulent interior. Like the Volt, the ELR can run on electricity alone until the battery becomes depleted; we averaged about 35 miles in the Volt, which is enough for many drivers to commute gas-free. Then, if necessary, the small gasoline engine kicks in to let you keep driving. A full suite of advanced safety systems in the ELR includes forward-collision, blind-spot, and cross-traffic alerts. The ELR also includes Cadillac's complicated Cue infotainment system.

CR's take: All the luxury trimmings may make for a more inviting interior than in the Volt, but the ELR won't have the Chevy's hatchback versatility. And the price is bound to be much higher.



▲ Cadillac CTS Fall 2013

In redesigning this luxury sports sedan, Cadillac has achieved the magic of making the CTS 5 inches longer while shedding 244 pounds. The added length means more room for passengers in the luxurious interior, and the weight-loss program should help with agility and fuel economy. All of the changes are aimed at making the CTS more competitive with its European rivals. Choices include turbocharged four-cylinder and V6 engines, each available with rear- or all-wheel drive. A high-performance Vsport model packs a 420-hp, 3.6-liter twin-turbo V6; an eight-speed transmission; and more aggressive suspension tuning.

CR's take: Based on our experience with the smaller ATS, which is built on the same platform, we look forward to driving the CTS. But the frustrating and distracting Cue infotainment system is dragging Cadillac models down in our test scores.

2014 cheat sheet

Here are the new or redesigned models for 2014 and early 2015, as well as those taking the exit ramp.



Fiat 500L

► New

BMW 3-Series GT	Kia Cadenza
BMW i3	Kia Quoris
Cadillac ELR	Mercedes-Benz CLA
Chevrolet SS	Mitsubishi Mirage
Fiat 500L	Porsche Macan



Chevrolet Corvette

► Redesigned

Acura MDX	Land Rover
Acura RLX	Range Rover Sport
Audi A3	Lexus IS
BMW X5	Mazda3
Cadillac CTS	Mercedes-Benz
Chevrolet	S-Class
Corvette	Mitsubishi
Chevrolet Impala	Outlander
Chevrolet	Nissan Rogue
Silverado	Nissan Versa Note
Ford Transit	Subaru Forester
Connect	Subaru WRX
GMC Sierra	Toyota Corolla
Infiniti Q50 (G37)	Toyota
Jeep Cherokee	Highlander
Kia Forte	Volkswagen
Kia Soul	Golf/GTI



Chevrolet Avalanche

► Discontinued

Chevrolet	Acura ZDX
Avalanche	Toyota Matrix

Hits & misses 2013

How do this year's new models really stack up?

FOR 2013 about 20 new models hit the street and another 20 or so received major redesigns. Automakers typically make a big deal over newly designed models at flamboyant auto-show launches and build the hype through pricey ad campaigns, all of which is intended to stir up anticipation among eager car watchers.

But when we strip away the fanfare and put the cars through our real-world testing program, some uphold their high expectations while others can't make the grade. Here are five redesigned 2013 models that stood out in our tests and four that don't deserve the buzz.

▣ Chevrolet Impala

This redesigned large sedan was the surprise of the year. In the 20 years we've been publishing numerical scores for test vehicles, a domestic car has never qualified as the top overall sedan. Until now, that is. In a major turnaround, the Impala went from lingering at the bottom of its class to topping its competitors. Moreover, it's one of the highest-rated vehicles we've tested, outscoring luxury sedans costing \$20,000 more. The Impala rides like a luxury car while delivering surprisingly agile handling, capable acceleration, very good interior quality, a roomy rear seat, and a huge trunk. Overall, there's little that the Impala doesn't do well.



▣ Subaru Forester

The small-SUV class has been thoroughly reshaped over the past couple of years as all of the top models were redesigned. The finishing touch was the revamped 2014 Forester, which handily out-pointed some very good competitors, including the Honda CR-V, Mazda CX-5, and Toyota RAV4. It looks plain and unpretentious, but the Forester's space-efficient interior, large windows, and big square doors provide excellent sight lines and very easy access. Plus, a new continuously variable transmission helps it deliver best-in-class fuel economy of 26 mpg overall. Gripes? Ride comfort is OK but not as cushy as before, and its infotainment features are behind the curve.





Hyundai Santa Fe

Redesigned for 2013, the seven-passenger Santa Fe is one of the most pleasant and well-rounded three-row SUVs we've tested. It's stylish, drives well, and provides a lot of features for the money. The Santa Fe has a comfortable ride, a quiet interior, responsive handling, easy access, and user-friendly controls. It also pulls off the tricky balance of providing a spacious cabin, with a limo-like rear seat and generous cargo area, without feeling too bulky while driving. Don't confuse this model with the shorter, five-passenger Santa Fe Sport, which is a different version that didn't score as well in our tests.



Honda Accord

The Accord may be a little short on pizzazz, but it does almost everything else very well. The airy, spacious cabin boasts one of the best driving positions available, along with comfortable seats and terrific visibility. The refined four-cylinder engine provides an amazing 30 mpg overall and 40 on the highway, while the smooth and punchy V6 averaged a very good 26. Handling is agile, with a taut, tied-down feel. And the long list of standard equipment includes a backup camera and automatic climate control, with high-tech electronic safety aids standard on higher trim levels.



Ford Fusion

Forsaking the bland tradition of many midsize sedans, the redesigned 2013 Fusion mixes eye-catching looks, upscale interior ambience, and most important, a really fun driving experience. We tested three versions—a mid-trim, a high-trim, and a hybrid—and all provided an unusually civilized ride and a blissfully quiet cabin. The top-trim Titanium version is the best-handling midsize sedan we've tested, and the hybrid averaged an excellent 39 mpg. Fuel economy of the nonhybrids is mediocre, however, and cabin space is much less generous than in, say, a Honda Accord. The aggravating optional MyFord Touch control system could be a turnoff for some, but this is one car we really enjoy driving.

Four models that fall short

Mitsubishi Outlander

The redesigned Outlander needed to hit a home run to keep Mitsubishi relevant in the popular small-SUV class, but it just can't compete with the top models. It's the only small SUV to provide a standard third-row seat, which can hold a couple of kids in a pinch. But that's not enough to offset its long list of shortcomings, including a noisy cabin, clumsy handling, a stiff ride, sluggish acceleration, and interior trim that looks cheap and feels insubstantial. Overall, the Outlander doesn't score well enough to be recommended.

Nissan Sentra

The redesigned 2013 Sentra looks good on paper, but it falls far short of expectations. Its best quality may be the rear seat, which is one of the roomiest in the compact-sedan class. Another plus is that attractive options such as a navigation system and backup camera are reasonably priced. But the driving experience is underwhelming. Handling is uninspiring, acceleration feels lethargic, the ride is choppy, and the nonstop engine drone got on our nerves.

Honda Crosstour

Honda has dropped the Accord name from the Crosstour, which is a good thing because buyers shouldn't expect to get the same excellent package as the Accord in this crossover SUV/wagon. On the plus side, the Crosstour provides a smooth, potent powertrain, spacious cabin, and comfortable seats. But its recent freshening brought a frustratingly complicated control interface and electric power steering that's devoid of road feel. In addition, handling is rather clumsy and the coupelike styling seriously impedes rear visibility.

Acura RLX

The all-new RLX replaced the RL as Acura's flagship sedan. But not only is it overpriced, it doesn't have what it takes to compete with better luxury models, such as the Audi A6, Lexus GS, and Mercedes-Benz E-Class. The RLX is actually more comparable with models such as the Chrysler 300 and Toyota Avalon, which cost thousands less. It's plush and spacious inside, but the ride is jumpy and handling is ponderous, undermining its luxury-car aspirations. A much better buy: the new Chevrolet Impala.





ACCIDENT AVOIDANCE Today's cars are safer than ever, but most deaths result from poor driver choices.

Crash course on safety

Highway deaths are up. Here's how you can help bring them down

A**FTER SIX YEARS** of steady declines in motor-vehicle deaths in the U.S., the initial data for 2012 grabbed the attention of many safety advocates when it showed a notable 5 percent spike. That means 1,700 more people died on our roads; the estimated total is 34,080.

What caused the additional deaths isn't known, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration probably won't have final 2012 data until early next year. But a number of safety experts note an increase in miles driven due to the easing of the recession and 2012's exceptionally mild winter and spring.

In retrospect, the uptick in deaths shouldn't have been surprising. "Economic recessions have suppressed traffic fatalities before, notably in the early '80s and early '90s," points out Kenneth P. Kolosh, statistics manager for the National Safety Council. "Fatality numbers tend to bounce up in recovery periods."

Still, certain situations account for thousands of traffic fatalities each year. Two-thirds of the fatal crashes in 2011, for example, involved people who were wearing seat belts improperly or not at all, those who were speeding, or those who were driving drunk or distracted. And many

were a result of a combination of factors.

Today's cars are the safest ever. They're better at protecting occupants in crashes and they have advanced technology that can help us avoid accidents altogether. But lowering the risk often comes down to a driver's choices. There are plenty of steps you can take to drive more safely and steer clear of dangerous drivers. The result could save thousands of lives and prevent hundreds of thousands of injuries.

Here's a look at each major factor, the number of deaths related to it in 2011 among all vehicle types, and what can be done to help make the roads safer.

Unbelted occupants
ANNUAL FATALITIES:
12,872

The good news is that only about 15 percent of the driving public still doesn't buckle up. But they account for more than 50 percent of the vehicle-occupant deaths. In 2011, almost 13,000 people died in traffic accidents in which occupants were unbelted or improperly belted, including in child seats. Many would have died anyway because of

the seriousness of the crash, but NHTSA estimates that 3,384 lives would have been saved if everyone had buckled up.

In 2011, belt use was lowest among people age 16 to 24 (79 percent), according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

What you can do

Buckle up. Some people think that wearing a seat belt affects only them. But in a crash, an unbelted person can become a projectile that can injure or kill other occupants. Moreover, according to Joe Nolan, vice president of research for the IIHS, air bags could possibly be more effective if they didn't have to be designed to cope with both belted and unbelted people, as is now legally required. A recent IIHS study shows that having to protect unbelted people may come partly at the expense of people who do buckle up.

What else can be done

Expand enforcement laws. Eighteen states still don't have primary-enforcement laws, which allow the police to cite people solely for not buckling up. In 2012 belt use averaged 90 percent in primary-enforcement states, but 78 percent elsewhere.

Increase high-visibility enforcement. Focused law-enforcement campaigns have



had significant success in several states. Often using the slogan, “Click it or ticket,” the programs work best when they’re highly visible and aimed at the type of driver who tends to not buckle up.

Build safeguards into cars. Belt-ignition interlocks that made it impossible to start the car without first buckling up were disastrously unpopular when they were tried in the 1970s. But that’s not the only option. Belt-minders, which remind you to buckle up, have proved to be very successful and could be implemented for all seating positions to improve use rates.

Speeding
ANNUAL FATALITIES:
9,944

Whether it’s because drivers are exceeding the posted speed limit or driving too fast for the conditions, in 2011 speeding contributed to about 30 percent of all traffic fatalities, NHTSA says.

Many people may not fully realize why excessive speed is dangerous. A speeding car is harder to control, of course, takes much farther to brake, and reduces a driver’s time to react when needed. But then there’s the matter of crash energy. The seriousness of a crash increases exponentially with your speed. A crash at 60 mph gener-

Newer SUVs have the lowest fatality rate

SUVs have come a long way in the last decade. Overall, they handle better, ride more comfortably, and get better fuel economy. And according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, they’re also now among the safest vehicles on the road. In fact, in its analysis of 2011 crash fatalities, the IIHS found that late-model SUVs—one to three years old—have the lowest death rate of any vehicle category.

These newer SUVs accounted for a relatively low 26 occupant deaths per million registered passenger vehicles, which is far better than cars, with an occupant-fatality rate of 62, or pickup trucks, with 72. The differences are even starker when we look just at driver deaths. In that snapshot, the death rate was only 18 per million for SUVs vs. 43 for cars and 54 for pickups.

Rollover deaths are down

Historically, rollover crashes have been the Achilles’ heel of SUVs. And taller vehicles such as SUVs are still more prone to roll over than cars, which are lower to the ground. All vehicle types have improved a lot in this area in the last 10 years, but SUVs have improved the most. Again, looking just at 1- to 3-year-old vehicles, in single-vehicle rollover crashes, the driver death rate per million vehicles for passenger cars dropped from 18 in 2000 to 8 in 2011. With SUVs, driver deaths dropped from 42 to 4.

Many factors have contributed to this turnaround, including improvements in vehicle design and a move to car-based SUVs. But the biggest factor is probably the increased use of electronic stability control, a proven lifesaver. ESC is designed to help prevent a vehicle from skidding or sliding in a turn, and it’s especially valuable in slippery conditions and when



swerving to avoid an obstacle. Phased in over the last decade, ESC became mandatory for all 2012 and later models.

Of course, driver demographics play a role in these statistics. SUVs are often driven by middle-aged people, who tend to drive more conservatively than younger people. By contrast, young male drivers, who represent the largest risk group overall, often flock to small cars and compact pickups because of their lower prices. Perhaps understandably, in 2011 fairly new subcompacts had almost twice the driver fatality rate of fairly new midsize cars, according to the IIHS. And the fatality rate of compact pickups lately has been similar. Still, even that death rate was about equal to the average car’s in 2008, so things are improving.



SEE SUV CRASH-TEST VIDEO

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ates more than twice the impact energy of a crash at 40 mph. And beyond a certain point, the human body can’t withstand rapid decelerations because the internal organs tear and rupture. Consequently, many high-speed crashes are just not survivable, regardless of seat belts, air bags, or other safety measures.

Going too fast on secondary roads can be especially hazardous. “The problem comes when people drive on a rural, undivided highway as if it were a freeway,” says Russ Rader of the IIHS. “Those secondary roads, with their blind curves, no median, and lots of trees lining them are much trickier than interstates.” In fact, only 13 percent

of speed-related fatalities took place on interstate highways in 2011.

What you can do

Give yourself more margin for error.

Driving at a moderate speed gives you more time to react to unexpected events and makes it easier to control your vehicle in a sudden maneuver. Also, be sure your tires are properly inflated; underinflated tires affect a car’s handling and can overheat, increasing their potential for failure.

Slow down in wet conditions. Your car’s tires just don’t have the grip they would on dry pavement and can hydroplane, causing you to lose control without warning, espe-

cially at faster speeds. And don't drive on tires that are excessively worn. In our tests, even tires with half-worn tread showed a significant drop in wet grip and were much less resistant to hydroplaning.

What else can be done

Design traffic-calming strategies. Popular in Europe, they involve constructing pedestrian-friendly streets and roads that force cars to slow down. That may include building in speed humps or kinks and narrow places on streets.

Improve enforcement. The use of speed cameras along roads and red-light cameras at intersections has proved to be effective at saving lives. But they're also controversial, with many people viewing them as a government cash-grab. An intriguing demonstration in Sweden in 2010 was a "speed-camera lottery." Some of the money from speed-camera fines was handed back as a prize to a random driver who had gone past the cameras without speeding.

Make cars more speed-sensitive. Cruise-control systems can already adjust a car's speed as you drive. And many GPS devices display the speed limit of the road you're driving on. A system called Intelligent Speed Adaptation combines those capabilities. It can alert a driver who's going over the speed limit or even reduce a vehicle's speed automatically. But what's needed for this to be effective is more comprehensive speed-limit data in GPS maps.

Drunken driving
ANNUAL FATALITIES:
9,878

Every year about 30 percent of fatalities involve alcohol-impaired driving, according to NHTSA. The 2011 toll of almost 10,000 deaths includes car occupants, motorcycle and bicycle riders, and pedestrians who were involved in crashes or struck by a driver with an illegal blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent or higher. Progress in lowering the percentage of fatalities related to drunk driving proceeded rapidly in the 1980s but then stalled in the mid-'90s. The number of deaths has decreased, but the percentage of alcohol-related crashes remains stuck at about 30 percent. But if all alcohol-impaired drivers, with blood-alcohol concentrations at or above the legal limit, were prevented from driving, the IIHS estimates that 6,800 lives would be saved a year.

What you can do

Think ahead. If you expect to be drinking while away from home, make sure that you can get a ride back with someone who hasn't been drinking alcohol. Another helpful tip: Keep some extra cash with you to pay a taxi, if necessary, for you or someone else. And keep the cab

company's number handy.

Take responsibility. "Many of us want to say something when we see an obviously intoxicated acquaintance about to drive their car, but we're afraid we'll be frowned upon," says David Hanson, Ph.D., a professor emeritus of sociology at the State University of New York at Potsdam. "Often, though, everyone else in the group is just waiting for someone else to take the lead. So go ahead and speak up. You might be saving someone's life."

Use a testing device. People metabolize alcohol differently. So if you're concerned about your blood-alcohol level or another person's, invest in a personal tester. Look for one that uses a law-enforcement-grade "fuel-cell sensor." They typically start at about \$130.

What else can be done

Lower the legal alcohol limit. A National Transportation Safety Board report issued in May 2013 says that by the time someone's blood alcohol concentration reaches the current legal limit of .08 percent, the risk of a fatal crash has at least doubled. The NTSB recommends lowering the threshold to .05 or less. Almost all of the European Union, which cut alcohol fatalities by more than 50 percent from 2001 to 2010, uses a BAC of .05 as the threshold for drunken driving.

Add more sobriety checkpoints. Those are locations where law-enforcement officers stop cars to check drivers for signs of intoxication. Checkpoints are the best and longest-lasting deterrent when they're part of a "high-visibility enforcement" campaign and their location is widely advertised ahead of time. Though checkpoints have proved to be effective, cutting alcohol-related fatal crashes by some 9 percent, 10 states ban them for various reasons. So proper safeguards are necessary.

Use ignition interlocks more. Alcohol-ignition interlocks are blood-alcohol-level testing devices that prevent a car from being started unless the driver passes it after exhaling into the device. In many states, people convicted of driving while intoxicated have to use an ignition interlock for some period to be able to drive legally. To encourage that, Congress passed legislation last year that provides grants to states that require it for all drunken-driving offenders. Thirty-three states currently do not.

Alcohol-interlock devices that don't require breathing into a device are in development. They sample the air around you

Five ways to steer clear of dangerous drivers

1 Be ready for the unexpected. Stay alert and drive cautiously. Use your mirrors to stay aware of what's going on around your vehicle at all times.

2 Give other drivers plenty of space. Don't drive too close to a vehicle in front or right next to one for an extended time. Leaving room will give you more time to react if something goes wrong.

3 Hone your skills. Consider taking a defensive-driving or car-control course. They help teach you how to control your vehicle in emergency situations, such as when swerving to avoid an obstacle or another vehicle, and how to recover if your car starts going out of control.

4 Avoid driving at the deadliest times. In 2011 more fatal crashes occurred in the early-morning hours of Saturdays and Sundays than at any other



time. Not only did fatalities peak at around 1 a.m. and 2 a.m., but most of those accidents involved drunken driving, including a whopping 72 percent of the crashes that occurred around 2 a.m. on Saturdays.

5 Report erratic, dangerous behavior. Pull over and call 911 to alert the police, especially if you can give a good description of the car or a license plate number.

The black-box dilemma

The Event Data Recorder, commonly called the black box, is a promising tool in the battle to reduce highway fatalities. Because it typically records such things as vehicle speed, throttle position, air-bag deployment, brake application, and seat-belt use, an EDR can give accident investigators valuable insight into what was happening during a vehicle crash. This can lead to the development of safer cars.

NHTSA data show that EDRs can be a powerful investigative and research tool, and studies with commercial fleets have shown that they can increase safety by helping to modify driver behavior. In addition, trauma centers say that the data can be invaluable in diagnosing the injuries of accident victims.

Most cars are now equipped with an EDR, but for years the data they recorded and how it was retrieved varied widely

from one automaker to another. That problem drew the spotlight in 2010 when Toyota, in a Senate hearing, admitted it had only one laptop in the U.S. that could read its EDR data.

To address the variation among the systems, NHTSA required that as of Sept. 1, 2012, all EDRs in new cars record the same type of data and standardize how it's retrieved. But because of all the older cars, it will take years before investigators can reap the full benefits.

Another concern is privacy. NHTSA has left the question of who owns or controls the use of that data up to the states. But many consumer advocates worry that the data could be misused. Consumers Union, the advocacy arm of Consumer Reports, thinks that EDRs should be mandated for use in all vehicles, but that car owners should own the data.

or take a reading from your skin when you touch a sensor. None is foolproof, but if they could be made reliable, fast-responding, and cost-effective, they could be a real lifesaver.

Distracted driving

ANNUAL FATALITIES:

3,331

Drivers have always faced distractions, but the popularity of texting and the rapid and widespread adoption of smart phones, with their Internet and music-playing capabilities, have made the distraction potential much worse. Automakers keep adding more electronic systems into their vehicles, which we've often found to be overly complicated and distracting to use while driving.

According to NHTSA, there were more than 3,000 traffic deaths involving distracted drivers in 2011, and 387,000 people were injured. But many experts think that those figures are underreported. Officers at an accident scene may have little or no evidence about whether a distraction contributed to the crash. And many police departments don't record the use of cell phones or other causes of distracted driving in their accident reports.

The National Safety Council says that "at

least 23 percent of all traffic crashes—or at least 1.3 million crashes—involve cell-phone use per year," and that "an estimated 1.2 million crashes each year involve drivers using cell phones for conversations and at least 100,000 additional crashes can be related to drivers who are texting." The council is calling for a total ban on cell-phone use while driving.

Eleven states now ban hand-held cell-phone use by drivers, and 37 ban any phone use, hands-free or otherwise, by novice drivers. Forty-one states ban texting by drivers and six more ban novice drivers from texting. Most have primary-enforcement laws, which mean you can be cited without violating any other laws.

What you can do

Put down the device. Use a hand-held cell phone or other electronic device only when the car is stopped off the road.

Don't enable. If you know someone is driving, don't call or text. As a passenger, speak up if a driver picks up a device to use. And set a good example. Texting or using the phone while driving sends your kids a message that it's OK.

Get an anti-distraction app. If you or your teenage driver finds it hard to ignore the phone while driving, the smart-phone app will block most incoming calls and texts. Available free or for a small fee, it will also send your callers an automated message that says you're driving.

For a rundown of several we've looked at, go to ConsumerReports.org/distracted.

Take action. Learn the rules in your state by going to distraction.gov. And if laws aren't in place, impose your own restrictions. To help pass or strengthen laws, voice your concerns to your legislators.

Buy a car with a good control system. Check our car reviews to find which models have easy-to-use controls and which have complicated, distracting systems. Infotainment systems that we've found difficult to use include MyFord Touch and MyLincoln Touch, and Cadillac's CUE system. Chrysler's Uconnect system is more intuitive and user-friendly.

What else can be done

Strengthen laws and enforcement. More states need to pass comprehensive distracted-driving laws that cover the use of hand-held devices as well as the use of any device—hand-held or hands-free—by novice drivers. And they need to back up the laws with effective enforcement. That combination has been shown to reduce the use of texting and hand-held phone use by drivers.

Design easy-to-use controls. As automakers cram more features into their cars, they need to simplify how drivers interact with them. Some systems force drivers to scroll through confusing menus to perform simple functions, which causes them to take their eyes off of the road for too long. Even an easy-to-use system, such as the one in the Tesla Model S, can provide too much functionality while the car is in motion, letting you prowl the Internet practically uninhibited as you cruise at any speed.

NHTSA recently released voluntary guidelines for automakers, but we think they should be mandatory. We also urge NHTSA to release guidelines for aftermarket products and make those mandatory as well.

Improve voice-command systems. We've found that voice-recognition systems can be handy for performing many functions, reducing the temptation to pick up a mobile device. But overall, they need to work better so that they don't become distractions themselves.

TAKE OUR ONLINE POLL

Which of the measures for cutting highway fatalities discussed in this article do you think are most important? Go to ConsumerReports.org/carsafety.

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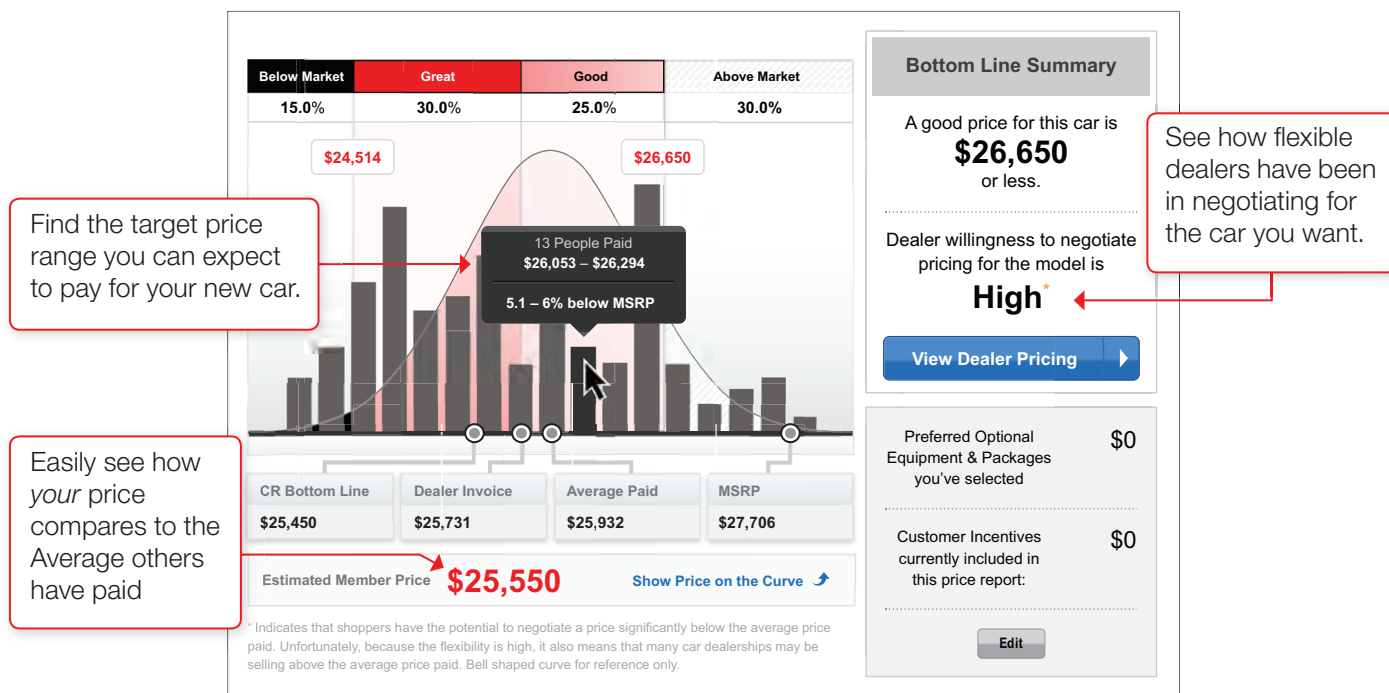
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Three-row SUVs

Redesigned models show the long and short of third-row seats

SUVS ARE KNOWN for versatility in carrying people and cargo. And adding a third-row seat boosts that capability another notch. Depending on the model, a third-row seat lets the vehicle carry up to seven or eight passengers. That's handy for a large family, car-pooling duties, or mobile play dates. And when you don't need the extra seat, it folds conveniently into the rear cargo floor. With a split-seatback design, you can fold one section down and still let someone sit in the other one.

But the third-row seats in most SUVs are small, tight, and best left for kids. It can be cumbersome to climb into and out of them. When they're up, cargo space can be slashed to a fraction of a vehicle's normal volume. So you might be able to carry half of the local youth football team but not its gear.

For this issue, we tested three recently redesigned models at different prices that show the range—and limitations—of the choices in this category.

The midsize Acura MDX, \$49,460, for example, has a pretty typical third-row seat. It's sized for kids. Adults can fit in a pinch, but the sitting position is a bit awkward. Leg, head, and foot room are tight.

The Mitsubishi Outlander, \$27,180, on page 57, is the only compact SUV that currently offers a third row. But this one is tighter still, with the owner's manual warning that the

row is designed only for shorter people. Moreover, to carve out enough leg room for people in that row, you have to slide the second-row seat forward, which impinges on leg room there, too.

The Mercedes-Benz GL350 BlueTec, a diesel-powered luxury SUV costing \$73,020, is the rarity here. It has a roomy, minivanlike third

row that comfortably accommodates two adults. The seat is easy to climb into and out of.

If you really want a three-row SUV and you don't have a luxury-car-level bank account, a couple of affordable models that did well in our testing are the redesigned Hyundai Santa Fe and Kia Sorento, although both are too new for us to have reliability data.

Ratings Luxury SUVs

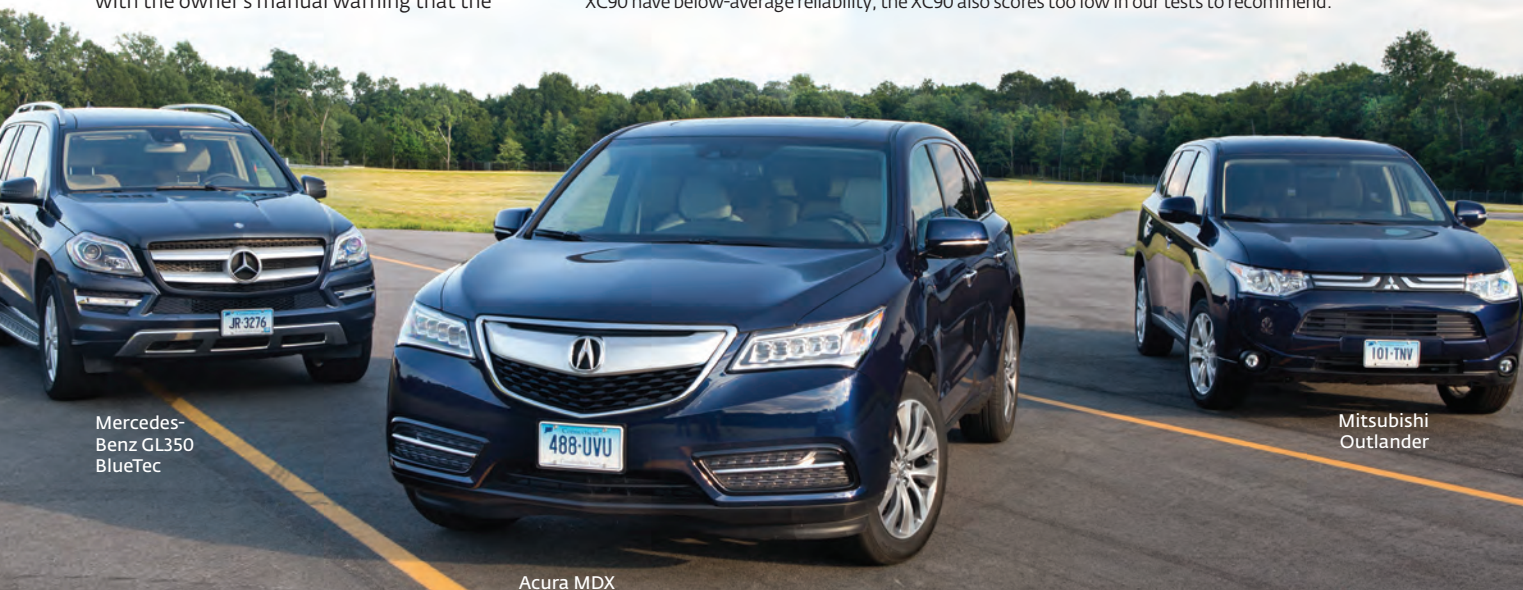
In performance order.

● Excellent
 ● Very good
 ○ Good
 ○ Fair
 ● Poor
 ✓ Recommended

Rec.	Rank	Make & model	Price as tested	In this issue	Overall road-test score	Predicted reliability	Overall mpg
					0 100		
					P F G VG E		
	1	Volkswagen Touareg TDI Sport	\$49,505		82	●	24
	2	Mercedes-Benz GL350 BlueTec	73,020	●	81	new	20
✓	3	Lexus RX 350	47,381		79	●	21
✓	4	Acura MDX Tech	49,460	●	79	○	20
✓	5	Infiniti QX60*	51,920		78	○	19
✓	6	Buick Enclave CXL	43,260		77	○	15
✓	7	Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited (V6)	41,375		77	○	18
	8	Mercedes-Benz ML350	59,960		76	●	18
	9	Land Rover LR4	54,010		73	NA	15
✓	10	Lexus GX 460	58,428		69	○	17
	11	Volvo XC90 3.2	49,850		58	●	17

*Formerly JX.

Why some vehicles are not recommended. The redesigned Mercedes-Benz GL BlueTec is too new for us to have reliability data, and we can't recommend it because of poor emergency handling. We do not have sufficient reliability data for the Land Rover LR4. The VW Touareg, Mercedes-Benz ML, and Volvo XC90 have below-average reliability; the XC90 also scores too low in our tests to recommend.



Mercedes-Benz GL350 BlueTec

Acura MDX

Mitsubishi Outlander

Acura MDX

 **Recommended**

**ROAD-TEST
SCORE**
79

For years, the upscale MDX has been one of our higher-rated SUVs. The redesigned third-generation 2014 model continues that tradition. Overall, it's a well-rounded SUV that does most things well.

The hushed cabin and supple ride are a step up over the previous version. The new 3.5-liter V6 engine is quick, responsive, and refined. And it delivers impressive fuel economy of 20 mpg overall, the same as the diesel-powered Mercedes-Benz GL350 BlueTec (see page 56) and only 1 mpg less than the Lexus RX 350, the most efficient nonhybrid or diesel model in this class.

The MDX has a roomy, comfortable, and very functional cabin that can hold up to seven people. And access to the third-row seat simply requires pressing a single button, a clever, user-friendly design that should be a benchmark for competitive models.

All versions except the base come with a comprehensive suite of electronic safety features, including forward-collision and lane-departure warning systems. Higher-trim versions add features such as self-braking

capability as well as self-steering to help ensure that the vehicle doesn't drift out of its lane.

Alas, if you're looking for pizzazz, you won't find it here. The MDX handles competently, but it has lost the sporty edge of its predecessor. The steering is short on feedback, and the vehicle doesn't have the agility of competitors such as the Audi Q7 and BMW X5.

As with other recent Acuras, the dual-screen in-dash control system can be frustrating and distracting to use while driving. In addition, certain common features are available only on the top-of-the-line trim version or by getting expensive packages.

Reliability is likely to be above average.

Competent luxury

The MDX is powered by a new 290-hp V6 and a six-speed automatic transmission, a combo that's smooth, refined, and responsive. Like most models in this class, premium fuel is recommended. For the first time, the MDX is available with front-wheel drive in addition to all-wheel drive. Opting for it will save you \$2,000 off the purchase price and 1 to 2 mpg on the road.

Handling is sound, if not particularly agile, and when pushed to its limits, the MDX remained balanced and predictable. The ride is compliant but quite firm, with bumps well masked and ride motions mostly controlled.

Inside, the cabin is well finished but is perhaps more purposeful than plush. There's plenty of space for the driver, including knee and head room, and the car has a generous range of power tilt and telescoping adjustments for the steering wheel.

You'll find front seats that are large and



GRIPPING A sliding shelf holds small items in place and acts as a lid for the deep bin below.



FRUGAL MINDED

The MDX's new V6 engine is more fuel efficient, delivering 20 mpg overall.



SPLIT DECISIONS With two large in-dash displays and lots of onscreen menus to wade through, the controls are far too confusing and cumbersome.

well-shaped. The roomy, well-contoured second-row seat can fit three adults across. The seatbacks recline, and the seat slides back and forth, providing generous leg room for the second-row passengers or giving added space to folks in the third row. That third row, though, is best left for kids.

One of the MDX's most clever features aids access to the third-row seat. Push a button on the second-row seat base and that seat folds and slides away on its own, presenting a narrow aisle to the back. Kids can then easily scamper in, although you might find adults grimacing a bit. When it's time to climb out of the MDX's third row, pushing an illuminated button atop the second row seatback repeats the trick.

The MDX has two display screens in the dash and one between the instruments. Their graphics have large fonts and are easy to read. Still, we found it impossible to show audio info (such as song title), fuel economy, and fuel range all at once.

At first glance, the MDX's controls, which combine normal buttons with a center controller knob and a touch screen, seem more approachable than the whiz-bang control systems found in other luxury cars. But the Acura does have a few tricks of its own.

On the plus side, the radio and climate touch screen has clear graphics and large onscreen buttons. It also provides tactile feedback by "buzzing" the screen when you tap it. But manual climate adjustments require pulling up each function's individual screen—fan, airflow, and so on—before making adjustments, which can be laborious. Most people will probably just keep it on Auto.

The audio controls are a mess because of the

system's confusing menu structure, which often requires you to perform lots of steps to find what you want. That can get convoluted and distracting while driving. Moreover, the volume knob is tiny and the MDX has no tuning knob; you can make the giant multicontroller knob serve as one, but good luck finding the right screen for that.

Pairing a phone is very easy if the system prompts you; if it doesn't, the process gets a little tricky. With a compatible phone, the system will let you send and receive text messages that display onscreen. But many of our staffers' phones didn't work with the system, so check the compatibility list.

Voice commands can be used to control the music, phone calls, navigation, and climate controls. But the system is less sophisticated than better versions that recognize more natural voice commands.

The rear cargo area can be expanded by folding one or more sections of the split second- and third-row seats.

Best version and options to get. The base MDX comes well equipped and has leather seats and a sunroof. But most buyers will go with a higher trim version. For about \$4,300 more, the Technology trim is the best all-around choice in the MDX lineup, adding an upgraded stereo, navigation system, and blind-spot monitoring.

For \$8,000 more, the top-level Advance version is the only way to get such luxury-class features as front passenger-seat lumbar adjustment and ventilated front seats, commonly available on competitive models. It also comes with a rear-seat DVD player whether you want it or not. If you don't have kids, that could be wasted money.



Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Fuel economy, fit and finish, third-row access mechanism, electronic safety features, headlights
LOWS	Controls, agility, suspension noise, rear visibility, lack of flexibility in ordering options
TRIM LINE	AWD Technology
DRIVETRAIN	290-hp, 3.5-liter V6; six-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	None
TESTED PRICE	\$49,460

More test findings

BRAKING	Braking performance was very good overall.
HEADLIGHTS	Acura's "jewel eye" LEDs are super-bright and provide very good forward visibility.
ACCESS	Big doors and flat sills ease access. Third-row access is helped by a clever one-button folding mechanism.
VISIBILITY	Good to the front and side. Thick pillars and head restraints reduce rear vision. A backup camera is standard.
CABIN STORAGE	Very generous and finished with a touch of luxury.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	The second-row center head restraint must be raised to provide protection.
CHILD SEATS	Rear-facing seats are a challenge to secure in the second row with seat belts and in the third-row because of limited space.



EASY ENTRANCE Gaining access to the third-row seat is as simple as pressing a button, which moves the second-row seat out of the way.

Mercedes-Benz GL350 BlueTec

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
81

Even among luxury SUVs, the diesel-powered GL350 BlueTec stands out as an exceptionally well-crafted package that excels in almost every area. Passengers enjoy a plush, quiet, and roomy interior; comfortable seats; and a long list of convenience and safety features. The GL also provides enough room for seven people to sit comfortably, surprisingly good fuel economy, and plenty of towing capacity. Plus it's the most comfortable-riding SUV we've tested.

But the package is marred by one serious flaw: poor emergency handling. When we pushed the GL to its handling limits, its electronic stability control system kicked in early and aggressively, which made the vehicle understeer and run wide of its intended path. Then the system's prolonged braking caused a tire to momentarily lock up in our avoidance maneuver, severely limiting the GL's performance. That resulted in a poor rating for emergency handling, so we can't recommend the GL. We think Mercedes-Benz should recalibrate the stability-control system to prevent that problem.



ROOMY BENCH The third-row seat is spacious enough to fit two adults comfortably, rare among three-row SUVs.

Other pauses: The controls, though better than those on certain other German cars, are still somewhat complicated. And the vehicle isn't cheap. Our GL350 BlueTec was \$73,000; a high-end, fully loaded GL can scratch six figures. We don't have data to predict its reliability yet.

Opulent and refined

We opted for the diesel-powered BlueTec model because it offers the best combination of power and fuel economy. The 240-hp turbodiesel V6 and super-smooth seven-speed automatic transmission are refined and responsive while delivering strong midrange acceleration and good fuel economy of 20 mpg overall and 28 on the highway. That gives the BlueTec a long 740-mile cruising range.

In routine handling, the GL is relatively agile for its size and bulk. The luxurious ride swallows up bumps with muted impacts. And the GL is serene and composed on the highway.

Inside, you sit high, with plenty of head and leg room. The well-padded front seats are wide and accommodating. And the GL has one of the best rear seats available; it's nicely contoured, and leg room is abundant. The third-row seat is one of a few with enough room for two adults.

The GL has relatively easy-to-use controls, although the electronic shifter takes some getting used to. The dual-zone automatic climate control worked well, but some drivers complained that it took a while for the diesel-powered vehicle to produce adequate heat on cold mornings.

Phone pairing was easier with an iPhone than with an Android device. Bluetooth and

MP3 audio streaming worked well. Voice commands can be used to control navigation, phone, and audio functions.

Best version and options to get. Our tested GL350 BlueTec is the most sensible combination. The diesel is refined and efficient, and the 19-inch wheels contribute to a more comfortable ride than the optional 20-inches. Blind-spot monitoring is a good idea for this big SUV. We'd skip the running boards; they just get in the way. The imitation-leather upholstery is impressively similar to authentic leather, so we wouldn't splurge on the real thing.



Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Fuel economy, quiet cabin, ride, plush interior, seat comfort, interior space, towing capacity, highway cruising range
LOWS	Clumsy emergency handling, some complicated controls, backup camera works only when radio is on
TRIM LINE	350 BlueTec
DRIVETRAIN	240-hp, 3.0-liter V6 turbodiesel engine; seven-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Panoramic sunroof, trailer hitch, navigation, running boards, seat memory and power lumbar support, active bi-xenon headlights, blind-spot warning, lane-keep assist
TESTED PRICE	\$73,020

More test findings

BRAKING	Very good on wet and dry surfaces.
HEADLIGHTS	Optional bi-xenon low and high beams provide good visibility and intensity.
ACCESS	A bit of a climb, even with big doors and low door sills.
VISIBILITY	Good, thanks to big windows. Backup camera is standard.
CABIN STORAGE	Abundant.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	All are tall enough to provide adequate protection.
CHILD SEATS	Rear-facing seats can be difficult to secure with seat belts.



Scan for video.





Mitsubishi Outlander

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
57

The small-SUV class has been dramatically transformed over the last couple of years, with many redesigned models raising the bar for their competition. In this environment, Mitsubishi's redesigned Outlander needed to be a home run to help it stand out to car buyers. Instead it's a rather mediocre model that rates near the bottom of the category and didn't score high enough in our testing to be recommended.

The Outlander's biggest distinction is its standard third-row seat. Though it's tight and best for kids, the feature makes it the only small SUV that can carry up to seven people. Another plus is the strong air-conditioning system, which proved particularly effective at chilling the cabin, even on hot, humid days.

But those positives aren't enough to offset the vehicle's many shortcomings. Compared with the previous Outlander, which was sporty and agile, this retooled model handles clumsily, tending to lumber through corners and feeling like a larger vehicle than it is.

The ride is fairly stiff and lacks the compliance of some competitors. The engine's sluggish acceleration is accompanied by raucous engine noise, which is accentuated

by a behind-the-times continuously variable transmission (CVT). Its 23 mpg overall is average for this class but nothing special.

Inside, the cabin is noisy, the front seats aren't supportive enough, and the trim looks cheap and feels insubstantial. Even some of the small details seem half-baked, such as rear head restraints that impede visibility; difficult child-seat installation; and an awkward method for folding the second-row seat.

Another consideration is Mitsubishi Motors' uncertain future in the U.S. because of low sales, which could affect the Outlander's resale value and future support. The Outlander is likely to have above-average reliability, based on previous models. Still, with the array of very good competitors in this class, we see little reason to consider the Outlander.

A mixed bag

Lower-trim versions, including our SE, come with a 2.4-liter, four-cylinder engine, mated to a CVT. GT models have a smooth, refined 3.0-liter V6, coupled with a six-speed automatic transmission. Our four's acceleration is slow, it struggles on hills, and it needs a heavy foot on the throttle to maintain speed. Lots of engine noise accompanies any rapid acceleration as the CVT holds revs at high engine speeds.

Inside, the Outlander provides lots of space in front, with plenty of head and knee room. But several drivers wished the telescoping steering wheel pulled closer. Visibility is generally good, except to the rear, where giant, paddlelike head restraints block the view. It's best to stow the third-row seat when not in use. All Outlanders except the base ES come with a backup camera, which works well.

The second-row seat has lots of leg, foot, and head room. Three adults can fit, but they might want to keep the trip short.



Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Standard third-row seat, strong air conditioning, crash-test results
LOWS	Noise, ride, agility, acceleration, front-seat comfort, fit and finish
TRIM LINE	SE
DRIVETRAIN	166 hp, 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine; continuously variable transmission; all-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Towing package
TESTED PRICE	\$27,180

More test findings

BRAKING	Very good performance.
HEADLIGHTS	Headlights are not bright, but they provide good visibility forward and to the sides.
ACCESS	Doors are big, but you need to step over a wide, thick door sill. Third-row access is tight.
VISIBILITY	Decent, thanks to big windows and moderate pillars. But third-row head restraints block most of the rear window. A backup camera is standard on SE and GT versions.
CABIN STORAGE	Adequate; par for the class.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	The second-row center restraint is not tall enough to provide protection.
CHILD SEATS	Complicated requirements for seatback positioning and hard, flat seat cushions make some installations difficult.



PASSENGER SPACE The Outlander is the only small SUV that can carry seven people, although the third-row seat is tight and just for kids.

Controls are generally simple to use, although you can find yourself having to flip through touch-screen menus to get things done. Pairing a phone via Bluetooth is easy, and voice commands can be used for some audio and phone functions.

The second- and third-row seats have split seatbacks for cargo-carrying versatility.

How they compare

Rec.	SMALL SUVs	0	100
		P	F G V G E
✓	Subaru Forester 2.5i Premium	88	
✓	Honda CR-V EX	77	
✓	Mazda CX-5 Touring (2.5L)	76	
✓	Toyota RAV4 XLE	75	
	Ford Escape SE (1.6T)	75	
	Mitsubishi Outlander SE (4-cyl.)	57	



Chevrolet Cruze Turbo Diesel

ROAD-TEST
SCORE
70

Here's the quick take on Chevy's new diesel-powered compact sedan: If you spend a lot of time driving on the highway and want to really stretch your fuel dollars, you might consider putting it on your short list. But if you mostly do around-town driving, it's much less compelling.

In our testing, the Turbo Diesel delivered an excellent 49 mpg on the highway, which is among the best we've seen in any vehicle. With its 15.6-gallon fuel tank, you could drive this Cruze about 760 highway miles before needing to fill up. And while cruising it provides a pleasant, civilized driving environment, with a compliant ride, smooth power delivery, and impressive isolation from road noise. Overall, that combination

helps the miles ease on by.

We measured 33 mpg overall in the Turbo Diesel, which is good but only a little better than some less-expensive gas-powered cars. Also, at slower, urban speeds, you'll notice a fair amount of diesel clatter that gets masked at highway speed and an uneven power delivery that tends to be unresponsive or abrupt, making it difficult to drive smoothly.

Inside, front occupants have ample space in the Cruze, although rear-seat room is very tight. Controls are mostly simple to use. And though the Turbo Diesel is competent in routine handling, it's less agile than other Cruze models when pushed to its handling limits; it tended to run wide in our track's corners, with a lot more understeer.

The Turbo Diesel comes well equipped,

with heated, leather seats; a six-way power adjustable driver's seat; a sunroof; and a backup camera. Our car cost \$27,300, which is about \$2,300 more than an equivalent gas-powered Cruze.

Although it scored well enough, this Cruze isn't recommended because the diesel engine is too new for us to have reliability data.

If you're also considering the similarly priced diesel-powered Volkswagen Jetta TDI, here's the scoop: The Jetta gets slightly better overall fuel economy of 34 mpg, but it gets only 45 on the highway. It also has a larger rear seat and trunk. But the Cruze is better equipped and handles slightly better overall. A maintenance note: The Cruze also requires the periodic addition of diesel exhaust fluid, which the Jetta doesn't.

On the other hand, for about an additional \$1,000, you could buy a diesel-powered Volkswagen Passat TDI, which is larger and roomier. And it gets an even better 51 mpg on the highway and 37 overall.

Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Fuel economy, quiet on highway, roomy front cabin, ride
LOWS	Diesel clatter and lack of driving smoothness at low speeds, tight rear seat
TRIM LINE	Turbo Diesel
DRIVETRAIN	151 hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder turbodiesel engine; six-speed automatic transmission; front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Sunroof, rear camera, heated power mirrors, crystal red paint
TESTED PRICE	\$27,300

More test findings

BRAKING	Relatively short stopping distances.
HEADLIGHTS	Good overall, although not particularly bright.
ACCESS	Easy in front, but tight getting into the rear seat.
VISIBILITY	Upright styling with big windows makes it easy; optional camera works well.
CABIN STORAGE	Minimal, but with a few clever details.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	There's no center-rear head restraint.
CHILD SEATS	Belt anchors are too far forward to securely install many seats.

How they compare

FUEL-EFFICIENT CARS UNDER \$30,000	Overall mpg	0 P F G V E
✓ Toyota Camry Hybrid XLE	38	93
✓ Honda Accord LX (4-cyl.)	30	90
Ford Fusion SE Hybrid	39	87
✓ Mazda6 Sport	32	85
✓ Volkswagen Passat TDI SE	37	80
✓ Toyota Prius Four	44	79
Volkswagen Jetta Hybrid SE	37	79
Ford Focus SE SFE	31	77
✓ Chevrolet Cruze Eco	27	72
Chevrolet Cruze Turbo Diesel	33	70
✓ Volkswagen Jetta TDI	34	68
✓ Honda Civic Hybrid	40	66



MILEAGE MARKER At an impressive 49 mpg on the highway, the Cruze has a driving range of 760 miles.



Scan for video.

Kia Cadenza

ROAD-TEST SCORE
86

The Cadenza banishes any lingering thoughts that Kia is just a manufacturer of cheap, unrefined cars. This modern large sedan is well-rounded and thoroughly likable. And it scored near the top of its category in our testing, edging out the Toyota Avalon, which was once a benchmark in this segment. Thanks to the Cadenza's better ride and handling, it also outscores the Hyundai Azera, which shares its platform and powertrain.

Pulling off that high score requires a long list of positives and very few faults. The cabin is quiet, well-finished, and spacious, and it has super-simple controls, which is rare in a loaded luxury sedan. The refined 3.3-liter V6, which is mated to a smooth six-speed automatic transmission, delivers ample power and a respectable 22 mpg overall.

Ride comfort is very good, but the Cadenza lacks the placid isolation of the best-riding cars, such as the Buick LaCrosse and Chevrolet Impala.

Despite Kia's traditional emphasis on value, our \$39,030 Cadenza lacks some features we expect for the price, such as

blind-spot monitoring and comprehensive seat adjustments. To get blind-spot monitoring, you need to ante up for the Luxury and Technology packages, which cost \$3,000 each.

We don't yet have reliability data on this new model.

Plush interior

Though the Cadenza provides secure, responsive handling, it's not particularly agile. The body remains controlled in corners, and the steering provides decent, if vague, response. When pushed to its relatively low handling limits, the sedan exhibits notable body lean and understeer.

Inside you'll find a plush, attractive interior. Drivers can stretch out, although those who are taller might find head room to be a bit tight. Some drivers wished the telescoping steering wheel pulled closer, and shorter people had trouble adjusting the seat cushion for a comfortable driving position.

The large, well-padded front seats fit most people well, although the front passenger will have to do without lumbar or bottom-cushion tilt adjustments. Rear-seat passengers will enjoy plenty of leg room and head room, and the seat is wide enough to fit three adults across.

Controls are refreshingly easy to use, with large, well-labeled buttons and simple radio knobs. Even the touch screen has big onscreen buttons and intuitive logic. Pairing devices via Bluetooth is easy, and you can stream music and podcasts through an iPhone or Android device. You can also control phone, navigation, radio, and iPod functions through voice commands.

The trunk is roomy, but the space can't be expanded by folding the rear seats. There's only a narrow pass-through for long items.



SUN BLOCKER A power-operated rear-window shade is one way that the Cadenza pampers its passengers.

How they compare

Rec.	LARGE SEDANS	0	P	F	G	V6	E	100
	Chevrolet Impala 2LTZ (V6)	95						
✓	Hyundai Genesis 3.8	92						
	Kia Cadenza	86						
✓	Toyota Avalon Limited (V6)	85						
✓	Chrysler 300 Limited (V6)	83						
	Hyundai Azera	81						
	Dodge Charger SXT Plus (V6)	75						
	Buick LaCrosse Touring (V6)	74						
	Ford Taurus Limited (3.5, V6)	64						



Tested vehicle	
HIGHS	Roomy interior, simple controls, fit and finish, quietness, powertrain
LOWS	Lacks some features expected in this class
TRIM LINE	Premium
DRIVETRAIN	293-hp, 3.3-liter V6 ; six-speed automatic transmission, front-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Luxury package, including panoramic sunroof, HID headlights, ventilated driver's seat, heated steering wheel and rear seats
TESTED PRICE	\$39,030
More test findings	
BRAKING	Short stopping distances.
HEADLIGHTS	Optional HIDs are very bright and reach a good distance but are particularly annoying to oncoming drivers.
ACCESS	Large doors and plenty of room make it easy in front and rear.
VISIBILITY	OK, but side windows are short. A backup camera is standard.
CABIN STORAGE	Very convenient and easy to access.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	The center-rear restraint is not tall enough to protect adults, even when it's fully raised.
CHILD SEATS	Wide enough to securely fit three child seats abreast.



Scan for video.

Compare



VERSION	Mercedes-Benz GL-Class	Acura MDX	Mitsubishi Outlander	Chevrolet Cruze	Kia Cadenza
TRIM LINE	GL350 BlueTec	Tech	SE	Turbo Diesel	Premium
PRICE: BASE/TESTED ^①	\$62,400/\$73,020	\$48,565/\$49,460	\$25,795/\$27,180	\$24,885/\$27,300	\$35,100/\$39,030
DRIVETRAIN	3.0-liter V6 (240 hp) turbodiesel	3.5-liter V6 (290 hp)	2.4-liter 4-cyl. (166 hp)	2.0-liter 4-cyl. (151 hp) turbodiesel	3.3-liter V6 (293 hp)
Engine				6-speed automatic	6-speed automatic
Transmission	7-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	CVT		
Drive wheels	AWD	AWD	AWD	Front	Front
TIRES TESTED	Continental 4X4 Contact, size 275/55R19 111H	Continental CrossContact LX Sport, size 245/55R19 103H	Toyo A24, size P225/55R18 97H	Goodyear Assurance (fuel max technology), size 215/55R17 94V	Hankook Optimo H426, size P245/45R18 96V
RATINGS					
PERFORMANCE					
Acceleration					
0 to 60 mph, sec.	8.2	7.2	10.8	9.7	7.2
45 to 65 mph, sec.	5.6	5.0	6.7	5.8	4.6
Quarter-mile, sec.	16.5	15.6	18.3	17.6	15.7
Transmission					
Routine handling					
Emergency handling					
Avoid. maneuver, speed, mph	44.5	52.0	51.0	53.5	51.5
Braking					
From 60 mph, dry/wet, ft.	136/146	136/145	130/142	134/144	132/134
Headlights					
COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE					
Ride					
Noise					
Driving position					
Front-seat comfort					
Rear-seat/third-seat comfort					
Access					
Controls and displays					
Interior fit and finish					
Trunk/cargo area					
PREDICTED RELIABILITY	New			New	New
FUEL					
Overall mpg	20	20	23	33	22
City/highway mpg	14/28	13/29	17/30	22/49	14/33
Type	diesel	premium	regular	diesel	regular
Capacity, gal./Cruising range, miles	26.4/535	19.5/390	15.8/365	15.6/520	18.5/410
Annual cost, 12K mi. @ \$3.80/gal.	\$2,365 @ \$4.00/gal.	\$2,390 @ \$4.00/gal.	\$1,960	\$1,445 @ \$4.00/gal.	\$2,055
SAFETY					
CRASH TESTS					
IIHS frontal offset	NA	Good	Good	Good	Good
IIHS side	NA	Good	Good	Good	Good
IIHS rear	NA	NA	Good	Good	Good
IIHS roof strength	NA	NA	Good	Good	Good
NHTSA front, driver/pass.	NA/NA	NA/NA	NA/NA		NA/NA
NHTSA side, driver/rear	NA/NA	NA/NA	NA/NA		NA/NA
NHTSA rollover 2WD/4WD	NA/NA	NA/NA	NA/NA	NA	NA/NA
AIR BAGS					
Side, front/rear	std./std.	std./no	std./no	std./std.	std./no
Head protection	std. w/rollover	std. w/rollover	std. w/rollover	standard	standard
SPECIFICATIONS					
DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHT					
Length/width/height, in.	202/84/73	194/77/68	183/71/66	181/71/58	196/73/58
Wheelbase, in.	121	111	105	106	112
Turning circle, ft.	41	40	37	38	38
Ground clearance, in.	7.0	7.0	8.0	4.5	4.5
Curb weight, lb. (% front/rear)	5,660 (50/50)	4,290 (58/42)	3,505 (55/45)	3,515 (63/37)	3,765 (59/41)
Maximum load, lb.	1,180	1,175	1,155	910	905
Luggage, suitcases+duffels/ Cargo volume, cu. ft.	47.0	34.0	32.5	2+2	3+2
Towing capacity, lb.	7,500	5,000	1,500	NR	NR
INTERIOR ROOM					
Front shoulder room, in.	58.0	60.5	56.0	55.0	57.5
Front leg room, in.	42.5	41.0	41.0	43.5	42.5
Front head room, in. ^②	4.5	4.5	6.5	4.5	3.0
Rear shoulder room, in.	57.5	58.5	55.0	53.0	54.5
Rear leg room, in.	28.0	30.0	30.0	26.0	31.0
Rear head room, in. ^②	6.0	3.5	4.0	3.0	1.5
Third-row shoulder room, in.	50.0	52.0	51.0	—	—
Third-row leg room, in.	25.5	25.0	24.0	—	—
Third-row head room, in. ^②	4.5	0.0	0.0	—	—

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



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Say (less) cheese

The 24-slice package gives you just 33 percent more cheese than the 16-slice package. How does that math work? A slice in the smaller package weighs three-quarters of an ounce; in the larger, two-thirds.



Power wash

Preferred Softwash roof cleaners promise to remove ugly roof stains "in one day!" Apparently they also make quick work of tree and bush removal.



Warning! Oh, never mind

An alert next to this picture, from a product containing cement and silica sand, says, "Wear waterproof gloves, a fully buttoned long-sleeved shirt, full-length trousers and tight fitting safety goggles."



Surf's down

"If you liked using [discontinued] Surf Hair Texture Paste we think you will also like our new Power Putty Surfer Hair," Garnier says. But a Florida reader demurs. "A hair product that I have been using for years has suspiciously increased the size of its packaging, decreased the ounces contained within, and raised the price." The suggested retail price for Surf Hair was \$3.99; for Power Putty, it's \$5.99.

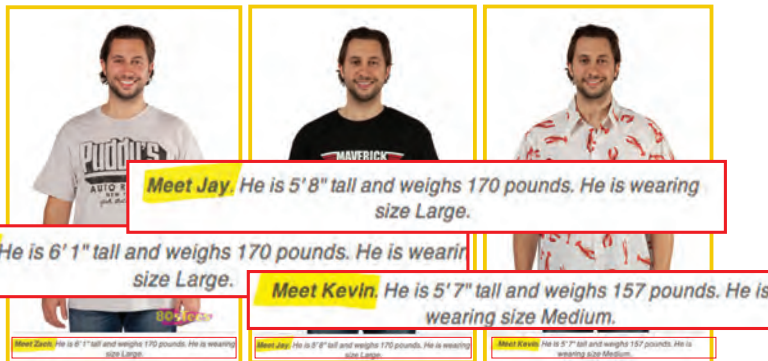


Are we bothering you yet?

A Florida reader opted out of receiving mailed promotions from Bank of America. So—of course!—the bank mailed him a letter asking him to reconsider his opt-out option, which was expiring. If he wanted to continue not getting letters like the one he just got, he could (a) go online and select marketing preferences, (b) call a toll-free number, (c) visit a banking center, or (d) talk to his financial adviser.

Triplets?

Either that or this T-shirt website found a fellow who can shrink and grow at will.



Buzzkill

Over the years, a Maryland reader has noticed a change in this liqueur. With enough time, it may consist only of hazelnuts.

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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NCPS1013A

*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

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How to use the Canada Extra section

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


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

In most cases, the prices we list here

are the approximate retail in Canadian dollars; manufacturers' list prices are indicated by an asterisk (*). Check marks identify CR Best Buys or recommended products in the U.S. Ratings. "NA" in a chart means that information wasn't available from the manufacturer. We include, in the Contact Info list on page 32D, the manufacturer's phone number and Web address in Canada, so that you can call or go online to get information on a model you can't find in the stores. (Many products that aren't available in Canadian stores can be bought online.)




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



 **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.

Food processors Report and Ratings, page 39

Five of the 20 tested food processors are available. All are recommended models.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E
	1	Breville Sous Chef	\$500	81
	2	Cuisinart Prep 11 Plus	225	70
	3	Cuisinart DFP-14BCN	330	67

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G VG E
	4	Cuisinart MFP-107BC	\$125	65
	5	Cuisinart Pro Custom II DLC-85	230	64

Generators

Report, page 24, and Ratings, page 25

Thirteen of the 27 tested generators are available, including eight of the recommended models.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Specifications			Overall score
				Claimed output (watts)	Weight with fuel (lb.)	Run time (hr.) ¹	
							0 100
							P F G VG E

A PORTABLE All are wheeled and run on gasoline unless footnoted. They require manual starting.

✓	2	Honda EM6500S2C	\$3,300	5,500	273	10	70
✓	3	Briggs & Stratton 30470	1,000	7,000	270	10	69
✓	4	Honda EU6500iS1C	4,600	5,500	286	8	69
✓	8	Champion 41553	1,000	7,500	245	9	66
	12	Yamaha EF6600DE ²	3,500	6,000	291	10	62
	14	Champion 41154	700	7,500	248	9	57
	16	Generac XG7000E 5845	1,300	7,000	262	15	49
	20	Briggs & Stratton 30468	900	5,500	199	9	35

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Specifications			Overall score
				Claimed output (watts)	Weight with fuel (lb.)	Run time (hr.) ¹	
							0 100
							P F G VG E

B SMALL STATIONARY These install permanently and run on propane or natural gas. They start automatically.

✓	2	Generac 6237	\$2,250	7,000 ⁶	NA	336 ⁷	91
✓	3	Generac CorePower 5837	1,900	6,000 ⁶	NA	296 ⁷	77

C LARGE STATIONARY These install and run like smaller models but can handle more needs.

✓	1	Kohler 14RESA	3,500	12,000 ⁶	NA	182 ⁷	93
✓	2	Generac 6240	3,400	13,000 ⁶	NA	178 ⁷	91
	3	GE 40324	NA	11,500 ⁶	NA	215 ⁷	83

¹ The average we measured over various loads. ² Price includes optional wheel kit.

⁶ Claimed output is with natural gas; output with propane is 1,000 to 2,000 watts higher (as tested). ⁷ With 250-gallon liquid-propane tank; runs indefinitely with natural gas. NA=not applicable; stationary unit.

Chain saws

Report, page 26, and Ratings, page 27

Eleven of the 20 tested chain saws are available, including four of the recommended models.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Specifications			Overall score
				Bar length tested (in.)	Engine cc/amps/volts	Weight (lb.)	
							0 100
							P F G VG E

A GAS Best for bigger jobs and frequent cutting on heavily wooded properties.

✓	1	Stihl MS 180 C-BE	\$300	16	32 cc	11.0	81
✓	2	Husqvarna 965167996	330	16	41	11.5	75
✓	3	Echo CS-352-16	300	16	34	10.5	75
	4	Echo CS-400-18	390	18	40	12.0	74
	5	Poulan Pro 967198201	270	18	48	15.5	73

B LIGHT-DUTY GAS These offer gas-saw mobility for light- to medium-duty work.

	2	Homelite UT10589A	180	18	42	12.0	63
	4	Poulan 966557801	190	16	38	13.0	54

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Specifications			Overall score
				Bar length tested (in.)	Engine cc/amps/volts	Weight (lb.)	
							0 100
							P F G VG E

C CORDED ELECTRIC Best for post-storm cleanup and other light-duty work near an outlet.

✓	1	Worx WG303.1	\$120	16	15 amp	11.0	68
	3	Makita UC4030A	290	16	15	12.0	60
	6	Homelite UT43122	90	16	12	9.0	52

D BATTERY-POWERED Offers push-button starts but is strictly light-duty and has limited run time.

	2	Ryobi RY40510	230	9	40	9.0	34
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Digital TV antennas

Report and Ratings, page 37

Nine of the 10 tested digital TV antennas are available.

Brand & model (in alphabetical order)	Price (on Amazon.com)
Antennas Direct CSM1-XG	\$145
Mohu Leaf	80
Mohu Leaf Plus Amplified Antenna	95
Mohu Leaf Ultimate Amplified	145
RCA ANT111	20
RCA ANT1650 Amplified	70
Terk Omnidirectional Amplified Indoor HDTV Antenna FDTV1A	90
Terk FDTV2	50
Winegard FL-5000 Flatwave	50

Lightbulbs

Report, page 30, and Ratings, pages 32-33

Nine of the 50 tested CFL and LED lightbulbs are available, including three of the recommended models.

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

A 60-WATT REPLACEMENTS GENERAL PURPOSE

Most have a Color Rendering Index (CRI) between 81 and 84.

✓	2	Feit Electric A19/OM/800/LED [2]	\$25.00	99
	10	Philips 60W Soft White Mini (CFL, 2 pack)	9.50	74
	13	GE Mini Spiral 13-60W Soft White 85383 (CFL, 2 pack)	9.00	67
	17	Utilitech Soft White Mini 13W-60W (Lowe's) (CFL, 6 pack)	14.00	58

D 100-WATT REPLACEMENT GENERAL PURPOSE

Has a CRI of 82.

✓	1	Utilitech 100W Soft White CFL (Lowe's) (6 pack)	17.50	68
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Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score
				0 100 P F G V E

E 65- TO 75-WATT REPLACEMENTS FLOOD/REFLECTOR

Most have a CRI between 80 and 84.

✓	2	Feit Electric BR30 Dimmable LED [2]	\$30.00	96
	4	Sylvania 15W BR30 LED Dimmable	40.00	87
	5	GE 65W R30 Dimmable 21710 (CFL)	13.00	72
	8	Philips R30 Dimmable (CFL)	13.00	34

[2] Works with photocell.

Autos

Report and Ratings, pages 53-60

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
LUXURY SUVs								
Mercedes-Benz GL	\$73,700-\$125,900	3.3	8.7	3.8	18.9	16.9	8.4	11.6
Acura MDX	49,990-65,990	3.1	7.6	3.7	17.9	17.9	8.0	11.7
SMALL SUV								
Mitsubishi Outlander	25,998-35,998	4.5	11.4	4.6	20.9	14.1	7.7	10.1
FUEL-EFFICIENT CAR UNDER \$30,000								
Chevrolet Cruze Turbo Diesel	24,945	3.9	10.2	4.0	20.1	10.9	4.8	7.1
LARGE SEDAN								
Kia Cadenza	37,795-44,995	3.1	7.7	3.4	18.0	16.3	7.2	10.6

Contact info

How to reach manufacturers in Canada.

Antennas Direct

877-825-5572
antennasdirect.com

Breville

855-683-3535
breville.ca

Briggs & Stratton

800-444-7774
briggsandstratton.com

Champion

877-338-0999
championpowerequipment.com

Cuisinart

800-472-7606
cuisinart.ca

Echo

877-324-6600
echo.ca

Feit Electric

888-985-6937
lowes.ca

GE (generators)

888-261-2008
geappliances.ca

GE (lightbulbs)

800-435-4448
gelighting.com

Generac

888-436-3722
generac.ca

Homelite

Contact local Home Depot
homedepot.ca

Honda

888-946-6329
honda.ca

Husqvarna

800-805-5523
husqvarna.com/ca

Kohler

800-456-4537
ca.kohler.com

Makita

800-263-3734
makita.ca

Mohu

855-446-6648
gomohu.com

Philips

Contact local Home Depot
homedepot.ca

Poulan

poulan.com

RCA

rcaaudiovideo.com

Ryobi

ryobitools.com

Stihl

519-681-3000
stihl.ca

Sylvania

888-985-6937
lowes.ca

Terk

terk.com

Utilitech

888-985-6937
lowes.ca

Winegard

800-288-8094
winegard.com

Worx

worx.com

Yamaha

416-498-1911
yamaha-motor.ca