43 WAYS TO PAY LESS FOR PRACTICALLY ANYTHING

PLUS

NEW & USED CARS OWNERS LOVE & HATE
TOP PICKS IN FROZEN PIZZA
5 WAYS TO GET A GREAT DEAL ON A NEW TV—NOW!

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- Child Car Seats
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- Honda Accord
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That’s why we want your input and feedback.

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Let’s start the conversation:

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ABOUT CONSUMER REPORTS
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RATINGS Overall scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. We rate products using these symbols:

• POOR
• FAIR
• GOOD
• VERY GOOD
• EXCELLENT
From the President

Your Saving Grace

Whether you believe that it talks, is the root of all evil, or is what makes the world go round, we can all agree on one thing when it comes to money: Having a little bit more of it can make a big difference for our families. Finding some extra dollars in your bank account doesn’t always require cutting corners or asking for a raise, though.

There are countless everyday ways you can start saving money now that you may not be aware of. This month, we’re cluing you in to the savviest strategies from our in-house experts and researchers, so you can pay less and get better value wherever and whenever you enter the marketplace.

From shedding dollars off your car insurance premium to identifying hidden discounts at the drugstore, our complete guide will have you keeping more and spending less on a host of common necessities. Inside, you’ll find simple tips to reduce common strains on your appliances so that they work effectively for longer before they need to be repaired or replaced. We’ll introduce you to the world of online haggling, walk you through methods to bring down your property tax assessment, and help you sort out which products are ripe for savings—and which you should never skimp on. There are more important things in life than money, of course, but at CR we also know that a penny saved is a penny you can use to plan for your future or feel more secure. That’s the peace of mind we strive to deliver, so that you and your family can enjoy many happy returns.
Taking Equifax to Task

WHAT’S AT STAKE
Armed with a petition signed by more than 180,000 consumers, CR advocates pressed executives of credit reporting agency Equifax to do more for the 145 million people whose personal data may have been stolen in last year’s massive data breach.

When Equifax announced in September that hackers had potentially gained access to millions of Social Security and credit card numbers as well as other sensitive data, many people wanted to know whether they were among those who were affected—and, if so, how to protect themselves from fraud and identity theft. But the company’s initial response was chaotic: Its website crashed, its phone lines were jammed, and when people did get through, Equifax offered only weak solutions.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK
That’s when CR called on Equifax to step up, and invited consumers to sign on to our demand for seven specific actions to make consumers whole. These include offering longer-lasting free credit freezes and credit monitoring, hiring and training more staff to process complaints promptly, and setting aside funds to compensate affected consumers.

Equifax finally agreed to meet with CR advocates at its Atlanta headquarters in November, and we used the opportunity to deliver the petition signatures. After discussing our recommendations for more than an hour, company executives pledged to continue the conversation with CR as they develop new remedies.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
Our latest petition to Equifax is online at ConsumersUnion.org/equifaxpetition. We are also pushing Congress to raise standards and hold companies accountable. Contact your representatives at congress.gov and demand stronger data privacy and security laws.

Seeking Sunroof Safety

WHAT’S AT STAKE
Spontaneously shattering vehicle sunroofs—a growing problem that we highlighted in our December 2017 issue—are getting some much-needed attention from policymakers.

In recent years, such incidents have spiked along with the increasing popularity of panoramic sunroofs. But our investigation found that many automakers and dealerships have refused to acknowledge the problem or pay for repairs.

In response, Sens. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., and Edward Markey, D-Mass., sent letters to automakers asking for detailed information on sunroof materials, defects, and design. “While, thankfully, severe injuries have not been officially linked to this hazard, the increasing trend of this risk requires immediate response and action,” they wrote.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK
The senators asked a lot of the same questions we did, and we’ll follow the responses closely. In addition, we called on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to expand its ongoing investigation into Kia Sorento sunroof problems to other makes and models, and to urge automakers with shattering incidents to order recalls.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
If your sunroof exploded or shattered, go to NHTSA’s safercar.gov or call 888-327-4236 to report it. We’re also collecting stories about the problem. Please go to CR.org/explodingsunroof to tell us what happened.

CR met with Equifax to push for better remedies to protect valuable consumer data.
In our December 2017 article, “Shop Online With Confidence,” we offered strategies to help readers avoid scams and save money when making purchases online—especially for holiday gifts. To cash in on our information or to join the conversation, go to CR.org/shoptips0218.

In reply to “Shopping for a Worthy Cause” (December 2017), I have used the iGive.com shopping portal for many years. The percentage each merchant agrees to give to your chosen charity is clearly listed—and at the end of the year you get a report on the amount you gave to your chosen cause for the year.

—Dennis Faulkner, via CR.org

I saw that Sam’s Club’s One Day Sale featured an LG refrigerator at a secret price, revealed to be $799 at 12:01 a.m. EST. The item listed for $1,899.99 on LG’s website.

It was instant pandemonium. The site was crashing. A family member had to get through to them using the telephone!

—Jay Lewis, via CR.org

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Although online shopping can yield great prices without requiring you to collide with crowds of shoppers, there’s still plenty of virtual competition (especially if software bots are also buying up the item). So if you know a sale is coming, set up an account with the site ahead of time to make checkout faster. But if you’re having site trouble, yes, a good old-fashioned phone call might help you secure the discount.

**Caring Conversation**

The December 2017 Consumer Reports article “Getting Help at Home” includes information about Meals on Wheels in the section “Help With Home-Care Bills.” The article states, “Get free meals” and then tells about the Meals on Wheels program. There is usually no set fee, but recipients are asked to make a donation toward the cost of the meal. Meals on Wheels programs rely on these donations to help them cover their costs and to be able to serve more people.

—Carol Mattson, Siren, WI

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Meals on Wheels told us that, depending on your financial situation, recipients might be asked to make a contribution. But that’s not always so. “The approach to asking for recipient donations varies by community,” a spokesperson says. To find out more about the organization, you can go to mealsonwheelsamerica.org.

At age 50, my wife and I opened mutual fund Roth IRAs, with the objective of self-funding our long-term care. This approach has three advantages over the expensive insurance offered for long-term care. 1) Unlike long-term insurance plans, which cover less and less of the actual cost of long-term care over time, the Roth IRA can be expected to increase in value, as long-term-care costs increase.

2) Statistically, only one of us will need long-term care, and that person is unlikely to need it before 85, giving us time to build (and share) our accounts.

3) If neither of us needs to use the funds for long-term care, the money goes to our children, not to an insurance company.

—Eric Johnson, Princeton, NJ

**EDITOR’S NOTE** We’re glad that you’re saving for long-term care. But keep in mind that the contribution limit for Roth IRAs is $5,500 per year, plus $1,000 for those 50 and older. If you put the max each year into a Roth IRA for, say, 10 years, you might have about $80,000, assuming 4 percent average annual returns. But inflation rates for healthcare and assisted-living costs are rising about 6 percent or more annually. You could definitely make a dent in your long-term-care costs, but you can’t expect to fully cover them if you have years of disability. Funding your own care can be very difficult, so it’s a good idea to look at all your options, including insurance.

**Sunroof Scares**

In reply to “Shattered” (December 2017): The sunroof in our SUV shattered last summer. At that time the car was two years into a three-year/36,000-mile warranty. Unfortunately, it was 137 miles over the 36,000 miles. The car manufacturer offered no assistance. Our next vehicle will not have a sunroof.

—Charlie Howard, via CR.org

This happened to me in my brand-new luxury vehicle. On a trip with my wife, there was a loud exploding sound. I looked...
up to see that my sunroof had exploded. The dealer was difficult to deal with to get this resolved. It has been eight weeks, and I still don’t have my car fixed. The paint job on the back of the car was damaged as well. Luckily we were not injured. The issue here is not that things happen but rather that manufacturers should take ownership of the incident and repair the car without a fight.

—Bryan Mours, via Facebook

THANKS FOR YOUR well-researched report on exploding sunroofs. Although you alluded to the increasing prevalence of sunroofs on new cars, you didn’t mention a simple remedy: Many car buyers, ourselves included, have elected to buy a lower trim level because it was available without a sunroof. They are noisy, especially combined with a roof rack. If a luggage box is above the sunroof, it is of no purpose whatsoever.

—Ken Eden, Green Valley, AZ

Drilling Discussion

GREAT DECEMBER ARTICLE on cordless drills ("Know the Drill" 2017). I would advise homeowners buying a cordless drill to look at the company’s product line before buying a drill. For instance, I went with Black+Decker, with a 20-volt drill, impact driver, hand vacuum, leaf blower, and flashlight all sharing the batteries, and with a 40-volt lawn mower, hedge trimmer, and leaf blower. So I have only two batteries to worry about and always have enough that are charged up. This brings up the big question: Why haven’t tool batteries been standardized? It doesn’t take long to realize that manufacturers lure you in with low prices on tools knowing you will have to buy their batteries later.

—Daniel Stadtherr, Porterville, CA

EDITOR’S NOTE We agree that it’s smart to consider a brand’s platform of tools when shopping for a drill, because you can use the same batteries—a considerable savings. In fact, we advise applying this idea to outdoor power equipment as well. Consumers should zero in on the tool that’s most important to them, then make sure the brand’s other offerings are solid performers, too.

Snap Chat

IN YOUR ARTICLE “Picture Perfect” (December 2017), rating photo print services, you use the phrase “print quality,” but I’d also want to know the quality of the paper on which the image is printed, for example, the finish (glossy, matte).

—Roger Kohn, Manhattan Beach, CA

EDITOR’S NOTE The panelists who judged the image-quality attributes reviewed prints only on glossy photo paper because it allows us to see the inherent capabilities of the printer, unimpeded. We don’t use matte paper because it introduces artifacts—slightly softening the details and making it more difficult to compare photos. Evaluating the surface light reflectance qualities of each service’s papers was beyond the scope of this testing project.

REGARDING PHOTO PRINTING services, you failed to mention one factor that may make the technical evaluations of photos moot. Prints ordered and picked up from local businesses (CVS, Walgreens, Target, etc.) are printed in those particular local stores. Therefore, the photo quality is dependent on the printer used, the skill level and attentiveness of the printer operator, and the photo paper used. These can vary greatly from place to place and even from day to day in the same place. My advice is to stick with one place once (if) you find a good one.

—James DeLacier, Silver Spring, MD

EDITOR’S NOTE We ordered all our prints via the internet and had them shipped to a residential address by the national chains (CVS, Walgreens, etc.). The prints appear to have originated from their corporate processing centers, not individual retail stores. So you’re correct that our testing results, which were designed to evaluate a purely online experience, don’t apply to retail in-store printing. But we agree with your advice: If you find a local retailer that consistently delivers quality prints, it makes sense to stick with that store.

A Helping Hand

CONCERNING YOUR ARTICLE about a lack of CPR training (Ask Our Experts, December 2017), as a recently retired 911 operator, I can tell you that when you call 911, the operator you reach is trained to help you perform CPR even as they are simultaneously sending a medic response to your home. I would encourage anyone to make the call.

—Richard Dennis, Blacklick, OH

Toilet Talk

I GOT A CHUCKLE out of the “Santa’s Other Throne?” ad in the Selling It section of the December 2017 issue. While a toilet seems to be an odd gift, it might also be a very thoughtful one. A few years ago, this was my Christmas gift to my parents. I gave them a new modern comfort-height toilet. Being older, they welcomed the easier-to-access increased height. Also, as a new model, they appreciate its lower water usage and resistance to clogs. Not every gift needs to be electronics, food, or clothing to be thoughtful. Something used every day might be the perfect gift, even if it does get a laugh.

—Rodney Grill, Helena, AL

EDITOR’S NOTE We agree. For anyone else in the market, turn to page 18 for our latest toilet ratings.
What We’re Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 60 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Chromebooks

**WE TESTED:** 24 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Display, overall performance, ergonomics, battery life, versatility, and more.

**Best Overall & Touch Screen**  
Asus Chromebook Flip C302CA-DHM4, 12.5" display  
$500

**Portable & Nicely Priced**  
HP Chromebook 11-V012NR, 11.6" display  
$200

**Best Battery Life**  
Acer Chromebook CB3-532-C47C, 15.6" display  
$200

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 63  
Range: 50-76

Immersion Blenders

**WE TESTED:** 9 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** How well it purées vegetables in water for soup, how well it blends frozen fruit and yogurt for smoothies.

**Best Overall**  
Breville Control Grip BSB510XL  
$100

**Super at Soup for a Lot Less**  
Cuisinart Smart Stick CSB-75  
$35

**Longest Warranty (5 years)**  
Electrolux Masterpiece ELHB10B9PS  
$230

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 64  
Range: 34-92

Ask Our Experts

I got an immersion blender as a holiday gift this year. What can it do that my regular blender can’t?

“For one thing, with its super-compact design, an immersion blender can easily be tucked away into a cabinet,” says CR home appliance tester Cindy Fisher. It can also save you time on meal prep because, rather than filling up a blender pitcher, you can submerge this slim device directly into the food or drink you’re preparing, such as simmering vegetables in a pot with tall sides. “But,” says Fisher, “these devices can’t truly replace a countertop blender,” which can handle heavy-duty jobs like ice cubes that immersion blenders can’t. So think of your immersion blender as a complementary tool to minimize the effort and mess of smaller culinary tasks. For our immersion blender picks, see above.
For even more ratings of these and other product categories, online subscribers can go to CR.org.

**Convertible Car Seats**

**WE TESTED:** 23 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Crash protection; ease of use including buckle and clip adjustment, secure installation with LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children) and seat belts.

**Best Overall**  
Chicco NextFit  
$300

**Easiest Installation**  
Britax Marathon ClickTight  
$265

**Great Value**  
Evenflo SureRide  
$100

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 63  
Range: 44-82

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**Instant Digital Meat Thermometers**

**WE TESTED:** 18 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Accuracy of temperature readings, accuracy with thin meats, quickness of response time, convenience, and more.

**Best Overall**  
CDNProAccurate TCT572  
$80

**Excellent for Extra-Thin Meat**  
ThermoWorks ThermoPen  
$80

**Accurate & Affordable**  
ThermoWorks Pocket RT600C2  
$20

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 71.5  
Range: 50-83

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**Large Countertop Microwaves**

**WE TESTED:** 40 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Heating and defrosting evenness, speed of heating, usable capacity in cubic feet, microwaving noise, and more.

**Best Overall**  
Panasonic NN-SD945S (14x24x20 in.; 1.4 cu. ft.)  
$215

**Great Zap for Your Buck**  
Oster OGG61403 (13x22x20 in.; 0.8 cu. ft.)  
$120

**Longest Warranty (10 years)**  
GE Profile JES2251SJ[SS] (14x24x19 in.; 1.5 cu. ft.)  
$280

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 65  
Range: 46-75

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**Ellipticals**

**WE TESTED:** 38 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Construction; ease of use of controls, display, and exercise programs; ergonomics; and more.

**Best Overall**  
Diamondback 1260Ef  
$2,300

**Intuitive Controls & Display**  
Sole E95S  
$2,300

**Bargain Buy**  
Schwinn 470  
$800

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 59  
Range: 45-80

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

**COMING NEXT MONTH:** Tablets, Frying Pans & More
Is green tea or the supplement healthy or dangerous? I keep hearing conflicting things.

Green tea, the drink, and green tea extract (GTE), the supplement, both contain compounds called catechins, which have been found to have antioxidant properties that may prevent cellular damage that can lead to cancer and other ills. However, an excess of catechins appears to harm the liver. GTE, sold on its own and in multi-ingredient blends, and often marketed as a fat-burner and weight-loss aid, can contain dangerously high amounts of those catechins. A study of postmenopausal women published in August 2017 in the journal Cancer Prevention Research found that participants who took green tea extract supplements twice a day for 12 months (containing a total of about 1,315 mg of catechins) were seven times more likely to have abnormally elevated liver enzymes than those who took a placebo. “Those levels are markers for liver injury, much as you might see with alcohol abuse,” says Marvin M. Lipman, M.D., CR’s chief medical adviser.

Consumer Reports believes GTE is so potentially harmful that we include it on our list of 15 supplements to always avoid. Also, dietary supplements are only loosely regulated, so you can’t be sure that what you’re taking contains what’s listed on the label, or in what amounts. Consumer Reports has long advocated for measures to give the Food and Drug Administration more authority to remove potentially harmful dietary supplements from the marketplace.

Drinking green tea is also said to have a number of health benefits, from lowering blood pressure to managing diabetes. But little evidence conclusively backs up many claims. And we couldn’t find any conclusive research showing how much is safe to drink each day, in part because it’s so difficult to know the exact amount of catechins you’re getting in each brewed cup. Drinking a few cups of green tea each day is probably safe, Lipman says. But limiting your intake even more may be safer.

A friend told me I can make my sports shows look better by adjusting the settings on my TV. What should I do? Sports fans, we’re glad you asked. All TVs have a picture settings menu, but not enough people take advantage of the settings to tailor their screens, says Claudio Ciacci, the program leader who oversees CR’s TV testing. Consumer Reports believes GTE is so potentially harmful that we include it on our list of 15 supplements to always avoid. Also, dietary supplements are only loosely regulated, so you can’t be sure that what you’re taking contains what’s listed on the label, or in what amounts. Consumer Reports has long advocated for measures to give the Food and Drug Administration more authority to remove potentially harmful dietary supplements from the marketplace.

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My car salesman was pushing me to buy an extended warranty because I put a lot of miles on my car per year. Is it worth it? “You might be tempted to roll the cost of an extended warranty into your new car purchase, but that means you’re paying up front—including interest—for a service you won’t use for years,” says CR auto analyst Mel Yu. Yu recommends waiting until your car is near the end of its original warranty and then shopping around for a factory-backed extended warranty if you still want one. By then, you’ll know how reliable the car is and how much repairs cost. (Check our new-car reliability ratings online at CR.org/reliability or on newsstands in our New Cars magazine.) In our 2013 survey, many car owners told us that they wound up spending more on the extended warranty than they would have to fix it during the coverage period. Get quotes from several dealers, not just the one you bought your car from, and don’t be afraid to haggle.
Insights

IF YOU HAVE a fire extinguisher in the house but you aren’t sure where it is or it’s coated in dust, it’s as good as useless. “Owning the right fire extinguisher is crucial,” says Don Huber, director of product safety at Consumer Reports. But so is having one in the right place and knowing how to use it.

Our tests show that heavier extinguishers contain more flame retardant and are able to deliver it quicker, so we recommend that you buy the largest ones you can comfortably handle. Also, Huber says, make sure your fire extinguisher can handle the three fire types that are indicated by the letters A, B and C on the label at right. This ensures that the retardant inside can put out multiple types of fires.

Have one multipurpose fire extinguisher on each level of your home. Also keep one in your garage, plus smaller supplemental units in the kitchen and car.

Don Huber, CR’s director of product safety

In the Know

How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

All the Right Moves

“You shouldn’t be reading the owner’s manual during a fire, so learn how to use your extinguisher before an emergency,” Huber says. No matter the fire’s origin, the four steps for extinguishing a blaze are largely the same; remembering the acronym “PASS” will help you perform the steps in order. But your safety is paramount, so leave the house immediately if the fire is growing or the room is filling with smoke. Once safely outside, call 911.

Pull the pin. Hold the extinguisher away from you, and release the locking mechanism.

Aim low, pointing the extinguisher at the base of the fire.

Squeeze the lever evenly.

Sweep the nozzle from side to side.

Go to CR.org/pass0218 to watch our video of this technique.
### Food Sleuth

**Which Egg Labels Matter?**

![Egg Diagram]

- **Pasture-Raised & Certified Humane**
  “Pasture-Raised” is one of the best labels for chicken welfare when it appears with the Certified Humane seal or the American Humane Certified label, which has similar standards for pasture-raised hens. Chickens must have access to a pasture with space to perform natural behaviors, such as pecking for seeds and bugs.

- **Organic**
  This seal means eggs were laid by hens fed grains grown without synthetic pesticides and not given antibiotics. The birds cannot be raised in cages and must have outdoor access, though in some cases this can still mean confined conditions in a building with just a small concrete porch.

- **Free Range & American Humane Certified**
  “Free Range” means the birds aren’t kept in cages and have outdoor access, but they may still live in crowded conditions and the outdoor area can be tiny. Look for it with a third-party American Humane Certified label to ensure that the birds can access a spacious outdoor run.

- **No Hormones**
  By law, chickens that produce eggs and those that are sold for meat can’t be given hormones, so eggs with this claim on the package label are no different from eggs sold without it.

- **Farm Fresh**
  All eggs come from “farms,” even if the farm is a big building where chickens are packed into cages, so this labeling claim has no value. The term “fresh” generally means the product hasn’t been frozen, but eggs in the shell should never be frozen.

- **Natural**
  People often mistake “natural” for “organic,” but the two terms are very different. By definition, an egg is a natural food product, so slapping “natural” on it has no clearly defined additional meaning.

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### CR Time Traveler: TVs

- **1948** Some of our first TV ratings are published, but scheduled TV service is in only 11 U.S. cities—most with just one channel. We also educate consumers about how to adjust the picture using Philco’s test pattern (right).

- **1950** Our staff evaluates demonstrations of CBS and RCA’s color TV systems, and urges the FCC to adopt color TV without delay.

- **1963** 19-inch portable TVs, such as this CR-recommended Sylvania 19PO8BN for $150, are all the rage, outselling larger 23-inch models.

- **1977** Our top-rated color TV is a 25-inch RCA GA725H for $750—the largest possible screen size at the time.
1986 With digital TV just around the corner, we test a new Panasonic’s picture-in-picture feature but deem it “an amusing gimmick”—even if it does let you watch “I Dream of Jeannie” at the same time as sports.

1987 Toshiba, MGA, and Sony top our charts for the most reliable TV brands.

1999 We test high-definition sets and find that they live up to their promise of better visuals—praising an $8,000 Sony KW-34HD1 (below), as “certainly the best TV picture we’ve ever tested.”

2008 Samsung introduces one of its first internet-connected smart TVs. The next year, Netflix starts streaming content directly to TVs, helping popularize the term “binge-watch.”

2017 Today LG OLED TVs, such as the 55-inch Ultra HD set at right, top our ratings charts.

READY FOR A NEW PHONE? We pitted two new iPhone models against each other—and found their overall performance to be strikingly similar. So your decision will come down to budget and user preference: The X has a larger display that can present more vibrant, lifelike images, and it employs facial recognition. But it’s a bit more delicate if you drop it (this gets factored into our ergonomics score). The iPhone 8 has the familiar home button—gone from the X—along with a much lower price.

For our TV article and more ratings, see page 40. Online subscribers can use CR.org’s TV Screen Optimizer by clicking on My Benefits in the drop-down menu under their name.

Face-Off

**iPhone X vs. iPhone 8**

**OVERALL SCORE**

1986 With digital TV just around the corner, we test a new Panasonic’s picture-in-picture feature but deem it “an amusing gimmick”—even if it does let you watch “I Dream of Jeannie” at the same time as sports.

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**Cool Product Feature of the Month**

**Flexi-Fridges**

Sometimes you just need more space in your refrigerator—whether to make room for party platters or to squeeze a kid’s ice cream cake into the freezer. If so, you might enjoy a new type of kitchen appliance: the flexi-fridge. It’s a refrigerator (or freezer) with adjustable temperature compartments that can be switched back and forth between fridge and freezer mode.

For example, the bottom-right chamber on this four-door French-door Samsung (below) can be converted from a freezer to a refrigerator—perfect if you want to prioritize produce over Popsicles every now and then. For more refrigerator ratings, online subscribers can go to CR.org/flexifridge0218.

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**Product Spotlight**

**How to Save a Life**

Smoke alarms are a must in all homes, and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms are essential for any home with fuel-burning appliances such as a furnace, water heater, range, and grill. Even those living in homes with all-electric appliances need to install CO alarms because the gas can seep into a house from an attached garage or from a backup generator placed too close to living quarters. Almost 150 people in the U.S. died each year from 2012 through 2014 because of accidental exposure to carbon monoxide produced by consumer products (mostly generators), according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The required types of alarms and their placement can vary by community, so before you buy, check with your local building or fire department. Some insurance companies may offer a small, perhaps 5 percent, discount on your premium if you install smoke alarms. If you already have alarms, check the date of manufacture on the label; replace CO alarms after five years and smoke alarms after 10 to ensure accuracy, or sooner if the alarm doesn’t sound when tested.

Smoke alarm prices start at $5, with CO alarms costing $20 and up. Newer, interconnected smoke alarms communicate among devices for whole-house protection. Hardwired or wireless, if one alarm in the
How to

WHERE TO PLACE ALARMS TO GET THE BEST COVERAGE OF YOUR HOME

Interconnected dual-sensor smoke alarm

Interconnected CO alarm

system senses a problem, all of them will sound.

The most effective smoke alarms, called dual-sensor, detect two types of fire—flaming and smoldering—using two technologies, ionization and photoelectric. Install at least one smoke alarm on each floor, including in a finished attic and the basement, in all bedrooms, and near any other sleeping areas. You should also have a CO alarm on each floor, in a finished attic, in the basement, and on an interior wall near the door to an attached garage. We are currently testing combination CO/dual-sensor smoke alarms new to the market; watch for ratings soon.

First Alert

**First Alert SCO501CN**

*Type:* CO and photoelectric smoke detector

$70

This battery-powered model detected both high and low CO levels accurately. And it detected smoldering (but not flaming) fires well.

First Alert

**First Alert 3120B**

*Type:* Dual-sensor

$30

Excellent at detecting both flaming and smoldering fires, this model must be hardwired to a power source. It comes with a battery backup for power outages.

Kidde

**Kidde PI2010**

*Type:* Dual-sensor

$30

Tied for first place in our smoke detector ratings, this hardwired model was as adept as the First Alert at sensing both types of fires.

For more information on smoke alarms, visit: [ConsumerReports.org](http://ConsumerReports.org)
Honda is recalling approximately 800,000 model-year 2011-2017 Odyssey minivans in the U.S. because the second-row seats may tip forward during braking if they're not properly latched after being adjusted or reinstalled after removal, which could lead to passenger injuries.

What to do: As we went to press, Honda was still investigating the appropriate repair to help ensure proper latching and will notify owners when that free repair is available. Until then, go to owners.honda.com for proper latching instructions for the second-row seat. CR’s Auto Test Center director, Jennifer Stockburger, also advises, “Owners can double-check that the seats are secured by hitting the brakes hard—without anyone occupying the second row—to be sure they’re latched.”

CR.org members can also use our Car Recall Tracker to stay informed about recalls on your vehicle.

ALLURA DECKING
Plycem is recalling 37,500 boards of Allura fiber-cement decking and fascia because they can deteriorate and crack. The boards can then break, resulting in a risk of injury from falling through. The recalled decking was sold in 12-foot lengths and came in two styles: a hidden fastener application and a direct...

February Is
THE BEST TIME TO BUY …

Humidifiers
Toward the end of the month, you’ll start to see good discounts on these and other winter items.

Mattresses
Presidents Day sales are a great time to get deals. See our ratings in the next issue.

Snow Blowers
If winter has been mild in your area, retailers will cut snow-blower prices to make room for lawn mowers.

WHAT 100 CALORIES LOOKS LIKE
Super Bowl Snacks
Right on the heels of holiday indulgence comes the No. 1 foodie festival of the football season. It’s hard to hold back when faced with a tempting array of hot wings, cheesy chips, and brews. To help, courtesy of Maxine Siegel, R.D., and the Consumer Reports food lab, is our portion guide to game-day noshes. Go to CR.org/supersnacks0218 for more 100-calorie comparisons.

Still Confused By …
How to Pick a Lightbulb

NOT THAT LONG AGO, when your 60-watt incandescents burned out, you simply bought another box of the same. But incandescents were phased out beginning in 2012. Now the bulbs du jour are energy-saving LEDs, which produce light color that ranges from warm yellow to cool blue-white. LEDs trim your electric bill, and many manufacturers claim their bulbs last 10,000 to 50,000 hours. If the bulb is used for 3 hours a day, that’s about nine to 46 years! But choosing the right bulb for your room is a little more complicated. Here, a primer to light your path to an easy decision.

**Lighting Facts** Per Bulb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Brightness</th>
<th>Lumens</th>
<th>Actual Energy Usage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brightness</strong></td>
<td>800</td>
<td>9 watts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated Yearly Energy Cost</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Based on 3 hours/day, 15 kWh</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cool</strong></td>
<td>2700 K</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life</strong></td>
<td>10 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Light Appearance</strong></td>
<td>Warm</td>
<td>Cool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Energy Used</strong></td>
<td>8.5 watts</td>
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</table>

Warm or Cool?
This is called “light appearance” on the label and is shown on a sliding scale from warm (or yellow) to cool (blue). The Kelvin (K) number ranges from 2200 to 6500. Lower K numbers tell you the light is more yellow. Higher numbers mean the light is whiter or bluer.

1½ Tbsp. Wish-Bone Chunky Blue Cheese Salad Dressing

1¼ Hebrew National Beef Franks in a Blanket

9 Lay’s Classic Potato Chips

1½ inches Subway Cold Cut Combo Sandwich

¼ of a Domino’s Large Hand Tossed Cheese Pizza

8 fl. oz. Budweiser

8½ fl. oz. Coca-Cola

*Frozen
Super Bowl Snacks

and the Consumer Reports food football season. It’s hard to hold more 100-calorie comparisons.

WHAT 100/uniA00 CALORIES

Right on the heels of holiday lab, is our portion guide to No. 1 foodie festival of the game-day noshes. Go to back when faced with a

LOOKS LIKE

*Frozen.

Chicken Wings

of a Domino’s Buffalo Style*

Large Hand

Coca-Cola

TGI Fridays

8/one.numr⁄/two.dnom fl. oz.

Pizza

Lay’s

1/two.numr⁄/three.dnom

9

PHOTOS: JOHN WALSH. ILLUSTRATIONS: CHRIS PHILPOT

RECALLS

HONDA ODYSSEY

Honda is recalling approximately 800,000 model-year 2011-2017 Odyssey minivans in the U.S. because the second-row seats may tip forward during braking if they’re not properly latched after being adjusted or reinstalled after removal, which could lead to passenger injuries.

What to do: As we went to press, Honda was still investigating the appropriate repair to help ensure proper latching and will notify owners when that free repair is available. Until then, go to owners. honda.com for proper latching instructions for the second-row seat. CR’s Auto Test Center director, Jennifer Stockburger, also advises, “Owners can double-check that the seats are secured by hitting the brakes hard—without anyone occupying the second row—to be sure they’re latched.”

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Plycem is recalling 37,500 boards of Allura fiber-cement decking and fascia because they can deteriorate and crack. The boards can then break, resulting in a risk of injury from falling through. The recalled decking was sold in 12-foot lengths and came in two styles: a hidden fastener application and a direct screw application. The recalled cement decking and fascia were sold in a natural wood color with a wood-grain texture at Home Depot as a special-order item, and at Trademark Exteriors and Kelseyville Lumber as stock items, from February 2014 through June 2017 for between $25 and $30 per board for the decking and about $25 to $40 per board for the fascia.

What to do: Stop using decks with the recalled boards and contact Plycem at 844-452-6787 to schedule a free repair or go to allurusa.com and click on Deck Recall.

HOVERBOARDS

A total of 13,900 hoverboards (also known as self-balancing scooters) from seven brands are being recalled because the lithium-ion battery pack can overheat and pose a risk of smoking, catching fire, and/or exploding. The brands are Drone Nerds, Go Wheels, iHoverspeed, iLive, Smart Balance Wheel, Sonic Smart Wheels, and Tech Drift. The products were sold in stores or online between August 2015 and March 2017. Prices ranged from $150 to $500.

What to do: Stop using the hoverboard. For details contact the company/importer: Drone Nerds at 888-785-7543; Go Wheels/Four Star Imports, 800-780-5231; iHoverspeed/Simplified Wireless, 833-220-1212; iLive/Digital Products International, 800-311-9263; Smart Balance Wheel/Salvage World, 888-726-9603; Sonic Smart Wheels/Dollar Mania, 844-333-4457; or Tech Drift, 800-491-0264.

BABY JACKETS

OshKosh is recalling about 38,000 Baby B’gosh quilted jackets because the snaps can detach and pose a choking hazard. The jackets were sold at stores nationwide and online between August 2017 and September 2017 for between $35 and $40.

What to do: Do not use the jacket on children. Call OshKosh at 800-692-4674, go to an OshKosh store, or go to oshkosh.com for a refund in the form of a gift card.

WIGGLE BALLS

Toys "R" Us is recalling about 29,700 Bruin Infant Wiggle Balls because the toy’s rubber knobs and plastic back can detach and pose a choking hazard. The toys were sold at Babies “R” Us and Toys "R" Us stores nationwide from June 2016 through January 2017 for about $13.

What to do: Stop using the balls and return them to the store for a full refund. For more details call Toys "R" Us at 800-869-7787 or go to toysrus.com.

INFANT MOTION SEATS

Fisher-Price is recalling about 63,000 Soothing Motions infant seats because the motor housing can overheat and pose a fire hazard. The seats were sold at stores nationwide and online from November 2015 through October 2017 for between $160 and $175.

What to do: Stop using the seat and contact Fisher-Price at 800-432-5437 or go to service.mattel.com and click Product Recalls & Safety Alerts to get a full refund.

CAKE KNIFE SETS

Macy’s is recalling about 18,900 Martha Stewart Collection Whiteware cake knife and server sets because the handles can break during use and pose a laceration hazard. The sets were sold at stores nationwide and online, and at military exchange stores, between January 2014 and July 2017. The price was about $25 at Macy’s and $15 at military exchange stores.

What to do: Stop using the set and return it to the place you purchased it for a full refund.

SLEEP NUMBER BEDS

Sleep Number is recalling about 11,900 Sleep Number 360 smart beds because the foot warmer under the mattress cover can short-circuit and overheat, posing a risk of burns. The beds were sold in Sleep Number stores and online from April 2017 to August 2017 for between $5,400 and $11,000.

What to do: Stop using the foot warmer and follow the owner’s manual instructions for disabling it. Call Sleep Number at 800-318-4432 or go to sleepnumber.com/ recall to arrange the installation of a free replacement foot warmer.

FEVER 2018

OFA ORG 17
Product Updates
The latest ratings from our labs

Amount of water the U.S. would save annually if inefficient toilets were replaced with water-saving models.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency.

The Best Seat in the House

Our expert buying advice and ratings will help you find the right toilet at the right price so that you can avoid flushing money down the drain.

Give It a Whirl
A dual-flush toilet allows you to flush with a reduced amount of water, typically 1.1 gallons.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency.
TOILETS. WHERE WOULD we be without them? Yet as many times as we rely on them throughout the day, we mostly take them for granted.

“Toilets are not at the top of most people’s minds,” says CR test engineer John Banta, who oversees toilet testing. “At least until they need to buy one during the course of a remodeling project or repair or replace one that’s stopped working.”

Banta says that two of the biggest mistakes people make when selecting a new toilet are shopping by brand and assuming that there’s a correlation between a toilet’s price and its performance. “The same brand can make models that are excellent and models that are only fair, and some of the least expensive models in our tests outperform some of the priciest. That’s why it’s important to refer to our ratings before you buy,” he says.

Here are some of the key things to consider when it’s time to replace your current commode.

1. Focus on the Flush
You’ll have two main decisions to make regarding flushing when choosing a toilet: gravity or pressure assist, and dual flush or single flush.

Conventional toilets operate with gravity flush (to learn how we evaluate flush effectiveness, see “How We Test Toilets,” on page 13). Toilets with pressure-assist flushing use water pressure to compress air in the tank that forces water into the bowl at high velocity, making a loud, telltale “whoosh” sound. “Toilets with pressure-assist flushing can be loud,” Banta says. “They clean the bowl well and can be less likely to clog than gravity-flush toilets, although there are some gravity-flush toilets that perform just as well.”

Still, Banta says, if you have kids in the house who throw a lot of toilet paper into the bowl, these can be a good choice. Because they announce that they’re being used, you may not want one if your bathroom is near the kitchen, dining room, or bedroom. You’ll also need to be sure you have adequate water pressure (at least 25 pounds per square inch) in your home.

Dual-flush toilets are outfitted with two buttons: One allows you to flush with a reduced amount of water (typically 1.1 gallons) to eliminate liquid waste; the other flushes with more water (usually 1.6 gallons) for bigger jobs.

“If you live in a place where water is expensive or you want to reduce the demand on your septic system, you might consider one of these,” Banta says. “You could also just pick a highly rated single-flush model that uses 1.28 gallons per flush or less.” (The Niagara Stealth, $149, an ultra-high-efficiency model that uses 0.8 gallon per flush, is currently being tested in our labs. Preliminary results are promising, but we need to complete testing before we make any determination.)

Some dual-flush models performed well in our tests; others lacked power and needed to be flushed twice to get the job done.

2. Select the Shape
Toilet bowls come in two basic shapes: round and elongated. In general, round bowls, which measure just under 17 inches front to back, are best suited for tighter quarters because they require less space. Measuring roughly 19 inches front to back, elongated bowls make for a more commodious commode. “These are popular with people who don’t want to feel squeezed on the seat,” Banta says. Compact
elongated models offer the extra room of elongated bowls and fit into the same space as a round bowl.

3. Consider Cleaning
Look closely at a standard toilet and you’ll see plenty of crevices and crannies where grime can collect. The trapway, for instance, is the bendy path that waste travels through to reach the piping in your house. Dust and dirt can collect along its contours, making it a chore to clean. Toilets with concealed or “skirted” trapways eliminate these contours, creating a smooth surface that’s easier to clean. Most toilets come in two pieces: a tank and a bowl that are bolted together, creating a seam between the two that can trap grime. One-piece toilets eliminate that seam but typically cost significantly more.

4. Get the Right Height
The rims of most standard toilets are about 14 or 15 inches above the floor. “Comfort height” toilets add a few inches of altitude with bowls that are closer to 17 to 19 inches high. The extra elevation can make sitting down and standing up easier, especially for people with limited mobility. Those added inches could also make it more difficult for small children (and less comfortable for diminutive adults) to use the toilet. Keep in mind who will be using a comfort-height model before you install it. “You could also just provide a little stool for the kids or for adults who have trouble getting up onto a higher seat,” Banta says. “It’s not like climbing up into a bunk bed.”

Royal Flushes
These top toilets have features you need and that CR recommends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Miser</th>
<th>Kohler</th>
<th>No-Clog Champ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>St. Thomas by Icera</strong>&lt;br&gt;Richmond ECO&lt;br&gt;$350</td>
<td><strong>Kohler</strong>&lt;br&gt;Highline Classic K-3493-0&lt;br&gt;$425</td>
<td><strong>Zurn</strong>&lt;br&gt;Z551-K&lt;br&gt;$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This toilet’s Overall Score is the highest of all the single-flush models we’ve tested. Though it uses just 1.28 gallons per flush, it was excellent at solid-waste removal and bowl cleaning in our tests and resists drainline clogs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Maintenance</th>
<th>Nice Price</th>
<th>Strong, Silent Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kohler</strong>&lt;br&gt;Highline Classic K-3493-0&lt;br&gt;$425</td>
<td><strong>Prelude</strong>&lt;br&gt;C43901-WH&lt;br&gt;$150</td>
<td><strong>Delta</strong>&lt;br&gt;Turner C43908-WH&lt;br&gt;$170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kohler is pricey but does an excellent job at cleaning the sides and front of the bowl, saving you from spending a lot of time on brush duty. It’s the second-highest-rated model of all toilets we’ve tested, but its pressure-assist flush is noisy, so you may not want to install it near a dining area.

This 1.6-gallons-per-flush model does a very good job removing waste and sending it farther along the drainline than many other models do, reducing the likelihood of clogs. It’s also quiet and has an elongated bowl and a height of almost 17 inches, meaning that most adults should find it comfortable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clean Machine</th>
<th>Strong, Silent Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Standard</strong>&lt;br&gt;Acticlean&lt;br&gt;$400</td>
<td><strong>Delta</strong>&lt;br&gt;Turner C43908-WH&lt;br&gt;$170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No need for a plumber to install the Acticlean: Everything you need to do the job yourself comes in the box. It’s quiet, uses just 1.28 gallons per flush, and has a compartment for cleaning-solution cartridges that the company says will last up to 9 weeks. (We did not test the performance of the cleaning solution.)

Though it’s one of the least expensive toilets we’ve tested, the Prelude rated Very Good for saving water and removing solid waste and Excellent for noise and bowl-cleaning capability. It packs in a lot of performance at a very pleasing price.

The 1.28-gallons-per-flush Turner saves on water (it’s WaterSense certified, indicating that it meets Environmental Protection Agency standards for water efficiency) and has one of the quietest flushes we’ve tested. It comes with a nonslam lid to ensure quiet operation from beginning to end.
A new alternative to traditional toilets, wall-mounted models appear to hover above the floor, floating untethered to any bulky tank. The tank and mechanics are hidden behind the wall, cradled in a cast-iron or steel carrier installed between two studs to provide support. Apart from the aesthetic appeal, wall-mounted toilets offer practical solutions to a number of problems. For instance, you can mop right under them, and they can be installed at any rim height between 15 and 26 inches, depending on the model you choose. But perhaps their biggest selling point is that they save space. “These toilets can meet building-code clearances where floor-mounted toilets might not,” says John Banta, the test engineer who oversees Consumer Reports’ toilet tests. In some municipalities, building codes require at least 21 inches in front of the toilet. Wall-mounted models can save as much as 10 inches by moving the tank into the wall.

All of this convenience comes at a price: Expect to pay several hundred dollars more for this type of fixture, not counting the cost of professional installation. “It could easily cost three times more to buy and install a wall-mounted toilet than a conventional model,” Banta says, adding that this is not a DIY project. “If there’s a leak, it’s going to be in the wall and it could take a while before you notice anything’s wrong. You definitely want a professional to install the toilet to make sure everything is done correctly,” Banta says.

At a minimum, installing a wall-mounted toilet requires opening a wall, rerouting the waste pipe, and—if you plan to keep the same flooring—patching the tile under your old toilet. Because the installation requires intensive reconstruction, it makes sense to have the work done during a renovation, Banta says.

What happens if the flushing mechanism gets stuck or there’s some other problem in the tank? The panel that houses the flush button pops off the wall to reveal an access to the tank that allows you or a plumber to reach inside to fix whatever’s not working.
### Ratings

**Game of Thrones** Full ratings for single-flush, dual-flush, and wall-mounted toilets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Test Results</th>
<th>Features</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>St. Thomas by Icera Richmond ECO (6123.218, 6125.028)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>$350</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Kohler Highline Classic K-3493-0</td>
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<td>Test Results</td>
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<td>Noise</td>
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**SINGLE-FLUSH TOILETS Continued**

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**DUAL-FLUSH TOILETS**

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<td>Noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Toto Aquia CT418FG#01 with Toto DuoFit In-Wall Tank System WT151M/WT152M</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td>Duravit Starck 3 22260/90092 with Geberit 111 335.5 UP3 20 tank</td>
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<td>$700</td>
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<td>EXCELNT</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Kohler Veil K-6299 with Kohler K-6284-NA In-Wall Tank and Carrier System</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>$900</td>
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**WALL-MOUNTED TOILETS**

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<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Solid waste removal</td>
<td>Noise</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**HOW WE TEST:** The Overall Score is based on solid-waste removal, bowl cleaning at 35 pounds per square inch of water pressure, and noise. Solid-waste removal is the ability to move simulated waste through the bowl and trap. Noise is flush quietness without the seat. Bowl cleaning is how well flushing cleaned the bowl’s front and sides. Type is gravity-feed or pressure-assist. Resists soil and odor indicates a large water surface, which helps minimize soil and odor. Gallons per flush is the amount of water used per flush.
How to Pay Less for Practically Anything

From car insurance to utility bills, from organic food to prescription drugs, our expert insights and advice will help you shell out less money for a huge variety of products and services. And while you’re at it, learn how to make the things you already own last longer.
Your Auto Dollars

3 Ways to Pay Less for Car Insurance

1. **Break up with your insurer.** Many consumers stay wedded to their car insurance company for decades. But comparison shopping among multiple insurers every three years or so can result in lower premiums. Cover lots of ground fast at thezebra.com, which offers estimates from 18 to 35 insurers, depending on your state.

2. **Raise your collision/comprehensive deductible.** A two-car family could chop $500 off its annual premium by raising its collision deductible to $500, up from zero, according to our recent analysis of billions of premiums nationwide. Slice off an additional $141 with a $1,000 deductible.

3. **Make your teens crack the books.** Adding a new teen driver to your policy can almost double your premium. But students under age 25 who show proof of good academic performance can earn significant discounts, especially in California, Louisiana, and Minnesota.

Steer Clear of In-Car Navigation Systems

You could save a good deal of money—hundreds, even thousands of dollars—on your next new car or truck by saying no thanks to the built-in navigation option. That’s because one of the best tools for finding your way around—your phone—is already in your pocket, and more automakers are integrating Android Auto and Apple CarPlay software into their vehicles. You connect your phone with a USB cord to your car’s infotainment system, and driving-appropriate apps appear on the car’s infotainment screen. In addition to navigation, you can receive phone calls, see texts, and select music playlists. (For safety’s sake, potentially distracting apps such as Facebook and Instagram won’t work.)

Needless New-Car Upsells

When you’re finalizing a new-car purchase, the dealer is likely to suggest add-ons that may seem smart but are a waste of money, based on our experience and testing, including:

- **VIN etching.** Dealers in some states have to tell you that you qualify for an insurance discount if you etch the vehicle identification number (VIN) into your car’s windshield as an anti-theft measure, and many charge about $200 for this. Say no. Etching can usually be done less expensively by an independent mechanic, or you can do it yourself for about $20 using an auto engraving kit.

- **Fabric protection.** At around $400, this is the most expensive Scotchgard treatment your seats will ever see. For the same protection, spend a few bucks on a can of fabric protector and spray it on yourself.

- **Paint sealant.** This roughly $600 add-on is little more than an overpriced liquid wax—the same kind you can buy from an auto-supply store for around $10 and apply yourself.

- **Rustproofing/undercoating.** Today’s vehicles are manufactured with corrosion protection, making this additional treatment, which can cost about $800, superfluous.

- **Extended warranty.** We’ve found that, on average, those who purchased an extended warranty spent hundreds more for the coverage than they saved in repair costs.

Negotiate Tire Prices

If you assume you have to pay sticker price on tires, you’re probably paying too much. A CR survey in 2016 found that shoppers who negotiated tire prices were successful almost three-quarters of the time and saved a median of $22 per tire. In particular, consumers who shopped at Discount Tire, Firestone Complete Auto Care, and Tires Plus reported success rates of 80 percent or greater when negotiating. Successful hagglers at car dealerships saved even more, about $28 per tire. Negotiators were much less successful at Costco, where only 33 percent of customers who negotiated were successful.
Haggling Works

Want a lower price? Just go online and ask for one.

When you're shopping online for a good deal on an espresso maker, a TV, or just about anything else, don't forget this money-saving move: Ask for a better price.

In fact, price haggling can work even better online than in a physical store. In a recent CR survey of more than 56,000 subscribers reporting on 88,021 online and in-store electronic shopping transactions, we found an impressive success rate among shoppers who tried to talk down the price. Online hagglers outperformed those who negotiated face-to-face, getting a sweeter deal 69 vs. 59 percent of the time.

To strike your own bargain, first poke around online to make sure you know what kinds of deals are out there. Then use the live chat feature or call a customer-service rep. “You want to be able to say something like, 'I'm looking for a good deal. If you can take 10 percent off the price, I'll buy it right now,’” says Michael Wheeler, who teaches at Harvard Business School and is the author of “The Art of Negotiation: How to Improvise Agreement in a Chaotic World” (Simon & Schuster, 2013).

Even if the customer-service rep can’t or won’t offer a better price, you may be able to get an extended warranty, free shipping, or other incentives.

Your Food Dollars

5 Ways to Save on Organic

Organic food is generally more expensive than conventional, because of differences in production and handling, according to the Department of Agriculture. Still, it is possible to buy organic more cheaply.

1. **Buy organic when it matters.** Choosing organic reduces your exposure to potentially harmful pesticides, and protects farmers as well as the environment.

Consumer Reports recommends opting for organic for fruits and veggies that have the highest pesticide residues. That includes carrots, cranberries, green beans, hot peppers, nectarines, peaches, tangerines, strawberries, sweet bell peppers, and sweet potatoes. An advantage to buying organic meat and poultry is that the animals were raised without antibiotics.

2. **Compare prices.** It's possible to find organic products for the same price as conventional ones—and occasionally for less. For example, at Costco, 2-pound containers of conventional Sabra Hummus and organic Hannah Hommus are each $5.99. In the coffee aisle, you can get 2 pounds of Peet’s Coffee Major Dickason’s Blend—not organic—for $14.69. But 2½ pounds of Highland Reserve Organic Peru Coffee costs $10.99.

3. **Seek out store brands.** According to the market research firm Nielsen, a market basket of selected organic store-label products costs 18 percent less than the comparable brand-name versions. For example, at Whole Foods recently, Santa Cruz Organic Applesauce cost $5.39 for 23 ounces, and Whole Foods’ store brand, 365 Organic Applesauce, was $2.79 for 24 ounces, or 50 percent less.

4. **Look in the freezer case.** Frozen organic vegetables may actually be cheaper than fresh, and the nutritional quality is similar. For example, at a local store a 10-ounce package of Nature’s Promise Organic fresh green beans is $3.99 and a 16-ounce package of the same brand’s organic frozen green beans is $1.99.

5. **Check the weight.** When organic produce is sold pre-packaged at a set price rather than by the pound, it’s worth taking the time to weigh a few packages. We’ve found that the amount in the package may exceed the weight listed.

(Note: Prices are based on items purchased at grocery stores near our Yonkers, N.Y., offices.)
5 Ways to Save on Your Medications

1. **Take advantage of drugstore discounts.** Stores such as Kmart, Sam’s Club, and Walmart offer hundreds of common generic drugs at very low prices—sometimes as low as $4 to $10—which could be less than your insurance co-pay. Ask the pharmacist whether the store has a discount program. Note: Money spent on meds purchased using these discount programs doesn’t go toward your insurance deductible.

2. **Beware pricey combo drugs.** When the patent on a drug nears its end, some manufacturers reformulate the medication into something “new” they can price higher than the generic equivalent. For example, the expensive migraine drug Treximet is actually a combination of two older, low-cost generic drugs: sumatriptan and naproxen. Nine tablets of 85-500 mg Treximet cost $695 at healthwarehouse.com. But the same website offers nine 100 mg tablets of sumatriptan for less than $16 and nine 500 mg naproxen tablets for about $5. That’s a savings of $674.

3. **Ask your doctor: “How much does this drug cost?”** A CR poll of 200 doctors in 2016 found that they generally don’t discuss the cost of a drug with their patients. But if price is an object for you and you let your doctor know that, he or she can look up the drug’s cost and, if necessary, help you find a more affordable alternative, such as the medication’s generic equivalent.

4. **Don’t assume using your insurance at the pharmacy is the cheapest.** A survey of pharmacists by the National Community Pharmacists Association found that many knew of instances of “clawbacks”—when the pharmacy charge you is more than the pharmacy’s normal retail price. Think your pharmacist will flag that when it happens? Not necessarily. Some pharmacists can tell you about lower prices only if you ask first.

5. **Ask your doctor whether you can stop taking any of your meds.** A 2017 CR national survey shows that when patients asked their healthcare providers whether they can stop taking one or more of their prescription medications, in 71 percent of the cases the doctor eliminated at least one drug.

Shop Your Doctors and Treatments

Because healthcare costs have risen, most of us are paying higher premiums, deductibles, and co-pays. But only 3 percent of us have tried to trim what we contribute out of pocket by comparison shopping our healthcare—i.e., finding out in advance what different doctors charge for, say, an MRI or knee replacement surgery. One reason: Consumers don’t know that doctors’ fee information is easy to find using the “cost-estimator” tools on most health insurance websites. You can also use third-party sites, such as HealthcareBluebook.com, FAIRHealthConsumer.org, Guroo.com, and Amino.com.
Know What’s Free
Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, nearly all of us who have insurance are entitled to certain preventive services free of charge, as long as we stay in our insurance network. What you can get for no cost may surprise you: blood pressure testing, breast-feeding support, colonoscopies, depression screening, nutrition counseling, and vaccinations. Check out the full list of eligible services at healthcare.gov.

Leverage Tax Breaks
Another way to ease the pain of high out-of-pocket medical costs is to put money into a flexible spending account (FSA) or a health savings account (HSA). Both allow you to set aside tax-free dollars to cover costs that your insurance doesn’t. Note that FSAs are offered only if you have employer-based insurance, and HSAs are available only to those in a high-deductible plan. It’s smart to contribute the maximum if you can afford it: for FSAs, up to $2,650 a year; for HSAs, up to $3,450 annually for individuals and $6,900 for families.

Get Care on the Calendar
Keep track of your spending against your annual deductible, which resets every year. If you expect you’ll need an expensive procedure that will get you close to or over your deductible, schedule it early in the year if you can. That way, if you need more care later in the year, your insurance will kick in. And don’t put off making doctor appointments. Make sure your physician has room in his or her schedule before Jan. 1, when your deductible resets.

3 Ways to Get a Good Deal on Appliances
Smart shoppers know to look for big discounts on large appliances on holiday weekends. But if that timing doesn’t work for you, here are other ways to find deals:
1. Manufacturer offers and rebates. Check the websites of manufacturers and retailers for special offers and rebates, then check our ratings on those appliances. The offers typically apply to specific models purchased within certain time frames, and if there’s a rebate, you’ll need to mail it in or submit it online by the deadline that’s spelled out. Recently, GE offered up to $1,000 in savings on paired appliances. One offer even included a free dishwasher if you bought three other qualifying appliances.
2. Price matches. Compare price-match policies of your favorite retailers. Although only about 3 in 10 Americans say they have requested a discount to match the price of another store (based on a 2017 CR survey of 1,033 respondents), this is a great way to get a better deal. Best Buy, for example, matches the prices of local competition and major online retailers, such as Amazon. Home Depot matches the competitor’s price for online purchases. For in-store buys, Home Depot will beat the competitor’s price by 10 percent.
Your **Personal Finance** Dollars

### Do Your Own Taxes

You'll pay about $180 on average to have a professional prepare a federal Form 1040 with a standard deduction and a state return, says the National Society of Accountants. Itemizers pay an average of almost $275 for a federal return and a state filing. So if you have a few hours and a bit of patience, consider doing your own taxes.

All the major do-it-yourself tax-prep brands—H&R Block, TaxAct, TaxSlayer, and TurboTax—have free versions for people filing simple, 1040-EZ federal forms; all but TaxSlayer have free prep and filing of 1040-A forms, too. Simple state forms are also free. For people with somewhat more complex tax situations, prices range from about $22 to $150 to prepare a federal form. State forms start at around $27.

Our comparisons of the online and app versions of H&R Block, TaxAct, and TurboTax found that each can ably handle itemized returns that aren't too complex. Each brand has its benefits and limitations. TaxAct Plus Online provides step-by-step guidance for investors, for example; H&R Block Deluxe and TurboTax Deluxe require you to upgrade for that feature. If you're self-employed and need to fill out Schedule C, all three require you to upgrade.

### Save on Investing Costs

For anyone who wants investing help, it's easier than ever to get advice at low cost—that is, if you're willing to trust a computer to manage your portfolio.

Traditionally, investors have had to pay high fees for financial planning and asset management. Typically, the median annual fee is 1 percent of your investing portfolio, according to the 2017 Inside Information Advisory Fees Survey. So if you have a $500,000 portfolio, you would give up $5,000 to your financial adviser.

But in recent years a new option has emerged: robo-advisers, which use computer algorithms to manage your portfolio, with results that can be as good as or better than what a human adviser delivers. Plus, their fees are lower, typically...
ranging from 0.15 percent to 0.5 percent annually. Betterment, for one, charges annual fees of just 0.25 percent to 0.4 percent. At Wealthfront, accounts pay no fees for the first $10,000; larger accounts pay 0.25 percent. Increasingly, traditional investment firms, including Schwab and Vanguard, are offering their own robo services, or hybrid versions that include phone access to financial advisers.

Robo-advisers typically invest your money in low-cost index funds or exchange-traded funds (ETFs). A typical stock index ETF might cost you just 0.04 percent yearly. By contrast, the average annual cost of an actively managed stock fund is 1.17 percent, according to Morningstar Direct. That cost advantage can help you hang on to more of your savings.

Never Pay Another ATM Fee

You can avoid ATMs altogether by taking the cash-back option when you pay for purchases using your debit card at many supermarkets, drugstores, and other retailers. Even better: Slash the amount of cash you need in the first place. You can do this electronically using the Zelle person-to-person (P2P) network, which lets you send cash from your bank account to another person’s. This free feature is handy if you need to reimburse a friend for your half of the tab for lunch, say, or want to spot the babysitter a few bucks to pick up some groceries. Zelle is already built into the mobile banking apps of major financial institutions, including Bank of America, Chase, and Wells Fargo, and the money typically transfers in minutes, once the sender and recipient have enrolled.

Your Technology Dollars

Fire Your Cable Company

Cutting the cord has been a holy grail for consumers for years. That’s when you keep your internet service but cancel the TV package, perhaps subbing in online streaming services, such as Amazon Prime and Netflix, for entertainment.

But in the past, doing that could have meant giving up on familiar channels, such as NBC, FOX, and HGTV. No longer. Newer internet TV services, such as DirecTV Now, Hulu with Live TV, and Sling, include conventional channels in their mix.

For instance, streaming service DirecTV Now charges $35 per month for a bucket of more than 60 channels. There are also higher-priced options that offer more, or you can add some premium channels, such as HBO, for just $5 to $8 per month.

Keep in mind: All services offer different mixes of channels and pricing. And these services don’t have all of their channels available in all markets. (We track the offers at CR.org/streamingguide0218.)

Don’t Overpay for Cellular Data

Unlimited data plans can cost just $60 to $85 for a single line, depending on the carrier and such factors as whether you want HD-quality video. But the takeaway is this: An unlimited data plan may be cheaper than whatever older plan you’re still using, and may be cheaper than paying for each line’s data individually. For instance, last fall a 10GB plan from AT&T was $100 for a single line, $5 more than the company’s Unlimited Plus option for one line. On the other hand, if you don’t use much data, don’t pay for it. You can get unlimited voice time and 1GB of data for just $30 at Consumer Cellular (less if you’re an AARP member). And this carrier, along with Ting, just happens to be CR’s highest-rated traditional cell-service provider, based on our summer 2016 subscriber survey.

Buy, Don’t Rent Your Router

If you’re still paying rental fees for your modem or router, you could be losing money. Leasing a cable-company router or modem generally sets consumers back $5 to $10 per month—or about $60 to $120 a year on top of the fees you pay for your internet service. Buy the equipment, and you’ll be ahead within a year or two. Just make sure any modem/router combination you buy is compatible with your service. Most traditional modems work with cable networks but not with fiber-optic networks, such as Verizon Fios.
How to Make 6 Major Appliances Last Longer

Appliances suffer from misuse and lack of maintenance. Here's what to do to get the most out of your machines.

### Dishwashers
When loading, make sure the silverware and dishes are placed so that they don’t catch the spray arms and damage them. If your dishwasher has a manual-clean filter, clean it regularly according to the manufacturer’s instructions to avoid food buildup and odors.

On a smoothtop, place heavy pots and pans gently and never drag them from one element to another. For gas cooktop burners, clean food particles from between the slots in the burner head to ensure an even flame, and use a needle or straight pin to carefully clean a clogged burner ignition port. Keep the oven free of food buildup by periodically using the self-cleaning feature or cleaning manually, per the manufacturer’s instructions.

### Refrigerators
Don’t pack it too full—so that air can circulate freely and the compressor doesn’t have to work overtime. Clean the compressor coils every few months. Check your owner’s manual for the coils’ location, then vacuum them with a soft-bristle brush attachment. Wipe door gaskets with mild detergent and water, not bleach. Maintain a stainless finish by using dish detergent, water, and a sponge, or use a stainless cleaner recommended by the manufacturer.

### Washers
At least once a year, remove grit from the screens where the hoses attach to the washer. Don’t stuff the washer beyond its manufacturer-recommended capacity. Make sure the machine sits on a level and well-supported subfloor to prevent excessive vibration. And to keep the washer from working harder than it has to, heed the manufacturer’s instructions about how much detergent to use.

### Dryers
Clean the lint filter after each use to keep air flowing freely. Check the exhaust duct periodically, especially if you find that the dryer isn’t sufficiently heating up or takes longer than usual to dry a load. Clean the duct once a year to keep it from clogging with lint, which is a fire hazard. And if you use dryer sheets, clean the moisture sensor strips inside the dryer with a little rubbing alcohol to remove film buildup, which hurts performance.

### Vacuums
Change the vacuum bag and clean the filters as needed. Avoid vacuuming up sharp or large objects, which can clog or damage a vac’s components, and running over the cord, which can fray and pose an electric-shock hazard. Whether you have a bagged or bagless vacuum, don’t let the bag or bin get filled to the brim, which makes the motor work harder. A motorized brush tangled with hair also adds stress to the motor, so keep it clean.
1. CAR SAFETY FEATURES. The systems that can help you prevent a car crash—or survive one—are worth every penny. Buy as many car safety features as you can afford, especially forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking, even if it means forgoing the sunroof or leather seats you have your heart set on. Better yet, choose a model that has safety features as standard. (Online subscribers can find complete car ratings at CR.org/cars.)

2. SUNSCREEN. Though you can use CR’s ratings to find a high-performing inexpensive product (at CR.org/cro/sunscreens), you shouldn’t try to save money by using only a tiny amount. To properly cover your body, you need to use a shot-glassful every 2 hours that you’re in the sun.

3. VACCINES. Last year’s flu vaccine won’t necessarily protect you from this year’s flu. And when it comes to vaccines that call for multiple doses, such as the MMR for kids, optimal protection requires all doses be given. Don’t skimp on the boosters that are recommended for adults during outbreaks, either—the protection from some vaccines wears off over time. Also, adults should get a tetanus booster every 10 years. Good news: All of these are covered by most insurance plans or are available for very little cost at your local drugstore.

4. CAR INSURANCE. Never buy a policy that just meets the minimum liability limits required by your state, because these may be insufficient to cover the cost of a major accident and typically are far below the standard 100/300/100 (which pays for bodily injury up to $100,000 per person and $300,000 per accident, and property damage up to $100,000). Don’t skip uninsured/underinsured motorist protection, either. You’ll need this if you’re in an accident caused by an uninsured driver.

5. INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR PAINT. CR’s proprietary paint tests (go to CR.org/cro/paints) continue to find that economy grades of interior paint don’t perform well overall, and you may need to apply three or four coats to cover dark colors. You also don’t have to buy ultra-premium paints—just avoid the bottom of the barrel, so to speak. Economy exterior paints don’t weather as well as top-of-the-line products from the same brand, so you’ll be back on that ladder sooner than you imagined.

6. DIY IDENTITY PROTECTION. Pay the fee (up to $10 per credit bureau, depending on your state) to freeze your credit report at each of the big three credit bureaus—Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. This is one of the best ways to lock out identity thieves who want to open new credit in your name.

7. CHARGING CORDS. It’s worth protecting your expensive phone by using a decent power cord. Cheap cords may not have undergone stringent testing by Underwriters Laboratories (UL), a leading safety testing organization whose logo you see on many electronic devices. Those cheap cords could damage your device (while voiding the warranty) and even, on rare occasions, cause a fire.

8. HOME INSURANCE. Don’t buy less costly, “actual cash value” homeowners insurance to cover your home’s contents. Always get replacement-cost coverage. In the event you were to make a claim, an actual-cash-value policy would reimburse you only for your belongings’ depreciated value, which probably wouldn’t be enough to cover the costs of replacing everything. (By default, most homeowners policies cover the replacement value of your home’s structure.)
Pie in the Sky

Can a frozen pizza taste good and still be reasonably healthy? Just in time for the big game, we rate 26 to see whether you can pick one that scores.

by Sally Wadyka

NEXT TO THANKSGIVING, Super Bowl Sunday is the biggest eating day of the year. And what finds its way onto many party menus? Pizza. Of course, it’s pretty popular every other day, too. One in 8 Americans has a slice (or two or three) on any given day. And according to the market research firm Mintel, much of that is frozen: 37 percent of us eat frozen pizza two to three times per month. Our recent tests of 26 cheese and vegetable pies show that opting for a frozen one is actually a pretty good plan.

Continued on page 36
Note: Check the charts on pages 38 and 39 for the actual serving size for each of the pizzas.

HOW TO MAKE A MORE PERFECT PIE

You’ll get the best results from a frozen pizza if you follow these tips:

1. **Preheat the oven.** It’s key to good browning and crisping. Don’t shortcut this step.

2. **Don’t thaw the pie.** Unless the directions on the box specifically tell you to do so, put the frozen pie directly into the preheated oven.

3. **Slide it on an oven rack.** This makes for a crispier crust. The rack should be positioned in the center of the oven.

4. **Add your own veggies or fresh herbs.** Baby spinach, mushrooms, onions, peppers, and sliced tomatoes are good choices, but you can use whatever you like. Sauté or roast the veggies lightly to remove some of the water so your pie won’t get soggy during baking. Finish with fresh herbs such as basil or oregano. These additions not only improve the nutritional content but also will help give a frozen pie a fresher taste.
**Frozen Gets a Makeover**

Frozen pies have always been dogged by a reputation for being highly processed and not so tasty. Mintel’s research shows that more than half of frozen-pizza buyers said they’d buy a pie more often if it weren’t so processed, and 59 percent said they’d buy more if they had more premium ingredients. That’s led frozen-pizza manufacturers to try to improve their product by cutting out preservatives and artificial flavors, lowering the sodium content, and making crusts with whole grains. “There are a lot more options now in frozen pizzas, with ‘clean’ ingredient lists that look more like what I would make at home if I started from scratch,” says Rachel Cheatham, Ph.D., an adjunct assistant professor of nutrition and food marketing at Tufts University.

Our test results show that these efforts are making a difference. About half of the pizzas earned a Very Good rating for taste. Nutrition was a bit trickier. Although we found several pies that—in the realm of pizza—are reasonably nutritious choices, you’d still be hard-pressed to call any of them health food. We didn’t find any that we could give our highest marks to, mostly because the fiber, saturated fat, and sodium counts dragged down the nutrition scores.

“Many of the cheese pizzas and all of the veggie ones received a Good rating for nutrition, with the veggie pizzas tending to have more fiber, less saturated fat, and a little less sodium than the cheese pizzas,” says Ellen Klosz, a Consumer Reports nutritionist. Three of the veggie pies we tested—California Pizza Kitchen Spinach and Artichoke Crispy Thin Crust, Trader Giotto’s Organic Roasted Vegetable, and Dr. Oetker Virtuoso Thin + Crispy Crust Vegetable Medley—scored the only Very Good overall ratings of the bunch.

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**Easy Bake Ovens**

You don’t have to turn on your oven to heat up a frozen pizza. These countertop toaster ovens will do a dandy job.

The smaller interior of a toaster oven means it will take less time to reach the desired baking temperature than if you used a regular oven, so you can go from freezer to plate faster. To fit a typical frozen pie, you’ll need a toaster oven with a depth of at least 12 inches, such as the two below. The Breville was tops in our testing, but the Krups scored well for less than half the price.

**Breville** Smart Oven Pro BOV845BSS, $270

**Krups** DeLuxe Convection Toaster OK710D51, $120

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**The Role of Toppings and Crust**

Whether you opt for frozen or takeout, chowing down on a couple of slices can mean taking in nearly 750 calories and an alarming 1,600 mg of sodium. (U.S. dietary guidelines call for less than 2,300 mg per day.) And depending on your choice of toppings, pizza can also pack a significant amount of saturated fat. We picked plain cheese and vegetable pizzas to test, knowing that those with meat toppings would have rated worse on the nutrition front. “Losing the meat and adding veggies is a good way to make pizza into a healthier meal,” says Lauri Wright, R.D., Ph.D., an assistant professor of nutrition and dietetics at the University of North Florida. “You’ll get more fiber, more vitamins and nutrients, and less sodium and fat.”

When trying to pick a healthier pizza, consider a vegetable pie. “The veggie pies we tested were for the most part lower in saturated fat than the cheese pizzas,” Klosz says. Thin crust can sometimes save you some calories, but don’t automatically assume that a thin-crust pie is a better choice. For example, Red Baron Thin & Crispy Crust Five Cheese Pizza is similar in calories and fat to the Tombstone Original 5 Cheese Pizza, and has considerably more sodium.

Whole-grain crusts aren’t easy to find but they’re worth seeking out. “If you go for one made with whole grains, you can double the fiber,” Wright says. In our testing, for example, Freschetta Artisan Crust Four Cheese Pizza had a multigrain crust and 4 grams of fiber per serving. Most of the other cheese pizzas had 1 to 2 grams.

**Why Size Matters**

“We found that serving sizes for these frozen pizzas varied quite a bit,” Klosz says. “Sometimes it’s one-third of a pie, sometimes a quarter. And for one of the thin-crust pies we tested (American Flatbread...
WHILE NONE of the frozen pizzas we tested are nutritional superstars, many are better choices compared with what’s on the menu at popular takeout chains. Thick crusts (made only with refined white flour), crusts stuffed with cheese, and toppings that include several types of processed meat add up to pizzas that are nutritionally on a par with a double cheeseburger. In some cases, a single slice can deliver nearly half of the recommended daily allowance for sodium.

### Takeout Pizza That Packs a Punch
Curious to know which are some of the unhealthiest pies that money can buy? Here are some heavyweights from the chain restaurants Pizza Hut, Domino’s Pizza, Papa John’s, and Little Caesars.

Three Cheese Pizza), a single serving was half the pizza.” So even though calories per serving averaged about 300, you could easily consume two to three times that if you don’t pay attention to serving size. If your favorite frozen pizza is higher in calories, fat, or sodium than you’d like, consider having just a slice and rounding out your meal with a big salad.

#### Food Flashback
A thorough examination of a product’s ingredients has long been part of CR’s food-testing rigor. In this photo from our June 1972 issue, a technician uses tweezers and a magnifying glass to remove the toppings from frozen pizzas for weighing.

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**Note:** Nutrition information is for one slice of a large pizza.
Ratings  Pizza Party A frozen pizza that can compete with takeout is crispy on the bottom but moist and chewy on the top. The sauce should taste fresh and the cheese should be flavorful plus have stretch and a little chewiness.

<table>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Flatbread Tomato Sauce &amp; Three Cheese Pizza</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>½ pizza</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very thin whole-grain crust and a blend of flavorful cheeses. Sauce has a slight fresh-tomato taste and olive oil and wine flavors, but it's sparse. Edges are slightly tough and crunchy.</td>
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<td>Amy's Cheese Pizza</td>
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<td>Tender crust topped with mozzarella and a fresh-tasting tomato sauce with flavors of olive oil, garlic, and Italian spices.</td>
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<td>DiGiorno Original Rising Crust Four Cheese Pizza</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>½ pizza</td>
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<td>Thick, breadlike crust with cornmeal crunch and a yeasty flavor. Flavorful blend of Italian cheeses. Plentiful sauce with big tomato and slight fennel flavors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Pizza Kitchen Four Cheese Crispy Thin Crust Pizza</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>½ pizza</td>
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<td>Thin crust topped with smoked Gouda and other cheeses. Fresh-tasting tomato sauce flavored with garlic and Italian spices, but a little light on the amount.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simply Balanced (Target) Organic Three Cheese Pizza</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>½ pizza</td>
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<td>Thin, crispy, somewhat bland crust with charred edges and a smoky note reminiscent of a brick-oven pie. Topped with a unique blend of sharp cheeses.</td>
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<td>Trader Giotto's (Trader Joe's) Pizza 4 Formaggi</td>
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<td>Thin, crispy, brick-oven-style crust. Topped with lots of stretchy Edam and Italian cheeses (no mozzarella) that add sharp flavors. Sauce is seasoned with oregano.</td>
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<td>Freschetta Artisan Four Cheese Pizza</td>
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<td>Soft, breadlike whole-grain crust. The slightly sweet sauce with slight fennel flavor somewhat overpowers the blend of Italian cheeses. Moderate heat.</td>
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<td>Amy's Gluten Free Cheese Pizza</td>
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<td>Crust has a soft, slightly crumbly texture, like cornbread. Topped with sparse, mild mozzarella cheese and fresh-tasting sauce.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newman's Own Thin &amp; Crispy Pizza Four Cheese</td>
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<td>Thin, crispy crust with lots of flavorful cheese and sparse, mild tomato sauce. Garlicky and a bit salty, with slight heat.</td>
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<td>Freschetta Naturally Rising Crust 4 Cheese Medley Pizza</td>
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<td>Thick, breadlike crust topped with a blend of Italian cheeses. Plentiful sauce heavily seasoned with Italian spices, garlic, and slight fennel. Has some heat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods) Thin Crust Four Cheese Pizza</td>
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<td>½ pizza</td>
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<td>Has a soft white-bread crust. Plentiful cheese and Italian spices. Slight heat and big dehydrated-garlic flavor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tombstone Original 5 Cheese Pizza</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>½ pizza</td>
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<td>Somewhat bland, white-bread-style crust topped with plentiful cheese. Has a slightly sour tomato sauce with slight heat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freschetta Gluten Free 4 Cheese Medley Pizza</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>½ pizza</td>
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<td>Crust is crispy and thinner than most and topped with lots of Italian cheeses with a “browned” flavor. But the crust has a very chewy texture that detracts overall.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Against the Grain Three Cheese Gluten Free Pizza</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cheddar-cheese crust is crispy on the outside and somewhat doughy on the inside. Lots of mozzarella and other Italian cheeses. Sauce tastes fresh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Overall Score is a combination of the two. The Nutrition score is based on energy density (calories per gram), total fat, saturated fat, fiber, sugars, sodium, and other influential nutrients. Extra weighting is given for extra positive or negative, respectively, to the pizza. Sensory scores are based on the results of a blind tasting by a trained sensory panel.

**How We Test:** CR’s nutrition and food-testing team rated frozen pizzas for nutrition and taste.
Get More TV for Less

Holiday sales are over, but the deals aren’t gone for good. The lead-up to the Super Bowl is another great time to get a low price on a high-performing TV. Here are five expert tips for finding a set you’ll love.

by James K. Willcox
1. Buy a Leftover 2017 Model
You’ll save money, and you won’t be missing out on any hot new features. That’s because 2018 sets aren’t likely to offer important technologies that weren’t already built into 2017 models, especially larger TVs from major brands.

The reason to buy a 2017 TV is, of course, the discounts. An analysis we did with retail market research firm Gap Intelligence shows that after TVs are introduced early in the year, the prices tend to drop steadily as the months tick by before nose-diving in advance of Black Friday.

After the holidays, prices tick up but then plunge again in the two weeks leading up to the Super Bowl (that’s Feb. 4 this year) as retailers try to make room for the next year’s models.

“Last year we saw a 55-inch Samsung TV—the UN55KU6300—selling as low as $699 in late January,” says Deirdre Kennedy, senior analyst at Gap Intelligence. “It had started out at $899 the previous spring.”

2. Go Big and Go Home
It used to require some math to figure out which size TV to buy for a particular room. With older high-definition sets, for instance, it was best to sit around 8 feet back from a 60-inch set to really enjoy the quality of the picture.

No longer. Today’s 4K (also called Ultra High Definition, or UHD) TVs have very fine picture detail, and you can go as big, and sit as close, as you like without the image beginning to look coarse, as it could in previous-generation 1080p sets.

But that doesn’t mean a bigger set is always better. If your sofa is too close to a huge set, it might be difficult to take in the whole picture at once, or the set might just seem to overpower the room. Screen size is a matter of personal preference. It’s a good idea to go to a store, stand back from the TVs about as far as you’d sit at home, and see which screen size feels comfortable.

3. Embrace the World of 4K
The benefit of 4K televisions is that they can show sharper, more detailed images than 1080p TVs—as long as you’re watching a 4K video, that is.

And that’s one problem with 4K: Cable TV providers aren’t transmitting shows at this resolution yet. Satellite TV companies do have some 4K content. But to take full advantage of your new set, you’ll need to turn to the many 4K shows available on streaming services such as Amazon and Netflix, and on 4K Blu-ray discs. (You’ll need a 4K Ultra HD Blu-ray player to watch these.)

The other thing to keep in mind is that 4K resolution is really a benefit only on big TVs. “As screens get smaller than 40 inches, it gets harder to appreciate the finer 4K picture detail,” says Consumer Reports TV program leader Claudio Ciacci.

4. Be Wary of ‘HDR’ Labels
High dynamic range, or HDR, technology is now built into almost every larger 4K TV, especially from the major brands.

When done right, HDR can deliver a greater range of brightness levels from black to peak white. You’ll see more detail in both the darker and near-white parts of the image, and the display will deliver more realistic lighting, including “specular highlights”—glints of light, such as the sun’s reflection off a car’s chrome bumper—that make images really pop off the screen.

“But our tests show that lots of sets that have some HDR capability fail to create the rich, lifelike images the technology is known for,” Ciacci cautions. “And there’s no way to judge this for yourself in the TV aisle of an electronics store.”

To get really good HDR performance, check the HDR score in our TV ratings, which can be found starting on page 44. The sets that deliver the goods on this technology tend to be more expensive, but if it fits your budget, the added cost is worthwhile: HDR can really enhance your TV-watching experience.

5. Don’t Sweat Smart-TV Choices
Most TVs being shipped these days are smart models, meaning they can connect to the internet to let you access streaming services such as Netflix.

Different TV brands use different smart-TV platforms. But we don’t think this should be a big part of a decision on which set to buy.

That’s the lesson from a recent CR survey of more than 1,000 smart-TV owners. Most respondents said they were highly satisfied with the streaming experience, regardless of their TV’s brand.

If you decide you don’t like the smart-TV platform in the set you purchase, you can always add a separate streaming device, such as a Roku stick or an Apple TV. These devices can cost as little as $30, though to get a model that handles 4K content you’ll need to pay around $70 or more.

Sixty percent of the respondents in our survey wound up adding a separate streaming device, though many liked the built-in functionality of their sets. Many told us they wanted better performance or a wider selection of streaming services to choose from.

We’ve recently tested 4K streaming players; see how they stack up against each other on the facing page.
Super Streaming

Even if you have a smart TV, a separate streaming device could give you more viewing options or just be easier to use. Here are some of the best and newest 4K-compatible players. Prices range from $70 to $200.

Roku Ultra
$100

Google Chromecast Ultra
$70

Apple TV 4K (32GB)
$180

Roku Streaming Stick+
$70

Amazon Fire TV with 4K Ultra HD and Alexa Voice Remote,
$70

Roku’s flagship streaming device—our top-rated model—offers the best performance of any Roku player plus the wide assortment of channels that helps make Roku devices so popular. Roku will search for a movie or TV title across various services, listing the cheapest options first. Two reasons to spring for this model instead of the cheaper Roku Streaming Stick+, also reviewed here: A button on the unit makes the remote beep if you misplace it, and a headphone jack in the remote allows for private listening.

Underneath the Chromecast’s cool-looking, circular exterior is a solid-performing streamer that works a bit differently from other devices. There’s no remote control. Instead, you use a smartphone or tablet with the Google Home app to find content, then “cast” it wirelessly to your TV. There’s an Ethernet port in the power adapter for a more reliable connection, and a Google Home smart speaker can be used to control the Chromecast. But note: Right now there’s no direct app for Amazon Video.

Apple TV has always made the most sense for people who live in Apple’s world, renting and buying content from iTunes. The new, 4K version has a sleek interface, a faster processor than its predecessor, and the Siri voice assistant. Additionally, 4K HDR titles cost less on iTunes than on other services. Apple sweetens the deal by upgrading your previous iTunes purchases to 4K free of charge. And the company recently added support for Amazon Prime Video. There’s also a 64GB version for $200.

Want a 4K Roku but not a set-top box? Just pop this stick-style player into a TV’s HDMI port and it will essentially disappear behind or alongside your TV. The power cord has a unique inline wireless receiver that can, the company claims, improve the device’s wireless range. Like all Rokus, this model has a category-leading assortment of channels. The Stick+ and Ultra have some voice controls, but these are limited compared with those in other players.

The latest Fire TV replaces a pricier, boxy predecessor with a diamond-shaped dongle that has a slightly faster processor, HDR capability, and support for a smoother-looking 60 frames-per-second video. A big selling point is that the Fire TV comes with an Alexa-powered voice remote, which you can also use to control Alexa-compatible lights, thermostats, and security cameras. Or you can control the Fire TV using an Amazon Echo smart speaker. The Fire TV prioritizes Amazon content, so it’s probably best for Amazon Prime subscribers.
## Futureproof TVs

Most of the televisions in our ratings are smart TVs with 4K resolution—but they’re not all created equal.

### Ratings

- **Brand & Model**: [Samsung, Vizio, LG, Sony]
- **Screen size**: [60, 65, 75] inches
- **Resolution type**: Ultra HD (OLED), Very effective
- **Picture quality**: Ultra HD, Very effective
- **Performance effectiveness**: Very effective, Effective, Limited
- **Motion angle**: Very effective, Effective, Limited
- **Sound quality**: Very effective, Effective, Limited

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*To use this TV’s internet functions you need to supply a compatible smartphone or tablet.
To use this TV’s internet functions you need to supply a compatible smartphone or tablet.

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## Ratings  Futureproof TVs (continued)

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*To use this TV’s internet functions you need to supply a compatible smartphone or tablet.*

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CRM02_TV_Shopping_Tips [P].indd   46
12/8/17 11:58 AM
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</table>

Online subscribers can go to [CR.org/tvs](http://CR.org/tvs) for complete, up-to-date ratings.

**How We Test:** The Overall Score is out of a total of 100 points. HD picture quality is evaluated after a TV is adjusted to produce the highest-fidelity image possible, encompassing detail, color accuracy, and contrast. Ultra HD performance is an evaluation of how well a TV reproduces full UHD image detail, including HDR where applicable, using 4K content. HDR effectiveness is a measure of the TV’s ability to show high dynamic range, or the difference between the darkest blacks and brightest whites in an image. Viewing angle reflects clarity and color accuracy from various horizontal and vertical angles. Motion blur shows how well the TV presents blur-free images during motion scenes. If the blur-reduction feature also invokes a “smooth motion” effect, it is turned off for the test. Sound quality reflects overall clarity of sound, depth of bass, effective volume level, and distortion for dialogue and music.
Satisfaction Guaranteed

Before you buy a brand-new car, consult our exclusive Owner Satisfaction ratings to see if the right used car is a smarter choice.

by Mike Monticello

**NEW**

Acura RDX
$38,990

**NOTHING BEATS** the feeling of driving a brand-new car off the lot. But if you want great value and more features than your budget allows, consider buying used. In fact, if you choose wisely, the only thing you’ll give up when you buy a used car is that new-car smell. (Buying advice for new-car purists can be found starting on page 52.)

The average new car loses about half its value in the first three years of ownership, says Mel Yu, CR’s automotive analyst. Buying a used car means that the previous owner took that financial hit.

CR’s survey results show that cars in general are very reliable today, easily clocking in 100,000 miles or more before needing any major repairs. If you take the necessary precautions when buying a used car from a recent model year, chances are good you’ll end up with one you can drive for years to come without needing to do much more than change the oil.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to buy used is that it can put premium features and luxury within reach of those who otherwise couldn’t afford them.

“Going the used-car route can let you step up to a model that’s more luxurious, better equipped, and more enjoyable to drive,” says Jake Fisher, director of CR’s auto testing.

To show you how much more car you can get by buying used, we selected eight new models—all well-rated by CR—and came up with two 3-year-old used alternatives, one in the same category and the other a step up in luxury. (See “New vs. Used: What You Get for the Money,” on page 50.)

The best way to start any search for a great used car is to consult our ratings and choose models that have high owner satisfaction and reliability ratings as well as a strong road-test score when tested new. Then, as you narrow your search, be sure to do the following:

**Take a test-drive.** There’s no substitute for getting behind the wheel. Note any unusual vibrations, squeaks, and rattles,
Satisfaction Guaranteed

Before you buy a brand-new car, consult our exclusive Owner Satisfaction ratings to see if the right used car is a smarter choice.

by Mike Monticello

and search and sniff for mildew or mold. (See “How to Avoid Buying a Once-Flooded Car,” on page 52.)

Check the title. Make sure the seller has the actual title. Many states will note on the title whether the vehicle has ever been seriously damaged, been repurchased under a state lemon-law program, or had another problem. But a title may not have this information for a variety of reasons, so get a vehicle history report for any car you’re considering. If the seller doesn’t have the title or won’t show it to you, consider a different car.

Check the vehicle history report. These reports—from companies like AutoCheck and Carfax—may indicate whether a vehicle has ever been in a crash, and show maintenance records and the number of owners a vehicle has had. Even if the seller provides a report, obtain one from another company; the sources of information they rely on can vary. An incident might not appear on a vehicle history report if, say, an owner hasn’t reported it to an insurer or the police. It can also take months for an incident to show up on a report, if at all.

Hire a mechanic. “Have a mechanic experienced in auto bodywork and accident repair give the vehicle a detailed inspection,” says John Ibbotson, CR’s chief mechanic. If the seller won’t let you have the car inspected, walk away.

Check for recalls. Make sure the car you’re considering doesn’t have a known, unfixed safety defect. Go to nhtsa.gov/recalls and enter the car’s vehicle identification number (VIN) to see whether any recalls are pending. Recall-related repairs are free but must be done by a dealer that sells the brand of vehicle being recalled.

Contact the previous owner. Check the title or ask the dealer for the contact information. Previous owners can tell you how the car was used—commuting? Uber?—and about any mechanical or other problems they experienced.

For more tips on how to buy a used car, go to CR.org/usedcars.
New vs. Used: What You Get for the Money

If you’re shopping for a 2018 car that’s well-rated by CR but you want a thriftier option or even a luxury upgrade for the same money, we offer these smart alternatives from the 2015 model year. Automatic emergency braking (AEB) and forward-collision warning (FCW) are available on all the new cars listed and on used models as indicated.
## Small SUVs

**NEW**

- **Nissan Rogue**  
  $29,920  
  OVERALL SCORE: 73

**SMART USED ALTERNATIVES**

- **Mazda CX-5**  
  $17,200-$24,100

- **Kia Sorento**  
  $17,050-$29,275

**SATISFACTION**

**RELIABILITY**

**Pros:** Roomy interior, nice ride  
**Cons:** Noisy engine, bland driving experience  
*AEB/FCW STANDARD*

---

## Midsized SUVs

**NEW**

- **Acura RDX**  
  $38,990  
  OVERALL SCORE: 73

**SMART USED ALTERNATIVES**

- **Audi Q5**  
  $31,425-$46,600

- **BMW X5**  
  $37,100-$53,825

**SATISFACTION**

**RELIABILITY**

**Pros:** Comfortable ride, agility, quiet interior  
**Cons:** Some annoying controls, notably the shifter
*AEB/FCW NOT AVAILABLE*

---

## Midsized Small SUVs

**NEW**

- **Honda Pilot**  
  $39,585  
  OVERALL SCORE: 74

**SMART USED ALTERNATIVES**

- **Toyota Highlander**  
  $25,775-$39,525

- **Acura MDX**  
  $32,850-$39,300

**SATISFACTION**

**RELIABILITY**

**Pros:** Roomy interior, visibility, smooth powertrain  
**Cons:** Clumsy handling, touch-screen radio
*AEB/FCW OPTIONAL*

---

## Luxury Small SUVs

**NEW**

- **Infiniti QX60**  
  $51,920  
  OVERALL SCORE: 64

**SMART USED ALTERNATIVES**

- **Buick Enclave**  
  $24,600-$33,450

- **Audi Q7**  
  $39,050-$50,575

**SATISFACTION**

**RELIABILITY**

**Pros:** Lots of interior space and flexibility, good third-row access, quiet and comfortable ride  
**Cons:** Engine drone, complicated controls
*AEB/FCW NOT AVAILABLE*
Car Satisfaction, According to Owners

Our Owner Satisfaction Survey reveals the real-world experiences of drivers like you.

At our 327-acre test track in Connecticut, we evaluate dozens and dozens of cars each year, which we buy at dealerships the same way you do. In addition to testing them rigorously at our track, we drive them on roadways for months and for thousands of miles.

For even more information, we seek the opinions of about 400,000 car owners with our Annual Owner Satisfaction Survey. The Owner Satisfaction Score, based on whether an owner says he or she would buy the same car again, measures whether a car lives up to expectations. Respondents also rate their cars in six categories: driving experience, comfort, value, styling, audio, and climate systems. Combined with CR’s ratings, our Owner Satisfaction Survey gives car buyers valuable guidance when they’re shopping for a vehicle. (See our charts, starting on page 55.)

A familiar theme is that cars that meet owner expectations consistently score well. Sports cars like the Porsche 911, the Chevrolet Corvette, and the Mazda MX-5 Miata are hits because they deliver the driving fun that their owners were looking for.

In a surprise showing, the revamped Honda Ridgeline outscored the compact pickup field by a wide margin. The Ridgeline and the Ford F-350 are also among the top 10 vehicles ranked by owner satisfaction scores. That’s the first time in at least five years that any pickup truck has made it into the top 10.

The charts on the following pages show which models and brands satisfy drivers after living with their vehicles for three years.

How to Avoid Buying a Once-Flooded Car

Hurricanes Harvey and Irma battered the U.S. last year, but the water-damaged vehicles they left behind are just starting to show up on used-car lots. As many as 650,000 cars were flooded in last fall’s storms, according to some estimates, and there’s no telling how many have been cleaned up and camouflaged to hide water damage so that they can be offered for sale.

The potential harm isn’t only musty upholstery and rust. Water can ruin vital electronics (including airbag sensors) and compromise lubricants and mechanical systems. But because the damage may not be noticeable for months or even years, CR’s chief mechanic, John Ibbotson, says shoppers should steer clear of vehicles with signs of deep water exposure “even if a vehicle looks acceptable and may be working when you inspect it.”

And don’t think you’re safe just because you’re buying in an area far from the storms. Flood-damaged cars are often shipped to distant places where consumers may not think to look for warning signs.

The National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (vehiclehistory.gov), Carfax (carfax.com), and the National Insurance Crime Bureau (nicb.org) offer free or paid services to help buyers screen cars for flood damage. But getting a detailed inspection by a trusted mechanic is the best protection. Still, there are a number of signs that a car has been flooded that you can look for on your own:

- Carpets with a musty smell and possibly even mud. Brand-new carpets in an older vehicle may also be a red flag.
- Scratches or marks on the seat-mounting screws. Because seats have to be removed to dry out or to install new carpet, these marks are telltale signs.
- Waterlines or fogging on headlight lenses or reflectors.
- Waterlines and debris in hard-to-clean places, such as gaps between trunk panels and on the bottom edges of brackets or panels.
- Rust on any unpainted exposed screws under the dashboard or on seat mounts.
Brands Owners Love—and the Ones They Don’t

Tesla and Porsche hold the top two spots on the list of brands ranked by the average of their models’ Owner Satisfaction Scores. For a fuller picture, we also indicate how many places each brand has climbed or dropped since last year, and provide ratings for four of the six categories owners evaluate. Genesis, Hyundai’s luxury spinoff, was the only brand to score a top rating in all of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Change from 2017</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Owner Satisfaction (average of all models)</th>
<th>Ratings</th>
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</table>

Note: Alfa Romeo, Fiat, Jaguar, Land Rover, Maserati, and Smart are not included due to a lack of sufficient data.
The Most & Least Satisfying Models

These rankings are based on the percentage of owners who said they would buy their car again. The Lincoln Continental, Ford F-350, Honda Odyssey, Honda Ridgeline, and Toyota Prius Prime are new additions to the Most Satisfying list this year.
### Ratings

**Owner Satisfaction** These ratings, based on owner feedback, can help you find the new cars that will meet your expectations and avoid the ones that won’t.

#### SUBCOMPACT CARS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make &amp; Model</th>
<th>Owner Satisfaction Score</th>
<th>Driving</th>
<th>Comfort</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Styling</th>
<th>Audio</th>
<th>Climate</th>
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#### COMPACT CARS

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#### MID-SIZED CARS

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<th>Make &amp; Model</th>
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<th>Driving</th>
<th>Comfort</th>
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Ratings ➤ Owner Satisfaction (continued)

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<td>Ford Explorer</td>
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<td>Dodge Journey</td>
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### MAKE & MODEL | OWNER SATISFACTION SCORE | RATINGS
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- GMC Yukon XL | 80 |
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- GMC Yukon | 72 |
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- Audi Q5 | 81 |
- Jaguar F-Pace | 77 |
- Mercedes-Benz GLC | 74 |
- BMW X4 | 72 |
- Lincoln MKC | 64 |
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**LUXURY MIDSIZED & LARGE SUVs**
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- Audi Q7 | 85 |
- Lexus RX | 77 |
- Porsche Cayenne | 77 |
- BMW X5 | 76 |
- Lexus GX | 75 |

### MAKE & MODEL | OWNER SATISFACTION SCORE | RATINGS
---|---|---
**LUXURY MIDSIZED & LARGE SUVs Continued**
- Land Rover Range Rover Sport | 74 |
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- Lincoln MKX | 72 |
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- Mercedes-Benz GLE | 70 |
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- GMC Sierra 2500HD | 72 |
- Ram 2500 | 71 |
- Chevrolet Silverado 1500 | 70 |
- GMC Sierra 1500 | 70 |

**HOW WE SURVEY:** Results are based on a single model year. The Owner Satisfaction Score is based on the percentage of owners who responded “definitely yes” to the question of whether they would buy the same vehicle if they had it to do all over again (considering price, performance, reliability, comfort, enjoyment, etc.). Factor ratings were determined based on the percentage of owners who said they were “very satisfied” in six categories: Driving reflects acceleration and handling; Comfort includes seats, noise, and ride; Value determines whether they got what they wanted relative to price; Styling relates to how the car looks inside and out; Audio is changing radio stations and sound quality; and Climate is A/C and heating performance. For more, go to CR.org/reliability.

*FEBRUARY 2018 CR.ORG 57*
Road Test

We conduct more than 50 tests on each vehicle at our 327-acre Auto Test Center. For complete road tests, go to CR.org/cars.

A Major Makeover

The Honda Accord has been radically revised with turbo engines, a new infotainment system, curvy styling, and standard advanced safety features.

HONDA TOOK A big gamble this year with its wholesale overhaul of the popular Accord. The result? It’s among Consumer Reports’ top-rated midsize sedans.

Some of its goodness stems from the 1.5-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine, which delivers on-demand power. The continuously variable transmission works well but exacerbates engine noise at full throttle. The new Accord is one of the quickest in its class and averages an excellent 31 mpg overall.

Unlike many competitors, the Accord’s handling strikes a happy compromise between sporty driving and a family-friendly ride.

The controls, including the new infotainment system, are easier to use than the previous version. On the downside, models with the 2.0-liter turbo engine and 10-speed automatic transmission get an unintuitive push-button gear selector.

The Accord’s low stance requires more ducking to get in and out than last year’s car, but it’s far from a back (or deal) breaker. We found the front seats comfortable, helped by four-way adjustable lumbar support, which comes standard on all but the base trim. The rear seat has plenty of legroom, though headroom can be tight for taller folk. It may not look like it from the outside, but the trunk is more spacious than before.

All Accords come with automatic emergency braking, forward-collision warning, and lane-keeping assist.

Room With a Vroom

Sporting a freshened exterior and revised suspension, the Hyundai Sonata is a compelling alternative to other mainstream choices.

THE SPRUCED-UP SONATA keeps much of what makes it a strong competitor each year in a crowded midsize sedan category. Wrapped inside its updated skin is a refined powertrain plus a roomy cabin and clear, easy-to-use controls. But this version falls short on fuel efficiency and ride comfort.

Its four-cylinder engine delivers sufficient pep without sounding like it’s being flogged, and the six-speed automatic transmission knocks out well-timed shifts with nary a hiccup. But its 28 mpg is nothing special when many competitors get 30 mpg or better.

Some of the biggest changes this year were made to the Sonata’s suspension. This revamped car now feels like it’s cooperating better with the driver through corners. Braking performance also has improved.

Unfortunately, the Sonata’s ride has grown considerably firmer, transmitting too many bumps into the cabin and reducing passenger comfort. While the Sonata lacks any “wow” factor inside, occupants should still be satisfied. The seats are wide and comfortable, and the well-appointed interior is spacious, particularly the rear seat. It’s one of the most generous in a class where cabin room is often sacrificed at the altar of styling.

The main controls and touch-screen infotainment system are easy to use.

Hyundai makes forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking optional on just two trims. We’d prefer they were standard for all versions.

MIDSIZED CARS

Honda Accord

OVERALL SCORE 84

ROAD-TEST SCORE 89

HIGHS
- Ride, handling, fuel economy, controls, standard advanced safety features

LOWS
- Low stance hurts access, unintuitive gear selector with 2.0L engine

POWERTRAIN
- 192-hp, 1.5-liter four-cylinder turbo engine; continuously variable transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL
- 31 mpg on regular fuel

PRICE AS TESTED $28,345

MIDSIZED CARS

Hyundai Sonata

OVERALL SCORE 78

ROAD-TEST SCORE 85

HIGHS
- Roomy rear seat, visibility, access, controls, braking

LOWS
- Ride is a touch firm, fuel economy isn’t a standout

POWERTRAIN
- 185-hp, 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine; 6-speed automatic transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL
- 28 mpg on regular fuel

PRICE AS TESTED $25,845
Civilized Traveler

The Chevrolet Traverse is a large, all-occasion family hauler that stands tall among tough competition.

The redesigned Chevrolet Traverse delivers room, comfort, and connectivity, providing a civilized alternative to full-sized SUVs and a credible challenge to established three-row competitors.

It shows grace and composure on the road that belies its length and overall size, handling curvy pavement with agility. The ride is comfortable; the suspension quietly smooths bumps in the road.

Aided by a nine-speed automatic transmission, the easygoing V6 engine has plenty of power at the ready for merging and passing. The Traverse is one of the quicker three-row SUVs we’ve tested, covering the 0-to-60 mph sprint in 7.3 seconds.

It’s easy to get into the cavernous interior, which features wide, accommodating seats front and rear. The third-row seat is low and tight but tolerable if you slide the second-row chairs forward a notch.

The controls are easy to operate with large, legible buttons. The MyLink infotainment system takes center stage with its colorful, intuitive screen and lots of cool features.

Despite its modern cabin appointments, the Traverse’s interior ambience feels low-rent for its price, reinforced by the clunky manual roof sunshade.

A rear-seat reminder designed to prevent drivers from leaving a child behind is standard, but only the top trims have automatic emergency braking.

Huge Bang for Your Buck

The Toyota Camry Hybrid delivers stunning fuel economy with hardly any compromises.

The new Camry Hybrid gives back to drivers what they sacrificed for years in the name of social consciousness—mainly trunk space eaten up by a battery and powertain smoothness in exchange for high mpg.

That changes with the new version. The LE Hybrid returned a stellar 47 mpg overall, not that far from the impressive Toyota Prius’ 52 mpg overall. Despite those gains, the trunk is now the same size as the regular Camry thanks to a smaller battery that’s better packaged.

The Hybrid is also quicker off the line—when red lights turn to green—than the regular four-cylinder version. And it delivers power more quietly than the conventional Camry we recently tested. That’s partly due to its smoother-shifting continuously variable transmission as opposed to the regular Camry’s eight-speed automatic.

The ride remains a mainstay Camry attraction, smoothly muting bumps and other road imperfections. It does, however, have longer stopping distances, and drivers might find that the brakes grab sooner than expected at lower speeds.

Five adults can fit in the Camry Hybrid nicely. And it comes with some nice upscale features such as standard automatic climate control, heated front seats, and an electronic parking brake.

All Camrys come with standard forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking, but blind-spot warning is optional.
Modern Family Transportation: Midsized sedans are market mainstays, but if you regularly carry five or more passengers, a three-row SUV might be what you need.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Make &amp; Model</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Survey Results</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Road-Test Results</th>
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MIDSIZED CARS

3-ROW LARGE & MIDSIZED SUVS

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<th>Survey Results</th>
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<td><strong>Recommended</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Toyota Highlander XLE (V6)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>$41,169</td>
<td>Std./</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honda Pilot EX-L</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>$39,585</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toyota Sequoia Limited</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>$54,005</td>
<td>Std./</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chevrolet Traverse Premier</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>$49,945</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volkswagen Atlas SEL (V6)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>$44,165</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dodge Durango GT (V6)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>$43,525</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ford Flex SEL</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>$42,155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nissan Armada Platinum</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>$63,020</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chevrolet Suburban Premier</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>$69,790</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chevrolet Tahoe LT</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>$60,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMC Yukon SLT</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>$62,125</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMC Yukon XL SLT</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>$67,370</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
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<td>16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**How We Test:** Recommended models did well in our Overall Score, which factors in Road-Test Results, Predicted reliability, Owner satisfaction, and Safety, which includes crash-test results and the availability of front-crash prevention features, such as forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking at city or highway speeds. For these systems, NA means no such system is offered; Opt. means it’s available on some versions but not necessarily on the one we tested, and models with standard systems are rated from  to  based on how many of these features are standard. We now deduct points from the Overall Score if a vehicle’s shifter is confusing, lacks fail-safes, or is difficult to operate. Online subscribers can go to CR.org/cars for complete, up-to-date ratings.
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For an extended index covering five years of CR articles and ratings, go to CR.org/Syearindex.
Potty Mouts

These ads and products made us think that maybe bathroom humor gets a bum rap.

Just Roll With It
We’re all for sustainability, but this is one turn too many, even for us. Submitted by Bjarne Kvarnstrom of Huntington Beach, Calif.

Moving Violation
We’re not convinced that this is the best seat in the house—or out of it. Submitted by Linda Brengle of Agoura Hills, Calif.

You Light Up My Life
We’re surprised that the Minions’ movie careers didn’t stop them from moonlighting “down under.” Submitted by Laura Ostrem of Montezuma, Iowa

A Straight Flush
No joke: This company believes in telling it like it is. Submitted by Kathleen Eagan of Beacon, N.Y.

A Straight Flush
No joke: This company believes in telling it like it is. Submitted by Kathleen Eagan of Beacon, N.Y.

Be on the lookout for goofs and glitches like these. Share them with us—by email at SellingIt@cro.consumer.org or by mail to Selling It, Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703—and we might publish yours. Please include key information, such as the publication’s name and date.
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• Save: With competitive, haggle-free, up-front pricing
• Know: All about financing, safety features, insurance, tires, and car seats

LET'S GO
cr.org/buyacar
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 (*). The symbols shown at right 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 32c, the manufacturer’s web address in Canada so that you can go online to get information on a model you can’t find in the stores. (Many products that aren’t available in Canadian stores can be bought online.)

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

 Autos

All of the tested vehicles are available in Canada. Report and ratings, pages 58-60

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<th>Make &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price Range</th>
<th>Acceleration (sec.)</th>
<th>Fuel Economy (liters per 100 km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0-50 km/h</td>
<td>0-100 km/h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDSIZED CARS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota Camry Hybrid</td>
<td>$31,290–$40,990</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honda Accord</td>
<td>$26,490–$38,790</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyundai Sonata</td>
<td>$24,799–$36,999</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THREE-ROW SUV</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevrolet Traverse</td>
<td>$34,895–$58,495</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CR Best Buy
Recommended models that offer the best combination of performance and price.

Recommended
Models that perform well and stand out for reasons we note.

TOYOTA CAMRY HYBRID
PRICE AS TESTED
$28,949 (U.S.)

89
OVERALL SCORE

CHEVROLET TRAVERSE
PRICE AS TESTED
$49,945 (U.S.)

67
OVERALL SCORE
TVs
Sixty-three of the tested TVs are available, including 47 of the recommended models. Report and ratings, pages 40-47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rec.</th>
<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>LG OLED65W7P</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Sony Bravia XBR-65A1E</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>$4,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>LG OLED65E7P</td>
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<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Sony XBR-65X930E</td>
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<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>LG 65SJ9500</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>$2,850</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Samsung QN65Q8C</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Samsung UN65MU8500</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Samsung UN65MU8000</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>LG 65SJ8500</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Samsung UN65MU9000</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Samsung UN65MU6300</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>LG 65UJ7700</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Sony XBR-65X850E</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>LG 60UJ6300</td>
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<td>Sony KD60X690E</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>LG 65UJ6300</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>Vizio E80-E3</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Vizio E65-E1</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Price</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Sony Bravia XBR-55A1E</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>$3,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>LG OLED55S7P</td>
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<td>LG OLED55E7P</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>LG OLED55E7A</td>
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<td>$2,280</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Sony XBR-55X930E</td>
<td>81</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Samsung QN55Q7C</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Samsung UN55LS003</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>TCL 55S405</td>
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<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Samsung UN50MU6300</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Samsung UN49MU7500</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>LG 49UJ6500</td>
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<td>Samsung UN50MS300</td>
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<tr>
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<td>LG 49UJ6300</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>LG 49LJ5500</td>
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<td>Vizio D50-E1</td>
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<td>LG 49LJ5100</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>TCL 49S405</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>$640</td>
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### Contact Info
How to reach manufacturers in Canada.

- **LG**
  - [lg.com/ca](http://lg.com/ca)

- **Samsung**
  - [samsung.com/ca](http://samsung.com/ca)

- **Sony**
  - [sony.ca](http://sony.ca)

- **TCL**
  - [bestbuy.ca](http://bestbuy.ca)

- **Toshiba**
  - [toshiba.ca](http://toshiba.ca)

- **Vizio**
  - [vizio.com/en-ca](http://vizio.com/en-ca)
2010 LEXUS HS 250H
On certain vehicles, the holding plate of the hybrid transaxle assembly may have been cramped improperly during assembly. This could lead to a short circuit and cause the vehicle to enter a fail-safe mode, resulting in reduced motive power. In some cases, the hybrid system could shut down, resulting in loss of motive power while the vehicle is in motion.
Affected: 1,314 vehicles.
What to do: Have the dealer replace the hybrid transaxle assembly with a new one.

2011-2015 GMC AND CHEVROLET MODELS
On certain vehicles equipped with gasoline engines and dual fuel tanks, the fuel level sensor in the front tank could become stuck in the low-level position, causing the rear tank to overfill the front tank. Over time, a hole could form in the front tank and cause a fuel leak.
Affected: 1,908 GMC Sierra HD and Chevrolet Silverado HD vehicles.
What to do: Have the dealer replace the rear-tank fuel pump module or flash the vehicle software. Dealers will also inspect the front tank for damage and replace it as necessary.

2014-2015 MITSUBISHI MIRAGE
On certain vehicles, the wiring harness connector located in the trunk, luggage in the trunk could damage the integrated circuit in the subwoofer amplifier and could create a continuous electrical current, increasing the risk of fire.
Affected: 1,727 Impreza WRX/STi and Impreza WRX.
What to do: Have the dealer inspect and repair as necessary.

2015-2017 FORD TRANSIT
On certain vehicles equipped with a trailer lighting control module, water may enter the module and connector, cause wiring corrosion and damage to the module, and result in an electrical short to ground even when the vehicle is parked and the ignition is off.
Affected: 8,365 vehicles.
What to do: Have the dealer add a drainage hole to the driver’s door step-well and incorporate a fuse into the vehicle wiring harness.

2015-2017 MITSUBISHI MODELS
On certain vehicles, defective electrical relays may have been installed in the power distribution center, potentially resulting in engine stalling, reduced engine power, or loss of engine cooling fan function, potentially resulting in the engine overheating.
What to do: Have the dealer replace affected relay(s) with updated parts.

2015 SUBARU MODELS
On certain vehicles equipped with a factory-installed subwoofer located inside the trunk, luggage in the trunk could damage the integrated circuit in the subwoofer amplifier and could create a continuous electrical current, increasing the risk of fire.
Affected: 1,727 Impreza WRX/STi and Impreza WRX.
What to do: Have the dealer inspect and repair as necessary.

2017 FORD F150
On certain vehicles equipped with a 10-speed automatic transmission, the roll pin attaching the transmission shift linkage to the transmission may come out, preventing the gearshift lever from changing gears. The shifter indicator could display inaccurate information.
Affected: 3,169 vehicles.
What to do: Dealers will remove and replace the roll pin with an updated part.

2017-2018 AUDI MODELS
On certain vehicles, the aluminum trim on the front- and rear-door speaker covers could come loose and expose sharp edges.
What to do: Have the dealer remove the aluminum trim from the speaker covers and replace the trim with an updated part. Note: For the A5 model, it is only the A5 Sportback that is involved in this campaign.

2018 FORD F150
On certain vehicles equipped with a 3.3L V6 engine, 6-speed transmission, and column-mounted gear shift lever, rapid movement of the transmission shifter from Park to Drive may cause loss of PRNDL gear indication in the instrument cluster and momentary engagement of the incorrect gear. This could result in unintended vehicle movement.
Affected: 2,023 vehicles.
What to do: Have the dealer reprogram the powertrain control module with new software.