

JUN 14

**America's Best  
Ice Cream**

PAGE 10



**Bug-Proof  
Your Summer**

PAGE 14



**Gorgeous Paints  
That Last & Last**

PAGE 24



**Toyota Highlander**

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JUNE 2014 | CONSUMERREPORTS.ORG

# ConsumerReports®

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- Lock doors
- Check lights
- Stop leaks

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away**

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- Subscriber benefit
- Guaranteed savings off MSRP\*\*
- CR Recommendation displayed on qualifying vehicles
- Network of dealers dedicated to great service
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# See how much you could save!

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\*Between 7/1/13 and 9/30/13, the average estimated savings off MSRP presented by TrueCar Certified Dealers to users of the Consumer Reports Build & Buy Car Buying Service, based on users who configured virtual vehicles and subsequently purchased a new vehicle of the same make and model listed on the certificate from Certified Dealers, was \$2,919. Your actual savings may vary. \*\*Guaranteed Savings currently not available in all states. See site for details.



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

## ISSUE BY THE NUMBERS

### What's the score?

88

Sunpentown SD-31E dehumidifier



17

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## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

### Notice something different?

We've been busy improving the look of Consumer Reports and want to know what you think. There will be additional changes in the coming months—but no change in our mission to protect consumers and empower their lives. We'd love to hear your feedback.

Go to [CRresearch.org/june14](http://CRresearch.org/june14).

### COMING IN JULY

Internet privacy; sunscreens; air conditioners; best ways to remodel your kitchen, plus our exclusive Ratings of ranges, cooktops, wall ovens, refrigerators, dishwashers, and more.

## CONSUMER REPORTS

We are the world's largest independent, nonprofit, consumer-product-testing organization, based in Yonkers, N.Y. We survey millions of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We buy all of the products we rate. We don't accept paid advertising. We don't accept free test samples from manufacturers. We do not allow our name or content to be used for any promotional purposes. **How to reach us:** Write to us at Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703-1057, Attn: Customer Service. To **send a letter** to the editor, go to [ConsumerReports.org](http://ConsumerReports.org).

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**Ratings** We rate products using these symbols:

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor





## ON YOUR MIND

### The future of cars

"The Road to Self-Driving Cars" (April 2014) says "using leading-edge technology to replace our current system that consists of old, poorly maintained vehicles operated by poorly trained, easily distracted, unsupervised individuals has a lot of potential for safety gains." Our system consists of old vehicles because new cars are too expensive, and up to a certain point, the driver maintains a smaller footprint by keeping the old car. As for poorly maintained vehicles, many states have discontinued already-inadequate vehicle inspection requirements.

—**Robert Moss** Bloomfield, NJ

Obviously this month's auto issue required a lot of thorough, professional work and some creative approaches on presenting the information. However, I miss some of the information which I've used in the past: thumbnail photos of each model and relevant facts and an overall summary by car of specifications, such as turning circle, type of fuel (regular vs. premium), and length and width.

—**Margaret Pryor** South Salem, NY

**Editors Note** We wanted to try something new and fresh. In each section we tailored recommendations based on how people use cars. The "Which Is Right For You?" sections allowed us to pinpoint strengths of cars, such as all-wheel drive, or which are most fun to drive. Full Ratings and vehicle profiles and photos are at [ConsumerReports.org](http://ConsumerReports.org).

In "5 Great Cars You May Be Overlooking" (April 2014), you list the VW Tiguan. Yet on the next two pages the Tiguan is in the lists of worst gas mileage and most expensive to own. So why would you include a thirsty, expensive-to-own vehicle in your list of great cars?

—**Craig Younger** Gahanna, OH

**Editors Note** The Volkswagen Tiguan is more solid, substantial, and enjoyable to drive than most of its more widely sold SUV peers. For some, that might offset the extra cost in fuel consumption.

**Correction** The May report "Getting More from Your Store" incorrectly said Publix, Raley's, and Whole Foods scored as high as Walmart for low prices.

## ASK OUR EXPERTS

**I recently purchased a house that has granite kitchen counters. When liquid from raw chicken dripped on them, I tried cleaning it with diluted bleach, but it seemed to dull the surface. I've since heard that bleach should not be used on granite.**

—**Edward Beres** Pasadena, CA

**We have used bleach to clean difficult stains in our countertop stain test and have seen some (but not all) granite tops possibly losing sheen where the stain was. We don't know whether it's the bleach or the remnants of the actual staining agent. You should follow the manufacturer's advice and periodically seal the granite. You could also try OxiClean. Dampen it and let it dry on the spot.**

My son has never had any official credit, although he has rented apartments, paid his own bills, and made big purchases in the past. Now he wants to buy some real estate, but his application for a credit card was denied. He is afraid that a string of "credit denied" responses will affect his record even though he has considerable savings. What do you suggest?

—**Jenny Lidington**  
Snohomish, WA

To avoid further credit denials, your son should check his credit-denial letter, which will explain

the top reasons he was turned down. That provides a road map for what he needs to do to build his credit rating and prevent being turned down in the future. Denial also entitles him to a free copy of his report. Check for erroneous information and the possibility that an identity thief opened accounts in his name. You can help your son establish creditworthiness by making him an authorized user of your credit card. (Your account and good rating will show up on his credit report.)

I am eligible for Medicare next year and am wondering if there are any resources that I can go to or use to help me know when to start the

process, what my options are, deadlines for getting onto Medicare, deadlines for getting the supplemental insurance, and what to look for in supplemental insurance.

—**Johanna Columbro**  
Dayton, OH

Yes, lots! Your first resource should be Medicare's consumer portal, [Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov), where you can get the answers to those questions and much more. Here at Consumer Reports we've also created a Medicare information center at [ConsumerReports.org/cro/medicare](http://ConsumerReports.org/cro/medicare). And for more complicated questions we recommend [medicareinteractive.org](http://medicareinteractive.org), a project of the nonprofit Medicare Rights Center.

**SOLID ADVICE**  
Periodically seal granite countertops to prevent staining.





## Greener gas, healthier lungs

**THE WIN** The Environmental Protection Agency announced new rules that lower the amount of sulfur in gasoline and cut tailpipe emissions from vehicles. Last year, Consumers Union testified before the EPA and collected more than 31,000 signatures in support of the regulations.

### WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

Millions of Americans struggle with health concerns such as asthma and other respiratory problems that are caused and complicated by breathing air that's heavy with smog and

other pollutants. Consumers Union thinks the new rules—known as “Tier 3 standards”—will lead to tremendous health and environmental benefits and push automakers to deliver more fuel-efficient vehicles.

Low-sulfur gasoline will also help improve vehicle reliability while lowering the costs of maintaining emissions systems.

When you add up the benefits, it's a big step forward by the EPA.

### STATE LINES

## Gift Card City, U.S.A.

New Haven, Conn., appears to be the first city to enter the gift-card business. Its “Shop-Dine-Park” card costs \$4, can hold up to \$999, and supports more than 250 local restaurants and retailers.

Will city-backed financial products take off in 2014? We are all for community support, but gift cards don't come with the same protections as credit and debit cards. Your losses won't be limited in the event of theft or fraud. Go to [ConsumersUnion.org](http://ConsumersUnion.org) and search “gift cards” to learn about perks and pitfalls.

# 4,300

**That's the average number of mortgage-related complaints received each month by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, a tally that has shown little improvement. Consumers Union looks forward to seeing the impact of new rules enacted in 2014 by the CFPB that aim to prevent irresponsible lending practices. We'll continue to push for their full enforcement.**

**'He is the type of person the court should expect to defraud his fellow inmates while in custody and to continue to commit fraud into old age. He appears capable of nothing else.'**

—The federal prosecutor's description of TV pitchman and author Kevin Trudeau, who in March was sentenced to 10 years in prison for violating a 2004 court order prohibiting him from making deceptive infomercials.

## Testing car seats



For decades, CONSUMER REPORTS has worked to make child car seats safer. Now we've made meaningful improve-

ments to our evaluations of infant car seats with a newly developed dynamic crash test.

Traditional child-seat tests—including our own previous ones—don't account for what happens when a child's head hits the interior of a vehicle.

To create a test that factors that in, we spent more than two years doing extensive research, viewing hours of crash videos, and building relationships with experts, including academics, medical staff, regulators, manufacturers, and bloggers.

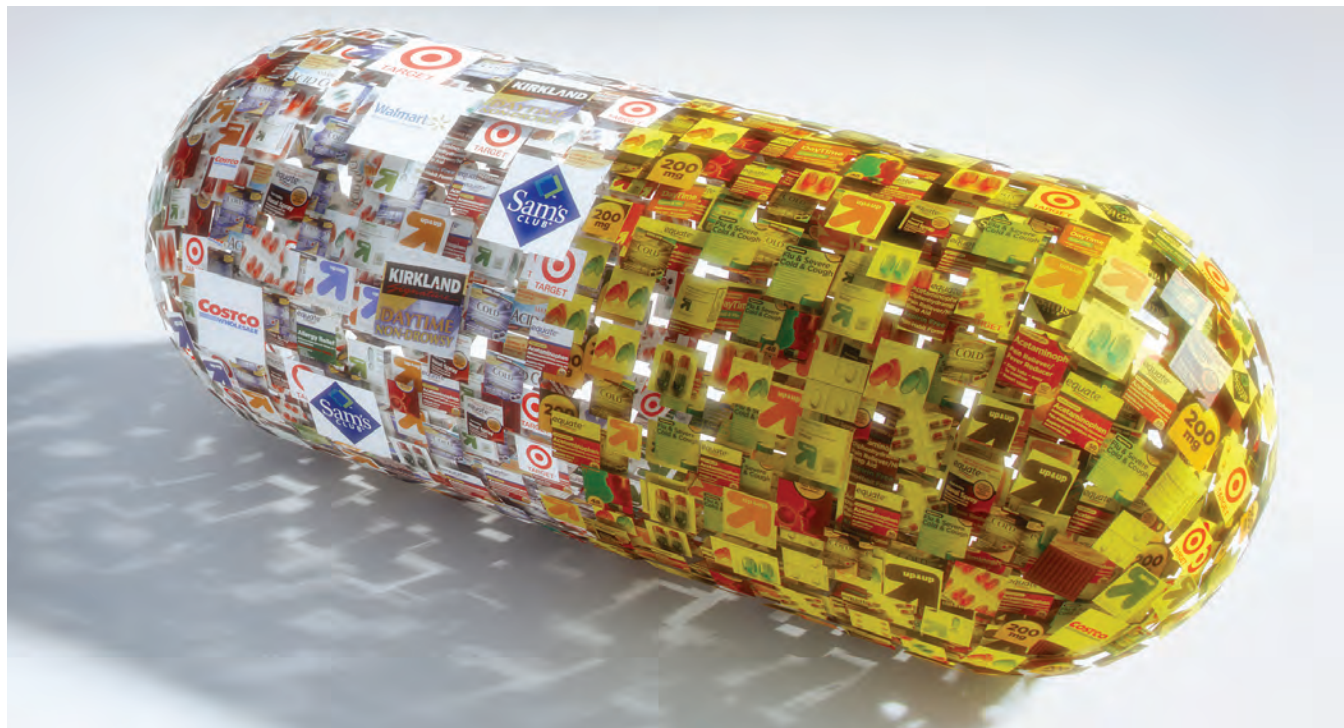
Our new dynamic test, done by an outside lab, simulates more realistic conditions inside cars, including installation on an actual vehicle seat and a surface that mimics a front seatback. We also upped the speed of the crash from 30 to 35 mph. All car seats provide an essential level of protection; our goal was to make it easier to compare car seats' potential for offering an additional margin of safety. Fortunately, some manufacturers already use features that increase safety. (Read more on page 17 and at [ConsumerReports.org](http://ConsumerReports.org).)

Our seven certified child-passenger-safety technicians evaluate how easy the seats are to use, including how clear labels and instructions are. Those factors are important for proper installation. We also evaluate each car seat in five vehicle types that pose particular challenges.

CONSUMER REPORTS' test results have helped us identify features and technologies that we believe can make a big difference in protecting the smallest passengers. We're hopeful that publishing the results will lead to even safer car seats.

*Jim Guest*  
Jim Guest  
President

# Up Front



## Top store brands at pharmacies

**THE TREND TOWARD** store brands isn't limited to supermarkets. "Given the perfect storm of a struggling economy, rising consumer perception of quality, and new lines hitting stores daily," says Todd Hale, senior vice president of consumer insights at Nielsen, "it's only natural for drugstore retailers to want to win as many converts to their own brands as possible."

Makers of name brands are feeling the need to push their products above the com-

petition. Consider the label on a bottle of Vicks cold medicine we saw recently that said: "Vicks does not make store brands."

To find out which pharmacy store brands performed better than others, we asked more than 22,000 readers to rate prices, quality, and selection. Costco's Kirkland Signature was the only one to get top marks for price and quality for over-the-counter remedies as well as personal-care products. Sam's Club's Simply Right OTC remedies received a top mark for price. In past studies, we've found that store brands as a whole generally cost far less than name brands.

The Ratings show results for the nation's biggest chains and for independent drugstores as a group. Regional chains that earned better-than-average scores for their store brands across the board included Wegmans, Fred Meyer, Kroger, Meijer, King Soopers, and H-E-B.

## Ratings

In order of average store-brand ratings.

Store	Over-the-counter remedies			Personal-care products		
	Price	Quality	Selection	Price	Quality	Selection
Costco	●	●	●	●	●	○
Target	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sam's Club	●	●	○	●	●	○
Walmart	●	●	●	●	●	●
Independents	○	●	●	○	●	●
Kmart	○	●	●	○	●	●
Walgreens	○	●	●	○	●	●
Rite Aid	○	●	●	○	●	●
CVS	○	○	●	○	○	○

Note: Ratings for store-brand price, quality, and selection reflect averages on a scale ranging from "very poor" to "excellent." Ratings are based on the experiences of Consumer Reports subscribers at walk-in pharmacies between April 2012 and April 2013, and might not reflect those of the U.S. population as a whole.

### ■ DID YOU KNOW?

In our survey, 94 percent of shoppers at independent drugstores gave pharmacists there high marks for their knowledge of prescription drugs. Independents also sell store-brand remedies and products. Among the names you might see: Quality Choice, Good Neighbor, and Select Brand.



## Tests of three people-finders

Personal locators are meant to provide peace of mind. Anyone (say, a child, or an adult with dementia) who wears or carries one of those GPS devices should be easy to find. But our tests have found that's not always the case.

**What we tested.** The Amber Alert GPS device, \$130 plus \$15 per month; the PocketFinder Personal GPS Locator (which can be used for pets and vehicles, too), \$130 plus \$13 per month; and the Filip, \$200 plus \$10 per month.

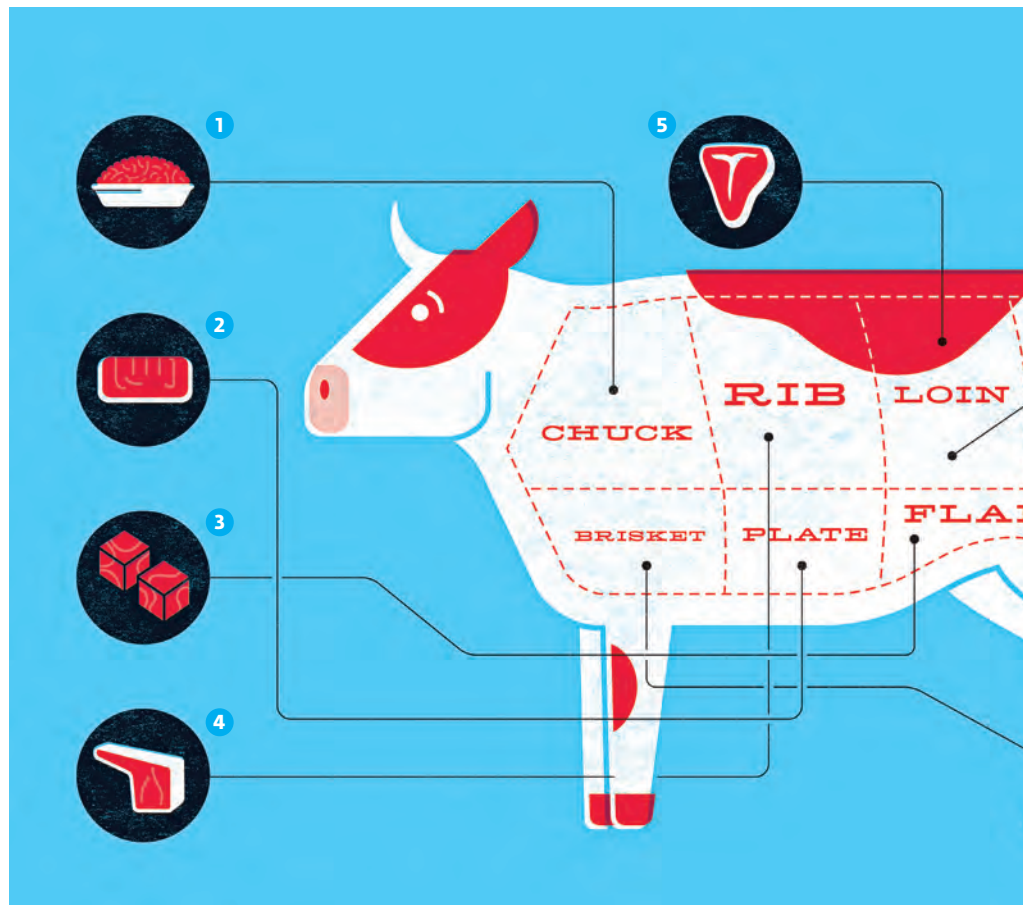
**How they work.** The devices use GPS navigation or a combination of GPS, Wi-Fi, and cell-phone signals to determine location. They send the information via the AT&T cellular network to either a Web page or a smart-phone app that's monitored by a parent or guardian. Amber Alert and Filip are also limited cell phones, allowing the person holding it to be contacted or to send an SOS. Zones can be set for all three devices so that the parent or guardian will be alerted if the person being monitored has strayed out of a certain area.

**What we found.** All three devices work as claimed—sometimes. And that's the problem. They determine and communicate locations only intermittently—PocketFinder every 2 minutes, Amber Alert every 5 minutes, Filip every 15 minutes. As a result, the information may no longer be accurate. And if the device can't read GPS signals, which often happens indoors, you're out of luck. Amber Alert informed our tester that it was a half-mile from him—even as it sat on his desk all day.

**Bottom line.** Given their occasional inability to provide up-to-the-minute location information, these devices provide limited peace of mind.

## Meat map: A cooking guide

It's easy to remember that as a rule, meat far from horn or hoof is most tender, and that meat close to those parts is flavorful but should be cooked a long time. Now you just have to remember where all the cuts are. Here's a guide to, um, steer you in the right direction. Beef prices are rising, so it's especially important to choose wisely.



### CLAIM CHECK

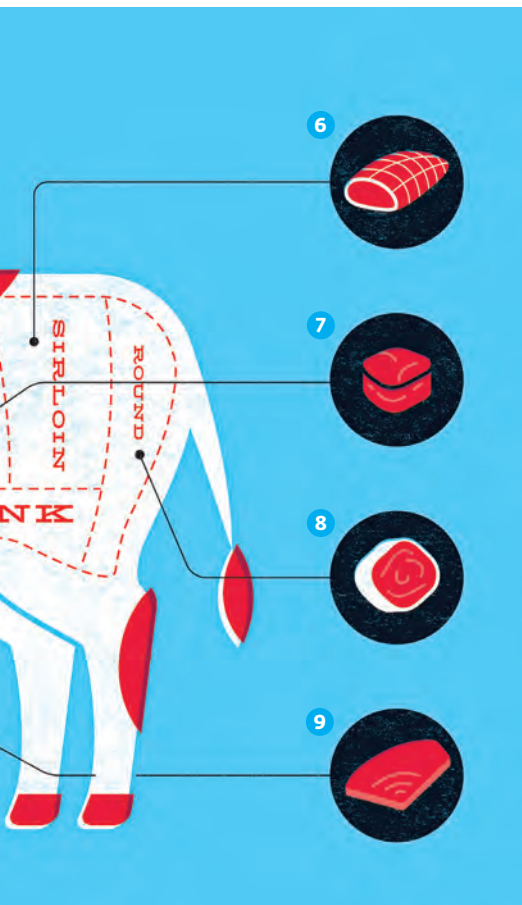
## Cool towels on a hot day

**The claim.** Place a Chill-Its 6602 Evaporative Cooling Towel under cold water for a minute, wring it, and it will make you feel "significantly cooler than ambient air." You can wear it "for hours or for quick relief," rewetting it occasionally. The Mission Enduracool Instant Cooling Towel "typically" cools to 30 degrees below body

temperature, the instructions say, "when soaked with water, wrung out, and then snapped in the air." Chill-Its, \$10, measures 13x29 inches; Enduracool, \$15, is 12x33 inches.

**The check.** We wet the cooling towels along with a 100 percent cotton cloth for comparison, then took their temperatures with an infrared





**1. Chuck** Deep, rich beef flavor. Ground for hamburger; good for pot roast.

**2. Plate** Rich, beefy flavor. Skirt steak from plate is used for fajitas and carne asada. Marinate for 6 to 24 hours.

**3. Flank** Lean, flavorful. Good for flank steak, London broil, kabobs, fajitas. Marinate before grilling; slice thin against the grain.

**4. Rib** Tender, flavorful, well-marbled. Roast, broil, pan-broil, grill.

**5. Short loin** Extremely tender; doesn't need moist heat or long cooking. Grill, broil, pan-broil, roast.

**6. Sirloin, top and bottom** Tender. Broil, pan-broil, grill. Sold as bone-in and boneless steaks. Top sirloin steak can be cut into strips for stir-frying or into cubes for kabobs.

**7. Tenderloin** Aka filet mignon, the most expensive and tender cut of all. Chateaubriand comes from its center or from the short loin.

**8. Round** Very lean, with mild beef flavor. Needs long, moist cooking. Used mostly for stew and roasts. Steaks from round need marinating.

**9. Brisket** Flavorful but lean. Good for corned beef, barbecue, pot roast. Slow-cook or braise in moist heat.

## Slow-cooker meat seasonings

As we say at left, beef brisket tastes best when cooked in moist heat. But what liquid to use? We cooked thin-cut boneless brisket in slow cookers for 7 hours with four products: two sauces and two dry mixes to which we added water. Staffers blind-tasted the meat shortly after cooking; trained tasters tried it reheated a few days later. The winners are below. The others, Crockery Gourmet Seasoning Mix and Kraft Recipe Makers Sauce, didn't make the cut because they tasted too salty or had an off-flavor.



### Campbell's Slow Cooker Sauces, Tavern Style Pot Roast

**COST** 33 cents per ¼ cup  
**CALORIES** 50  
**FAT** 2.5 grams  
**SODIUM** 580 milligrams

A few mushroom pieces; mild, well-blended flavors with sweet-and-sour notes that complemented the meat.



### McCormick Slow Cookers Savory Pot Roast Seasoning Mix

**COST** 29 cents per 2 teaspoons  
**CALORIES** 10  
**FAT** 0 grams  
**SODIUM** 440 milligrams

Simple and mild, with the flavor of pot-roast drippings along with tangy, peppery, and sherry notes.

thermometer. We also asked staffers to assess their cooling ability, dampness, and softness.

**Bottom line.** Why pay for a chill? The cooling towels chilled to within a few degrees of each other at each temperature and humidity we tried, but so did our cotton cloth.

At 98° F and 40 percent humidity, the three cooled to about 77° F. At 112° F and 20 percent humidity, they cooled to just over 70° F. Lower humidity meant a cooler towel. In high humidity, the Enduracool didn't quite meet its 30-degrees-cooler claim.

When wet, Chill-Its is soft,

smooth, and flexible; when dry, it looks like cardboard. (The manufacturer recommends storing it damp in a refrigerator.) Enduracool is lighter weight, soft, thin, and flexible even when dry. But it holds only about half as much water as Chill-Its, so it dries out faster.



## The scoop on scoops

**PLAIN AS IT IS**, vanilla is the nation's favorite ice-cream flavor. Our expert tasters tried 19 (including gelatos), separating the yum from the ho-hum. For ice-cream lovers who venture beyond vanilla, we also recommend a dozen in three other flavors: salted caramel, mint chip, and fudge brownie (see "Beyond Plain Vanilla").

**Taste.** Among vanillas, Ben & Jerry's and Häagen-Dazs are the clear winners: dense and creamy, with intense dairy flavor and complex, high-quality vanilla flavor. Runner-up Talenti is quite sweet and a bit icy, with a fruity-floral vanilla flavor typical of Tahitian vanilla. As you go down the Ratings, the ice creams tend to be a bit more gummy or have vanilla flavor that's generic or less pronounced.

**Nutrition.** No one would claim that ice cream is great for your health, but some have half the calories, fat, or sugar of others. The listed nutrition information is for an official serving: a half-cup, which isn't much. Nutrition scores are based on calories, sugars, fat, and other nutrients.

**Bottom line.** Choose among the five excellent ice creams or the top half of the very good ones. The others are less memorable but could be basic birthday-party fare. Kirkland Signature is a CR Best Buy, but because it comes in two cartons totaling 128 fluid ounces, it's best bought for a crowd.

### When ice cream isn't

Breyers calls some of its products "frozen dessert" because they don't meet the official definition of ice cream, which requires a certain amount of milk fat and limits the amount of air whipped into it. We compared Breyers Natural Vanilla Ice Cream with Breyers Extra Creamy Vanilla Frozen Dessert. The ice cream was very good, with vanilla-bean and dairy flavors. The frozen dessert? Just OK, with a generic vanilla flavor and gummy texture. It also left a slick coating in the mouth.

## Ratings Ice cream

All tested products In taste order.

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

Rec.	PRODUCT	Nutrition	Per 1/2 cup			
			Cost	Calories	Fat (g)	Sugars (g)
EXCELLENT						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ben & Jerry's	●	\$1.03	250	16	20
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Häagen-Dazs	●	1.03	250	17	19
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Talenti Tahitian Vanilla Bean Gelato	◐	1.19	200	9	25
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kirkland Signature Super Premium (Costco)	●	0.30	280	19	21
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Häagen-Dazs Vanilla Bean Gelato	◐	1.14	230	10	23
VERY GOOD						
	Breyers Natural	○	0.35	130	7	14
	Great Value All Natural Vanilla Bean (Walmart)	○	0.25	140	7	14
	Breyers French	○	0.33	140	7	14
	Baskin-Robbins	◐	0.71	170	10	17
	Nice Classic (Walgreens)	○	0.26	130	7	11
	Tillamook Old Fashioned	○	0.31	160	9	9
	Blue Bell Homemade	◐	0.28	180	9	19
	Turkey Hill Vanilla Bean	○	0.30	130	7	12
	Dreyer's/Edy's Grand	○	0.29	140	7	13
	Friendly's Rich & Creamy	○	0.27	140	8	11
	Blue Bunny	○	0.33	130	7	14
GOOD						
	Market Pantry Vanilla Bean (Target)	○	0.25	140	7	13
	Dreyer's/Edy's Slow Churned Classic	○	0.29	100	3.5	12
	Private Selection Double (Kroger)	◐	0.33	210	11	18



## Beyond plain vanilla

Our tasters sorted through 21 ice creams to pick the ones below. Turkey Hill and Dreyer's/Edy's are the least expensive, at 33 to 35 cents per half-cup serving; Steve's is the priciest, at \$1.75. Lowest in calories for each flavor: Turkey Hill salted caramel (160), Dreyer's/Edy's Slow Churned mint chip (120), and Dreyer's/Edy's Grand fudge brownie (160).

**Recommended salted caramel**  
Graeter's, Häagen-Dazs, Steve's, Talenti, Three Twins, Turkey Hill.



Each is good in its own way. Häagen-Dazs and Talenti provide a big caramel hit but are quite sweet. Graeter's caramel flavor is more subtle. Steve's is tasty vanilla ice cream with salty, buttery caramel swirls, and it tastes freshly made. Turkey Hill is also vanilla with swirls, but it's slightly icy. Three Twins has a cooked dairy flavor with a caramelized taste of brown sugar.

**Recommended mint chip**  
Häagen-Dazs, Dreyer's/Edy's Grand, Dreyer's/Edy's Slow Churned.



Häagen-Dazs is best. It's dense white ice cream with a big dairy flavor, a full mint flavor, and lots of crunchy dark-chocolate pieces.

**Recommended fudge brownie**  
Ben & Jerry's, Dreyer's/Edy's Grand, Good & Delish Royal (Walgreens).



Ben & Jerry's is the clear winner. It's dense, creamy, and smooth, and includes brownie pieces.

## Ad tactics that bug Americans the most

Everybody has an ad come-on they love to hate. The top five, according to a recent nationally representative survey by the Consumer Reports National Research Center, are robocalls; false claims that you've won a prize or sweepstakes (are you listening, Bruce Dern?); bills that look real but aren't; pop-up online ads; and hyperbolic ads for medical remedies. Least annoying of all the gripes we asked about: ads on billboards.

Women tend to get more annoyed than men, our survey of 1,000 Americans found, especially

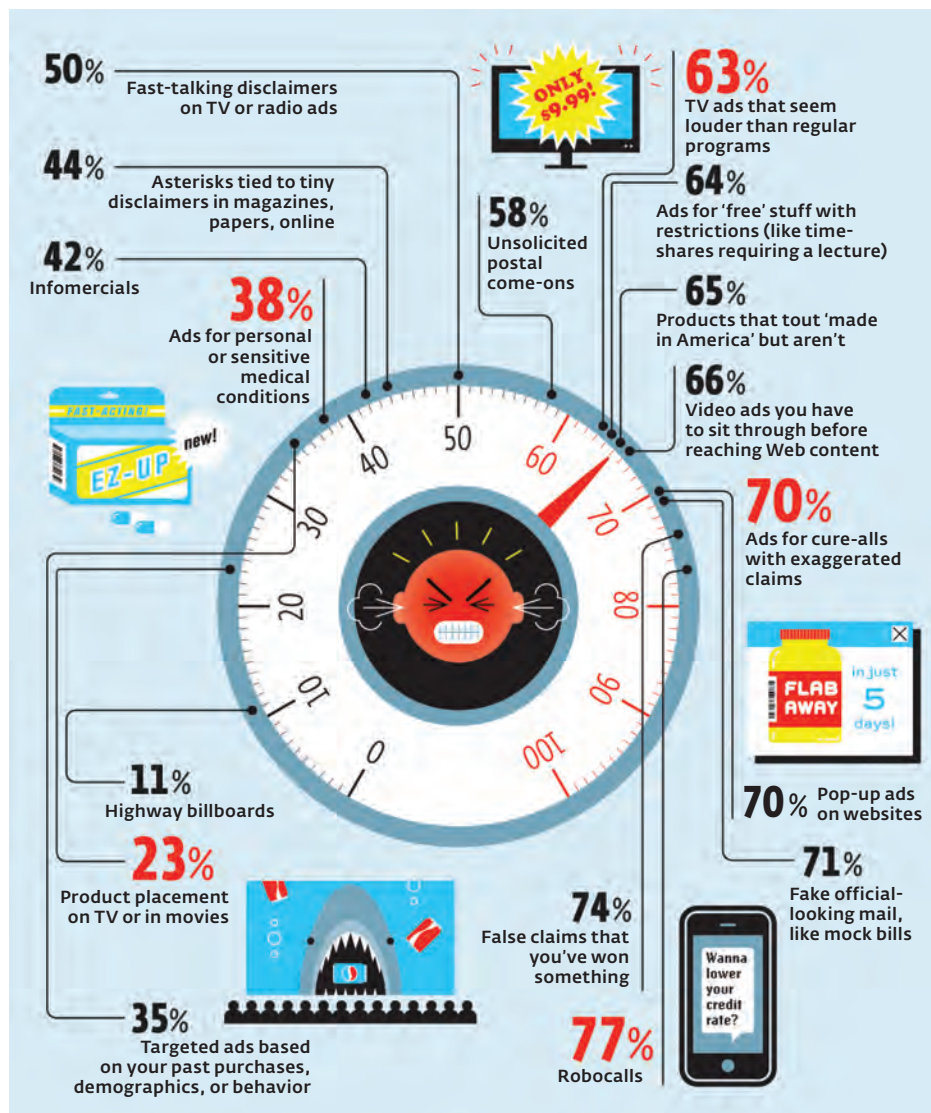
with fast-talking disclaimers; ads that target people based on past purchases, demographics, or behavior; and asterisks tied to tiny disclaimers in print or online ads.

Adgratation also increases gradually with age. By the time Americans have passed 60, they're much more annoyed than are those 18 to 29. Have they just grown tired of waiting for advertisers to tell it straight?

Our special "Selling It" feature about ads that annoy—and amuse—starts on page 60.

### THE GRIPE-O-METER

In our survey, 11 to 77 percent of Americans were highly annoyed by these 18 marketing practices.



# Picture vs. product: The sequel

Open some packages and you may not recognize the food inside

**WHEN WE FIRST** featured supermarket foods that bore little resemblance to their package photos, in 2012, we apparently opened a can of, well, worms.

Since then, you've told us about many additional offenders. Among them: crab cakes with "NO CHUNKS of crab meat"; chicken Alfredo with "nary a trace of chicken!!"; a burrito "as flat as a pancake," even though it was pictured plump with egg and cheese; a

sauceless pasta dish that left a reader asking, "Albino spaghetti, anyone?"

We narrowed your stack of submissions to eight winners, or losers.

There's no sure way to tell whether a product will resemble its picture. Checking the ingredients list and weight could help, but until manufacturers decide to represent products accurately, you might still find what one sorry reader did: a ravioli meal that contained ... a single ravioli.

## Why the differences?

Here's what customer-service reps (and in the case of Silver Palate Grain Berry cereal, the product's founder) said when we asked about the pictured discrepancies:

**Healthy Choice** "What you see on the box is what you should see in the product. I guess it's going to lean toward whiter because it's white-meat chicken."

**IHOP** "We strive for uniformity. We get occasional remarks that maybe there's not enough filling. We get a lot of compliments, too."

**Special K** "Unfortunately, I can't say much. Maybe it's a matter of a batch not turning out right ... or the lighting in the photo."

**Michelinina's** "I understand. It is smaller than the picture. We've had many complaints."

**Silver Palate** "I didn't realize people would be confused, but obviously I didn't do enough because many people have complained. They're natural berries of grain, not berries of fruit."

**Tyson** "You shouldn't get crumbs or bits or too many small pieces. It could have been the result of mishandling, crushed in shipping, or a processing error."

**Van's** "I would like to assure you that I have sent your feedback to Quality Control. We work hard to deliver you the best product we can."

**Banquet** "We are so sorry. They really should match up."

### 1. Healthy Choice Oven Roasted Chicken

#### A PALE IMITATION

An enticing browned chicken breast and golden gravy have been replaced by something white and bland-looking.

### 2. IHOP French Toast Stuffed Pastries

#### NOT STUFFED

The strawberry "filling" isn't. "I was so disappointed," a reader writes.

### 3. Special K Pastry Crisps

#### CARAMEL IS A NO-SHOW

The pictured product has an oozing orangey layer. The reality: a thin brown line.

### 4. Michelinina's Cheese Manicotti

#### NAUGHTY MANICOTTI

Despite the photo of chubby shells occupying what must be a very small dish, we found no oozing cheese. "The box reads 'Let Mama feed you,'" wrote one reader. "Mama must think I'm morbidly obese. ..."

### 5. Silver Palate Grain Berry Bran Flakes

#### BERRY

#### MISLEADING?

Let's see: "Berry" in the name, berries in the photo, but inside? Ah ... berries of grain.

### 6. Tyson Grilled & Ready Chicken Breast Strips

#### STRIP TEASE

Some of these strips were more like nuggets.

### 7. Van's Blue- berry Waffles

#### SINGING

#### THE BLUES

Forget about whole blueberries; might there at least be blueberry pieces? "Not a speck," a reader wrote.

### 8. Banquet Deep Dish Sausage & Gravy pot pie

#### AIR RAID

In the photo, the contents burst out of the cut pastry shell. The real pie looked about half-empty.







1



2



3

65%

Percent of Americans highly annoyed about products that look nothing like their photos.

Source: Consumer Reports National Research Center.



4



5



6



7



8



# Bug-proof your summer

**DEET, YARD FOGGERS, BUG ZAPPERS.** In the quest for an insect-free summer, Americans turn to a bevy of products that companies promise will repel, trap, kill, or otherwise neutralize the pests. The attraction of those products is all too understandable. Not only can mosquitoes, ticks, and stinging insects like yellow jackets ruin summer fun, but they can also trigger allergic reactions or carry disease. Serious ones, too, such as Lyme disease, West Nile virus, and a new worry for the U.S., tropical diseases such as dengue fever and Chikungunya, or ChikV. Both are debilitating conditions spread by mosquitoes, and they're heading to the U.S. mainland.

Our tests over the years have found that some products, especially chemical-based insect repellents, can help keep away ticks and mosquitoes. But our safety experts also worry about the risks they may pose to people and the environment. "We think that deet and other chemical-based insect repellents should only be used if other measures don't work for you," says Urvashi Rangan, Ph.D., executive director of Consumer Reports' Food Safety and Sustainability Center. "Other methods, such as wearing protective clothing and avoiding the use of scented products when outdoors, can be effective for many situations."

Joseph Conlon, a retired Navy entomologist who consults with the nonprofit American Mosquito Control Association, agrees that it often takes more than one approach to rein in backyard bugs. "Unfortunately, there is still no silver bullet for mosquito problems," he says. "But with careful planning, it's possible to control them." The box on the facing page explains how to use insect repellents safely. Below are other steps you can take to control the pests, and what to do if they bite or sting you.

## In your yard

**Mosquitoes.** Manufacturers now sell mosquito traps that use fans, electric grids, or adhesive pads to capture and kill mosquitoes. The devices do kill some of them, but it's unclear whether that translates into "a

noticeable reduction in your mosquito population," Conlon says. Even less impressive are devices that use light, sound, or smell to lure mosquitoes. "I have pictures of the machines with mosquitoes standing on them," he adds.

Conlon also warns people about misting systems (yes, there are such things) that spray insecticides like automatic sprinklers. "That widespread use could breed resistance to pesticides," he says.

Our safety experts also caution against using yard foggers, which spray repellent from a can. You might inhale the pesticides, including some compounds that might disrupt your hormone system and that have been linked to neurological, developmental, and other health problems.

Rangan emphasizes that you're best off doing things that discourage mosquitoes from breeding in the first place. Because they're drawn to murky water, keep your yard free of containers filled with water, such as gutters, birdbaths, tires, wheelbarrows, wading pools, and swimming pool covers. Clear away ivy and decaying leaves, because mosquitoes like cool, dark places. Other steps you might try include using LED or yellow lights on your porch and around your house, and plugging in a fan when on your deck. Citronella, in candles or in the oil in tiki torches, is a mild repellent.

**Ticks.** They like tall grass and lots of shade. So keep your lawn mowed, remove leaves and other debris, and try to let as much sun into your yard as possible. Consider putting up a fence around your property to keep out deer and other large animals that can carry ticks. And don't forget to check your pets for ticks after they have been romping in the yard.

**Stinging insects.** Keep garbage cans and picnic food covered, because bees love discarded food. Most bees and wasps will leave you alone if you don't bother them, so don't swat at them. Nests should be removed only if they are in high-traffic areas. If you can, wait until the fall or winter, when the nests are abandoned. If you need to remove them



**Mosquito**

Some diseases once confined to the tropics, such as dengue fever and ChikV, are spreading.



**Deer tick**

300,000 people get Lyme disease each year—10 times more than previously thought, according to the CDC.



**Yellow jacket**

Fatal allergic reactions to bee and wasp stings may be underestimated because they can be mistaken for heart attacks.

sooner, do it early in the spring, and early or late in the day when the insects are less active. Insecticide powders or sprays may be necessary, but follow directions and keep pets and children away. Always wear head-to-toe protective clothing, and never remove nests if it requires standing on a ladder; call a professional instead. Traps with the chemical heptyl butyrate may help control bees.

## What to wear—and take off

**Mosquitoes.** When you're out at dawn and dusk, wear long sleeves, long pants, socks,

## Bug risks

**Mosquitoes.** West Nile virus is the most common mosquito-borne disease in the U.S. In 2012 there were 5,674 reported cases, including 286 deaths, in 48 states, making it the deadliest year on record. Also worrisome: Florida, Puerto Rico, and Texas have reported cases of dengue fever, which can cause high fevers and severe joint pain. Chikungunya (ChikV), which can cause similar symptoms, has been reported in the Caribbean.

**Ticks.** Lyme disease—common in the Northeast, upper Midwest, and the Pacific Coast—isn't the only tick-borne disease you need to worry about. Deer ticks can also transmit anaplasmosis and babesiosis, mostly in the Northeast and upper Midwest. The Lone Star tick, most common in the South and East, can cause ehrlichiosis. And the American dog tick can carry Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Despite its name, it's most prevalent east of the Mississippi River.

**Stinging insects.** Bee and wasp stings are painful, but they can also cause life-threatening reactions in people who are highly allergic to them. Spider bites can lead to painful wounds and infections, but they're rarely serious. Fire ants, prevalent in the Southeast, live in large dirt mounds. Step on one and you could get an ankle's worth of stings.

and closed-toe shoes. Avoid tight clothes (mosquitoes can bite through them), dark colors, and perfume or aftershave (both attract them). You can purchase clothes treated with the repellent permethrin, or spray it on your clothes (but never on your skin). Manufacturers say that one application lasts several weeks, but our tests of treated clothing a few years ago found that permethrin didn't work well.

**Ticks.** When walking through wooded or grassy areas in the summer, wear the same clothes that ward off skeeters. Light-colored

clothes are best, because that makes it easier to spot ticks. Tuck your shirt into your pants and your pants into your socks. Inspect your skin when you go indoors, and use tweezers to gently remove any attached ticks. (Remove the whole body, including the head.) Ticks have to be on your body for at least 36 hours to transmit Lyme disease. For extra protection, toss your clothes into a clothes dryer to kill ticks that might be attached.

**Stinging insects.** Bees are attracted to strong scents, so if you have lots of them or wasps in your yard, or you're headed to a picnic, avoid perfumed soaps, shampoos, and deodorants. And because sweat can anger bees, wash up before you head out.

### If you're bitten

**Mosquitoes.** Cool compresses and an over-the-counter steroid cream, such as hydrocortisone (Cortizone-10 and generic), can ease itching. Applying calamine lotion or dabbing on undiluted white vinegar might also help, says Marvin M. Lipman, M.D., Consumer Reports' chief medical adviser. See a doctor if you develop a fever, a headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, or a rash on your torso.

**Ticks.** Get medical help if you develop signs or symptoms of a tick-borne illness. In addition to the classic bull's-eye rash of Lyme disease, tick-borne illnesses can cause chills, fever, fatigue, headaches, and muscle or joint pain. Prompt treatment with antibiotics usually cures infections and prevents complications such as acute arthritis and facial paralysis (with Lyme disease), difficulty breathing or bleeding disorders (ehrlichiosis), and widespread heart, joint, or kidney damage (Rocky Mountain spotted fever).

**Stinging insects.** If you're stung by a bee, carefully remove the stinger. Cold compresses, hydrocortisone creams, and oral antihistamines such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl Allergy and generic) can help ease burning or itching. You can take an OTC pain reliever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol and generic), ibuprofen (Advil and generic), or naproxen (Aleve and generic). If you've had severe reactions to insect stings, always carry a prescription epinephrine injector such as an EpiPen or a Twinject. And get medical help if inflammation and swelling extend well beyond the sting site.

## Insect repellents: Choose carefully

**Start natural.** If you think you need a repellent, consider a plant-based product, such as Repel Lemon Eucalyptus, which contains a synthesized version of a naturally occurring chemical. It protected users for 8 hours in our tests, though it has since been reformulated with less of the active ingredient, and the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that you shouldn't use it on children under age 3. Or try a repellent with 20 percent picaridin, a chemical similar to one found in black pepper.

**When to consider deet.** Serious side effects—including seizures, slurred speech, and coma—have occurred after people ingested it, applied it for three or more days in a row, or used products with 95 percent deet or more, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. It can also cause eye irritation and allergic skin reactions. Stick with products that contain 15 to 30 percent deet; they repelled mosquitoes and ticks for at least 8 hours in our tests. **One Option:** **Off Family Care Smooth & Dry** (15 percent deet). Beware of products with very high concentrations of deet, such as **Jungle Juice 100** (98 percent). Also be wary of **Off Clip-on**, a device that attaches to your waistband or belt and uses a fan to circulate a repellent around your body. The active ingredient, metofluthrin, can pose risks to your nervous system, and our tests found that it didn't work very well anyway.



Consider

Avoid

# Guard your credit from thieves

**AFTER TARGET** and Neiman Marcus told tens of millions of shoppers that their credit- and debit-card information had been stolen, the retailers offered them a year of free credit monitoring. But that service does little more than give consumers a false sense of security because it does nothing to protect them from fraudulent charges on their credit- and debit-card accounts. More than 85 percent of identity theft cases involve existing account fraud, according to the Department of Justice. Credit monitoring, security freezes, and fraud alerts are designed to thwart much less common—but much more serious—new-account fraud.

In that type of identity theft, a crook uses your Social Security number and other personal information to open credit accounts in your name. If it happens to you, it's worth considering credit monitoring, along with a security freeze or fraud alert. Here's what each does:

**A security freeze** prevents most credit-card issuers and lenders from reviewing your credit history. Without that, lenders probably won't issue new credit, so criminals can't set up fraudulent accounts in your name. But it also shuts out most of those people who have a legitimate need to access to your file, such as lenders you've asked for credit, telecom companies, and insurers. To give them access, you have to lift the freeze.

A freeze might be free, depending on your state and circumstances (for example, if you're an identity theft victim). Otherwise, expect to pay \$2 to \$12 to initiate or lift a freeze at each credit bureau: Equifax ([equifax.com](http://equifax.com)), Experian ([experian.com](http://experian.com)), and TransUnion ([transunion.com](http://transunion.com)). To review your state's law, go to [defendyourdollars.org/document/guide-to-security-freeze-protection](http://defendyourdollars.org/document/guide-to-security-freeze-protection).

**When to use it.** Freeze your credit files if you're a victim of ID theft or if you think your Social Security number has been stolen. Also place a freeze if you think you might become the victim of new-

account ID theft (say, because your wallet was lost or stolen) and you don't mind the hassle and cost.

**A fraud alert** is easier to initiate than a freeze, but it offers less protection. While a fraud alert is in place, your credit file will be accessible, but creditors must take reasonable steps to verify your identity before granting credit. You need to request a fraud alert at only one credit bureau; it will then notify the other two. An alert lasts 90 days. If you're an ID-theft victim, you can keep one in place for seven years.

**When to use it.** Request an alert if you think you might become a victim of ID theft but don't want to deal with freezes.

**Credit monitoring** alerts you by e-mail when there's activity in your credit file.

**When to use it.** Consider monitoring if a company offers it free after a data breach. Otherwise, we don't recommend paying for the service, which can cost about \$170 to \$360 per year. Instead, check your credit reports for errors and fraud yourself. Federal law allows you to get one free report from each of the three major credit bureaus every year by going to [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com). Get a report from one bureau every four months.



## How to respond to a data breach

If you're told your credit- or debit-card information has been stolen, ask your card issuer to change your account numbers; also monitor your billing and bank statements. Report any unauthorized activity immediately. Sign up for alerts that notify you about major purchases or withdrawals from your accounts.

Watch for anyone who might use your stolen data to trick you into revealing your Social Security number or other sensitive information, perhaps by impersonating someone from a company you regularly do business with.

Check your credit reports for fraud regularly if you are or think you might become an ID-theft victim. You may be entitled to free reports more than once a year if you have credit monitoring or you initiate a fraud alert.



## Pick the right infant car seat

All child car seats sold in the U.S. must pass the government's safety standard, but Consumer Reports' new crash test goes a step further to help parents choose seats that could offer an extra margin of safety (see page 6). The new test, for infant car seats, simulates a 35 mph frontal crash, which is a higher speed than the standard 30 mph test. A rear-facing-only infant seat often provides the best fit for newborns and the convenience of a detachable carrier. Though all car seats provide protection in a crash, some do it better than others. Here are five rear-facing seats that stand out.

**Chicco KeyFit**, \$170, and **KeyFit 30**, \$180. These seats are among the easiest to install and provide a

handy single-pull LATCH tightening system. The KeyFit 30 has a higher weight limit, although kids are more likely to outgrow the seat because of their height before they reach 30 pounds.

**Combi Shuttle**, \$180. This model can hold up to 35 pounds, and its 33-inch height limit means that the child will probably be able to stay in it longer before moving to a rear-facing convertible seat.

**Cyber Aton 2**, \$300. The Aton 2 showed significantly better crash-test performance in our new test than any other model did. A feature called a Load Leg, common in Europe, helps to reduce the rotation of the seat in a crash. But the leg may prevent installation in some center seats, where the floor is high. A tensioning device also helps get a secure installation.

**Safety 1st Onboard 35 Air**, \$160. This seat offers a high weight limit of 35 pounds, which can benefit larger babies. It also has a pillow-like component on the sides of the carrier, which is intended to provide additional head protection in side impacts, although we don't currently rate that feature.

**UppaBaby Mesa**, \$280. The handy LATCH connectors on this model automatically retract to tighten, and an indicator lets you know when the installation is tight enough. But the features are best suited to use with LATCH.



Chicco  
KeyFit 30

# 1,000,000

That's the approximate number of Nissan-produced vehicles involved in a recall in the U.S. and Canada for air bags that may not deploy in a crash. Models include certain '13-'14 models of Nissan's Altima, Leaf, Pathfinder, and Sentra; also involved are the '13 Infiniti JX35, '14 QX60, and '14 Q50. Nissan began notifying dealers and owners in the spring and will update vehicle software free of charge. Owners can call Nissan at 800-647-7261.



## RECALLS

### AUTOMOBILES

**'08-'13 Buick Enclave and GMC Acadia, '09-'13 Chevrolet Traverse, and '08-'10 Saturn Outlook**

Increased resistance in the driver and passenger seat-mounted side air-bag wiring harnesses may prevent the air bags and seat-belt pretensioners from deploying in a crash.

**MODELS** 1,176,407 vehicles.

**WHAT TO DO** The dealer will replace the harness connection with soldered connections. Buick owners can call 800-521-7300; Chevrolet owners, 866-694-6546; Saturn owners, 800-553-6000; and GMC owners, 866-996-9463.

**'05-'10 Honda Odyssey**

The fuel pump strainer cover may deteriorate, allowing fuel to leak and increasing the risk of fire.

**MODELS** 886,815 vehicles manufactured from June 23, 2004, through Sept. 4, 2010.

**WHAT TO DO** Honda will notify owners when repair parts are available, which is expected to be during the summer. Any vehicles that are currently leaking from the fuel pump cover will get a replacement original cover. All vehicles will get an improved cover when it is available. Call Honda at 800-999-1009 for details.

### SPORTING GOODS

**Fitbit Force activity-tracking wristband**

Users can develop allergic reactions to the stainless-steel casing, materials used in the strap, or adhesives used in assembly.

**PRODUCTS** About 1,000,000 in the U.S. and 28,000 in Canada, sold at stores nationwide and online from October 2013 to February 2014 for about \$130. Model numbers are FB402BK, FB402BKS, and FB402SLS. The company has received more than 10,000 reports of problems. **WHAT TO DO** Call Fitbit at 888-656-6381 or go to [fitbit.com](http://fitbit.com) to get a refund.

### GARDENING PRODUCTS

**Hitachi Koki and Tanaka grass trimmers**

The trimmer can overheat, posing risks of fire and burns.

**PRODUCTS** About 115,000 in the U.S. and 12,400 in Canada, sold at home-improvement stores nationwide and online from March 2010 through November 2013 for \$300 to \$800. Twelve models of the handheld gas-powered trimmers are being recalled.

**WHAT TO DO** Call Hitachi at 855-880-6638 or go to [hitachipowertools.com](http://hitachipowertools.com) to arrange for a repair.

# Beyond the boring backyard

## Nine ways to have fun and stay safe this summer

Need more space to entertain? Just open your back door and step outside. But after a harsh, unrelenting winter, you might not like what you see. Forty-four percent of Americans plan to improve their yard for outdoor entertaining, according to the latest Consumer Reports nationally representative survey of 2,000 adults. Almost 30 percent say they'll spend \$500 to

\$1,999, and 36 percent plan to spend \$100 to \$499. Improved landscaping, better lighting, a new grill, and adding a deck or sprucing it up are high on the to-do list, as backyards evolve into true living spaces customized for fun, not resale value. Use these tips, gleaned from our experts and testing, to enjoy the long, leisurely days of summer ahead.



### Deck check

Leaves and other yard waste under the deck can cause mildew, so regularly clear the debris. And while you're at it, check the framing and deck platform for insect damage and rot, especially where the deck ties to the house. If you find any, have a pro do the repairs. See page 24 for the best deck stains.



### A little music

What's a party without music? The portable TDK Life on Record Wireless Weatherproof Speaker A33, \$145, uses Bluetooth and offers good sound. The top-rated Libratone Zipp, \$400, (shown) offers even better sound, but the portable Wi-Fi unit isn't weatherized. Neither should be left outside.



### Protect your skin

Using sunscreen is a no-brainer, but you might be surprised how much you need to use. A family of four spending 4 hours in the sun wearing shorts and T-shirts should go through an 8-ounce bottle. And don't leave the bottle in a hot car, which can degrade its effectiveness. Equate Ultra Protection SPF 50, from Walmart, is a CR Best Buy.



### Gone with the wind

A fan sweeping a gentle breeze across your deck or patio can help keep mosquitoes away. They aren't strong fliers, and the brisk airflow makes it tough for them to hone in on your scent and find you. For more on battling bugs, see page 14.





### Light the night

Low-voltage fixtures are do-it-yourself-friendly. The wiring can be buried only 6 inches, not the 18 required with standard voltage. Place heads every 8 to 10 feet to deliver uniform path lighting, and use floodlights and spotlights to illuminate dark areas. Long-lasting LED bulbs are ideal for hard-to-reach spots and use significantly less electricity than incandescent bulbs.



### Establish a safety zone

The allure of gathering around a fire remains strong and explains why chimineas and fire pits have become popular; 16 percent of those surveyed plan to add one to their yard. Create a 3-foot safety zone to keep kids away, and keep a fire extinguisher within reach. Before calling it a night, check that embers are fully extinguished by dousing with water or burying in dirt.

### Cushion care

Vacuum dust and dirt, then use a damp sponge and mild dish detergent to clean. Rinse thoroughly and let dry. For pet stains, try a pet odor and stain remover, or blot with a solution of 1 tablespoon of household ammonia with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water. Stain still there? Use  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of white vinegar mixed in  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of water. As always test an inconspicuous spot first and check for damage.



### Outdoor furniture 101

Comfortable furniture invites your friends to settle in. Painted metals should have a uniform finish and smooth welds. All-weather wicker that's tightly wound on its frame is best; many now have more realistic-looking textures. No matter the type, joints should be tight and well fitted. End caps help protect screws and bolts from moisture.



### Create a nook

Wall-mounted planters and trellises can transform an ugly wall or fence. A hammock or bistro set and large containers of plants are just a couple of ways to make a charming pocket in a large yard. You'll find plenty of inspiration online and at home centers.







# Fire up your grill

The best for backyard bashes, small spaces, and tailgating

**S**IZZLING BURGERS on the grill can bring back great memories and set the mood for happy get-togethers with friends. But for manufacturers, these have not been the happiest of times. Sales are down in recent years, and prices have mostly stalled. That's good news if you need a new gas grill. Even if your model is in great shape, we'll give you some tips and products that can make it more versatile. And if you're on the fence about getting a new grill, we'll tell you what grill parts usually break and whether or not they're worth fixing.

Manufacturers have added premium features to midpriced models with only modest price increases. Grills such as the Broilmate 165154, \$200, have electronic igniters, an often easier and more reliable way to fire up, and stainless-steel or coated cast-iron grates, which are usually better for searing and maintaining even grilling

temperatures. Some grates are reversible, with one side designed for enhanced searing, the other for cooking fatty foods with the promise of fewer flare-ups. Infrared burners, such as the ones on the Kenmore 16136, \$700, have been added for better searing and high-temperature cooking. Grills with more storage and prep space, such as the Master Forge 3218LTN, \$650, also mean less running back and forth to your kitchen to get supplies.

If you usually cook for a crowd, you may want a larger grill. To help you choose the one that meets your needs, we measure each grill's actual cooking area. Manufacturers often count warming racks and searing burners in their measurements. And keep in mind that we shop where you shop, so you'll find impressive and recommended grills whether you prefer home centers, Sears, Walmart, or online retailers.

# Is my grill a goner?

Whether you've been using it all winter or haven't touched it in months, you should give your grill the once-over before prime grilling season starts. Though Americans haul their grills to the curb after three years on average, according to the Hearth, Patio &

Barbecue Association, age isn't the best way to know when your grill should be replaced. Instead, use these maintenance tips to help keep your grill in top shape or to spot problems that aren't worth fixing.

**Inspect the firebox.** Remove light corrosion with a stainless-steel brush. But extensive rust or cracks means it's time to buy a new grill.

**TIP** The firebox often collects grease and food that has dropped through the grates. Clean the drip pan and remove grates and burners to clean the firebox. Your owner's manual will suggest appropriate cleaning solutions. Replace corroded or cracked drip pans. Don't try to get away with lining them with aluminum foil, which can cause grease to accumulate and cause a fire.

**Test for gas leaks.** Mix a small amount of dishwashing liquid and water in a spray bottle and spray over connections and along the hose. Turn on the tank, or if there's no tank, the natural gas line. Bubbling occurs at the connection, tighten it.

**TIP** Hairline cracks or tiny holes can be hard to spot by just looking, so soapy water is a must.



**Check burner tubes or ports.** Yellow or uneven flames or heat can mean it's time to clean the burner tubes or ports (a toothpick can help clear burner holes). But if that doesn't solve the problem or you spot corrosion or rust, then it's time for new burners, which usually cost from \$40 to \$150.

**TIP** Burners are the most frequently replaced grill part. Before buying new ones, check whether yours are still under warranty. Some are covered for 10 years or longer.

**Clean the grates.** Use a stiff wire brush to clean each side, but skip the soap. Porcelain-coated grates require a nylon brush. Ideally you should clean grates before grilling, then oil and clean them right after cooking. Porcelain-coated grates rust only if they chip. Replace them when the coating is chipping or flaking because it can stick to food.

**TIP** Grates can be expensive to replace. So before you put money into parts, consider how much you paid for the grill, its age and replacement price, and whether the rest of it is in good shape.

## Match the model to your needs



### Cooking for a crowd

**B1 Kenmore** \$700  
CR Best Buy (shown)

**B2 Master Forge** \$650  
CR Best Buy

These were among the few large grills to offer superb temperature range and the only ones to deliver excellent, even low-heat performance. Overall they performed similarly. Each has five main burners; stainless-steel grates, which tend to be good for searing and maintaining even grilling temps; and an infrared rotisserie. The Kenmore offers a larger cooking area and a long warranty on its burners. The Master Forge is sold at Lowe's.



### For small yards

**C1 Weber** \$450

**C2 Broilmate**  
\$200 (shown)

Both small grills have two main burners, coated cast-iron grates, and electronic igniters. The top-rated Weber adds a side burner, has a long burner warranty—burners are the most frequently replaced part—and has four casters for easy moving. The Broilmate has the largest cooking area of the recommended small grills, is the only one to offer a superb temperature range, and costs hundreds less. But it doesn't have a long burner warranty.



### Best for most

**A1 Weber** \$600

**A2 Char-Broil** \$400  
CR Best Buy (shown)

**A7 Kenmore** \$300  
**A10 Char-Broil** \$260

All are mid-sized and preheat quickly. The Weber offers more even cooking on high than the \$400 Char-Broil, though the Char-Broil's temperature range was better. The Kenmore and the \$260 Char-Broil just missed our recommended list but are impressive. The Kenmore has four burners—one more than the others—but lacks a long burner warranty. The \$260 Char-Broil also lacks a long burner warranty, but it has the most cooking space of these four grills.



### For the grilling enthusiast

**B3 Weber** \$2,500

This large grill has all the extras—six main burners, a side burner, an infrared rotisserie spit and motor, a smoker burner, lighted controls, and a lighted cooking area—as well as an electronic igniter, a fuel gauge, and ample shelf space and utensil hooks. Its temperature range and low-heat performance wasn't quite as good as our recommended large grills. But it offers fast and even preheating and impressive performance on high and low heat, indirect cooking, and temperature range, plus a long burner warranty.



### For tailgating

**D1 Weber** \$250

This portable grill offers an impressive amount of cooking space and quick preheating. An electronic igniter fires it up. Its one burner delivered very good low- and high-heat cooking, but like other portables we tested, the temperature range is just so-so and indirect cooking is not an option. The grates are coated cast iron, which tends to be good for searing and maintaining even grilling temperatures.



**Top grills** In performance order, within types.

Looking to up your outdoor cooking menu beyond burgers and steak? Here are three simple and inexpensive ways to add versatility to a basic grill:

**Low and slow** Cook briskets, pork shoulders, other tough cuts of meat, and whole fish or poultry on your grill. Start by preheating the grill. Once it's warm, set one burner to high and turn off the other. Place the food over the burner that's off. If you have a three- or four-burner grill, keep only the front and back or outside burners on; put the food over the burners that are off. Keep the lid closed to keep in the heat.

Recommendation	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Features
Rank	<b>Similar models</b> , in small type, are comparable to tested model.		<div><div></div><div>0100</div><div>P   F   G   VG   E</div></div>	Preheat performance High-temp evenness Low-temp evenness Indirect cooking Temperature range Convenience	Stainless steel grates Coated cast-iron grates Long-warranty burners  Infrared burner















[illegible]

	1	Kenmore 16136  16157, 16156	700	<div><div></div>75</div>		side burner and rotisserie
	2	Master Forge 3218LTN [Item #6554] (Lowe's)	650	<div><div></div>75</div>		side burner and rotisserie
	3	Weber Summit E-670	2,500	<div><div></div>74</div>		rotisserie
	4	Swiss Grill Zurich Series Z650	1,850	<div><div></div>69</div>		rotisserie
	5	KitchenAid 720-0709C (Sam's Club)	800	<div><div></div>69</div>		searing
	6	Blue Ember BE65078-584 (Home Depot)	900	<div><div></div>69</div>		rotisserie
	7	Grand Hall Grand Tech	500	<div><div></div>68</div>		
	8	Weber Summit S-650 Summit S-620	1,900	<div><div></div>66</div>		
	9	Char-Broil Tru-Infrared Commercial 463241413 (Lowe's) [Item #404325]  Tru-Infrared Commercial 463241414 (Lowe's) [Item #404325]	500	<div><div></div>66</div>		main
	10	Kenmore 01566	600	<div><div></div>65</div>		rotisserie



Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Features
				0100 P   F   G   V   E	Preheat performance High-temp evenness Low-temp evenness Indirect cooking Temperature range Convenience	Stainless-steel grates Coated cast-iron grates Long-warranty burners Infrared burner

[illegible]

1	Weber Q 2200 54060001 Q 2000 53060001	250	67	  	NA		NA	
2	Cuisinart CGG-200 <a href="#">1</a>	190	53	  	NA		NA	
3	Weber Q 1000 50060001 Q 1200 51060001 <a href="#">1</a>	170	53	  	NA		NA	

## Guide to the Ratings

## No hands: A robot to clean your grates

Grimy grill grates look unappetizing, and they certainly won't improve the taste of your food. But does the Grillbot really clean grates and eliminate scrubbing with the push of a button?

The rechargeable battery-powered Grillbot, \$130, can be used on gas or charcoal grills and on cold or warm grates that have been allowed to cool for 5 minutes for a gas grill and at least 20 minutes for a charcoal grill. Simply set the timer for a scrub that's 10, 20, or 30 minutes, close the lid, and you're done.

We tried it on stainless-steel and coated cast-iron grates covered in burnt-on food. After 10 minutes, the grates were cleaner. And after an additional 20 minutes of cleaning, the grates were much cleaner though

not spotless. The Grillbot didn't reach grime between grates, but preheating on high heat turned what was left into ash. We used a standard grill brush to wipe away the ash.

Our biggest beef: The Grillbot makes quite a racket when working as it bounces off the inside of the lid. The directions say the lid should be closed. When we left the lid open to take a video of it working, it almost fell off.

Removing the Grillbot's dishwasher-safe brushes is a bit tricky, but they came out of the dishwasher clean and with their bristles in place. That's important because loose bristles—from any grill brush—that get left behind after cleaning could make their way into grilled food. If swallowed, the bristles could puncture your digestive tract or stomach.



## The worst grills in our tests

Grills scoring 40 or less earned a spot on this list. They were the worst at evenly providing low and high heat.

- **American Outdoor Grill**  
24 PC \$1,950

- **Better Homes and Gardens**  
BG1755B (Walmart) \$360

- Member's Mark 720-0778C (Sam's Club) \$400

- **Back Yard Grill**  
BY14-101-001-02 \$160

- Solaire AGBO-27GIR \$1,800

- **Better Homes and Gardens BH14-101-099-04 (Walmart) \$360**



**Bottom line.** The Grillbot beats scrubbing, but a regular grill brush and some elbow grease on a warm grill is faster, more thorough, and cheaper. Grillbot recommends new brushes every season or after 100 uses for best results and maximum safety. The 180-day warranty doesn't cover brushes, batteries, and the charging cord.



# Spruce up your home & deck

22 top paints and stains that go on easily and last

**Y**OUR GRILL (and what's on it) may be the star of your next barbecue, but your house and deck could get less-than-rave reviews if their finish has faded. More manufacturers are promising greater longevity with long warranties that cover the cracking and dirt most homeowners gripe about. Paints that brush on without priming first and a stain you can roll over wet wood are time-savers whether you hire a pro or do the job yourself. Roughly 25 percent of homeowners paint their own house, and 75 percent do the deck.

Ace Hardware's Royal Exteriors now rivals Home Depot's Behr and Lowe's Valspar, two of our top satin and semigloss paints. As with the Behr and Valspar, both Ace paints have a lifetime warranty and endured the equivalent of nine years outdoors without cracks. And at less than \$30 per gallon, they cost up to \$11 less. But the home-center brands proved to be better at fending off dirt and mildew. A newcomer, Behr Marquee, also looks good so far.

Home Depot is also facing tougher competition among the solid-color deck stains that last longest and sell best at stores. Benjamin

Moore's Arborcoat Deck & Siding Solid, \$46, looked better than Behr's Solid Color Waterproofing Wood Stain after two years of tests and fared just as well after three. But the Behr still wins in the war against dirt and mildew, and it costs almost \$20 less.

Our relentless outdoor tests under broiling sun and freezing snow also confirm that even top-performing brands could leave you cold if you buy the wrong line or shop at the wrong store. Some time-savings claims didn't deliver. And if you think you're fully covered by lifetime and other paint and stain warranties, think again. (See "What Warranties Really Mean," on page 27.) Here are the details:

**An Ace misses our target.** Ace's Royal Exteriors Satin and Semi-Gloss are two good reasons to go to the nationwide hardware chain for your next can of paint. But so-so results for the flat version after the equivalent of nine years outdoors kept it off our winners' list, despite stellar results earlier on. Ace's upscale Clark+Kensington line looks impressive after two years outside. We'll see how well it maintains those looks when our tests are done.

**Same-brand stains strike out.** Better resistance to cracking and

dirt helped Cabot's Solid Acrylic Siding, \$36, swamp its Solid Color Decking stain at about the same price. But the brand's Express line sank almost to the bottom among semi-transparent stains. Thompson's WaterSeal is a winner among solid and clear deck finishes, but two other versions turned in subpar results.

**A wet-wood claim doesn't hold water.** Cabot's Express Semi-Transparent name reflects the promise that you can power-wash and stain your deck the same day, without waiting for it to dry. We tested this stain over wet and dry wood, with the same unimpressive results. Behr makes no such claims for its top-scoring Premium Semi-Transparent stain. Yet its two-year results over wet wood looked as good as what we got over dry surfaces.

### How to choose

Pick a paint based on your project. Flat and satin are what most people choose for siding, and semigloss adds sheen and contrast for trim. Among stains, solids hide the beauty of the grain in exchange for longer life; clear finishes show it all but usually last no longer than a year. A smart compromise:

Semitransparent stains, which show some of the grain and can still look good after two years. Here's what else to keep in mind as you're shopping:

**Consider the store.** Most of the best paints and stains we tested still come from Behr, making Home Depot your one-stop shopping destination if you're doing your house and deck. Our tests also found that the Glidden Premium Satin sold at Home Depot is generally a better bet than the Glidden Endurance Plus at Walmart, though the Walmart product is self-priming.

**Plan around promos and sales.** Holiday weekends such as Memorial Day and Father's Day can bring storewide discounts of 30 percent or more. You'll also save year-round by buying 5-gallon containers instead of the usual gallon cans.

**Protect yourself.** For houses built before 1978, any painter you hire must be trained in lead-safe practices and certified by the Environmental Protection Agency. If your deck was built before 2004, it could have been made with chromated copper arsenate, which contains arsenic. Hire a pro, who can safely contain and remove flaking finishes and potentially harmful sanding dust.

## Colors that sell (and repel)

More than one in 10 Americans plan an exterior paint job in the next year, based on a nationwide survey from the Consumer Reports National Research Center. Most cited tired paint, but almost half wanted a different color to boost their home's resale value. Popular combos from our Facebook fans include Mediterranean yellow with white trim, and light brown with cream trim and hunter-green shutters. You'll find similar schemes on real-estate hot lists.

Suppose you prefer other colors. We spoke with real estate agents and paint experts, such as members of the Paint Quality Institute, an industry group, about colors to choose and a few to skip, whether you're selling or staying put:



### Colors with staying power

#### Whites, grays, and touches of black.

White with black trim is a classic. Variations include off-whites and tans for the siding.

**Earth tones.** Browns, warm grays, and muted greens are smart choices for inland locations. Consider brighter shades of green and blue if you live by the sea.

**Tricolor schemes.** A favorite is one color for siding, another for trim, and an accent color for the front door (think yellow and orange, or even burgundy and olive). For a split-level house, consider a different color for each level. And stick with complementary neutrals and earth tones, such as those listed here.



### Shades to avoid

**Bold reds and yellows.** Studies have found that both tend to make you hungry—great for hot dog stands, not so great for your house. An exception: front doors and trim.

**Pinks and purples.** Both are likely to send neighbors, guests, and prospective buyers running for cover. Bright colors also tend to highlight dirt rather than hide it.

**Colors that mimic—or clash.** You don't want your house to look just like your neighbor's. You can also reduce the value of your house and others nearby if it stands out for the wrong reasons. Check the area. Like another house's overall color? Consider using something like it on your trim.

## 5 biggest painting and staining goofs

**You can save about \$800 by staining an average-sized 350-square-foot deck yourself, and about \$4,000 if you're refinishing a typical 2,300-square-foot house. But think twice: "Never again!" was the most common response from our Facebook fans who took on the project. Contractor gripes, though, included poor prep and painting in the rain.**

**Here's what to watch for, whether you pay a pro or do the job yourself:**

**Rushed prep.** Power-washing dirt and mildew and sanding a cracked or flaking finish are essential for new paint or stain to stick. Also be sure to sand glossy paint surfaces and replace crumbled caulking.

**Skipping the primer.** Many of our top paints now have a built-in primer and might be your best choice. But some, including the Ace Royal Exteriors and Behr Premium Plus, require an initial prime coat—something we recommend for new wood or siding that's especially weathered. Our advice: If in doubt, prime the surface first.

**Laying it on too thick.** Paint and stain are more likely to fail if you apply too much at once. Paint can run and, after drying, might crack soon. And too much stain tends to sit on the surface without soaking in, forming a film that often peels prematurely.

**Working over wet wood.** Most stains are meant for dry wood. Paint can blister when trapped moisture leaches out beneath it. And while we wish all stains could be applied and work well over wet wood, Behr and most manufacturers still recommend waiting for the wood to dry.

**Ignoring the weather.** Many paint and stain manufacturers claim that their products can be applied in temperatures as low as 35° F. But for the best chance of success, you still might want to wait until the temperature is around 50° F—then check that it won't dip for about 48 to 72 hours during the project. Telltale signs of a rush job are cracking, flaking, and blotches.



## Pick the right finish

Top paints and stains in our tests resisted cracking and other weathering. Many also meet regional California VOC limits of 50 grams per liter for paints and 100 grams for stains. The picks below offer special strengths, added value, or both.

- ✓ **CR Best Buy** These perform best for the price and are recommended.
- ✓ **Recommended** These are all fine choices; some are CR Best Buys.

### BEST FOR SIDING

- A1 Behr** \$37 **CR Best Buy**
- B1 Behr** \$31 **CR Best Buy**
- B3 Behr** \$39
- B5 Glidden** \$25 **CR Best Buy**
- B6 Glidden** \$27 **CR Best Buy**



Among flats, choose **A1** for superb protection, especially in humid areas where mildew is a concern. Among satins, **B1** offers similar protection but doesn't have a built-in primer. **B3** has lower VOCs and needs no prime coat, but it sacrifices some dirt protection. Also consider the lower-priced **B5** and **B6** if mildew isn't a problem.

### BEST FOR TRIM

- C1 Valspar** \$40
- C2 Ace** \$29 **CR Best Buy**
- C4 Behr** \$32 **CR Best Buy**
- C6 Glidden** \$28 **CR Best Buy**



All are semigloss. **C1** is sold at Lowe's, doesn't require priming, and is the obvious choice for dirt resistance. **C4**, from Home Depot, adds mildew resistance. Choose **C2** or **C6** if you want to spend less and prefer to shop at Ace or at another independent retailer.

### TOP STAINS FOR DECKS

- D2 Behr** \$29 **CR Best Buy**
- E1 Behr** \$37
- F1 Thompson's** \$23



Among solid stains, **D2** protected the best, including against mildew. **E1** offers similar protection among semi-transparent finishes. Choose **F1** if you want to see all of the grain and let the wood turn gray naturally but you're also willing to refinish more often.

## Ratings Exterior paints

All tested products In performance order, within types.

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

		Product	Price	Overall score	Appearance	Resists						
Rec.	Rank		Per gallon		After 3 years	After 6 years	After 9 years	Cracking	Color change	Dirt	Mildew	Claimed VOCs
				0100								
				P   F   G   VG   E								

### A FLAT May hide minor surface imperfections.

✓	1	Behr Premium Plus Ultra Flat Enamel (Home Depot) ①	\$37	86	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
✓	2	Benjamin Moore Aura Flat ① ②	68	82	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	67
✓	3	California Paints Fres-Coat Velvet Flat	44	79	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100
✓	4	Sherwin-Williams Duration Flat ①	67	79	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	92
	5	Ace Royal Exteriors by Ace Flat	26	77	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	50
	6	Glidden Spred Flat	25	77	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100
	7	Glidden Premium Flat (Home Depot)	22	77	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100
	8	Behr Premium Plus Flat (Home Depot)	29	76	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100
	9	Glidden High Endurance Plus Flat (Walmart) ①	27	76	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
	10	Valspar Ultra Flat (Lowe's) ②	28	75	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100
	11	Valspar DuraMax Flat (Lowe's) ① ②	37	74	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100
	12	Sherwin-Williams Resilience Flat	59	70	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	48

### B SATIN Adds slight gloss to finish.

✓	1	Behr Premium Plus Satin Enamel (Home Depot)	31	79	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100
✓	2	Sherwin-Williams Duration Satin ①	68	78	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	107
✓	3	Behr Premium Plus Ultra Satin Enamel (Home Depot) ①	39	77	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
✓	4	Ace Royal Exteriors by Ace Satin	28	77	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
✓	5	Glidden Premium Satin (Home Depot)	25	75	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
✓	6	Glidden Spred Satin	27	75	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
	7	Valspar DuraMax Satin (Lowe's) ① ②	39	72	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	150
	8	California Paints Fres-Coat Satin Gloss	48	72	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	150
	9	Glidden High Endurance Plus Satin (Walmart) ①	29	72	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	50
	10	Sears WeatherBeater Ultra Satin	44	71	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	53
	11	Sherwin-Williams Resilience Satin	63	70	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	48
	12	Valspar Ultra Satin (Lowe's) ②	30	70	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	150
	13	Kilz Casual Colors Satin ②	30	63	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50

### C SEMIGLOSS Use mainly for trim, windows, and doors.

✓	1	Valspar DuraMax Semi-Gloss (Lowe's) ① ②	40	80	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
✓	2	Ace Royal Exteriors by Ace Semi-Gloss	29	79	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
✓	3	Behr Premium Plus Ultra Semi-Gloss Enamel (Home Depot) ①	40	77	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
✓	4	Behr Premium Plus Semi-Gloss Enamel (Home Depot)	32	77	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	100
✓	5	Sherwin-Williams Duration Semi-Gloss ①	69	76	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	41
✓	6	Glidden Spred Semi-Gloss	28	74	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
	7	Benjamin Moore Aura Semi-Gloss ① ②	68	70	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	50
	8	Glidden High Endurance Plus Semi-Gloss (Walmart) ①	30	70	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	50
	9	Glidden Premium Semi-Gloss (Home Depot)	27	69	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
	10	Valspar Ultra Semi-Gloss (Lowe's) ②	31	66	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	150
	11	Kilz Casual Colors Semi-Gloss ②	31	63	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50

① Self-priming paint. ② Manufacturer claims that product has been reformulated since we tested.

# Ratings House and deck stains

All tested products In performance order, within types.

CR Best Buy  
Recommended

Excellent  
Very good  
Good  
Fair  
Poor

Rec.	Rank	Product	Price Per gallon	Overall score	Appearance			Resists			
					After 1 year	After 2 years	After 3 years	Cracking Color change	Dirt	Mildew	Claimed VOCs
					P	F	G	VG	E		

## D SOLID STAINS These form a paintlike film that shows only texture of wood grain.

✓	1	<b>Benjamin Moore</b> Arborcoat Solid Deck & Siding <sup>①</sup>	\$46	79	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
✓	2	<b>Behr</b> Solid Color Waterproofing Wood Stain (Home Depot)	29	78	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
✓	3	<b>Cabot</b> Solid Acrylic Siding <sup>① ②</sup>	36	74	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
✓	4	<b>Thompson's</b> WaterSeal Deck & House Solid Latex <sup>①</sup>	26	71	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	5	<b>Wolman</b> DuraStain Solid	33	66	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	6	<b>Sears</b> Weatherbeater Deck, Fence & Siding Solid	32	64	•	•	•	•	•	•	90
	7	<b>Sherwin-Williams</b> Woodscapes Solid <sup>②</sup>	48	62	•	•	•	•	•	•	136
	8	<b>Behr</b> Premium Solid Color Weatherproofing Wood Stain (Home Depot)	37	61	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	9	<b>Sherwin-Williams</b> Deckscapes Solid <sup>③</sup>	46	61	•	•	•	•	•	•	122
	10	<b>Flood</b> SWF-Solid Wood Stain <sup>①</sup>	29	56	•	•	•	•	•	•	250
	11	<b>Cabot</b> Solid Color Decking Stain <sup>① ③</sup>	38	55	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	12	<b>Woodsman</b> Solid Color Deck Stain <sup>①</sup>	30	27	•	•	•	•	•	•	250

## E SEMITRANSSPARENT STAINS These soak into wood, adding color, but grain is visible.

✓	1	<b>Behr</b> Premium Semi-Transparent Weatherproofing Wood Stain (Home Depot)	37	65	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	2	<b>Cabot</b> Semi-Transparent Deck & Siding	38	46	•	•	•	•	•	•	250
	3	<b>Behr</b> Semi-Transparent Waterproofing Wood Stain (Home Depot)	29	41	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	4	<b>Benjamin Moore</b> Arborcoat Semi-Transparent Deck & Siding <sup>①</sup>	46	40	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	5	<b>Sherwin-Williams</b> Deckscapes Semi-Transparent <sup>① ③</sup>	46	38	•	•	•	•	•	•	170
	6	<b>Flood</b> TWF-Semi Semi-Transparent Wood Stain <sup>①</sup>	29	38	•	•	•	•	•	•	250
	7	<b>Ace</b> Wood Royal Semi-Transparent Deck & Siding	31	35	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	8	<b>Thompson's</b> WaterSeal Deck & House Semi-Transparent Latex <sup>①</sup>	25	32	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	9	<b>Wolman</b> DuraStain Semi-Transparent	30	32	•	•	•	•	•	•	250
	10	<b>Cabot</b> Express Deck Wood Stain Semi-Transparent <sup>① ③</sup>	37	22	•	•	•	•	•	•	250
	11	<b>Sherwin-Williams</b> Woodscapes Semi-Transparent <sup>②</sup>	46	21	•	•	•	•	•	•	79

## F CLEAR SEALERS These soak into wood, showing grain but allowing the wood to age naturally.

✓	1	<b>Thompson's</b> WaterSeal Advanced Waterproofer <sup>①</sup>	23	31	•	•	•	•	•	•	250
	2	<b>Thompson's</b> WaterSeal Waterproofer Plus Clear Wood Protector <sup>① ④</sup>	19	28	•	•	•	•	•	•	100
	3	<b>Olympic</b> Maximum Sealant (Lowe's)	34	24	•	•	•	•	•	•	98
	4	<b>Wolman</b> RainCoat Clear Water Repellent	18	21	•	•	•	•	•	•	250
	5	<b>Benjamin Moore</b> Waterproofer (320)	24	18	•	•	•	•	•	•	250
	6	<b>Sherwin-Williams</b> Deckscapes Clear Sealer <sup>③</sup>	38	15	•	•	•	•	•	•	311

① Manufacturer claims that product has been reformulated since we tested. ② Recommended only for siding and fences. ③ Recommended only for decks. ④ Clean up with mineral spirits.

## Guide to the Ratings

**Overall score** for paints and stains is weighted average of each year's appearance for white, blue, and brown (clear for sealers); score is based on two coats over primed pine-clapboard siding (for stains and self-priming paints, two coats without primer). Fully tested finishes have undergone accelerated outdoor weathering for up to three years; each year approximates three years on vertical surfaces, one year on decks. Displayed scores are rounded; products

are listed in order of precise overall score. Scores for previously tested products may have changed because of changes in tabulations. **Appearance** indicates performance after years indicated. **Resists** means score of at least Good for that attribute at the end of testing. **Claimed VOCs** is maximum grams per liter as stated on can. Price is approximate retail per gallon.

## What warranties really mean

Long warranties and a long life for paints and stains top most people's wish lists for finishes. But the two aren't necessarily synonymous. And don't expect a team of uniformed pros to arrive at your house if the paint or stain fails early.

Even lifetime warranties, which usually last the life of your house, merely cover problems caused by defects in the finish, not improper application or normal aging. What's more, the most you can usually expect is enough free paint or stain to cover the affected area.

Our outdoor testing also shows that some paints and stains with similar warranties perform very differently. Our tests are especially tough, but they suggest that some finishes could let you down quickly, regardless of warranty coverage.

### 'Lifetime' paints differ

Our results approximate up to nine years outdoors for paints and stains on house siding. All of the paints we tested carry a lifetime warranty for defects. The best of the 36 in our Ratings still looked impressive after the equivalent of nine years, but the Kilz Casual Colors Satin and Semi-Gloss paints showed cracks and dirt.

### Stains fail sooner on decks

That is because horizontal surfaces are exposed more directly to the elements. Indeed, fewer stains offer warranties, with some stating only that the product "can be expected" to last a certain period. Flood SWF-Solid Wood Stain does carry a five-year warranty for decks. But unlike some with similar coverage, it was among those that looked worn after three years of testing. The semitransparent Wolman DuraStain, and the clear Wolman RainCoat and Olympic Maximum Sealant have three-year warranties—and looked worn after just one year of testing.

**Bottom line.** Pick a paint or stain that held up best in our tests, regardless of its warranty claims.



# Run your home from your phone

Do smart appliances, app-enabled locks, and musical toilets really work?

**YOU KNOW THE FEELING.** You're on your way to work or the airport, and you can't remember whether you turned off the lights and turned on the security system or locked the door. Do you go back home? Continue on your way and hope for the best? Or do you simply pull out your smart phone, open an app or two, and make sure everything is OK? Convenience, control, and peace of mind are the powerful combination that

the newest smart products are selling.

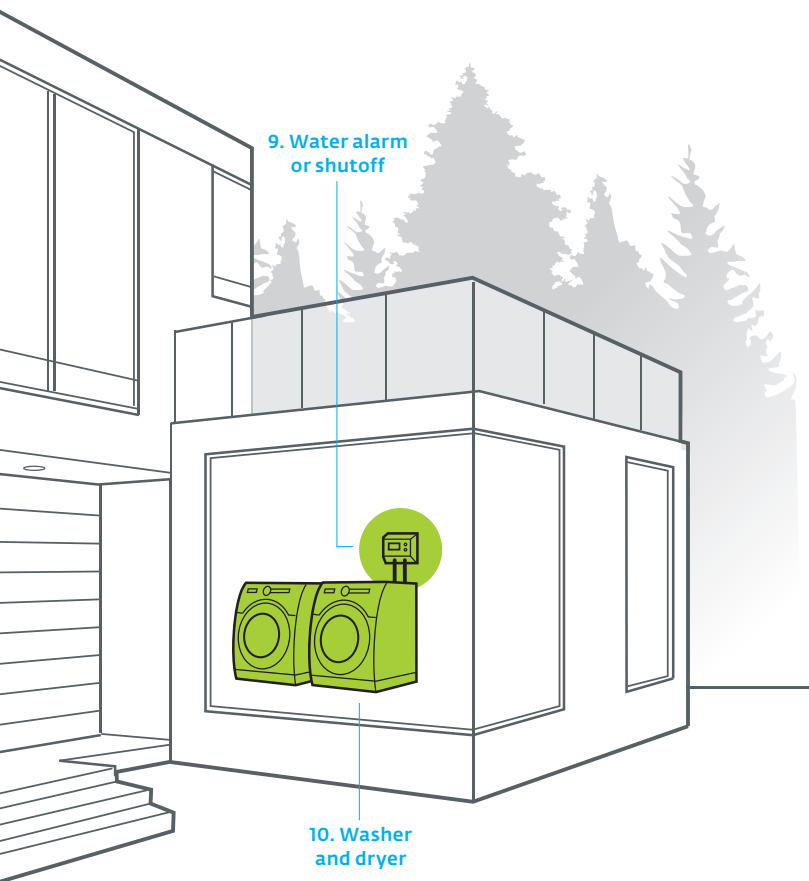
With mainstream corporations such as Amazon, AT&T, Home Depot, Lowe's, Staples, and Verizon introducing smart products and services, this might actually be the year that home automation catches on in a big way—or at least becomes difficult to ignore, given those companies' fat advertising budgets.

Product selection is growing, with 37 billion smart products expected on the market by the year 2020, says network-hardware

maker Cisco. Already there: Ranges and ovens from Dacor and GE can be set to pre-heat during your drive home, so you can get dinner on the table faster. A side-by-side fridge from Whirlpool texts you if a door is ajar, helping you save energy and prevent food from spoiling. Certain dryers can tell you if your dryer exhaust duct is clogged, which prolongs drying time, wastes energy, and is a fire hazard. Appliances from Kenmore and LG can self-diagnose problems via your smart phone, potentially saving on repair costs or time waiting for the service technician.

The public is definitely intrigued. Almost 20 percent of CONSUMER REPORTS subscribers already use their phone or tablet to remotely control some of their home, and almost 70 percent of those who don't voiced interest in doing so in the future, according to our latest survey. Thermostats, security systems, blinds,





## A glimpse of what's already possible



The possibilities seem endless, judging from what's available and the increased bundling by top-name companies of multiple products with one controller—and, of course, monthly fees. Home size and construction, plus the distance between devices, make a difference. Drywall and plywood should do fine, but nonporous materials such as plaster, brick, and stone could slow down or block signals.

**1. Burglar alarm.** Major providers offer multidevice systems that you can monitor from afar.

**2. Generator.** Lets you know whether the generator is working and can e-mail or text you and a service technician if there's a problem.

**3. Thermostat.** Senses patterns in human presence and controls equipment accordingly.

**4. Lighting.** Lets you control lights from an app and set vacation schedules.

**5. Smoke/CO detector.** Can notify you and prompt the same-brand thermostat to shut off fuel-burning appliances.

**6. Refrigerator.** Alerts you if power is out and even if a door is left ajar.

**7. Range.** Lets you preheat the oven, set the timer, and check cooking status without being in the room.

**8. Electronic door locks.** Let you remotely lock or unlock and change who's authorized to enter.

**9. Water alarm or shutoff.** Can text you when water is spilling from a pipe or an appliance; shutoffs can cut off your water main to minimize flooding.

**10. Washer and dryer.** Lets you start cycles and monitor progress, and alerts you if your dryer duct is clogged.

lighting, and door locks are the home items readers most want to manage remotely.

In our package on the pages that follow, you'll learn which products can make your life easier, which fail at their basic function, and which may leave you vulnerable. As always, we put our experts in the labs and our investigative reporters to work, so our picks and pans are based on months of testing, and analysis of benefits, payback time, up-front and ongoing costs, and other concerns. Here are our findings:

**Your Wi-Fi network is vulnerable.** Even if the security settings on your home's router limit access to devices you've authorized, you need to be just as careful about the security settings of each device you add to the network, whether it's a whole-house suite of products controlling lighting, security, and smoke/CO alarms, or just an Internet-enabled fork. Otherwise the device could allow

hackers—and whomever they sell your data to—access to other connected products in your home, such as the computers on your home network. In one cyberattack, about 100,000 products, such as routers, TVs, and at least one connected refrigerator, sent out more than 750,000 phishing e-mails over two weeks, according to security consulting firm Proofpoint. The blame: weaknesses in their basic protections or setup. Proofpoint would not disclose the model of fridge, suspecting the user hadn't changed the default password, but not every smart device is even designed for high security.

**Privacy can be a problem.** An unconnected "dumb" gadget shares no information that you might prefer to keep to yourself, such as when your home is empty. But a smart thermostat might be less discreet, alerting hackers when it's in vacation mode. Or the history log of a smart-lock app

might let thieves learn when you usually get home from work without having to stake out your home.

**You could bet on the wrong horse.** Connectivity is still in its infancy, with no clear winner among competing technologies. So you can control a product via its app on your phone, but you'll need multiple apps to control your household, which isn't all that convenient. The alternative, a suite of products from a single brand or that run on the same wireless standard, such as ZigBee or Z-Wave, leaves you vulnerable to potentially buying into the Betamax of smart products. And based on our testing, some product designs need refinement, unless you like being an unpaid beta tester.

Though certain connected products deliver, so far the promise of an easy, centrally controlled smart home has yet to catch up with reality. *Continued on next page*

# Smart products or dumb choices?

Internet-enabled products often cost more than their low-tech siblings. To tell whether they're worth it, we test their "life improving" claims and their primary function. We also determine how easy these smart features are to set up and use. Below are several products, most of which we've tested, and whether we'd shell out for them.

## Worth buying

### • Connected by TCP light system, \$50

Hate the idea of coming home to a dark house? Unlike a standard timer, this system can be used to program multiple lights to come on before you pull into the driveway, schedule morning wake-ups in your kid's room, or change settings remotely. The kit includes two LEDs and a controller. Setting up the hardware and app were easy. So was remote control, which let us turn lights on

and off and dim them. The app lets you group certain bulbs to switch on with one press of a button for settings such as a romantic dinner. And you can set a bulb's brightness at the point of switching on. The 12-watt LEDs were as bright and warm as 60-watt incandescents in our tests.

### • Generac Mobile Link, \$280

Just having a stationary generator doesn't guarantee you'll have power. You still need to regularly check the LCD screen on the unit to ensure that it's working right and isn't displaying any service-needed messages. But you can't always be home to do that. Mobile Link is one of a few makers' products that can e-mail or text you or a servicing dealer if a problem arises during the generator's periodic self-check. Service after the first year is \$12.50 per month or \$100 per year. Among stationary generators it works with are two that we've recommended: the 7-kilowatt Generac 6237, a CR Best Buy at \$2,250, and the 13-kW Generac 6241, \$3,500.

### • FortrezZ Wireless Z-Wave water valve, \$485 to \$565

Whether it's for a flood-prone basement or an appliance on a higher level—think washing machine, toilets—you want to know whenever anything springs a water leak before it damages flooring, wiring, or furniture below. Water shut-off valves directed by water-alarm sensors aren't new, but this one can e-mail, text, or call you if water is where it shouldn't be. So you don't have to be home to know there's a problem. The kit includes the valve, its power adapter, and a monitoring probe. We haven't tested the FortrezZ but find it promising. It's costly once you add water sensors, about \$60 each, and installation.



## Never mind

### • GE Profile PT9050SFSS wall oven, \$2,600, with free Brillion app

### • Dacor Discovery iQ 30" wall oven, \$4,300 (single), \$7,400 (double)

### • Dacor Discovery iQ dual-fuel range, \$12,000

Save time by preheating your oven while you're driving home. Change cooking temperature from another room. The Brillion app lets you do those things, and the GE Profile oven offered fine baking and broiling, though it wasn't the best in our tests. The two Dacor products, not tested, also let you control cooking from the built-in wireless tablet or a smart device. We like being able to check on a meal's cooking status while relaxing in another room. But we don't recommend turning on your oven, even to preheat, from anywhere other than your home.

### • Nest Learning Thermostat, \$250

Programming a thermostat can be a pain, so one that programs itself and adapts to your schedule sounds great. And you can remotely change the Nest's setting using its app if your routine changes. But the initial setup wasn't as intuitive as other digital or smart thermostats we tested. The Nest is also connected online via Wi-Fi, so it automatically updates its software. But there's the rub: User reviews have complained of Nests shutting down the heating system after updates, with a few reports of frozen and burst pipes as a result.

### • Nest Protect, \$130

This combination smoke and carbon-monoxide detector was impressive as a CO alarm and was top-notch at detecting smoldering fires. It also can tell the Nest Learning Thermostat to shut off the furnace or boiler if the detector senses CO. But the product lacks an ionization sensor, available on dual-sensor smoke alarms. So it's poor at detecting a fast, flaming fire. And as we went to press, Nest had temporarily halted sales because of

a feature that lets you silence nuisance alarms with the wave of a hand but could, the company found, be unintentionally activated and delay the alarm in case of a fire.

### • Lixil Satis smart toilet, \$5,685

The toilet will open at your approach, play music ("Ring of Fire," anybody?), flush automatically, close its lid, and clean up using deodorizers and even a built-in air purifier. But software-security firm Trustwave hacked the toilet's Android app. How? The

app uses "0000" as its permanent PIN, so a hacker could cause the toilet to repeatedly flush or spray its bidet into the air. If designed with similar disregard for security, other connected toilets could face similar mischief. Repeated flushing could prove costly and messy. As for connected toilets in general, we'd rather not go there.

## The jury's out

### • Philips Hue Connected LED system, \$200

The system lets you dim or switch the color of the LED bulbs to almost any other color using an app. The set has three LEDs and a device that plugs into your router.



Setup and operation were easy, and the bulbs provided instant light. Still, there were trade-offs in addition to the high price. When the color temperature of the light was warm, the rendering accuracy was great, but the light was only a bit brighter than a 40-watt bulb.

### • Belkin WeMo light switch, \$50

This switch replaces regular switches and lets you control your lights from home or afar using an app and your home's Wi-Fi system. You can program a lighting schedule or check whether you left the lights on. It worked well once installed, sending e-mail alerts indicating whether lights were on or off. But installation isn't quite the snap the company claims it is. Only serious do-it-yourselfers should try it because the WeMo is taller, deeper, and wider than the typical light switch.

### • Samsung WF457ARGSGR, \$1,550, and DV457EVGS[GR], \$1,550

### • Whirlpool Duet WFL98HEBU, \$1,500, and Duet WEL98HEBU, \$1,500

Sometimes you don't feel like running up or down stairs to see whether your clothes are done. These matching washer and dryer pairs have apps that let you track your laundry's progress while you're playing with your kids and even turn your machine on or off. The dryers are also among those with a duct-blockage indicator, which the manufacturers say improves lagging performance and efficiency—though clogged exhaust vents cause thousands of fires a year. All are among our picks, but you can get great performance for hundreds less if you forgo the smart feature and regularly check the vent. The indicators told us of a full blockage, but we'd prefer to know before dust buildup has become a fire hazard.

# Best electronic door locks and more

Most smart locks let you instantly add or delete many distinct user codes, so you can grant temporary access to workers from afar, track who is coming and going into your home, and enable or disable auto relock via a smart-phone or tablet app.

But your best bet for the most protection is still the key-equipped Medeco Maxum 11\*603, \$190. It aced our best efforts to crack it.

Even the least expensive dead bolt we tested would be an improvement over the traditional key-in-knob variety.

**Electronic connected.** The Schlage Camelot Touchscreen Deadbolt smart lock, \$200, easily withstood our simulated kick-in test, which is why it made our recommended list, though a cordless drill disabled it in less than 2 minutes. The keyless Yale YRD240 smart lock, \$275, was difficult to drill because it lacks a key cylinder, but it was easy prey to kick-in. Once we replaced its cheap strike plate with a better one (about \$10 at home centers and hardware stores), the Yale aced our kick-in test, as did others in this group. But we think a lock should be secure as sold.

You don't even need a mobile device to unlock the Kwikset Kevo 925, \$220. Touch it, and the lock identifies the phone or key fob you're toting via Bluetooth and opens up. But it was one of three Web-enabled locks we could defeat with kick-in or drilling.

**Electronic.** These locks can't be controlled via app. All work using a keypad or a key, except for the iTouchless Bio-Matic BM002U, \$300, which opens by fingerprint, passcode, or key. But none could beat a drill, and one, the Schlage BE365 V CAM 619, \$130, was the easiest to pick of all of the electronic locks. But that model was also among the toughest against kick-in, which raised it to the top of its category.

**Standard.** The rekeyable Kwikset 980, \$30, and Baldwin Prestige 380, \$40, and the Falcon D241, \$55, did best in our tests. All came with a sturdy strike plate and resisted all of our assaults except for drilling. The others did dramatically better once we replaced their lousy strike plates with a box strike secured with four 2-inch screws.

Like many regular locks, some pricey smart locks come with flimsy parts. So a well-placed kick or a small cordless drill could open your door.



A1 Schlage



C1 Medeco

## Ratings

All tested models In performance order, within types.

☒ Recommended

● Excellent  
● Very good  
○ Good  
○ Fair  
● Poor

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Resistance to	Kick-in as sold	Kick-in reinforced	Drilling	Picking
				0 P   F   G   V   E 100					
<b>A ELECTRONIC CONNECTED</b>									
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Schlage Camelot Touchscreen Deadbolt with Alarm BE469NX CAM 619	\$200	79	●	1	●	●	●
	2	Yale Real Living Key Free Touchscreen Deadbolt Stand Alone YRD240	275	50	●	●	●	●	2
	3	Kwikset Kevo 925 3	220	43	●	●	●	●	●
	4	Baldwin Boulder AC Z-Wave 8252	400	41	●	●	●	●	●
	5	Yale Real Living Touchscreen Deadbolt YRD220-ZW-619	275	33	●	●	●	●	●
<b>B ELECTRONIC</b>									
	1	Schlage BE365 V CAM 619	130	53	●	●	●	●	○
	2	Kwikset 909 3	100	49	●	●	●	●	●
	3	iTouchless Bio-Matic BM002U	300	38	●	●	●	●	●
<b>C HIGH-SECURITY</b>									
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Medeco Maxum 11*603	190	97	●	1	●	●	●
<b>D STANDARD</b>									
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Kwikset 980 3	30	83	●	1	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Baldwin Prestige 380 3	40	82	●	1	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Falcon D241	55	78	●	1	●	●	●
	4	Emtek 8455	50	52	●	●	●	●	○
	5	Arrow E61	43	37	●	●	●	●	●
	6	Master Lock 5261D 4	13	22	●	●	●	●	●
	7	Gatehouse DLX71	12	19	●	●	●	●	●
	8	Kwikset 660	17	19	●	●	●	●	●
	9	Prime-Line Segal SE 15361 4	50	19	●	●	●	●	●
	10	Weslock 671	30	17	●	●	●	●	●

1 Needed no reinforcement. 2 Keyless. 3 Rekeyable. 4 Surface-mount.

## Guide to the Ratings

**Overall score** is based mainly on resistance to a heavy metal pendulum meant to simulate a burglar's kicks. Some scores of previously tested locks have changed because of changes in our scoring.

**Resistance to kick-in as sold** is how well the lock survived increasingly forceful impacts using the hardware it comes with. **Kick-in reinforced** is the same test using an aftermarket box strike plate in place of the included strike or, for surface-mount locks, 3-inch screws; models scoring Excellent as sold were not retested. **Drilling** indicates how well the lock stood up to a cordless drill. We also assessed electronic locks for how easy they were to set up and use. **Price** is approximate retail.





# Point, shoot & share

A quick guide to organizing, sending, and saving your photos

**A**BOUT 880 BILLION photographs will be taken in 2014, according to Yahoo, roughly 123 photos for every man, woman, and child on Earth. That's a lot of birthdays, weddings, graduations, vacations, and selfies.

Even though photography has never been more popular, camera sales fell by 34 percent in 2013, according to the Consumer Electronics Association. Why? You need look no further than the do-everything device in your pocket or purse. Smart phones are the new cameras of choice for casual photographers,

because they unite two previously separate activities—shooting and sharing photos. That has changed not only how images are captured, but why: Rather than taking photos to be printed and placed in an album, consumers are impulsively capturing moments that can be shared with friends (or the entire world) instantly.

But sharing isn't just for phones. Conventional cameras have adapted to meet that need. Many new models have built-in wireless features to link to a smart phone or to Internet services such as Facebook

and Flickr via Wi-Fi or cell service.

You might roll your eyes at Snapchatting teenagers or stare with wonder at the stream-of-consciousness photography of a friend's Instagram feed. Maybe you just want to chronicle a family vacation with a printed photo album that won't break the bank. No matter how or why you share photos, there's no one-size-fits-all service. But before you commit your photos to the cloud, there are practical considerations:

- How do you organize and manage the torrent of digital images when memory is so

## Take your best shots ...

There's one in every family. The proud dad who posts 185 photos of his son's soccer game to Facebook, or the overeager aunt who e-mails hourly links to her cruise snapshots. Don't be that person. A smart photographer knows what to throw away. Here's how to apply an editorial eye to your photo feed:

- **Delete duplicates and duds.**

Professional photographers like New York-based Mason Resnick take multiple shots of groups of people to make sure they wind up with at least one good picture. It's a great idea—as long as you get rid of the also-rans. "I do a quick run-through on the camera after an event and delete the obvious rejects," he says. Then he reviews the rest full-sized on his computer for the final

cut. Everyone benefits if you're discriminating. By discarding so-so shots you'll spend less time uploading and have more space on your memory card for future photos, and your friends will enjoy your photos more.

- **Lock 'em up.** If you worry about accidentally deleting a great shot, this should ease your mind: Most cameras let you lock or protect an image or a group of images on the memory card so that you can't trash them by mistake.

- **Organize in the camera.** When you have lots of photos on a memory card, it's tempting to upload them all rather than pick and choose. Let your camera or smart phone help: In the menu, select photos by date. That makes it easier to share only images from a specific event.

## ... and polish them before you press 'send'

A little planning and touch-up work can make a world of difference in a photo. Correcting red eye (often caused by using a flash in low light) is just the start. Most new digital cameras and phones have a number of tools you should try.

- **Take advantage of shooting modes.**

They can help you take photos that are really worth sharing. A feature on Samsung cameras and smart phones, for instance, is great for group photos. You select the best face for each subject from five consecutive shots and merge them in one photo. Canon's Smooth Skin feature softens wrinkles and harsh shadows on faces, and Portrait mode focuses on a subject while blurring the background.

- **Crop distractions, focus attention.**

Pros like Resnick crop to perfect well-composed images. "When I photographed a family recently, I noticed part of a red 'Exit' sign near the edge of the frame," he said. "Cropping out less than 5 percent of the image improved the photo significantly." You can also alter a composition by zeroing in on a small area. But don't overdo it or the image won't look sharp. Some phones let you erase bystanders who wind up in your photo.

- **Play with color, tone, and filters.**

Many cameras let you change a color photo to black and white or apply a sepia tone. Also, you can often adjust color saturation, image contrast, and brightness, and apply special-effects filters.

inexpensive and online storage is seemingly infinite?

- What's the best way to back up photos so that they don't disappear if your device is lost, stolen, or damaged?
- What, precisely, are you agreeing to when you upload photos? Are your kids going to wind up in a cereal ad one day?

This guide should help clarify the situation. We compare popular photo-sharing services, offer tips on how to improve your photos, and highlight devices that make it easy to share.



**LOOK HERE!**

Cropping the picture and 'erasing' a stray person in the background will focus attention on the main subject.



# Select the right services

Do you like to share images as pixels or prints? See which service suits you.

## Facebook

(facebook.com; mobile apps: Android, iOS, and Windows)



Though its main focus is social networking, Facebook is the biggest image-sharing site on the Internet. Users upload more than 350 million photos to the site every day. **Pros** The intuitive interface makes it easy to share photos and albums with a network of contacts or a few close friends. It has decent help guides and tagging is easy. **Cons** It offers fewer options than dedicated photo sites. For example, you can't view images as a slideshow, it has no image-editing tools, and there's no way to make prints directly from the site. It automatically resizes high-resolution images to a maximum of 2048x2048 pixels, so it's not a great choice for backing up important photos. You can gather photos into albums, but it's hard to move them or change the sequence. And it's easy to overlook some privacy settings, such as changing from public to friends only. **Best for** quick sharing with friends.

## Flickr

(flickr.com; mobile apps: Android and iOS)



This pioneering photo-sharing website, now 10 years old, got a much-needed refresh when Yahoo (which owns Flickr) gave it a soup-to-nuts redesign last year. Changes include expanded free storage and new services such as an Android mobile app, fun filters, and easy-to-use image-editing tools. An ad-free version costs \$50 a year. **Pros** It's easy to apply quick edits to photos and change their sequence. The site is packed with clever tools, such as a photo stream that lets you view thumbnails in a scrolling bar. Photos are easy to tag and are nicely displayed. Each user gets 1 terabyte of free storage, which makes Flickr great for uploading full-resolution photos. **Cons** If you want to print photos or create a photo book, you have to use its partner, Snapfish. Help tools aren't easy to find. Menus and submenus can be confusing. **Best for** backing up full-resolution photos online. It also lets you connect with a strong photographic community.

## Instagram

(instagram.com; mobile apps: Android, iOS, and Windows in beta)



This simple photo-sharing service, owned by Facebook, is primarily a mobile app, but you can access your account via the Web. Using it is straightforward: You take a photo with the app (or select one you've already taken), then apply one of its numerous retro-style filters or other effects. Then you caption and upload the photo to your Instagram feed, which appears on your phone and on Facebook, Foursquare, Twitter, and Tumblr (whichever you selected in your profile). **Pros** The simple interface makes Instagram easy to use. Adding a filter to change the look of your image is very intuitive. **Cons** You can't print images or create books within Instagram; you must use a third-party service. It doesn't have many tools to organize or reorder photos. The website is for viewing only; you can't upload photos there. **Best for** quickly sharing single images and adding a photo filter.

## Picasa/Google+

(picasa.google.com and plus.google.com; mobile apps: Android and iOS)



Owned by Google, Picasa is free photo-organizing and image-editing software for PCs and Macs. It's integrated with Google+. **Pros** Both Picasa and Google+ have clear interfaces and are easy to use. Picasa gives you lots of tools without cluttering the screen or getting you lost in submenus. A photo in Google+ will have a simple menu at the top and bottom listing essential features. If you click on, say, Edit, you can tweak the photo in that section of Google+. Picasa and Google+ are good for organizing photos, with lots of tools to apply quick edits and move or change the sequence. **Cons** Because Picasa is integrated with Picasa Web Albums and Google+, it can be confusing to know where you're posting your images. You must use the Chrome browser to edit images on Google+. The Help info on the Google+ photo-tools section is more difficult to find than on Picasa. You get only 1 gigabyte of free storage, or 15GB free to share between Google Drive, Gmail, and Google+photos. **Best for** keeping all of your images in one ecosystem, namely Google. Also, both Google+ and Google Drive offer various options for storing photos, including full-resolution images, which make them good for storing and sharing images.

## Shutterfly

(shutterfly.com; mobile apps: Android and iOS)



This photo-printing service allows you to share images on its website by e-mail or through Facebook. Its main use is for printing photos and creating photo-related products, such as books, cards and invitations, and calendars. **Pros** Shutterfly's interface is simple and user-friendly. It offers many options for printing photos. With a few clicks, you can set up a slideshow of images in your album. The service frequently runs promotions for free or low-cost prints, buy-one-get-one-free offers on books, free shipping, and more. Tools are great, photo edits are easy to make, and you can quickly move photos or change the sequence. You can password-protect your shared photos. The company says it won't delete your photos if you don't use your account or make a purchase. **Cons** It doesn't offer full-resolution downloads. The network and community aren't as strong as that of some other photo-sharing services. Though intuitive, the interface isn't very attractive. It shares with only one social-networking site, Facebook. **Best for** those who want to share photos selectively and get prints and related merchandise.

## Snapfish

(snapfish.com; mobile apps: Android and iOS)



Like Shutterfly, this photo-printing service, which is owned by HP, allows you to share images. But its main use is for printing photos and creating books, calendars, and other photo-related products. **Pros** Tools are easy to use. The site is clear and well-structured, with several options for printing your photos. It's easy to play a slideshow of images in your album. It offers full-resolution downloads. Like Shutterfly, Snapfish frequently runs promotions for discounts and freebies. It's integrated with Flickr and lets you share with Facebook, Twitter, Typepad, WordPress, and others. You can require that viewers sign in to a password-protected account to see photos. It's very good for organizing photos, with lots of tools to apply quick edits and move or change the sequence of images. **Cons** Its network and community aren't as strong as services dedicated to photo sharing. Your account and photos will be deleted if you don't order prints or other merchandise once a year. **Best for** those who want to share photos selectively and get prints and related merchandise.



## HOW TO SHARE

# Protect your privacy

You can't unshare digital photos or be sure that they will be seen only by the people you want to see them. A friend (or someone you thought was a friend) could take a screen grab and forward it to everyone he knows. But there are a few ways to reduce the risks.

### Tag! You're it

Some services, including Facebook, have automatic tagging features that suggest the name of the people in a photo. But not everyone wants to be identified in every shot, which can be unsettling and even creepy. You can control who tags your

own posts, and you can remove tags of yourself that others have posted. Check all of the privacy settings to see what the defaults are. Also look for tools to limit who sees your photos and the information contained in them.

### Somebody's watching

Photos have a habit of traveling fast and far afield on Facebook and Instagram. On Facebook, the default setting is for sharing with friends. But you can be more selective: Use the drop-down menu next to the Post button and choose Custom. On Instagram, the default setting for posts is Public, so anyone can

see your photos. You'll need to turn on the Photos Are Private switch under Edit Your Profile. But privacy policies change, so there's no guarantee photos won't wind up in the public eye.

### The geotag red flag

Digital photos carry more information than you might think. Each image file created by a phone or camera has Exchangeable Image File Format (EXIF) "metadata" that can include everything from exposure settings to the location. Phones and cameras with GPS sensors can embed EXIF geotags into photos—turning a



casually posted vacation pic into an open letter to thieves that you're not home. Facebook says that it strips EXIF data from uploaded photos in the interest of user privacy. But Picasa, Photo-bucket, and Flickr still support it.

## BUILT TO SHARE

# Make a direct connection

When it comes to picture quality, a phone still can't compare with a good camera. But cameras can learn a lesson or two from smart phones about connectivity—and some have. Many new cameras have built in Wi-Fi and near field communication (NFC) antennas that let you transfer your photos to a phone or tablet. Some cameras can connect directly to online

services such as Dropbox, Facebook, and Flickr. (In our experience, cameras don't always share as quickly and as easily as phones, so it might take a little time and effort to get this working, especially at first.) You can also add an app to your phone or tablet that lets you print directly from a social-networking site. We included one printer with that capability here as well.



**Canon PowerShot N100 wireless camera**

This point-and-shoot subcompact uses Wi-Fi to transfer images to phones, tablets, and computers, and it can connect to other PowerShot N-series cameras. (In our informal tests of an earlier model, connecting wirelessly to phones and tablets was easier than connecting to computers.) When set in Creative Shot mode, it can automatically alter photos using various filters and cropping techniques, and save five versions of a shot, mimicking many of the filters you would find on Instagram.



**Sony DSC-QX10 lens-based camera**

This cylindrical-shaped device looks like a lens, but it's actually a full-fledged camera minus a viewfinder and display. The idea is that you use your smart phone's—and that's an interesting idea. By using a Wi-Fi link to your phone, the QX10 takes advantage of the phone's large, high-resolution display, processing power, and sharing capabilities. What the QX10 has that your phone doesn't is a 10x optical zoom and image stabilization. In our informal tests of the DSC-QX10, we found it easy to connect to an iPhone 5 via Wi-Fi, and we got better close-ups and had fewer blurred photos than with the iPhone's camera.



**Samsung NX30 Wi-Fi-enabled advanced camera**

Near field communication lets you tap this mirrorless Samsung camera to a compatible Android phone or tablet to share photos instantly. (You need to download Samsung's Smart Camera app to your device.) The camera's AutoShare feature automatically sends photos to iOS or Android phones or tablets. The Group Share feature sends photos to four people at once. The NX30 can post images directly to Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, and Dropbox via Wi-Fi. It even has a Baby Monitor mode that sends photos to a compatible phone or TV when it detects a sound.



**Canon Pixma MG7120 all-in-one printer**

For years, many printers from the major brands have been able to connect wirelessly to mobile devices to print photos, documents, and Web pages. Some models now go beyond that. This Canon Pixma can print directly from Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Dropbox, and other services when used with a phone or tablet running Canon's new cloud-based printing app, Pixma Printing Solution. This all-in-one inkjet also works with Apple's AirPrint technology, which lets you print easily from most iOS-based devices.



**STAR-STUDED** The now-famous selfie from this year's Academy Awards shows how good composition and lighting—not to mention beautiful faces—make for a winning photo.

## SHARE WITH FLAIR

# Take the perfect selfie

- **Seek the light.** Many of the most memorable photos are taken in good lighting, whether natural or artificial.
- **Avoid distractions.** Look around before you snap your self-portrait. You don't want a potted plant sprouting from your head.
- **Choose the background.** A cluttered, busy setting can detract from the photo, so opt for a scene in which you're the star.

- **Assess the angle.** Hold the phone (or camera) at a few levels and angles to see which yields the most flattering shot.
- **Set the mood.** The best selfies tell a story or have a point of view. Hold a prop—say, your passport if you're going on vacation—or strike a pose that conveys something about your state of mind or the reason for the photo. In general, keep it light and have fun.

## KEEP A SPARE

# Store safely

Backing up your photos might seem about as much fun as flossing your teeth, but neglect either practice and you'll probably lose some valuable assets. If you never off-load the images from your phone or camera, then your memories could be lost or damaged as easily as the device itself.

But even if you dutifully transfer your photos to a computer or website, you're not home free. Drives can crash or be destroyed in a disaster, and online companies can go out of business. Two simple strategies for safeguarding against the hazards of fate: redundancy and geographic distribution. In other words, make multiple copies of photos, and don't keep them all in the same place.

## Strategy

**Transfer regularly.** After an event or at regular intervals, transfer photos from your camera or phone to your computer. One way to organize them: Place photos in folders corresponding to the occasion or time frame (monthly, for instance), then place those folders into a folder for that year. Copy the annual folder onto an external hard drive and a cloud-storage service. That gives you two sets of backups for the photos on your computer.

**Automate everything.** One helpful trick is to let digital tools do the work for you. Some photo-organizing and image-editing software, like Picasa, will ask if it can scan your entire computer for photos. Once it's done, it displays all of the folders containing photos so that you don't have to hunt for them. Alternatively, most external hard drives and online backup services include backup software. You can also use your operating system's backup utility. On Macs, it's called Time Machine. On Windows 8 computers, it's called the File History feature in the Control Panel. Windows 7 calls it Windows Backup.

## Storage solutions

**External hard drives.** 1TB to 2TB drives now sell for \$100 or less. Most connect to a computer via a USB port.

- Seagate Backup Plus Desktop Drive: 2TB, \$100
- Western Digital My Book: 2TB, \$100

**Cloud storage.** Photos stored online are accessible no matter where you are. Cloud services usually offer limited space at no cost and charge for more.

- Dropbox: 2GB, free; 100GB, \$100/year; 500GB, \$500/year
- Microsoft OneDrive (formerly SkyDrive): 7GB, free; 100GB, \$50/year; 200GB, \$100/year
- Google Drive: 15GB, free; 100GB, \$2/month; 1TB, \$10/month; 10TB, \$100/month

- Apple iCloud: 5GB, free; 10GB, \$20/year; 20GB, \$40/year

## Online backup services.

Though similar to online cloud storage, these focus on performing regular, automated backups of your devices and storing the photos and data online. They come with backup software you install on a computer, tablet, or smart phone.

- Carbonite: Personal Plus Basic with unlimited storage space, \$60/year per computer
- Mozy.com: MozyHome with 50GB, \$6/month; 125GB, \$10/month; additional 20GB, \$2/month; \$2/month for each additional computer

## Additional cloud services.

Personal clouds are an offshoot of network drives that can be accessed from any device with an Internet connection. They require a router that can be accessed from the Internet and

an external hard drive. With a Wi-Fi camera, you can snap and upload pictures to your personal cloud almost instantly. Also, you can use cloud-connected hard drives to connect to a router via an Ethernet connection. You control your hard drive through a Web browser or with an app on a mobile device. You can download and upload files no matter where you are.

- Western Digital My Cloud Personal Cloud Storage: 2TB, \$150; 3TB, \$180

## USB flash drives, optical discs.

These devices aren't designed for long-term storage, but using them is better than not backing up at all. Just be aware of their limitations. USB flash (or thumb) drives are small and easily lost or damaged. Many new computers don't have an optical drive, so if you store images on Blu-rays, DVDs, or CDs, you might need an external drive (about \$100 for Blu-ray; \$50 or less for DVD).







# How to live well into your 80s and beyond

Five keys to a long, healthful life

**S**IXTY YEARS AGO an American who made it to 65 could expect to live an additional 14 years. Today, it's 19 years. The most important question then: how to grow older healthfully so that we can actually enjoy those extra years? A CONSUMER REPORTS survey of 2,066 Americans age 50 and older revealed that we're eager to maintain our quality of life into retirement and far, far beyond.

"Whether you're just starting to think about your golden years or are well into retirement, it turns out that most of us have pretty similar goals: remaining independent, keeping mentally sharp, and staying as mobile as possible," says Fernando Torres-Gil, Ph.D., director of the UCLA Center for Policy Research on Aging.

But that kind of successful aging requires savvy planning and decision-making. Our survey found that multiple chronic illnesses,

shelves full of medications, and numerous medical specialists are common for Americans older than 50, so lining up good health care and managing it smartly are important. We also discovered that mobility decreases dramatically as you age; 33 percent of those older than 80 have difficulty walking, and more than 25 percent have a tough time simply getting out of chairs, so a fitness plan that maintains strength, flexibility, and balance is vital. Our survey group told us that their current home was the top choice of where to live as they aged and needed more care. But the ability to do so is highly dependent on the home's location and physical features. Also, maintaining an active social network for yourself and being a lifelong learner are the best ways to reduce the risk of cognitive decline, the situation that respondents feared most about old age.

The good news: No matter whether you've just hit 50 or are well

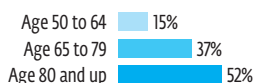




## Survey said ...

What can you expect as you age? The Consumer Reports National Research Center conducted an online survey of a nationally representative sample of 2,066 Americans 50 and older in December 2013. Some important findings:

### Have four or more chronic conditions



### Take more than three prescription medicines



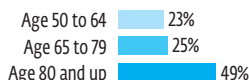
### Less active than 10 years ago



### Difficulty getting into or out of a chair



### Live alone



on your way toward the century mark, there are strategies that can help you stay healthy, keep you socially and intellectually engaged in the world around you, and create a living situation that is comfortable and safe.

This report is the fourth in a series on how to manage your health and health care in the years ahead, funded in part by a grant from the Atlantic Philanthropies.

## 1 Managing your health

Three out of four of those we surveyed had at least one health condition, such as high blood pressure, arthritis, or diabetes—and 31 percent had three or more.

“You’re likely to end up with multiple doctors, not all of whom are coordinated with each other. The basic question is who’s in charge here anyway?” says Daniel Callahan, Ph.D., a medical ethicist specializing in aging (who, at 83, says “I’ve now got a chance to study myself”).

It’s not easy to get your arms around the complexities of modern health care. But if you assemble a capable team and take advantage of some of the recent improvements in the way doctors are organizing their services, you can minimize confusion. What are the most important items on your medical to-do list?

**A great primary care doctor.** This person (usually an internist or family practitioner) should be your main point of contact with the health care system. Seventy-two percent of our survey respondents said they already have such a doctor, but if you don’t, find one now and make an appointment for an initial visit. Look for a physician whose practice is a “patient-centered medical home.” That means the doctor’s office has organized itself to quarterback all of your care, including alerting you when it’s time for a test or visit, intervening if it looks like you’re likely to develop type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure, keeping tabs on all of your medications, and coordinating care with your specialists. That last point is critical; about three-quarters of survey respondents 65 and older said they had seen two or more specialists in the previous year. (Read more about medical homes at [ConsumerReports.org/cro/medicalhome](http://ConsumerReports.org/cro/medicalhome).)

**Well-managed medications.** Among respondents 80 and older, 72 percent took at least three prescription medications, and 84 percent took three or more over-the-counter medications, including vitamins and nutritional supplements.

“People are on five, 10, 20 medications. And nobody thinks that 20 medications are beneficial,” says Mary Tinetti, M.D., chief

of geriatric medicine at the Yale New Haven Health System and the Yale School of Medicine. A least once a year you should put all of your pill bottles in a bag (including all over-the-counter drugs and supplements) and take them to your primary care doctor for a review. Make a note of any side effects or problems you’ve noticed. If it turns out your medications are working at cross-purposes or causing unacceptable side effects, ask your doctor to work out the optimum combination of medications. Also keep an up-to-date list of your drugs (including dosages) in your wallet or handbag in case of a medical emergency. (Read more about managing your medications at [ConsumerReports.org/multiplemeds](http://ConsumerReports.org/multiplemeds).)

**Health-insurance savvy.** Carefully go through your health plan’s requirements, so you really know how it works and whether you need to get referrals for specialist visits or prior authorization for elective surgery or costly tests. Not following those rules could result in a nasty surprise on your bill. You can find all of that information in your plan’s summary of benefits and coverage, a standardized plan-information document that should have come with your policy. (If it didn’t, ask for it.)

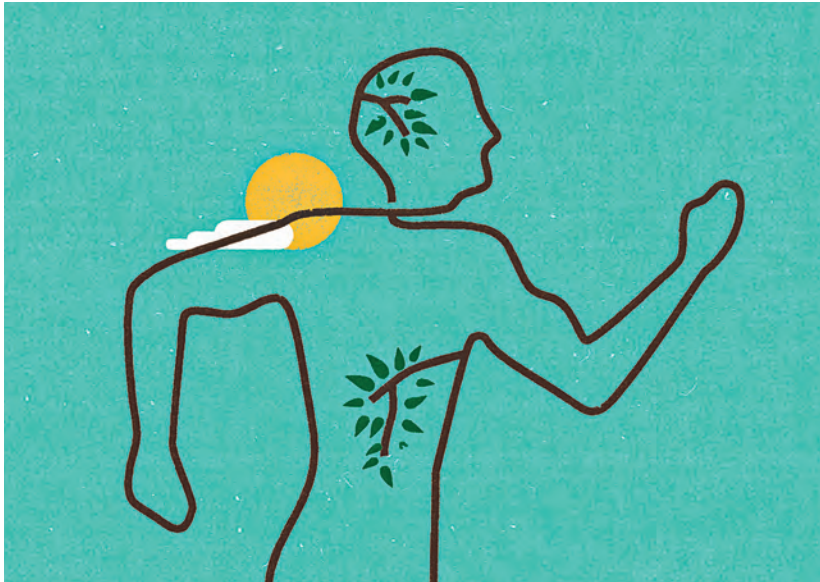
A few months ahead of your 65th birthday, be sure to enroll in Medicare. The process can be complicated, especially if you are still working at a job with health benefits, so study up at [Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov) or at our Medicare information page at [ConsumerReports.org/cro/medicare](http://ConsumerReports.org/cro/medicare). Review your plan choices every year at open enrollment.

## 2 Keeping your body strong

One of the ongoing effects of aging is loss of muscle mass. If you don’t do anything to fight it, you could find yourself unable to get out of an armchair or off the toilet one day. Aging also brings declines in aerobic capacity and flexibility. And those factors together increase your risk of falls—at a time in life when bones tend to be more brittle. Eighteen percent of our survey respondents said they had fallen in the past year, and of those, 71 percent were injured, including 8 percent who broke a bone.

Here’s a quick test to find out whether your fitness has deteriorated to a point that puts you at risk: Time how long it takes you to get out of an armchair, walk 10 feet, walk back, and sit down again. A healthy adult older than 60 should be able to do it in 10 seconds or less.

Flunked the test? The good news is that it’s never too late to start working out to counter aging’s effects. “There’s no medica-



tion, no medical device that has anywhere near the effectiveness of physical activity,” says Yale’s Mary Tinetti.

Here are some concrete steps you can take, based on recommendations from experts at the American Heart Association and American College of Sports Medicine:

**Get a physical-therapy evaluation.** Ask your doctor to prescribe a consultation with a licensed physical therapist who can help you design a safe exercise program.

**Do 150 minutes of cardio every week.** Aim for at least 30 minutes at a time of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise (think

a brisk walk where you’re not breathing so hard that you can’t carry on a conversation) five days per week. For motivation, consider using an activity tracker; the Fitbit One is our top-rated model.

**Add strength training.** You should strength train on two or three nonconsecutive days each week and do eight to 10 exercises targeting the muscles of your upper body, lower body, and core. Start slowly and work up to a weight or resistance that causes fatigue after eight to 14 repetitions. If you have problems with your joints or bones, consult a certified trainer or physical ther-

apist before starting a program.

**Keep your balance.** One of the simplest exercises is to practice standing on one leg. Also consider tai chi, which numerous studies have shown improves balance and reduces the risk of falls. Find local classes by putting “tai chi” and the name of your city into a search engine.

**Stay flexible.** Yoga is great for improving your flexibility. But clear the idea with your doctor first if you have any chronic problems, find a qualified instructor, and make sure he or she knows about any physical limitations you have.

### 3 Staying mentally sharp

The older Americans we surveyed said that losing their cognitive abilities was their No. 1 fear about aging. Nothing you do will protect you 100 percent from developing Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia, but there are ways to reduce your risk:

**Remain physically fit.** Follow the fitness advice in the previous section because staying physically active decreases the risk of cognitive decline.

**Stay socially engaged.** Our survey found that our social lives start to dwindle even before retirement; 43 percent of respondents ages 50 to 64 said they spent less time with friends than they had a decade previously. Keep in contact with family and friends, and expand your social circle by volunteering, attending local cultural events, taking continuing-education classes at a local college or traveling with a group such as Road

## Introducing a new approach to good care

You may have received a notice that you’ve been assigned to an Accountable Care Organization, or ACO. Here’s what it is and how it’s supposed to work:

An ACO consists of a group of doctors, a hospital, or a combination of both, who have made a deal with either Medicare or a private insurance company that upends the usual financial incentives. Normally providers are paid a fee for every service they provide, even if it’s to fix a mistake they made or isn’t necessary to begin with. An ACO gets a financial bonus for providing safe and appropriate care that keeps patients healthy. It becomes “accountable”

for the overall cost and quality of care of its assigned population. ACOs that do a good job on quality measures, such as controlling diabetics’ blood sugar or giving the appropriate medications to people with heart disease, share the savings with the insurance company or Medicare. In practice, that means giving extra attention to people with serious or multiple conditions. The first

hospital-led ACOs started up in 2010, and the first Medicare ACOs in 2012. Now almost 500 of them are in operation, covering more than 31 million patients.

If you’re assigned to an ACO, it most likely means that your doctor’s office is participating in one. You can opt out, but we recommend that you don’t. Being in an ACO has no effect on your insurance coverage and doesn’t restrict your ability to see the doctor of your choice. And if the ACO



does a good job, your out-of-pocket costs might go down if you need fewer doctor visits or hospital stays to manage your condition.

For more information about ACOs, go to [ConsumerHealthChoices.org/gettinghealthcareright](http://ConsumerHealthChoices.org/gettinghealthcareright).



Scholars (formerly known as Elderhostel).

**Learn something new.** Crossword puzzles aren't enough, especially if you've been doing them for years. The key to brain fitness is to establish new neural connections by taking on fresh mental challenges. Try learning a new foreign language or taking lessons on a new musical instrument.

## 4 Living independently

Fifty-five percent of our respondents wanted to stay in their own homes, with help as needed, as they got older and required more care. But a recent AARP survey revealed that only about half of older adults thought their homes could accommodate them "very well" as they age; 12 percent said "not well" or "not well at all."

"The time to think about your housing options is when you first retire and are relatively healthy and young," says Linda Fodrini-Johnson, a geriatric-care manager in Walnut Creek, Calif. "You need to think realistically about the things that might happen over the next 20 years."

If you want to "age in place," here are some modifications to consider if your home doesn't already have them:

- Ground-floor sleeping space. Adding a first-floor bedroom and bath would be great, but at an average cost of \$225,000, according to Remodeling Magazine, it might be out of reach. A more cost-effective option might be converting a den into a bedroom and expanding the ground-floor powder room into a full bath.
- Bathroom safety features. Replace the tub with a roomy shower that has no threshold to step over. Add grab bars and a shower

seat. Install a "comfort height" toilet seat, 2 inches taller than usual, that's easier to get off of.

- Lever-type doorknobs and faucet handles. They're easier to turn for people with stiff or weak hands and arms.
- Chairlift. If your stairs are wide enough (37 inches is the recommended minimum) you can install an electric chairlift. But they are expensive—more than \$10,000, depending on needed modifications, models, and specifications.

The National Association of Home Builders has a list of Certified Aging-in-Place Specialists with special training in designing and building aging-friendly home renovations. Find one in your area by putting "NAHB CAPS directory" into a search engine.

Check to see whether you already live in an area served by a village, a membership network of people who are "aging in place" in their own homes with the help of services such as rides to the doctor, home maintenance and repair, computer troubleshooting, social events, in-home medical care, and light housekeeping in exchange for a monthly or annual fee. Find a village near you at [vtvnetwork.org](http://vtvnetwork.org).

## 5 Moving to an easier home

Renovations and villages aren't an option for everyone. You might find yourself struggling to take care of a big yard or feeling isolated because driving at night has become difficult. Those may be signs that it's time to relocate to a more aging-friendly home.

Ray Mack, 68, a retired chemist, reached that point after "one too many visits to the

emergency room" for mishaps involving heavy machinery and yard maintenance on his 5-acre spread near Houston. He and his wife relocated to a house on a small lot in Baton Rouge, La., within walking distance of a university, museums, and parks.

Some features to look for include:

- Entryways and interior doors without raised thresholds.
- Wide hallways and doorways.
- Bathroom, bedroom, and laundry on the main floor.
- "Universal design" features such as levered door handles, grab bars in bathrooms, and a place to sit while preparing meals.
- Services, shopping, transit, and recreational facilities within walking distance. Go to [walkscore.com](http://walkscore.com) to calculate a neighborhood's walkability.

In certain areas you can also buy into a cohousing development. Cohousing features regular private homes built on small parcels and clustered around common facilities such as a recreation building where residents gather to share weekly meals and social events. Find a cohousing near you at [cohousing.org](http://cohousing.org).

Or you might reach a point where even those types of homes are too much to manage. When? "If you realize you're not getting out at least three times a week," Fodrini-Johnson says. "When your vision is poor and you can't set your thermostats, or read your medicine bottle, or just don't have the stamina to take care of yourself."

Here are your top choices at that point:

- Continuing-care retirement community. These developments offer a continuum of housing options, from regular independent apartments to assisted living to skilled nursing facilities, which residents can move among as their medical and physical needs dictate. But the buy-in can run from the low six figures up, with additional four-figure monthly fees for any extra services you might require. And, warns Fodrini-Johnson, the communities might not accept you if you've already developed a serious condition such as Parkinson's disease.

- Assisted living. If you don't need skilled nursing care but can no longer manage on your own, assisted-living facilities offer some combination of housing, meals, help with daily-living tasks such as dressing and bathing, and, in certain cases, help with medical tasks such as medication management. Prices and amenities vary widely.

Start your search at [eldercare.gov](http://eldercare.gov), which will guide you to local agencies that can help you avoid unlicensed facilities.





# Lab Tests

## Wireless wonders

**WITH SO MUCH MUSIC** residing on phones and tablets these days, you'll want wireless speakers that make it easy to play tunes around the house. Bluetooth speakers let you stream from a phone or tablet in the same room. Wi-Fi speakers have a longer range, so they don't have to be in the same room as the audio source.

We recently compared three new speakers: the Bose SoundTouch 20, Samsung Shape M7, and Sonos Play:1. All three can stream music directly from online services and from a phone or tablet.

**Bottom line.** The Sonos Play:1 was tops, with the best sound and the most streaming services at the time we tested. The Samsung has good sound quality and the most flexibility connecting to devices. The Bose has good sound quality and Apple AirPlay.



### 1. Sonos Play:1, \$200

Sonos essentially pioneered wireless speakers, and it has set the bar for performance, ease of use, and flexibility. Its first entries, the Play:3, \$300, and Play:5, \$500, were pricey. Its latest model, the Play:1, could appeal to more buyers because of its lower price. It sounds great, with very good overall sound and bass that's well-balanced—though not especially deep—and more extended than you'd expect. When you combine two Play:1 speakers in a stereo setup, you get even richer, more detailed sound with a wider soundstage. The Sonos system will complement an existing Wi-Fi network with its own dedicated mesh network, so you won't get interference from other devices. Each Sonos component acts as a transmitter, extending your wireless range. Like the other models in the line, the Play:1 doesn't come with a remote control; instead, you use the free Sonos Controller app on mobile devices, PCs, and Macs.

### 2. Bose SoundTouch 20, \$400

This is Bose's first run at the multiroom-speaker market. It uses proprietary Wi-Fi technology and is compatible with Apple AirPlay. Though bigger than the Sonos Play:1, the SoundTouch 20 doesn't match it for sound quality. Overall sound was good—probably fine for most noncritical listeners—but the bass wasn't as defined and could be boomy, and midrange lacked detail. The speaker can sync to your iTunes library or be used with other AirPlay-compatible speakers, and it doesn't need an optional bridge for a multiroom setup. It includes a simple remote control, and Bose offers a free remote app for mobile devices. Six presets let you call up favorite stations or playlists. But you can't combine two speakers to form a stereo pair. And it had access to fewer streaming services than the Sonos and Samsung models at the time we tested.

### 3. Samsung Shape M7, \$350

The wedge-shaped Samsung Shape M7—which uses Bluetooth (with NFC pairing) and DLNA-based (AllShare) technology in addition to Wi-Fi—might be just the ticket if you want maximum flexibility. The M7 can connect to other devices on a Wi-Fi network or directly to Bluetooth-enabled cell phones and tablets, as well as Samsung TVs with the SoundShare feature. In our tests, we found the M7's sound to be good overall, a bit better than the Bose SoundTouch 20, but not quite as clear and detailed as the Sonos Play:1. With two M7s paired in a stereo setup, sound quality improves to very good. Bass becomes more balanced, mid-range loses some of its softness, and treble is a bit more extended. It streams audio wirelessly from a several Internet services. But you'll need a \$50 optional hub to form a stereo pair or multiroom system. It doesn't have a remote, so you use the Samsung Multiroom app on a smart phone or tablet.

# LED goes flat and light

**THE PHILIPS SLIMSTYLE** A19 LED is shaped like a traditional incandescent, except that it's flat. It weighs about half as much as similar LEDs, but it's still heavier than the 60-watt incandescent it's meant to replace.

In our initial tests, the Philips SlimStyle, \$10, was as bright as the manufacturer claimed (800 lumens), cast a warm yellow light, and used just 10.5 watts. It was also dimmable. A long life is one reason to buy an LED, and the SlimStyle is meant to last almost 23 years. Philips says that this LED's sleek design makes it ideal not only for table and floor lamps but also for pendants and sconce fixtures. We'll continue testing it and report our findings, including whether it can provide all-around light—360 degrees—and how well it dims. Philips has submitted the LED for Energy Star certification.



## BRIGHT IDEA

Philips saved weight in the SlimStyle A19 LED by getting rid of the heavy heat sink at the base and by tinkering with the way it manages heat.

Side view

# Hold the phone: Sprint's Spark data network fizzles during phone calls

Sprint's new Spark service, a technical improvement to the 4G LTE service the carrier rolled out more than a year ago, promises its fastest wireless data connections yet. That should provide smoother, faster streaming of high-definition videos and other large files, better Web browsing, and more when you use a newer, Spark-enabled Sprint phone. Another bonus: support for HD Voice, a wideband audio technology that should improve voice quality, which is a weak point for many phones.

We can't say for certain yet whether such speedy connections are easy to find or even possible, but Consumer Reports

engineers have confirmed that Spark can't do what older Sprint 4G used to: make or maintain data connections during phone calls. That means no Web browsing, e-mail checking, Facebook posting, or GPS navigation assistance while you're on a call unless you can access a Wi-Fi hot spot.

If you're using a data-dependent app when a call comes in, the app will stop functioning until the call is finished—not great if, say, the GPS navigation app is guiding you through unfamiliar territory or if the caller is asking you to look up a movie time or restaurant address.

The funny thing is that most non-Spark 4G LTE phones you could buy from Sprint just a few months ago don't have that limitation. For example, the original 4G LTE Samsung Galaxy S 4 has no problem juggling voice and 4G data connections. The Spark version of that same model does. The exception was and still is Sprint's iPhones, which could never handle simultaneous voice and 4G LTE connections.

# Food-processor face-off

Our latest tests included two models from big-name brands with similar overall scores: Cuisinart's Elite Die-Cast 16-Cup and Kenmore's Red 414302. The Cuisinart just made our recommended list; the Kenmore just missed. Here's how the two machines stack up:

## Cuisinart's Elite Die-Cast 16-Cup

Price	\$300
Overall score	63
Capacity	16 cups
Weight	18.5 pounds



**PROS** Very good chopping, slicing, and shredding. Adjustable slicing disc lets you vary thickness, and extra-large feed tube can handle large vegetables.

**CONS** Puréeing, which you might do often for soups and sauces, was only so-so, as was its grating capability.

## Kenmore's Red 414302

Price	\$75
Overall score	58
Capacity	11 cups
Weight	7 pounds



**PROS** Great value and compact design, nice if your budget and countertop space are tight. Shredding, chopping, and slicing were all very good.

**CONS** Grating was subpar, and it's short on accessories, including a mini-bowl insert.

**BOTTOM LINE.** The new Cuisinart is worth the splurge if your meal prep involves plenty of slicing, dicing, chopping, and more. If you're really into those tasks—you make lots of soups, slaws, and stir-fries—you should consider spending \$100 more on our top-rated Breville BFP800XL/A, which earned an impressive overall score of 81. The 16-cup, fully loaded food processor excelled at most tasks in our tests. It's also very quiet given its power and performance.

# Dehumidifiers squeeze out more efficiency

**OUR ADVICE ON DEHUMIDIFIERS** has always been to go large. That's because the models with capacities between 60 and 70 pints per day do the job more quickly and efficiently than smaller sizes.

But because of a new federal energy standard, which we advocated, almost every dehumidifier in our latest tests, large and small alike, scored very good or better for efficiency.

That could save you \$50 to \$100 when buying a dehumidifier if your space requires only a small or medium unit. You'll also see savings in operating costs compared with older dehumidifiers.

Here are the details from our tests:

**Small wonders.** The new standard makes dehumidifiers from 3 to 32 percent more energy-efficient, depending on the capacity. Based on our exclusive tests, which involve a climate-controlled chamber that simulates sultry weather, manufacturers have managed the cut in energy consumption without compromising performance. In fact, our top-scorer is the 30-pint **C1 Sunpentown**, \$200, which was excellent at sucking moisture from the air. It's also quiet, with a very accurate humidistat.

**Best of the bigs.** For big or very wet spaces, we still recommend a larger dehumidifier. In addition to working quickly, 60- to 70-pint models tend to have larger tanks, so you won't have to empty them as frequently. Best in class is the 60-pint **A1 Danby**, \$250, with a built-in pump that can expel water to an elevated drainage location, such as a utility sink in the basement. But its fan runs continuously, adding to its noise and energy consumption. If that's a concern, consider the 70-pint **A2 Frigidaire**. It performed well and will alert you when it's time to clean the air filter.

**Middleweight champ.** For medium spaces, we like the 50-pint **B1 Frigidaire**, which earned solid marks across the board. But think twice about the **B3 Haier**. During our testing, one of three samples had water overflow from its bucket, and we've seen similar complaints in online user reviews.



A1 Danby



B1 Frigidaire



C1 Sunpentown

## Ratings

All tested products In performance order.

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

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Specs		Overall score	Test results				Features			
				Tank size (pt.)	Claimed pt./day		Water removal (pints per day)	Energy efficiency	Humidistat accuracy	Noise	Dirty-filter alert	Drain hose included	Pump included	Continuous fan
						0 100 P   F   G   VG   E								
<b>A LARGE CAPACITY</b> Best for large or very wet spaces, these capture the most moisture per day.														
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Danby DDR60A3GP	\$250	15	60	86	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Frigidaire FAD704DWD	280	16	70	83	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
	3	Sunpentown SD-61E	240	13	60	81	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	4	GE ADEL70LR (Home Depot) <sup>1</sup>	320	13	70	77	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●
	5	Sunpentown SD-65E	230	17	65	68	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<b>B MEDIUM CAPACITY</b> Best for medium or small spaces that are damp but not wet.														
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Frigidaire FAD504DWD	220	16	50	82	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	2	DeLonghi DD50PE	320	12	50	79	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	3	Haier DE45EM-L	190	13	45	78	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	4	GE ADEL50LR (Home Depot) <sup>1</sup>	220	13	50	77	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
	5	LG LD450EAL <sup>1</sup>	230	17	45	66	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
<b>C SMALL CAPACITY</b> Best for small spaces that are damp but not wet.														
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Sunpentown SD-31E	200	7	30	88	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Danby DDR30A2GP	170	11	30	87	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Frigidaire FAD301NWD	200	10	30	85	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	4	Soleus SG-DEH-30E-1 <sup>1</sup>	260	8	30	32	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●

<sup>1</sup> Discontinued, but similar model is available; price is for similar model. <sup>1</sup> Compressor and fan cycle on and off periodically, even after target humidity level is reached.



# The Hot List

A monthly guide to the top products our testers recommend

78

John Deere X300



## Tractors

Model	Score
-------	-------

### STANDARD

John Deere X300, \$3,000	78
Husqvarna YT46LS, \$2,300	76
Snapper NXT2346, \$2,800	76
John Deere X310, \$4,000	75

### ZERO-TURN-RADIUS

Troy-Bilt Mustang 42" 17WFCACS, \$2,300 (and similar Cub Cadet RZT L42, \$2,500)	82
Troy-Bilt Mustang 50" 17WFCACP, \$2,800 (and similar Cub Cadet RZT L50, \$2,900)	79

## Toasters

Model	Score
-------	-------

### TWO-SLICE

Calphalon Stainless Steel 2-Slot HE200ST (1779206), \$60	77
Cuisinart CPT-420, \$80	74
Magimix Vision Toaster (Williams-Sonoma), \$250	73
Hamilton Beach Digital 22502, \$35	73
Frigidaire Professional 2-Slice Wide Slots FPTT02D7MS, \$60	72

### FOUR-SLICE

Calphalon Stainless Steel 4-Slot HE400ST (1779207), \$80	77
Cuisinart CPT-440, \$100	74
Frigidaire Professional 4-Slice Wide Slots FPTT04D7MS, \$80	72
Breville BTA840XL, \$180	71

### TOASTER OVENS

Breville Smart Oven BOV800XL, \$250	72
Panasonic FlashXpress NB-G110P, \$150	70
Breville BOV650XL, \$180	68
Oster TSSTTVMNDG, \$80	66



77

Calphalon Stainless Steel 2-Slot



83

Honda HRX217VKA

## Mowers

Model	Score
-------	-------

### GAS SELF-PROPELLED, MULTISPEED

Honda HRX217VKA, \$600	83
Honda HRR2169VLA, \$500	83
Toro 20381, \$520 (and similar 20382, \$570)	82
Honda HRR2169VYA, \$480	82
Honda HRR2169VKA, \$400	81

### GAS SELF-PROPELLED, SINGLE-SPEED

Toro 20339, \$380	67
Toro 20370, \$280	66
Toro 20371, \$300	65
Snapper SP70 12A-A27X, \$280	63

### GAS PUSH

Cub Cadet SC100 11A-A92J, \$250	71
Craftsman 37432, \$220	67
Yard Machines 11A-B96N, \$240	67
Lawn-Boy 10730, \$240	65

### ELECTRIC-BATTERY PUSH

Ego LM2000, \$500	62
Black & Decker CM1936, \$400 (and similar CM1936ZF2, \$500)	59
Neuton CEM6X4X, \$400	59
Black & Decker CMM1200, \$430	58
Toro 20360, \$420	56

### ELECTRIC-CORDED PUSH

Black & Decker MM875, \$240	56
-----------------------------	----

## Microwave ovens

Model	Score
-------	-------

### OVER-THE-RANGE

GE Profile PVM9215SFSS, \$550	80
GE JVM3160RFSS, \$250	75
GE JVM7195SFSS, \$400	75

### COUNTERTOP

Sharp R-323TKC, \$140	79
GE Profile PEB2060DM[BB], \$270	75
Panasonic Inverter NN-H965BF, \$180	75
Kenmore Elite 74229, \$180	75
Panasonic Genius Prestige NN-SD681S, \$180	72
Kenmore 72123, \$150	72

80

GE Profile  
PVM9215SFSS



## Desktop computers

Model	Score
-------	-------

### ALL-IN-ONE

Dell XPS 27 Touch, \$1,600	83
Asus ET2702-O3, \$1,800	78
Toshiba PX35T-AST2G01, \$1,500	74
HP Envy Recline Touchsmart 27-k150xt, \$1,200	73
Sony Vaio SVL24147CXB, \$1,600	72
Lenovo IdeaCentre B750, \$1,500	72
Lenovo IdeaCentre A730, \$1,550	71
Asus Transformer P1801-B037K, \$1,125	70
Apple iMac 27-inch ME088LL/A w/Fusion Drive, \$2,000	68

### FULL-SIZED

Dell XPS 8700 Special Edition, \$1,800	82
Dell XPS 8700, \$800	77
HP Envy 700-230, \$700	72
Asus M51AD-US0025, \$900	72
HP Pavilion 500-200t, \$500	71
Asus Essentio M51AC-B07, \$900	69

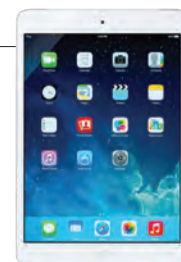
83

Dell XPS 27 Touch



90

Samsung Galaxy  
Tab Pro 10.1



86

Apple iPad  
Mini with  
Retina display

## Tablets

Model	Score
-------	-------

### 7- TO 8-INCH, 3G/4G PLUS WI-FI

Apple iPad Mini with Retina display (16GB), \$530 (and similars 32GB, \$630; 64GB, \$730; and 128GB, \$830)	86
Amazon Kindle Fire HDX (16GB), \$330 (and similars 32GB, \$370, and 64GB, \$410)	81
Google Nexus 7 (32GB, 2nd gen.), \$350	79
Apple iPad Mini (16GB), \$430	75

### 7- TO 8-INCH, WI-FI-ONLY

Samsung Galaxy Tab Pro 8.4 (16GB), \$400	87
Apple iPad Mini with Retina display (16GB), \$400 (and similars 32GB, \$500; 64GB, \$600; and 128GB, \$700)	83
Acer Iconia W4-820-2466 (64GB), \$350 (and similar 32GB, \$300)	81
Google Nexus 7 (16GB, 2nd gen.), \$230 (and similar 32GB, \$270)	81

### 9- TO 12-INCH, 3G/4G PLUS WI-FI

Apple iPad Air (16GB), \$630 (and similars 32GB, \$730; 64GB, \$830; and 128GB, \$930)	88
Amazon Kindle Fire HDX 8.9 (16GB), \$480 (and similars 32GB, \$530, and 64GB, \$580)	86
Apple iPad with Retina display (16GB), \$530	83
Nokia Lumia 2520 (32GB), \$400	81
Sony Xperia Tablet Z (16GB), \$630	80
Samsung Galaxy Tab 2 (10.1) (16GB), \$350	78

### 9- TO 12-INCH, WI-FI-ONLY

Samsung Galaxy Tab Pro 10.1 (16GB), \$500	90
Samsung Galaxy Note Pro 12.2 (32GB), \$750 (and similar 64GB, \$850)	87
Apple iPad Air (16GB), \$500 (and similars 32GB, \$600; 64GB, \$700; and 128GB, \$800)	85
Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 2014 Edition (16GB), \$550 (and similar 32GB, \$600)	84
Amazon Kindle Fire HDX 8.9 (16GB), \$380 (and similars 32GB, \$430, and 64GB, \$480)	83

# Security software

## Best ways to protect your computer

Talk about getting in harm's way. We scanned 13,000 malware files, went to 75 malicious websites, and checked out 1,000 phishing sites—all to help you decide which security software will do the best job of protecting your computer and your data from viruses, trojans, and other dangers lurking online.

We tested four free anti-malware programs and 13 Internet-security suites for Windows that cost from \$60 to \$100 plus Windows 8's built-in security. The free programs continue to deliver protection that's good enough for most users. The best, Avast Free Antivirus, offers very good protection against threats from websites, for example, by preventing a malicious site from downloading malware onto your computer. It's also quick to react.

If you opt for the free software, make sure the Windows firewall is on to help block malware and keep malicious websites from grabbing data from your computer. Create your own "mini suite" by trying Windows' built-in parental controls and downloading a free anti-spam program such as Spamfighter ([spamfighter.com](http://spamfighter.com)) if you use stand-alone e-mail like Windows Mail or Outlook. If you're using a Web-based service such as Gmail, it already has strong anti-spam protection built in.

For a bit more fortification, a paid

suite might be what you need. Those that topped our Ratings add a layer of protection with, among other things, the tougher firewall that's necessary if you remotely access your computer when you're away from home. The pay suites also include extra features such as spam filters but require annual renewals.

Many of the packages, free and pay, were weak at fighting phishing. To better

protect yourself, use the anti-phishing features in your browser. Those are on by default in the latest versions of Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Chrome.

All of the software we tested is for Windows computers. Apple computers have been subjected to far fewer malware attacks, but Mac users should still use Mac-compatible security software to avoid new threats and passing along Windows malware.



## Ratings

All tested products In performance order, within types.

☒ Recommended

● Excellent  
● Very good  
○ Good  
○ Fair  
● Poor

		Product	Price	Overall score	Anti-malware							Features					
Recommendation	Rank			0100 P   F   G   V   E	Threat blocking	Ease of use	Malware scan	Resource drain	Firewall	Updating	Anti-phishing	Response to threats	Informative help	Clear firewall warnings	Spam filter	Parental filter	Startup repair

### A FREE ANTI-MALWARE PROGRAMS Protect against viruses, spyware, and other malicious software.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Avast Free Antivirus	free	57	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Avira Free Antivirus	free	53	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	3	AVG AntiVirus Free 2014	free	51	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	4	Microsoft Security Essentials	free	38	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

### B SECURITY SUITES Protect against malware and online threats, and include a firewall. <sup>②</sup>

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	ESET Smart Security	\$80	65	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	G Data InternetSecurity 2014	65	64	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	F-Secure Internet Security 2014	60	60	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Kaspersky Internet Security 2014	80	59	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Bitdefender Internet Security	70	59	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Avira Internet Security Suite 2014	100	59	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	7	Avast Internet Security 2014	60	56	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	8	BullGuard Internet Security 2014	60	55	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	9	Trend Micro Titanium Internet Security 2014	80	54	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	10	AVG Internet Security 2014	70	53	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	11	McAfee Internet Security 2014	80	52	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	12	Norton Internet Security	80	50	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	13	Microsoft Windows 8 (Defender)	<sup>③</sup>	47	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	14	Panda Internet Security 2014	70	42	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

<sup>①</sup> Windows firewall used. <sup>②</sup> All suites provide a unified user interface and automatic updating of all components, are compatible with Windows XP or higher, and have a time-limited trial version available. <sup>③</sup> Price varies, depending on version.

## Time to say goodbye to Windows XP



Still using Windows XP? Microsoft recently ended support for that favorite version of its operating system, including no longer providing security updates. That will make you increasingly vulnerable to hackers, viruses, and other security risks. Technical support and driver updates also ended. The same, by the way, applies to Office 2003.

Stop using XP as soon as possible. If your PC is new enough, consider upgrading to Windows 8 and adding security software. Otherwise, it's time to buy a new computer.



# Cars

## Gas-saving tips & myths

**AS THE SUMMER TRAVEL** season rolls in, prices at the gas pump are usually going in the wrong direction for our wallets. That's when drivers become more concerned about how to squeeze the most miles from their fuel dollars and keep their cars running their best. To help you stay in the know, here are some common questions that our auto experts often get asked about gas mileage and related topics:



### What's the best way to cut fuel costs?

Slow down. In our tests, we've found that driving faster on the highway can really take a bite out of your car's fuel efficiency. We measured gas mileage while driving at a steady 55, 65, and 75 mph in a Honda Accord, Toyota RAV4, and three versions of a Ford Fusion, including a hybrid. The drop in fuel economy while going from 55 to 65 ranged from 4 to 8 mpg. Upping the speed from 65 to 75 cut it 5 to 7 mpg more. Overall, speeding up from 55 mph to 75 is like moving from a compact car to a large SUV.

### What if I need to carry stuff on my car's roof?

Carrying things on the roof increases aerodynamic drag, which hurts fuel economy. When we tested a 2013 Honda Accord at a steady 65 mph, it got 42 mpg with

nothing on the roof. Adding even an empty bike rack dropped the mileage by 5 mpg, to 37. A wind deflector reduced the wind noise but cut gas mileage to 35 mpg. And with two bikes on the rack, gas mileage dropped to 27 mpg, a whopping 15-mpg difference overall. Similarly, when we tested a 2008 Camry with a large car-top carrier, fuel economy dropped by 5 mpg.

### Does running the A/C hurt fuel economy compared with opening the windows?

It depends on how hard the air-conditioning system has to work. When we measured the fuel-economy difference in a 2008 Ford Focus, Honda Accord, and Subaru Forester, we found that fuel use with the A/C running went up with higher outside temperatures. At 55° F, there were negligible differences. But when we measured again on days when the temperature was in the low

70s and high 80s, we got fewer miles per gallon with the A/C on. In general, expect 1 to 4 mpg less with air conditioning.

### How far can I go when my low-fuel warning light comes on?

There is no set rule, but most cars have a reserve of between 1 and 2 gallons of gas when the light goes on, or enough to travel about 40 miles or so at a moderate speed. To maximize those last couple of gallons, we suggest slowing down and maintaining a steady pace.

### Can I improve gas mileage by installing a special air filter?

With modern cars, changing your air filter probably won't improve your fuel economy. When we tested a car to see whether a dirty air filter hurt its gas mileage because of reduced air intake, we found that the

car's acceleration was hurt but not its fuel economy. The engine's computer automatically compensated for the restricted airflow by reducing fuel use to maintain the right air/fuel ratio. We expect similar results from any air-filter change.

### Can running on empty hurt my engine?

Some people think that can draw in debris from the bottom of the fuel tank, but it's not really a big concern. That's because the fuel pump always pulls in gas from the bottom of the tank, even when it's full. So if there is a debris problem, you'll probably know about it long before the fuel level gets low. These days, there's usually a fuel filter in the gas tank as well as one nearer the engine, so debris is unlikely to get through to your engine. If your tank contains junk, though, you might have to change the filters more frequently.



Recommended

Toyota  
Highlander

# The family sedan of SUVs

The Toyota Highlander is redesigned, refined and people-friendly

**YOU'RE NOT DRAWN** to the Toyota Highlander for its snazzy styling, exhilarating performance, or engaging driving experience. Its appeal lies in its functional, family-friendly nature, frugal gas mileage, consistently good reliability, and good manners. Overall, it combines the practicality of an SUV with the refinement of a good sedan. And year after year, that has helped it rank among the top SUVs we've tested and do well in our owner satisfaction survey.

The redesigned 2014 Highlander maintains its successful formula while boasting several strategic improvements. Styling is a bit edgier, fuel economy has improved, and handling is more responsive, making the vehicle more enjoyable to drive. It's also 3 inches longer, which opens up the interior room, particularly in the second- and third-row seats. All of that is enough to once again make the Highlander one of our top-rated midsize SUVs. We also expect that it will have above-average reliability based on the previous-generation model, so we heartily recommend it.

### Driving prowess

Our tested vehicle came with a refined and punchy 270-hp, 3.5-liter V6 coupled with a six-speed automatic transmission. We got 20 mpg overall, which ties it with the Hyundai Santa Fe and Kia Sorento as the most fuel-efficient midsize SUVs that aren't hybrids or diesels.

If you want better fuel economy, go for the Highlander Hybrid, which is expected

to deliver 28 mpg overall based on EPA estimates. But the hybrid powertrain is now available only with the top-of-the-line Limited trim.

Though not really sporty, the Highlander corners soundly, with minimal body lean and prompt turn-in response. The steering is appropriately weighted, but it doesn't provide much feedback. When pushed to its handling limits, the Highlander proved to be predictable and stable.

A trade-off for improved handling is ride comfort that is somewhat less plush than

in the previous model. The Highlander feels steadier and more tied down, and it's composed and controlled at highway speeds. But it's not as isolated at low speeds.

### Crowd-pleasing cabin

Inside, drivers will find a roomy cockpit. The wide front seats are comfortable, well-padded, and supportive. A three-person second-row bench seat lets the Highlander carry up to eight people. Captain's chairs, standard in Limited versions and a \$250 option in the XLE version, are comfortable,

## Ratings 3-row midsized SUVs

In performance order.

Recommended

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

		Make & model	Price as tested	In this issue	Overall road-test score	Predicted reliability	Overall mpg
Rec.	Rank				0100		
					P   F   G   VG   E		
	1	Toyota Highlander XLE (V6)	\$38,941	•	84		20
	2	Dodge Durango Limited (V6)	43,525		83	new	18
	3	Hyundai Santa Fe GLS (V6)	36,290		81		20
	4	Chevrolet Traverse LT	39,920		77		16
	5	Mazda CX-9 Grand Touring	38,615		77		16
	6	Kia Sorento EX (V6)	37,950		77		20
	7	Nissan Pathfinder SL	40,470		72	•	18
	8	Honda Pilot EX-L	36,980		71		18
	9	Ford Explorer XLT (V6)	39,275		67	•	18

**Why some models aren't recommended.** The Dodge Durango is too new for us to have reliability information. Reliability for the Nissan Pathfinder and Ford Explorer have been much worse than average. The Mazda CX-9, Kia Sorento, and Honda Pilot performed poorly in an IIHS crash test.

ROAD-TEST  
SCORE

84

but they limit capacity to seven people. There is plenty of head and leg room, but the seats are a bit low.

The three-person third-row seat is now wider, but it's still not a great place for adults. There's ample room behind the rear seats for carrying gear, and if you need more space, you can easily fold all of the second- and third-row seats.

Controls are mostly simple, with well-labeled buttons. XLE and Limited versions have a versatile 8-inch touch screen for the infotainment system. You can split the screen display to show more information or to customize the onscreen buttons so that, say, your most often used audio sources are closer to you. Touch-sensitive buttons are easy to use, but they're also easy to activate accidentally by brushing across them.

Connecting your phone via Bluetooth is simple, and voice quality is good. But you can't access your contacts while the vehicle is moving; only recently called numbers are available. Voice commands can be used to launch apps, make phone calls, play music, and enter addresses and find points of interest in the navigation system. It's a very good system that lets you speak naturally. With many Android phones, it will read incoming

text messages and allow you to respond by talking, but that's not available for iPhones.

A backup camera is standard on all Highlanders, but you can't get advanced electronic safety features, such as blind-spot monitoring, unless you go for the Limited trim, which costs \$3,600 more than the XLE. Moreover, forward-collision warning is available only as part of the \$1,400 Technology package or by stepping up to the Limited trim with the Platinum package. Those features are available on competing SUVs for less money.

Overall, the Highlander is an appealing choice that does a lot of things well. Combined with a history of good reliability and good resale value, this redesigned model should be an easy choice for many people.

**Best version to get.** The XLE trim level offers the best combination of features and value, including standard leather upholstery, a moonroof, a navigation system, and a power tailgate. It also lets you choose between getting a second-row bench seat or captain's chairs. Our all-wheel-drive XLE came to \$38,941, which is a competitive price for the features it provides. Still, the floor and cargo mats should be standard rather than a \$225 option.



### Tested vehicle

<b>HIGHS</b>	Powertrain, fuel economy, roomy and versatile interior, access, standard backup camera, easy infotainment system, crash-test results
<b>LOWS</b>	Electronic safety gear is expensive; rear seat is low
<b>TRIM LINE</b>	XLE
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b>	270-hp, 3.5-liter V6; six-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive
<b>MAJOR OPTIONS</b>	Second-row captain's chairs, floor and cargo mats
<b>TESTED PRICE</b>	\$38,941

### Highlander line

<b>OTHER TRIM LINES</b>	LE, LE Plus, Limited, Hybrid Limited
<b>OTHER DRIVETRAINS</b>	185-hp, 2.7-liter four-cylinder engine; 280-hp, 3.5-liter hybrid V6; continuously variable transmission; front-wheel drive
<b>BASE PRICES</b>	\$29,215-\$49,790

### More test findings

<b>BRAKING</b>	Short stopping distances.
<b>HEADLIGHTS</b>	Coverage is very good to the front and sides.
<b>ACCESS</b>	Almost minivan easy, with large doors and flat sills.
<b>VISIBILITY</b>	Large glass area aids visibility, along with a standard backup camera. But blind-spot warning comes only with the top-of-the-line Limited trim.
<b>CABIN STORAGE</b>	Abundant, with cubbies in various shapes and sizes.
<b>HEAD RESTRAINTS</b>	Third-row restraints must be raised for use.
<b>CHILD SEATS</b>	Limited space in the third row makes it difficult to install rear-facing seats.



### SEVEN OR EIGHT?

Spacious second-row captain's chairs are more comfortable than a bench seat but limit capacity to seven people.

**STOW AWAY**  
A wide shelf spans the dashboard, providing lots of handy storage.







BMW X5



Range Rover Sport

# Opulent opponents

BMW X5 outpaces the Range Rover Sport to top the luxury class

**BMW'S X5** and Land Rover's Range Rover Sport share a lot of appealing characteristics, as they should while carrying \$70,000 sticker prices. Both combine the hushed, well-appointed interior of a high-end sedan with the roominess, versatility, and all-wheel-drive practicality of an SUV. They have many of the latest comfort, convenience, and safety features. And both can carry up to seven people, although the optional third-row seat in each is very snug and best suited for kids.

It's what you feel from behind the steering wheel, however, that really defines their distinct personalities.

The current X5 has evolved into a luxurious vehicle that's more refined and easier to live with. It has a more comfortable ride and a super-quiet cabin. And it provides impressive fuel economy of 21 mpg overall, which makes it among the most efficient vehicles in its class. All of those qualities helped it earn a road-test score of 84, which places it securely at the top of its well-to-do peers.

The Range Rover Sport is a smaller, more spirited, and less expensive vehicle than the familiar Range Rover (see page 55). And it has a sportier demeanor than the X5, with faster responses, quicker acceleration, and surprisingly agile cornering. Yes, that may seem counterintuitive to those familiar with these brands. But the flip side to this sporty attitude is a stiff ride and a loud exhaust bark that can seem a bit over the top. In addition, the electronic controls are fussy and complicated, and the gas mileage of 18 mpg

overall is nothing special for this class. Another trade-off: The standard summer high-performance tires help the Sport's handling on pavement, but as we found during the many storms last winter, they're all but useless in snowy conditions. Swapping tires for the winter will be mandatory in snow

country, which just isn't right for an all-wheel-drive SUV. Both of these redesigned models are too new for us to have reliability data. The reliability of the previous X5 has been average; we don't have sufficient data on the previous Range Rover Sport.

## Ratings Luxury midsized/large SUVs

In performance order.

✓ Recommended

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

	Rec.	Rank	Make & model	Price as tested	In this issue	Overall road-test score	Predicted reliability	Overall mpg
						0 P   F   G   V   E		
		1	BMW X5 xDrive35i	\$70,050	●	84	new	21
		2	Mercedes-Benz GL350 BlueTec	73,020		82	○	20
✓		3	Acura MDX Tech	49,460		81	●	20
✓		4	Lexus RX 350	47,381		80	●	21
		5	Land Rover Range Rover HSE (V6)	88,545	●	80	NA	17
✓		6	Infiniti QX60 (JX)	51,920		79	○	19
✓		7	Porsche Cayenne (base, V6)	63,805		78	○	19
✓		8	Buick Enclave CXL	43,260		77	○	15
✓		9	Mercedes-Benz ML350	56,960		75	○	18
		10	Land Rover Range Rover Sport HSE (V6)	74,040	●	74	new	18
✓		11	Infiniti QX70 V6 (FX)*	51,635		72	○	18
✓		12	Lexus GX 460	58,428		70	●	17
		13	Toyota Land Cruiser	67,707		68	NA	14
		14	Volvo XC90 3.2	49,850		60	NA	17

\*Powertrain has changed since last test.

**Why some models are not recommended.** The BMW X5 and Land Rover Range Rover Sport are too new for us to have reliability data. The Mercedes-Benz GL350 rated poor in emergency handling. We have insufficient reliability data for the Land Rover Range Rover and the Toyota Land Cruiser. The Volvo XC90 scored too low in our tests.

ROAD-TEST  
SCORE

84

# BMW X5

**WITH THE X5'S REDESIGN**, BMW has dialed back the sharp handling and taut ride of previous models, trading some of their sporty feel for a cushier ride that makes it seem, well, less BMW-like. The cabin is now more luxurious, solid, and quiet. Fit and finish are impeccable, and it's loaded with an array of up-to-date electronic features. The result is a very comfortable, refined, and high-tech SUV, although one that's less engaging to drive than previous X5s.

The generous list of standard equipment doesn't include a backup camera, which is inexcusable at this price. Our X5 had the optional Driver Assistance Plus package, which includes several active safety systems that can even brake the vehicle when needed to avoid an accident.

The standard 300-hp, 3.0-liter turbocharged six-cylinder engine and eight-speed automatic transmission deliver silky-smooth, effortless performance with plenty of reserve power. And it can tow up to 6,000 pounds. With its commendable fuel economy of 21 mpg overall, the X5 is tied with the Lexus RX 350 as the most efficient nonhybrid luxury SUV we've tested.

For those craving more power, a 445-hp, 4.4-liter twin-turbocharged V8 comes in the xDrive50i. A 255-hp, 3.0-liter six-cylinder turbodiesel, which arrives later this year, should provide even better fuel economy.

The X5 may no longer be one of the sportiest luxury SUVs to drive, but it remains extremely competent and composed. Steering effort is much lighter than before, making parking and low-speed maneuvers easier, but there is less tactile feedback. When pushed to its handling limits, the X5 was stable and secure, and it posted a commendable speed in our avoidance maneuver.

Though the ride is still firm and jiggle at low speeds, partly because of the run-flat tires, it is much improved. Gone is the constant chopiness of the previous X5, replaced



with more isolation and gradual body motions that make this one feel more settled.

Inside, you'll find a plush and well-constructed interior, with padded surfaces and handsome wood and brushed-chrome trim. There's plenty of room for the driver, as well as a standard power-adjustable tilt-and-telescoping steering wheel. The front seats are very comfortable and supportive, and passengers get the same 10-way power-seat adjustments as the driver. Visibility is refreshingly good, which is something we can't say about many new vehicles.

The second-row seat is firm, well-shaped, and supportive, with good leg and head room. But the cushion is a bit low, which reduces thigh support. Opting for the \$1,700 third row adds two folding jump seats, but the space is super-snug.

Large doors and ample rear floor space help access, but it's a bit of a step up to get into the X5, and the wide rocker panel can soil clothing.

Gauges are large and easy to read, and an optional heads-up display helps keep your eyes on the road. The iDrive control system takes some getting used to, but BMW moved the central lock switch to the doors and labeled a few controls better. Electronic and connectivity features have also improved, with faster response time and better voice controls. Pairing a phone is easy, and iPhone users can access a variety of Internet radio stations and apps using the X5's screen.

**Best version to get.** We would choose the standard six-cylinder engine to get the best blend of performance and fuel economy. Most X5s come with the optional Premium package. The \$400 backup camera is the only option we consider a must-have, which brings the sticker price to \$61,925. Getting blind-spot and forward-collision warnings requires \$3,300 more in option packages.

## Tested vehicle

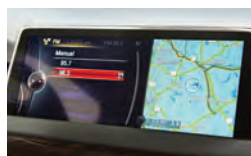
<b>HIGHS</b>	Drivetrain, fuel economy, quietness, seat comfort, fit and finish, visibility
<b>LOWS</b>	Some complicated controls
<b>TRIM LINE</b>	xDrive35i
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b>	300-hp, 3.0-liter turbo six-cyl. engine; eight-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive
<b>MAJOR OPTIONS</b>	Premium and Cold Weather packages; third-row seat; backup camera; blind-spot, forward-collision, and lane-departure warnings
<b>TESTED PRICE</b>	\$70,050

## The X5 line

<b>OTHER TRIMS</b>	sDrive35i, xDrive35d, xDrive50i
<b>OTHER DRIVETRAINS</b>	255-hp, 3.0-liter six-cylinder turbodiesel; 445-hp, 4.4-liter turbo V8; rear-wheel drive
<b>BASE PRICES</b>	\$52,800–\$68,200

## More test findings

<b>BRAKING</b>	Short stopping distances.
<b>HEADLIGHTS</b>	Optional LED headlights are bright but only fair in forward visibility.
<b>ACCESS</b>	Large doors help, but wide sills can soil clothing.
<b>VISIBILITY</b>	Very good. But a backup camera should be standard.
<b>CABIN STORAGE</b>	Lots of versatile space.
<b>HEAD RESTRAINTS</b>	The second-row center restraint isn't tall enough.
<b>CHILD SEATS</b>	Installing a rear-facing seat is difficult in the second-row center position. The third row has inadequate room for most child seats.



### SPLIT DISPLAY

The screen can show audio and navigation info at the same time.



# Land Rover Range Rover Sport

**ALTHOUGH THE NAME** can cause confusion, the Range Rover Sport is distinctively different from Land Rover's familiar flagship, the Range Rover (see page 55). It's shorter, lower, sportier, and more affordable, with a starting price that's about \$20,000 less than its big brother.

Its engaging character is reminiscent of its German competitors, but the Sport lacks the Range Rover's comfy, refined ride. Another appeal for families is an optional but tiny third-row seat.

The Sport gets the same weight-saving aluminum construction and choice of two supercharged engines as the Range Rover. A 340-hp, 3.0-liter V6 is standard; a fire-breathing 510-hp, 5.0-liter V8 is optional. Either way, you get an eight-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel drive. The V6 delivers effortless power as well as 18 mpg overall, which isn't outstanding but isn't bad considering the Sport's potent performance. Towing capacity is a hefty 7,715 pounds.

Handling is quite responsive, with quick turn-in response, and the Range Rover Sport is taut and hunkers down in corners. The steering is on the heavy side but doesn't transmit much feedback.

When pushed to its limits, the Sport was secure, although its stability-control system intervenes quite early to keep this heavy vehicle out of trouble.

The Range Rover Sport's biggest shortcoming is its stiff, choppy ride.

For off-road use, the Sport provides various electronic modes for driving on sand, mud, and gravel. It managed to scale our rock

hill, but low-range capability is available only as an option.

Interior fit and finish is excellent in the Sport. Drivers sit up high, with plenty of room and very good visibility to the front and sides because of large windows and a low dashboard.

Chairlike front seats are comfortable and accommodating, with a wide range of power adjustments. Large bolsters offer plenty of lateral support, but bigger drivers might find them somewhat confining. There is ample rear-seat room, with firm, well-shaped cushions that provide good support. The optional third row can hold two kids, but it's cramped and a chore to access.

The controls are mostly complicated and frustrating, with the electronic shifter and central touch screen being notable sore points. The unintuitive shifter makes it easy to select the wrong gear. And the touch screen, which controls many basic functions, has small fonts and is slow to respond. There's a shortcut for the seat heaters. Pairing a phone isn't as easy as in most systems. Voice controls can be used for a number of functions, but they require a specific sequence of commands rather than natural speech.

**Best version to get.** The Sport comes well equipped, even in base trim. The only must-have option is the \$2,100 Vision and Convenience Package, which includes blind-spot monitoring and a surround-view camera system. Going with a higher trim or adding other options quickly inflates the price for features that most buyers can probably do without.

## Tested vehicle

<b>HIGHS</b>	Handling, acceleration, fit and finish, front visibility, towing and off-road capability
<b>LOWS</b>	Stiff ride, poor snow traction, controls, fussy shifter
<b>TRIM LINE</b>	HSE
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b>	340-hp, 3.0-liter supercharged V6; eight-speed automatic transmission; four-wheel drive
<b>MAJOR OPTIONS</b>	HSE package (heated seats, panoramic roof, 20-inch wheels), luxury climate comfort and visibility package (cooled seats, cooler box, four-zone climate control, adaptive headlights), third-row seat
<b>TESTED PRICE</b>	\$74,040

## The Range Rover Sport line

<b>OTHER TRIMS</b>	SE, SCV8, Autobiography
<b>OTHER DRIVETRAIN</b>	510-hp, supercharged 5.0-liter V8 engine
<b>BASE PRICES</b>	\$62,600-\$92,400

## More test findings

<b>BRAKING</b>	Short stopping distances.
<b>HEADLIGHTS</b>	Standard HID (xenon) lamps provide very good forward visibility, but their brightness may cause glare for oncoming drivers.
<b>ACCESS</b>	Large doors help, but it's a climb into the cabin. The vehicle can be lowered by 2 inches by pressing a button before exiting.
<b>VISIBILITY</b>	Large glass area and thin windshield pillars help, but large head restraints block the rear view.
<b>CABIN STORAGE</b>	There's very little open storage. A cooler box chills drinks and food.
<b>HEAD RESTRAINTS</b>	The second-row center restraint is not tall enough to provide protection.
<b>CHILD SEATS</b>	It's difficult to install a seat in the second-row center position.



## FAIR-WEATHER FRIENDS

The summer tires performed well on pavement, but they made driving in snow harrowing.



ROAD-TEST  
SCORE

74

# Kia Soul

**THE SOUL LIVES** in that increasingly gray area between hatchbacks and SUVs. A boxy, upright design gives it abundant interior space and super-easy access. You sit up high in chairlike seats, surrounded by an ample glass area for good visibility. Overall, it feels like driving a small SUV, but one that's lower to the ground.

Redesigned for 2014, the new Soul provides a more mature and well-rounded package than its predecessor. That is, once you get past the quirky styling, which reminds some of a surfer dude with wraparound shades.

Unlike a true SUV, the Soul is available only with front-wheel drive. Our test vehicle had the larger of two engines available, a 164-hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder, mated to a smooth-shifting six-speed automatic transmission. Even so, power delivery was just adequate. Some of us wanted more gusto when merging or going uphill. Fuel economy averaged 26 mpg, which is good but not outstanding.

We suspect the less powerful 130-hp, 1.6-liter four base engine would also be wanting for oomph.

This Soul is quieter than the previous model, and its small size makes it easy to park and maneuver. But overall the driving experience is nothing special. Handling is secure when pushed but not inspiring during everyday jaunts. And the ride is stiff and jiggly, which can become fatiguing on a long ride.

Inside, there's generous room. The supportive leather front seats are much more comfortable than those in most lower-priced cars. The spacious rear seat is comfortable for two adults, but those taller than 6 feet may find scant head room. Three can squeeze in, though they may be a bit too close for comfort. There's not much trunk room when the backseat is up.

The vehicle's low floor, tall roof line, and square door openings make getting in to and out of it extremely easy. Very little ducking is required.

Controls in the Soul are refreshingly simple to use. The base radio has large buttons for common functions and an easy-to-read display. The uplevel system has an 8-inch touch screen with large fonts and onscreen buttons, and a simple menu. The screen also responds to swipe motions. We like the well-laid-out

steering-wheel buttons and the red and green color-coded buttons for the phone.

It's easy to pair a cell phone, and once that's done, it seamlessly reconnects every time you get into the vehicle. You can stream Pandora radio by tethering your iPhone via a USB cable; Android devices connect only via Bluetooth.

You can use voice commands to select the music source, change radio stations, initiate phone calls, or interact with the navigation system.

A big draw is Kia's long list of available features. Our loaded midtrim + (Plus) version includes appealing items such as a push-button start, an automatic climate system, a heated steering wheel, heated front and rear leather seats, a panoramic sunroof, a backup camera, and a touch-screen navigation system.

**Best version to get.** With a sticker price of about \$17,500 with an automatic transmission, the base Soul is a great deal if you can live with the less powerful engine. We'd go for the + trim, which starts at less than \$19,000, to get the larger engine as well as access to the extensive options list.

## How they compare

Rec.	BOXY COMPACT HATCHBACKS	0	100
		P	F   G   V   G   E
	Kia Soul + (Plus)	74	
✓	Scion xB	68	
	Nissan Versa Note SV	61	
	Nissan Cube 1.8S	60	
	Fiat 500L Easy	50	



## Tested vehicle

<b>HIGHS</b>	Handy size, easy access, simple controls, braking performance, numerous upscale features
<b>LOWS</b>	Stiff ride, scant cargo room behind rear seat
<b>TRIM LINE</b>	+ (Plus)
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b>	164-hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine; six-speed automatic transmission; front-wheel drive
<b>MAJOR OPTIONS</b>	Audio package (navigation, automatic climate control), Primo package (panoramic sunroof, leather, power driver's seat, heated/ventilated front seats), UVO connectivity with backup camera
<b>TESTED PRICE</b>	\$24,115

## The Soul line

<b>OTHER TRIMS</b>	Base, ! (Exclaim)
<b>OTHER DRIVETRAIN</b>	130-hp, 1.6-liter four-cylinder; six-speed manual transmission
<b>BASE PRICES</b>	\$14,700-\$20,300

## More test findings

<b>BRAKING</b>	Great overall performance.
<b>HEADLIGHTS</b>	Visibility is good enough, but the lamps are not very bright. Auto headlamps (part of the UVO package) didn't seem to turn on until it was very dark, rather than at dusk.
<b>ACCESS</b>	Very easy with chair-height seats and big, square doors.
<b>VISIBILITY</b>	Good out the front and sides. Thick roof pillars and a rising beltline cut into rear visibility.
<b>CABIN STORAGE</b>	Convenient and easy to use.
<b>HEAD RESTRAINTS</b>	The center-rear restraint is not tall enough to provide protection, even when it's raised.
<b>CHILD SEATS</b>	Stiff seat cushions and seatbelts that are anchored forward of the seat bite make some installations difficult.



# Nissan Rogue

**RATHER THAN ROGUE**, Nissan could have named this redesigned SUV “Mr. Congeniality.” True, that’s not very macho, but the model stands out as an easy-to-drive, family-friendly vehicle. And it now ranks among the better small SUVs.

The new Rogue has grown larger and more accommodating; it has a spacious cabin, easy access, and plenty of room in the rear seat. Refinement has improved dramatically, with a relatively quiet and more comfortable ride than is usual in this class. Other enhancements include more responsive handling, improved fuel economy of 24 mpg overall, and a better-calibrated continuously variable

transmission that’s smoother and quieter than the previous version.

Power comes from a 170-hp, 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine that delivers adequate performance but can get somewhat vocal under hard acceleration. Our vehicle’s all-wheel drive worked unobtrusively.

Handling is sound, with prompt steering response if not much feedback, and restrained body lean in corners. Overall, the Rogue feels competent and very secure when pushed to its limits, although it’s not sporty or engaging to drive.

You sit up high in the cabin, with plenty of head room. Some drivers felt that the pedals were too close, but sliding the seat back made the steering wheel a reach.

The cloth seats in our car are wide but lack sufficient support, especially on long trips. Theaterlike raised rear seats improve the view, and there’s ample room for three, which is helped by the almost flat floor.

Adding to the Rogue’s family-friendly credibility is an optional third-row seat that brings seating capacity to seven. That’s rare among small SUVs, though the tight seat is best for kids. Opting for the third row eliminates the spare tire, which means you get run-flat tires and, probably, a stiffer ride. A removable shelf in the cargo area adds versatility.

Controls are mostly simple. The optional touch screen is relatively straightforward, but the radio’s preset buttons are too small. Connecting a phone is easy, and voice commands work well enough for phone, radio, iPod, and navigation functions.

A backup camera is standard on all Rogues. And we really like the optional surround-view camera, which provides a virtual 360-degree view around the vehicle when parking.

Tested vehicle	
HIGHS	Ride, access, spacious interior, standard backup camera, optional surround-view camera, available third-row seat, IIHS crash-test results
LOWS	Engine noise, cloth front-seat support, gets pricey
TRIM LINE	SV
DRIVETRAIN	170-hp, 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine; continuously variable transmission; all-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	Moonroof, SV Premium package (navigation, power liftgate, Around View camera system, blind-spot and lane-departure warnings)
TESTED PRICE	\$29,920
The Rogue line	
OTHER TRIMS	S, SL
OTHER DRIVETRAIN	Front-wheel drive
BASE PRICES	\$22,490–\$29,420
More test findings	
BRAKING	Short stopping distances.
HEADLIGHTS	Good visibility from standard halogen bulbs, although light distribution is uneven.
ACCESS	Big doors, chair-height seats, and low sills make access easy.
VISIBILITY	There are large windows, but thick pillars impair the view. A standard backup camera helps, and a surround-view camera system is optional.
CABIN STORAGE	Adequate for a small SUV.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	The rear-center restraint is not tall enough, even when it’s fully raised.
CHILD SEATS	Hinge covers and buckle hardware in the rear-center position make it difficult to install a child seat.

How they compare	
Rec. <b>SMALL SUVs</b>	0 100
	P   F   G   V   E
✓ <b>Subaru Forester 2.5i Premium</b>	86
✓ <b>Honda CR-V EX</b>	76
<b>Toyota RAV4 XLE</b>	75
<b>Ford Escape SE (1.6T)</b>	75
<b>Nissan Rogue SV</b>	74
✓ <b>Mazda CX-5 Touring (2.5L)</b>	74
<b>Hyundai Tucson GLS</b>	71
<b>Kia Sportage LX</b>	70
<b>Mitsubishi Outlander SE (4-cyl.)</b>	61
<b>Jeep Cherokee Latitude (4-cyl.)</b>	57

# Land Rover Range Rover

**YES, ITS FULL NAME** can be a mouthful, but the Range Rover has long been an icon among luxury SUVs. It couples the ambience and feature-rich convenience of an ultra-luxury sedan with the off-road savvy of a true four-wheel-drive SUV. And the current model is a radically updated flagship that's plush, comfortable, and loaded with advanced technology.

Major changes for this fourth-generation model include weight-saving aluminum unibody construction, a switch to a supercharged V6 as the standard engine instead of a V8, and the latest iteration of Rover's terrain-adapting electronics.

Overall, this stately coach emphasizes tranquility over dexterity. The 340-hp V6 and excellent eight-speed automatic transmission provide effortless power. We averaged 17 mpg on premium fuel, which isn't great but still beats most rivals.

It's responsive and secure in corners, but agile handling has never been a Rover forte, so don't expect the sporty experience of, say, a Porsche Cayenne. When pushed to its handling limits, the Rover leaned quite a bit and felt a little cumbersome, but it remained secure.

Ride quality is excellent. Bumps and ruts are barely acknowledged. And body motion is slow and controlled, making this large SUV feel gracious and serene.

Ensnared in the high, hushed cabin, you're surrounded by tasteful wood, leather, and chrome trim, with very comfortable, supportive seats. The rear is roomy, and it's even more spacious in the long-wheelbase version. At normal driving height, the vehicle requires a bit of a step up to get in. But with its adjustable-height suspension, you can lower it by 2 inches to ease access. The Rover then automatically returns to its regular ride height when it reaches 10 mph.

Some of the controls are frustratingly dated; most are operated using a large touch screen on the dash. The menu structure buries some often-used features, such as the radio tuner. The small touch buttons are slow to respond at times, and the instrument

panel fonts are too small. There are shortcuts for some functions, such as the one to activate the seat heaters.

Complementing the Range Rover's luxury accoutrements is impressive off-road capability. The adjustable suspension also lets you raise the vehicle for more ground clearance, and various electronic settings can reconfigure the running gear to handle different off-road situations. In short, it can crawl over boulders and ford streams with the best of them, should its upscale buyers wish to do so. Towing capacity of 7,715 pounds is also impressive.

Despite its hefty \$88,545 sticker price, our car lacked such safety aids as blind-spot monitoring, cross-traffic alert, and lane-departure warning, features that are common on many less expensive vehicles. Those systems and a wraparound camera display are part of a \$2,160 Vision Assist package that wasn't on our HSE.

Reliability isn't yet known.

**Best version to get.** Buy the midtrim HSE, which is what you'll find on most lots, and add the Vision Assist package.



**GETTING DOWN** With the press of a button, the body lowers 2 inches to ease access.



Tested vehicle	
<b>HIGHS</b>	Ride, quietness, acceleration, interior room, fit and finish, visibility, seat comfort, off-road and towing capabilities
<b>LOWS</b>	Agility, controls
<b>TRIM LINE</b>	HSE
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b>	340-hp, 3.0-liter supercharged V6; eight-speed automatic transmission; four-wheel drive
<b>MAJOR OPTIONS</b>	20-inch wheels, panoramic sunroof, 12-way power front seats, heated rear seats
<b>TESTED PRICE</b>	\$88,545
The Range Rover line	
<b>OTHER TRIM LINES</b>	Base, Autobiography
<b>OTHER DRIVETRAIN</b>	510-hp, 5.0-liter supercharged V8
<b>BASE PRICES</b>	\$83,100-\$142,100
More test findings	
<b>BRAKING</b>	Fairly short stopping distances.
<b>HEADLIGHTS</b>	Good to the front; very good to the sides.
<b>ACCESS</b>	There's a high step-in, but wide door openings help.
<b>VISIBILITY</b>	Easy, because of large windows.
<b>CABIN STORAGE</b>	There's inadequate open space for incidentals on the center console but some covered bins elsewhere.
<b>HEAD RESTRAINTS</b>	The center-rear restraint is too low to protect adults.
<b>CHILD SEATS</b>	Rear-facing child restraints are difficult to secure properly.



# Cars \ Compare

Recommended



VERSION	Toyota Highlander	BMW X5	Land Rover Range Rover Sport	Kia Soul	Nissan Rogue	Land Rover Range Rover
<b>TRIM LINE</b>	XLE	xDrive35i	HSE	Plus	SV	HSE
<b>PRICE: BASE/TESTED</b> <sup>①</sup>	\$37,500/\$38,941	\$55,100/\$70,050	\$62,600/\$74,040	\$18,200/\$24,115	\$25,580/\$29,920	\$82,650/\$88,545
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b>						
Engine	3.5-liter V6 (270 hp)	3.0-liter 6-cyl. (300 hp)	3.0-liter V6 (340 hp) super-charged	2.0-liter 4-cyl. (164 hp)	2.5-liter 4-cyl. (170 hp)	3.0-liter V6 (340 hp) super-charged
Transmission	6-speed automatic	8-speed automatic	8-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	CVT	8-speed automatic
Drive wheels	AWD	AWD	4WD	Front	AWD	4WD
<b>TIRES TESTED</b>						
Model & size	Bridgestone Dueler HL422, size P245/60R18 104T	Pirelli Scorpion Verde All Season RF, size 255/50R19 107H	Michelin Latitude Sport, size 255/55R20 110Y	Kumho Solus TA31, size 215/55R17 94V	Hankook Dynapro HT, size 225/65R17 102H	Goodyear Eagle F1 AT SUV 4X4, size 255/55R20 110W
<b>RATINGS</b>						
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>						
Acceleration	⊖	⊖	⊖	○	○	⊖
0 to 60 mph, sec.	7.5	7.4	6.5	8.8	9.5	6.7
45 to 65 mph, sec.	4.6	5.0	4.2	5.7	5.8	4.2
Quarter-mile, sec.	15.9	15.7	15.1	16.9	17.3	15.1
Transmission	●	●	●	●	●	●
Routine handling	○	●	●	●	○	○
Emergency handling	○	○	○	○	○	●
Avoidance maneuver, speed, mph	50.5	52.0	49.5	53.5	54.0	48.5
Braking	⊖	●	⊖	●	⊖	⊖
From 60 mph, dry/wet, ft.	134/144	137/142	137/139	127/135	134/142	137/144
Headlights	●	○	○	○	○	○
<b>COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE</b>						
Ride	●	●	○	○	●	●
Noise	⊖	●	⊖	○	○	●
Driving position	●	●	●	●	○	●
Front-seat comfort	●	●	⊖	⊖	○	●
Rear/third-seat comfort	●/●	●/●	●/●	●	●	●
Access	●	●	●	●	●	⊖
Controls and displays	●	●	●	●	●	○
Interior fit and finish	⊖	●	●	⊖	○	●
Cargo area	○	○	○	●	○	○
<b>PREDICTED RELIABILITY</b>	⊖	New	New	New	New	NA
<b>FUEL</b>						
Overall mpg	20	21	18	26	24	17
City/highway mpg	14/27	14/28	13/23	19/33	17/30	12/21
Type	regular	premium	premium	regular	regular	premium
Capacity, gal./Cruising range, miles	19.2/390	22.4/460	27.7/490	14.3/370	14.5/345	27.7/460
Annual cost, 12K miles	\$2,070 @ \$3.50/gal.	\$2,160 @ \$3.70/gal.	\$2,500 @ \$3.70/gal.	\$1,615 @ \$3.50/gal.	\$1,770 @ \$3.50/gal.	\$2,685 @ \$3.70/gal.
<b>SAFETY</b>						
<b>CRASH TESTS</b>						
IIHS moderate/small-overlap frontal	Good/Acceptable	Good	NA	Good	Good/Good	NA
IIHS side	Good	Good	NA	Good	Good	NA
IIHS rear	Good	Good	NA	Good	Good	NA
IIHS roof strength	Good	Good	NA	Good	Good	NA
NHTSA front, driver/passenger	●/●	NA/NA	NA/NA	●/●	○/●	NA/NA
NHTSA side, driver/rear	●/●	NA/NA	NA/NA	●/●	●/●	NA/NA
NHTSA rollover 2WD/4WD	⊖/○	NA/NA	NA/NA	○/NA	⊖/○	NA/NA
<b>AIR BAGS</b>						
Side, front/rear	std./no	std./no	std./no	std./no	std./no	std./std.
Head protection	std. w/rollover	std. w/rollover	std. w/rollover	standard	std. w/rollover	standard
<b>SPECIFICATIONS</b>						
<b>DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHT</b>						
Length/width/height, in.	191/76/68	192/76/69	191/78/70	163/71/63	182/72/66	197/78/72
Wheelbase, in.	110	116	115	101	107	115
Turning circle, ft.	40	43	41	36	38	41
Ground clearance, in.	8.0	8.0	8.0	6.0	7.0	8.0
Curb weight, lb. (% front/rear)	4,490 (55/45)	4,745 (50/50)	5,255 (49/51)	3,055 (61/39)	3,590 (57/43)	5,300 (50/50)
Maximum load, lb.	1,385	1,345	1,345	825	900	960
Cargo volume, cu. ft.	40.5	34.5	31.5	24.5	31.5	34.5
Towing capacity, lb.	5,000	6,000	7,715	NR	1,100	7,715
<b>INTERIOR ROOM</b>						
Front shoulder room, in.	58.5	60.5	60.5	55.0	56.0	60.5
Front leg room, in.	42.0	42.0	42.0	42.0	40.5	42.5
Front head room, in. <sup>②</sup>	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.5	5.0	5.5
Rear shoulder room, in.	58.5	58.5	59.0	53.0	54.5	59.0
Rear leg room, in.	31.5	27.0	28.0	28.5	29.0	29.0
Rear head room, in. <sup>②</sup>	5.5	4.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	4.0
Third-row shoulder room, in.	53.0	45.0	43.0	—	NA	—
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Third-row head room, in. <sup>②</sup>	1.0	1.0	0.0	—	NA	—

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

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# Goofs & gotchas

## A salute to marketing flubs

How many ads does a person see in a year? No one seems to have a clue—guesstimates range up to thousands per day—but our readers sure notice plenty. In fact, they send about 2,800 examples per year to the Selling It column, our monthly collection of goofs, glitches, and gotchas.

Clearly, many of the examples we feature are for laughs, but others are real rip-offs. Advertising law allows for puffery—a vague claim of superiority, such as “Nothing’s better than Blitz,” which could also be read as “Nothing’s worse than Blitz.” But claims must be truthful, cannot be deceptive or unfair, and must be evidence-based.

When ads deceive, various entities—government agencies, state attorneys general, the Better Business Bureau's

National Advertising Division—can mete out punishment. Usually, the smackdown comes from the Federal Trade Commission, which in March obtained an almost \$2.2 million judgment against a supplement company that made phony claims for diabetes prevention and treatment. (It will use the funds to reimburse consumers.)

## Tricks of the trade

Why do we believe some ads even when they're clearly false? "Numerous neuroscience studies show that we're hardwired to believe good intentions rather than bad intentions, and advertising is no exception," says Martin Lindstrom, author of "Brand-washed" (Crown Business, 2011). "The good news is that the average American consumer has become less gullible over the past two decades."

The bad news, says Lindstrom: The advertising industry has become equally sophisticated. "The very moment the consumer has established a solid filter in order to 'survive,' a new media channel, technique, or approach is introduced, surprising the consumer and making us spend more."

Marketers are also using increasingly sophisticated techniques to figure out which ads work. For starters, they can measure the physiological effects that ads have on consumers, through tracking heart rate, respiration, galvanic skin response (for stress and anxiety levels), facial-muscle activity, brain activity, and eye movement.

However tempting the marketing ploy, here's a low-tech word to the wise: If an advertising boast seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Judging from the feedback we receive, readers get a kick out of our column. "Love your page," one wrote. "It's always the first I turn to when the magazine arrives. It was also a great teaching tool in consumer awareness as my son grew up." The request from another fan: "Don't *ever* eliminate the back page, *please*."

For this special Selling It feature, we've expanded the back page, rounding up 18 reader submissions. Be annoyed—or enjoy. And for more on the types of ads that are especially irritating, see “Ad Tactics that Bug Americans Most,” on page 11.

## Common marketing gimmicks we see:

- Products that have shrunk in size but not in price.
- Contenders for our Black Hole Award for wasted space or our Golden Cocoon Award for overpackaging.
- Merchandise that seems to be made in the U.S. but isn't.
- Foods whose names belie their ingredients ("pumpkin" muffins that contain no pumpkin?).
- Manuals that have been lost in translation. (Our favorite: Intending to identify a screw, an electronic-keyboard pamphlet from Yamaha used an entirely different Anglo-Saxon word.)

## ▶ BY THE NUMBERS

# \$161.2 billion

**Total U.S. ad expenditures in 2012.** *Source: ZenithOptimedia.*



**Wave the ...**  
... Chinese flag.



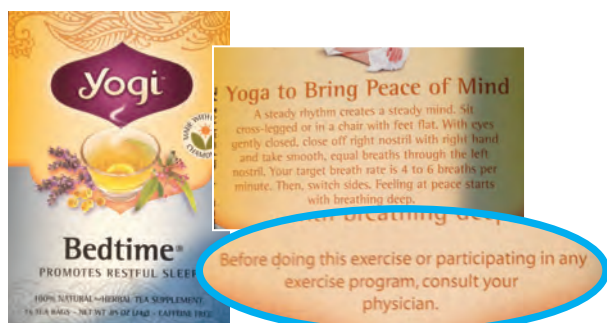
**Empty logic**  
"With room for toppings," the lid says. Gee, for even more room, Oikos could provide an even less full container.



**Weird warning**  
Watch out for high-velocity nail clippings.



**Well, that clears it up**  
It's that other natural flavor that makes the difference.



**M.D. overkill**  
The instructions say to sit, close your eyes, and take deep breaths. Breathing? Better consult your doctor.



**If you say so, mate**  
This koala might feel more at home at Outback Steakhouse.



## Selling it



### Mixed message

We're guessing that the reader who snapped this photo while shopping for a Honda Ridgeline ended up buying a Toyonda RidgeRunner or 4Line.



### Chickening out

There's a whole lot less shakin' going on.



### Golden Cocoon Award

"All of that just for the Angry Birds telepods!" the recipient writes.

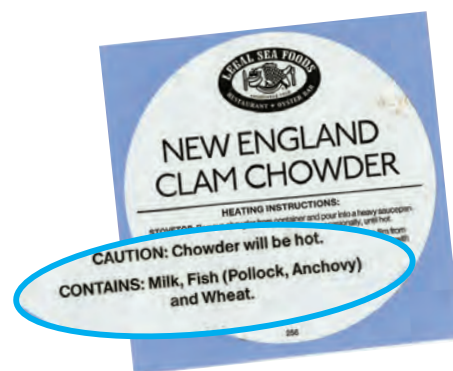
### No, really?

Can't fault DiGiorno's math.



### Brown thumb

The small print says, "Grow vegetables, herbs, and tomatoes indoors." Or not.



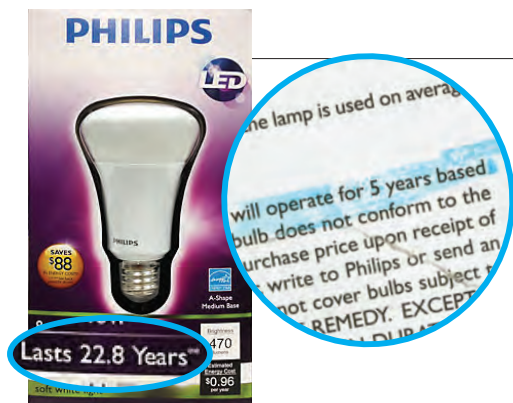
### Something's fishy

The clams are on the lam.



## Selling it

Submissions:  
SellingIt@cro.consumer.org or  
Selling It, Consumer Reports,  
101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703



### Shedding no light

Differing claims on the package front and back left a reader in the dark.



### Effortless, but a meal?

Walmart might want to rethink this display.



### You've been warned

Wouldn't it be great if this vendor sold gas, too?



### What wheat?

We bet it's cholesterol-free, too.



### Give this man a hand

No wonder he's playing great bridge—count the number of Jacks.



### Ow!

"I feel for the mother of this baby," a reader writes.



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

**The Consumer Reports New Car Price Report** shows you what others really paid, regional dealer marketing fees, and other information to help you get a great deal on a new car.

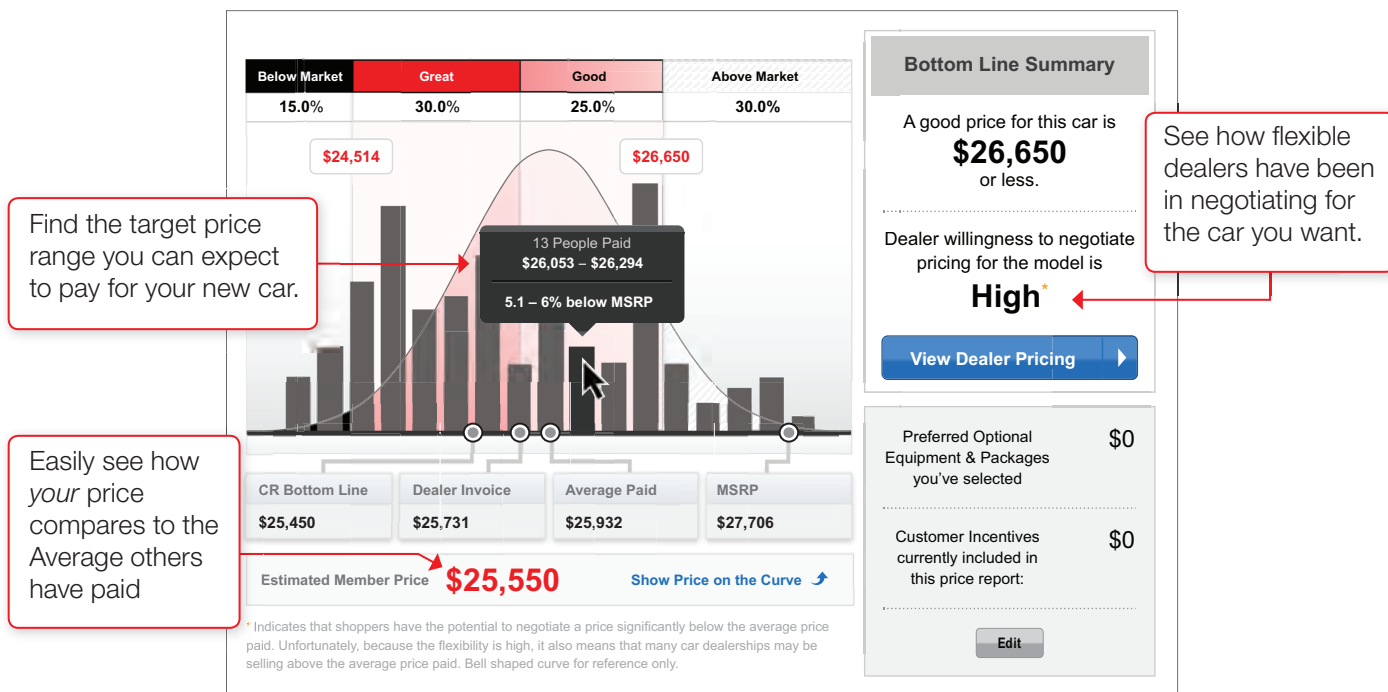
**The enhanced Report now features an easy-to-read price curve that includes:**

- Great, Good, and Above Market price ranges for your area
- The average price others paid for the same car
- The Build & Buy Service, providing a transparent car-buying experience through a network of pre-qualified dealers
- A rating of a dealer's willingness to negotiate on the model you've chosen



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PE44CURVES2



# Canada Extra

Information from CONSUMER REPORTS® for Canadian readers

## In this special section

Dehumidifiers	32A
Grills	32B
Recalls	32C
Autos	32D
Contact info	32D

## 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](mailto: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.

## Dehumidifiers Report and Ratings, page 43

Six of the 14 tested dehumidifiers are available, including three of the recommended models.


Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Specs		Overall score
				Tank size (pt.)	Claimed pt./day	
					0	100
					P   F   G   VG   E	

**A LARGE CAPACITY** Best for large or very wet spaces, these capture the most moisture per day.


	2	Frigidaire FAD704DWD	\$420	16	70	83
	3	Sunpentown SD-61E	400	13	60	81
	5	Sunpentown SD-65E	350	17	65	68

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Specs		Overall score
				Tank size (pt.)	Claimed pt./day	
					0	100
					P   F   G   VG   E	

**B MEDIUM CAPACITY** Best for medium or small spaces that are damp but not wet.

	1	Frigidaire FAD504DWD	\$370	16	50	82
	2	DeLonghi DD50PE	350	12	50	79

**C SMALL CAPACITY** Best for small spaces that are damp but not wet.

	1	Sunpentown SD-31E	290	7	30	88
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# Grills

Report, page 20; Ratings, pages 22-23

Twenty-nine of the 48 tested large, medium-sized, small, and portable grills are available, including nine of the recommended models.

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

## A MEDIUM-SIZED These have room for 16 to 30 burgers. All have electronic igniters, unless noted.

✓	1	Weber Spirit SP-320 46700401	NA	81
✓	3	Vermont Castings Signature Series VCS324SSP	NA	77
✓	4	Weber Spirit E-320 46710001	\$ 800	76
✓	6	Weber Genesis S-330	1,050	75
	7	Kenmore 690342	450	74
	9	Kenmore 690340	300	73
	11	Vermont Castings Signature Series VCS424SSP	NA	73
	13	Weber Genesis E-330	1,000	73
	14	Broil King Signet 90 986784 LP	NA	72
	16	Napoleon Legend LA400 Series LA400RSIBPSS*	NA	72
	18	Kenmore 690346	700	71
	20	Weber Summit S-470	2,200	70
	21	Black & Decker JXG4103A (Walmart)*	200	70
	22	Napoleon Mirage M485RSIB	1,000	70
	24	Napoleon Prestige P500RSIB	1,300	69

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

## B LARGE These have room for 30 burgers or more. All have electronic igniters, unless noted.

✓	1	Kenmore 690347	\$ 900	75
✓	2	Master Forge 3218LTN [Item #6554] (Lowe's)	700	75
	3	Weber Summit E-670	2,700	74
	4	Swiss Grill Zurich Series Z650	NA	69
	5	KitchenAid 720-0709C (Home Depot)	1,000	69
	6	Blue Ember BE65078-584 (Home Depot)	750	69
	8	Weber Summit S-650	2,200	66
	9	Char-Broil Tru-Infrared Commercial 466241413 (Lowe's) [Item #404325]	600	66

## C SMALL These have room for fewer than 15 burgers. All have electronic igniters, unless noted.

✓	1	Weber Spirit E-220 46310001	NA	77
✓	2	Broilmate 165154 (Home Depot)	200	72
✓	3	Napoleon Terrace SE325PK*	450	71
	5	Master Forge MFA350BNP [Item #221380] (Lowe's)	200	67

## D PORTABLE These use propane canisters.

	1	Weber Q 2200 54060001	280	67
	3	Weber Q 1000 50060001	190	53

\* These have a rotary or push-button igniter.

# Recalls

## 2011-2012 Chevrolet Cruze

Oil spilled as a result of improper oil change procedures could reach hot engine or exhaust components. That may cause the shield to ignite and burn. Also, on vehicles with a manual transmission, driving with a worn clutch may cause fluid to be expelled from the clutch housing vent hole. Burning fluid may cause the shield to ignite and burn.

**Models** 61,299 vehicles.

**What to do** Have the dealer modify the engine shield to prevent fluid from contacting it.

## 2012 Honda Civic

In vehicles with an automatic transmission, the snap ring may malfunction and cause the driver's side driveshaft to separate from the CV joint. That might result in a loss of propulsion, or the vehicle may move while it's in the park position.

**Models** 12,587 vehicles.

**What to do** Have the dealer inspect the driveshaft and replace it, if necessary.

## 2012-2013 Honda models

If the manual or power dock lock is activated while the door is being opened using the interior door handle, an interior door-latch mechanism may loosen and move out of position. That may affect the door latch, and the door may not lock properly.

**Models** 21,729 2012 Honda CR-V and 2013 Acura ILX vehicles.

**What to do** Have the dealer replace the front door-latch assemblies. In addition, the interior front-door handles will be replaced on certain 2012 CR-V vehicles.

## 2007-2008 Hyundai Santa Fe

For vehicles equipped with an advanced air-bag system, the Passive Occupant Detection System (PODS) may mistake a smaller adult seated in the front-right passenger seat for a child and deactivate the front air bag. The light will illuminate, and the air bag will not inflate in the event of an accident.

**Models** 29,679 vehicles.

**What to do** Have the dealer reprogram the PODS.

## 2012-2013 Hyundai Sonata

There may be a defect in the inflator module due to manufacturing, causing the side curtain air bag(s) to deploy without warning.

**Models** 1,925 vehicles.

**What to do** Have the dealer replace the affected side curtain air bag(s).

## 2002-2003 Jeep models

The supplemental restraint may be defective and may result in the unintended deployment of the front air bag or side curtain air bag, or possibly the seat-belt pretensioner.

**Models** 29,186 2002-2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee and 2002-2003 Jeep Liberty vehicles.

**What to do** Have the dealer install an in-line jumper wiring harness to correct the problem.

## 2010 Lexus models

Due to an unsecured or incompatible driver's floor mat, the accelerator pedal may become stuck. A fully depressed accelerator may make it extremely difficult to slow or stop the vehicle.

**Models** 14,478 Lexus RX 350 and Lexus RX 450H vehicles.

**What to do** Have the dealer modify or replace the accelerator pedal.

## 2009-2012 Subaru Forester

When used in automatic locking retractor mode, the center-rear seating position seat belt may not allow the proper installation of a child restraint system or booster seat and may revert to emergency locking mode while the system is in use. In the event of a crash, the seat belt will still lock, but the belt may loosen, increasing the risk of injury.

**Models** 35,585 vehicles.

**What to do** Subaru will send owners a locking clip to be used to properly secure a child restraint system or booster seat, and an owner's manual supplement with instructions on its proper use. Also, upon request, dealers will replace the center seat-belt retractor.

## 2004-2009 Toyota Prius

The electrical water pump assembly may fail. Coolant may stop circulating, and warning lights may illuminate. If the water pump short-circuits, the hybrid system could cause the engine to stall.

**Models** 8,740 vehicles.

**What to do** Have the dealer replace the electrical water pump.



# Autos

Report and Ratings, pages 48-56

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
MIDSIZED SUV								
Toyota Highlander	\$31,680-\$45,100	3.0	7.9	3.5	18.2	16.6	8.6	11.6
LUXURY MIDSIZED AND LARGE SUVs								
BMW X5	62,990-98,500	3.2	7.8	3.6	18.0	16.4	8.5	11.5
Land Rover Range Rover	98,900-154,990	2.8	7.1	3.0	17.3	19.6	11.0	14.2
Land Rover Range Rover Sport	73,990-104,990	2.7	6.9	3.2	17.3	18.4	10.2	13.3
SMALL SUV								
Nissan Rogue	23,498-30,698	3.9	10.0	4.2	19.9	13.6	7.7	9.9
BOXY COMPACT HATCHBACK								
Kia Soul	16,995-27,195	3.4	9.4	4.0	19.4	12.2	7.2	9.1

## Contact info

How to reach manufacturers in Canada.

### Black & Decker

Contact local Walmart  
walmart.ca

### Blue Ember

Contact local Home Depot  
homedepot.ca

### Broil King

800-265-2150  
broilkingbbq.com

### Broilmate

Contact local Home Depot  
homedepot.ca

### Char-Broil

Contact local Lowe's  
lowes.ca

### DeLonghi

888-335-6644  
delonghi.ca

### Frigidaire

800-668-4606  
frigidaire.ca

### Kenmore

Contact local Sears  
sears.ca

### KitchenAid

Contact local Home Depot  
homedepot.ca

### Master Forge

Contact local Lowe's  
lowes.ca

### Napoleon

napoleongrills.com

### Sunpentown

877-719-4883  
sunpentown.ca

### Swiss Grill

swissgrills.com

### Vermont Castings

vermontcastings.com

### Weber

800-265-2150  
weber.com