



THE 10 MOST RELIABLE NEW CARS



SLEEP BETTER
TONIGHT P. 40

THE TRUTH ABOUT
COSTCO CHICKEN

GREAT PRINTERS
FOR LESS

JANUARY 2022

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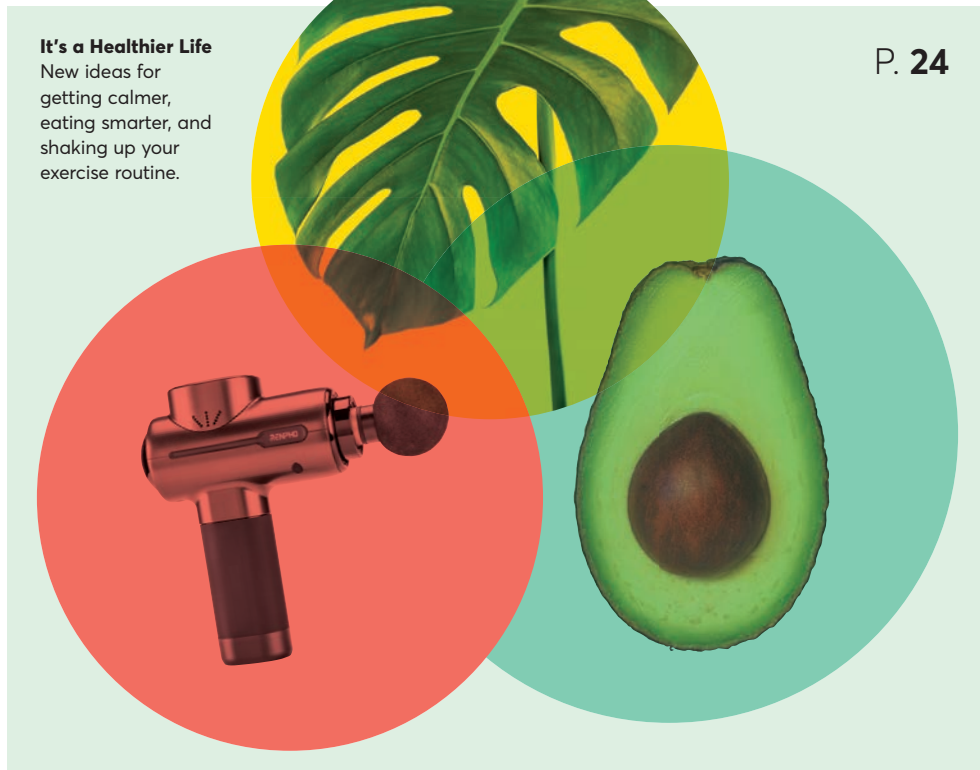


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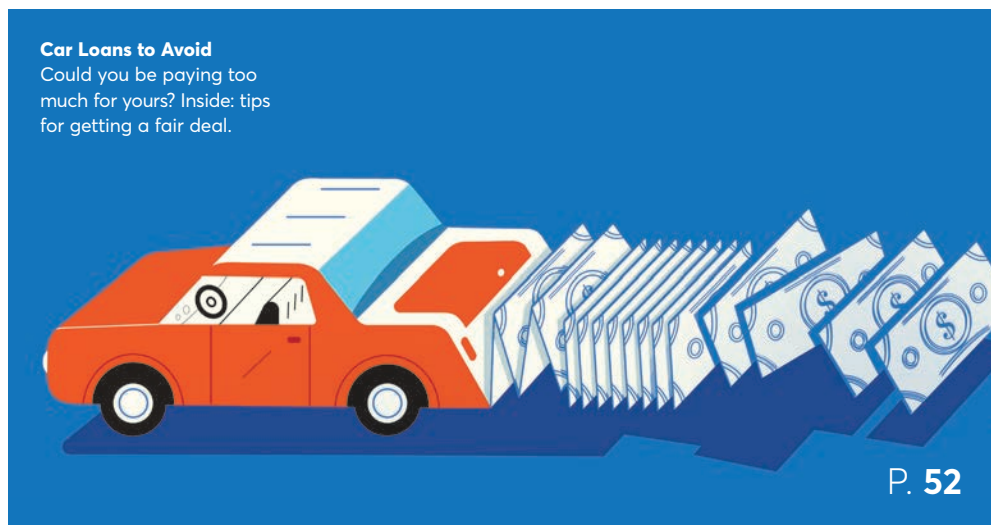
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See page 63 for more details.

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Go to **CR.org/magazine** or call 800-333-0663.

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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

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Making Our Food Safer



THE SEASON of resolutions is upon us, and with it comes plenty of nutrition advice, some of it smart, and some not so much. But not even the soundest advice will help if the food we believe to be healthy isn't safe to eat—and unfortunately, we have a significant food safety problem in the U.S.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that foodborne illnesses

cause 1 in 6 Americans to get sick every year, leading to 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. In just the past few months, we've seen large recalls of ground turkey, kale, and onions, among other products. Congress released a worrisome report in September on dangerous heavy metals in food for babies and toddlers. And a recent CR report warned that about one-third of the spices we tested had high enough levels of heavy metals to pose a health concern for kids (and many for adults, too).

In October, the Department of Agriculture launched a new initiative to increase and revamp its testing, which could cut salmonella illnesses from poultry by 25 percent. How chickens are raised is an important issue, as noted in our article "Is Costco Chicken Good for You?" on page 35, and is one of many other potential food dangers that remain unchecked. We need strict limits on heavy metals in products, including baby foods and spices. We need strong rules to reduce potentially toxic PFAS chemicals in our nation's drinking water. We need better tracking of sources of dangerous foodborne diseases, such as campylobacter, listeria, and E. coli, so consumers can be immediately notified of hazards.

In 2022, it's time for our government leaders, along with the food industry, to make their own resolution: to quit the glacial and weak response to these food safety risks. Instead, let's accelerate the work and apply the best science to address the broad array of food dangers putting Americans in jeopardy. It's the perfect commitment for ringing in the new year, protecting Americans for years to come.

Marta Tellado

Marta L. Tellado,
President and CEO
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The Problem With Baby Food

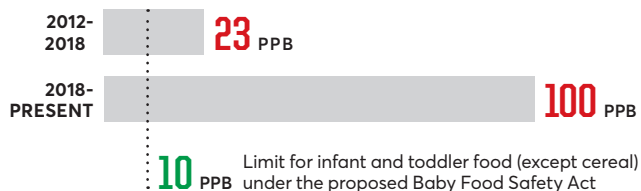
Some baby foods contain troubling levels of heavy metals such as arsenic and lead. Early exposure to these metals has been linked to lower IQs, behavior problems, and other health issues.

Last year, the Food and Drug Administration issued guidance to limit the levels of inorganic arsenic in infant rice cereal. But two 2021 reports by Congress reveal that several companies have allowed products with alarming levels of heavy metals to remain on the market. Among the findings: In 2018 Walmart raised its own allowable limit on inorganic arsenic, without explanation, from 23 parts per billion to 100.

That's why CR is now urging executives at baby food companies to pause the sale of infant rice cereals until better tests and stronger standards for inorganic arsenic are in place. (Walmart says it has since ended sales of its Parent's Choice rice cereal.) And we've shared our heavy metal test results to inform a group of 23 state attorneys general petitioning the FDA to accelerate efforts addressing the problem.

Meanwhile, parents shouldn't panic. Grains other than rice, such as buckwheat, millet, and polenta, have much lower levels of inorganic arsenic. Learn more at [CR.org/heavymetals0122](https://www.consumerreport.org/heavymetals0122).

AMOUNT OF ARSENIC WALMART ALLOWS IN ITS BABY FOOD



ACTION UPDATE

It's bad enough that scammers and telemarketers incessantly flout anti-robocall laws. Now a political campaign group has asked the Federal Communications Commission for a legal exemption allowing it to leave "ringless voicemail" messages, which would bypass a phone's ringer and land in voicemail boxes without consent from consumers. If granted, the exemption could subject us all to a new form of automated annoyance and predation. So in October, CR submitted comments opposing the new loophole, backed by more than 90,000 consumer signatures.



Fighting for Fair Insurance

WHAT'S AT STAKE

A growing number of Americans are letting their auto insurance company track their driving in real time in exchange for potential discounts. These telematics programs, which use mobile technology to send driving data to insurers, can mean substantial savings for consumers, and may even encourage safer driving. But a recent CR investigation found that they often come with troubling downsides.

Among them: The rules about the driving habits that will earn you better prices are confusing and opaque. What's more, the data collected about your driving may be

used inappropriately—not only for marketing purposes but also for potentially evaluating insurance claims if you're involved in a crash.

In addition, most telematics programs reward customers who tend to drive during times of day that are deemed to be safer. Consumer advocates say this effectively penalizes people driving to or from a late shift, a group disproportionately made up of Black and Latino workers and low-income people.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK After the investigation, CR sent letters to the 10 biggest auto insurers, calling on them to make telematics programs more transparent and accountable. Among other measures, we specifically urged insurers to demonstrate exactly how every telematics factor they're using relates to risk, and to test their telematics algorithms for unintended bias and disparate impacts.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Learn more about telematics programs, and get tips on choosing and making the most of one, at [CR.org/telematics0122](https://www.consumerreport.org/telematics0122).

Your Feedback



Our November 2021 article “**The Truth About Those Dollar Stores**” investigated how these retailers may be changing the way you shop—and whether they really offer good deals. Readers wrote in with their own experiences and insights. To add your voice, go to CR.org/dollar0122.

WE WHO LIVE IN more rural areas of the country are pleased to have Dollar General stores “popping up” in a lot of the small communities. Though not a replacement for a trip to the larger grocery/department store, they do make it very easy to pop in and grab some “essentials.” In the part of Pennsylvania where I live, we are seeing new dollar stores showing up in small towns, and most of the folks I know appreciate them.

—John Weaver, Flinton, PA

I READ WITH INTEREST your article about dollar stores. Our small community of Tionesta, Pa., has long struggled with trying to keep a grocery store in town, and over the years we’ve had a number of different grocery stores come and go. Within the last few years we had our first dollar store come to town. The nearest grocery was a 30- to 45-minute drive away, and many in our community have limited access to transportation. Through good fortune and community support, our local service club was able to contact Giant Eagle (a Pittsburgh-based grocery chain) and propose an innovative solution. Our residents are able to go online

through a virtual Giant Eagle-Tionesta website to shop for all food products available in a regular Giant Eagle store at the same prices. They can pay by credit card, Advantage Card, PayPal, or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). The food is delivered in totes to a location in town where volunteers meet the delivery van and unload the items. Consumers then drive to the pickup location. There is no charge for delivery. As the COVID virus swept the country, our project gained immense appreciation. Giant Eagle, a true community partner, has remained committed to the project as a way to serve small, rural communities.

—Farley Wright, Tionesta, PA

I STARTED GOING TO the dollar store when I became a teacher and needed baskets for organizing papers. Great baskets, very cheap! It’s great for teachers.

—Jan Tappan, via Facebook

I BUY GENERIC [medications from dollar stores], especially things like allergy meds that can be stupidly expensive for name brands. The generic is more reasonably priced! I figure if it has the same active ingredients inside, why pay more?

—@makeitwithcalvin, via Instagram

VERY GOOD ARTICLE. But my main reason for going to my local Dollar Tree is quite different. I buy all my greeting cards and holiday items there. I buy calendars, picture frames, dish towels, drinking glasses, and small household items. I’ve saved so much money—my local Walgreens may charge two to three times more for these items.

—Doris Baran Hirsch, Fort Lee, NJ

AS AN OCCASIONAL Dollar Tree shopper, I think your recent article neglects to mention

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CR.org/lettertoeditor
to share your comments
for publication.

an important reason why the stores are popular among lower-income persons. When someone is living on a tight budget, shopping at a dollar store makes it easy to know almost exactly how much a shopping trip is going to cost before getting to the register. That predictability can save time and frustration, as well as decision fatigue in trying to decide what items are the highest priority. On top of that, I'm a little fed up with how often I shop at other major retailers only to find the price of an item is not what I expected: Price tags sometimes do not correlate to the price that comes up according to the UPC. I'm happy to shop at dollar stores for the "treasure hunt" aspect, but also because I appreciate how these stores keep it simple and serve a particular need for a particular segment of our populace.

—Ann DeFranco, Superior, CO



HOMEMADE PIZZA

REGARDING "Portable Backyard Pizza Ovens" (Insights, November 2021): I've been making my pizza from scratch for years. I use King Arthur flour for the crust with homemade pizza sauce.

—Kelly Oliver-Krider, via Facebook

I USE AN OONI propane oven. My downfall has always been getting the pie to release from

the peel. I think I need to use cornmeal, and plenty of it.

—Ken Franklin, via CR.org

EDITOR'S NOTE Our tester did find that dusting the pizza peel with a large handful of cornmeal will help the pizza slide off, but here's another trick, suggested by the pizza oven manufacturer Ooni: If your dough is sticking to the peel, lift up one edge of the pizza base and gently blow air under the dough. According to the company, this should create air pockets underneath the pizza and spread the flour (and/or cornmeal) around to any areas that might be sticking to the peel.

I USE MY GAS GRILL cranked on super-high and cook on a \$10 pizza stone. I'm sure that the pizzas cooked this way aren't as good as those made in a purpose-built oven, but it's way cheaper. I use the money I save to buy premium ingredients: fresh mozzarella, high-quality sausage from a local farm, etc. Plus, my way doesn't require that I make space in my garage or shed to store a device that I'll use only occasionally.

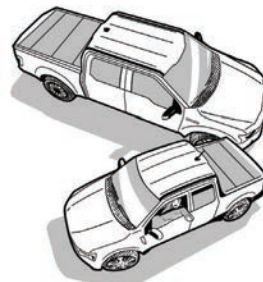
—Phillip Ortiz, via CR.org

I MAKE PIZZA all the time on my Weber Spirit gas grill. I use a homemade pizza crust on a pizza stone heated to the highest temp I can get.

—Bill-Joelle Snyder, via Facebook

WE PARBAKE the dough on our grill, put on the toppings, and put it back on the grill to finish. Delicious!

—Jennifer Jacobi, via Facebook



YOUR TAKE ON THE NEW SMALLER PICKUP TRUCKS

Regarding "The Small-Truck Revolution" (November 2021): I like the Ford Maverick. Great for the city and suburbs where people want to haul appliances home, or the occasional bulky item, but still thrifty enough to get around town and park easily.

—Dale Wells, via Facebook

Not every truck needs to be a car-and-a-half in size to be useful.

—Floyd W. Adams, via Facebook

I will keep my Honda Odysseys and Dodge Grand Caravans [both larger vehicles] for my kayaking, biking, and camping lifestyle!

—Karin Nelson, via Facebook

I hope someone offers a hybrid truck with a real bed, with a length of at least 6 feet. Trucks like the Ford Maverick are doubly useless with a tiny back seat and a tiny bed!

—Steve Frederick, via Facebook



EASY ENTERTAINING

REGARDING "Hosting Made Easier" (November 2021): A key part of my turkey or ham preparation is the brine. The meat always comes out moist and more flavorful when I brine. There are numerous brining recipes on the internet.

—Mark Hastings, Dover, NH

TO KEEP LEFTOVERS delicious and safe, we use our FoodSaver [vacuum sealer] machine.

We've used one for years.

—Dave Sandy Goodwyn, via Facebook

EDITOR'S NOTE Food vacuum sealing machines are a great way to store raw meats and produce, as well as cooked leftovers. We tested seven models from different companies, and the FoodSaver VS3180 Multi-Use (\$180) received our top score. For those looking for a less expensive model, our testing found that the Anova Culinary ANVS01-US00 food sealer (\$80) is also an excellent choice for less than half the price.



FIRE PREVENTION

I REALLY APPRECIATED the article "8 Ways to Prevent Kitchen Fires" (Insights, November 2021). Now I am very careful to have short or close-fitting sleeves on and a lid that fits the pan at hand. [I'm] taping this article to the kitchen cabinet door for frequent reference.

—William Petticrew, Toms River, NJ

CR BYLAWS UPDATE

Consumer Reports' Board of Directors voted at its October 2021 meeting to approve amendments to certain provisions of the Consumer Reports bylaws. To see the revised bylaws, go to [CR.org/bylaws](https://www.consumerreports.org/bylaws).

What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

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

Multi-Cookers for \$150 or Less

WE TESTED: 15 models
WE TEST FOR: How well a model can cook rice, steam vegetables, pressure-cook ribs, slow-cook beef stew, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 74
Range: 67-80

GREAT COOKER WITH VERSATILE ACCESSORIES
Instant Pot Max 6-Quart
\$150

80
OVERALL
SCORE



NONSTICK INTERIOR & SUPER FOR STEAMING VEGGIES
Crock-Pot Express 6-Quart Oval
\$90

78
OVERALL
SCORE



HOT PRICE & A GOOD SIZE FOR SMALLER KITCHENS
Gourmia Express Pot GPC965 Digital Multi-Functional (6-Quart)
\$70

75
OVERALL
SCORE



Sheets

WE TESTED: 6 sets
WE TEST FOR: How well sheets fit a queen-size bed, their softness and resistance to tears, and how much they shrink in the wash and stay wrinkle-free after drying.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 51
Range: 25-79

BEST-FITTING
Matouk Sierra
\$336

79
OVERALL
SCORE



MOST DURABLE
L.L.Bean Cotton Percale (280 TC)
\$150

74
OVERALL
SCORE



SOFTER FEEL
Brooklinen Luxe Core
\$175

61
OVERALL
SCORE



Ask Our Experts

How much does thread count matter when buying sheets?



SURPRISINGLY, NOT MUCH. Our testers have found that a higher thread count (the number of vertical and horizontal threads that go into each square inch of material) doesn't indicate better durability, fit, or softness. For example, one of our top-rated sheet sets, the Matouk Sierra above, has a claimed thread count of 350, and it significantly outperformed a 1,000-thread-count Wamsutta Dream Zone sheet set, which sits near the bottom of our ratings. Instead, focus on the material the sheets are made of. Our testers have noticed that cotton sheets tend to shrink less in the wash than bamboo viscose ones. Some people find that cotton also breathes better than synthetics such as polyester.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

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

Space Heaters

WE TESTED: 42 small models
WE TEST FOR: How quickly it warms a person sitting 4.5 feet from it, how well it heats a family room in 15 minutes, safety features, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 65
Range: 37-86

OSCILLATING & EXCELLENT HEATING OVERALL
Lasko AW315 Bladeless Tower
(Home Depot)
\$100

77
OVERALL SCORE



EXCELLENT FOR "SPOT HEATING"
Heat Storm Mojave
\$130

75
OVERALL SCORE



QUIET, WITH A TIP-OVER SAFETY SWITCH
Vornado VH10
\$80

68
OVERALL SCORE



Media Streaming Devices for \$50 or Less

WE TESTED: 7 4K models
WE TEST FOR: Ease of use, including how it navigates through menus; whether it has compatible streaming video services; data protection; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 62
Range: 49-69

AWESOME FOR ALEXA USERS
Amazon Fire TV Stick 4K
\$35

69
OVERALL SCORE



GREAT FOR GOOGLE USERS
Google Chromecast With Google TV
\$50

67
OVERALL SCORE



EASY TO USE & VERY VERSATILE
Roku Express 4K+
\$40

65
OVERALL SCORE



Handheld Vacuums

WE TESTED: 17 models
WE TEST FOR: How well a model cleans carpets and bare floors, how well it picks up pet hair and maneuvers in tight corners, how quiet it is, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 70
Range: 56-80

SUPERIOR AT PICKING UP PET HAIR
Shark Ion W1 WV201
\$130

80
OVERALL SCORE



LONG RUN TIME (23 MINUTES)
Black+Decker Max DustBuster AdvancedClean+ HHVK515J00
\$90

79
OVERALL SCORE



BARGAIN BUY FOR SMALL MESSES
Bissell AeroSlim 29869
\$40

63
OVERALL SCORE



Advanced Point-and-Shoot Cameras

WE TESTED: 29 models
WE TEST FOR: Image quality in auto and manual modes with flash and without, video quality, ease of use, quality of the LCD display, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 80
Range: 43-89

EXCELLENT VIDEO QUALITY
Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX10
\$500

83
OVERALL SCORE



LONG BATTERY LIFE FOR LESS
Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS100
\$400

78
OVERALL SCORE



RELIABLE BRAND & LIGHTWEIGHT
Canon PowerShot G9 X Mark II
\$450

75
OVERALL SCORE



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

COMING NEXT MONTH Big-Screen TVs & More



In winter weather, is it safest to keep my four-wheel drive on all the time?

FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE delivers power to each wheel and increases traction during acceleration and for off-road driving situations, such as in snow or mud, or on steep inclines. Most new SUVs have either a permanent 4WD system, which means 4WD is always engaged, or an automatic 4WD mode, which is a setting you may need to turn on. (Check your manual to see which type you have.) If you have automatic 4WD, it's both smart and safe to turn it on and leave it on indefinitely; that way, your vehicle will automatically switch into 4WD when it senses slippery conditions, and back out when it's no longer needed.

On some vehicles, however, you may need to select or manually shift into 4WD each time you want to engage it. This

type of 4WD will help give you traction on snowy roads—but if roads become clear, it's best to switch back to two-wheel drive. That's because using this type of 4WD system on dry roads will cause excess wear on your vehicle's tires and drivetrain.

And although 4WD helps a vehicle handle better in poor driving conditions, note that it does nothing to improve braking. So no matter which system you have, it's safest to keep your speed lower than usual even with 4WD on: It will give you more time to react.

Which will give me better sound quality—wired or wireless headphones?

"IF YOU'RE LOOKING for the ultimate in audio quality, you'll find it in a wired headphone," says Maria Rerecich, CR's senior director of product testing. "Wireless headphones are more convenient, but they don't match the sound of the best wired headphones." CR experts test more than 40 headphones every year

for a range of criteria, including comfort and audio quality, and our tests reveal that many wired headphones we test offer better sound quality than even the very best wireless pairs. The downside of wired pairs, of course, is being tethered to the audio source. What's more, many smartphones no longer offer traditional headphone jacks (which means you may need an adapter). But wired headphones are typically priced lower than their wireless counterparts, and you never need to worry about charging them. For top-notch sound in a wired headphone, our testers recommend the Grado SR125x wired headphones, \$175, which earn Excellent ratings in our audio quality tests. If you prefer wireless headphones, consider the Bose SoundLink around-ear headphones II, \$230, which receive a Very Good score for audio quality and have a claimed 15 hours of battery life.

I put off getting my eyes checked during the pandemic, but my vision seems fine. Do I still need to see an eye doctor?

ALL HEALTHY ADULTS should see an ophthalmologist for a comprehensive eye exam by age 40, and people 65 and older should have an eye exam every

one to two years, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Regular eye exams are especially important as you age, when the risk increases for conditions such as cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and age-related macular degeneration. "All of these are at least treatable—and some are curable—if caught early," says Hilary Beaver, MD, an ophthalmologist and cataract surgeon at Houston Methodist Hospital and an associate professor of clinical ophthalmology at Weill Cornell Medical College.

During a routine eye exam, your practitioner will ask about your vision, test how well you can read an eye chart, and check your current prescription if you have one. They will also examine the optic nerve and retina after dilating your eyes with drops, and look inside your eyes with a microscope. In some practices, a technique called wide-field retinal imaging may be offered instead of dilating your eyes for an exam. This has become increasingly common during COVID-19 because it can minimize close face-to-face contact between the practitioner and the patient. But that technique, which uses a laser scan to generate an image of the retina, captures only about 80 percent of the retinal surface area, so you'll probably still need an eye exam that requires dilation in the near future, too.



LEARN

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

CR Insights

IN THE KNOW

The Best Chef's Knives for Your Kitchen

"ONE QUALITY chef's knife can really do about 95 percent of your cutting in the kitchen," says Branden Lewis, an associate professor in culinary arts at Johnson & Wales University in Rhode Island. That's because a chef's knife blade, typically 8 inches, has the perfect length and heft to tackle everything from finely mincing herbs to deboning a chicken.

But finding a stellar chef's knife isn't easy. A quick online search yields hundreds of choices, ranging from \$10 to \$1,000 or more.

To help you separate the great deals from the duds, CR evaluated eight different 8-inch chef's knives in our labs and focused on factors that will make for a great knife years down the road, such as force transmission (how much force you need to exert on the handle while cutting) and handle comfort.

We asked four panelists, all with different hand sizes and cutting styles, to chop carrots and slice tomatoes with each knife before scoring it on 14 factors, including the balance of the knife and the feel and contour of the handle and blade. Each knife was also evaluated by our in-house ergonomics expert, Dana Keester, to see which

knife designs were comfortable for the most people. Then CR home editor Paul Hope used them for a variety of common tasks in his own kitchen, such as chopping potatoes, mincing garlic, and deboning and then cubing chicken thighs.

All that testing revealed that you don't need to spend big money to get a great knife. We found several smart picks, all between \$20 and \$150. The Henckels, shown at right, for example, costs just \$40.

TOP KNIFE OVERALL
Henckels Premio 8" Chef's Knife \$40

CR'S TAKE The Premio has great force transmission, so you don't need to exert as much effort when cutting, and the contoured handle is comfortable for a wide variety of hand sizes and grip styles.

STURDY & SMOOTH CUTTING

Wüsthof Classic 8" Chef's Knife \$150

CR'S TAKE This knife was heavy but still comfortable for all of our panelists. Good force transmission let it glide through tougher-to-cut foods, like chicken.

BEST BUDGET CHEF'S KNIFE

KitchenAid Classic 8" Triple Rivet Chef Knife \$20

CR'S TAKE Considering its bargain price, this knife has decent force transmission. And the design is reminiscent of much pricier knives, such as the Wüsthof.

GOOD GRIP

Global Classic 8" Chef's Knife \$125

CR'S TAKE Great for chefs who use a pinch grip (when thumb and index fingers grip the top of the blade). Plus, the handle resisted slipping in wet hands.

FACE-OFF

Top-Rated Smart Thermostats

AS TEMPERATURES DROP across much of the U.S., fuel prices are rising. In fact, the U.S. Energy Information Administration predicts that heating oil bills will rise by 43 percent, natural gas by 30 percent, and electricity by 6 percent this winter. Fortunately, smart thermostats can help to offset these climbing prices. By automatically lowering your home's heat when you're asleep or not at home, these gadgets can save you at least \$50 a year or more on your energy costs. That means a smart thermostat could pay for itself in a few years, depending on the model.

In our labs, we test how easy it is to set up and use a thermostat, and any smart features, such as voice control. Of the 40 models in our ratings, two stand out: the top-scoring Nest Learning Thermostat and the Best Buy Braeburn BlueLink, which offers similar features such as geofencing (which auto-adjusts your house temperature when you leave and return). To help you pick the right one for you, we compared their strengths and weaknesses.



✓ **Nest Learning Thermostat**
\$250

83
OVERALL SCORE



✓ **Braeburn BlueLink 7320**
\$120

74
OVERALL SCORE

⬆	SMART IQ	⬆
⬇	MANUAL OPERATION	⬆
⬆	AUTOMATION	⬆
2 years	WARRANTY	5 years
No	REMOTE SENSOR INCLUDED	Yes
Yes	LEARNS BEHAVIOR	No
Internal rechargeable battery	POWER SOURCE	C wire (24VAC)

CR'S TAKE The Nest earns the top spot with its Excellent rating for heating and cooling automation that learns your preferences and can create its own schedule based on them (the Braeburn doesn't do this). It also offers smart features, like a sensor that detects when people are home. But its manual controls aren't as easy to use as those of the Braeburn.

CR'S TAKE The Braeburn is easier to use than the Nest and is a CR Best Buy, thanks to its impressive performance and lower price. It has many of the same features, like geofencing, plus a few extras the Nest doesn't, such as a touch screen, and a wireless temperature sensor that can be placed in another room to help the Braeburn heat and cool your home more precisely.

CR Time Traveler CHICKEN

1940 Our testers rate 14 brands of chicken soup. Crosse & Blackwell's soup comes in first. Most surprising: Six brands don't contain any chicken.



1952
The first Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise opens near Salt Lake City.



1963 Professor Robert C. Baker is widely credited with inventing chicken nuggets in a lab at Cornell University.



1978 CR begins its decades-long fight urging the U.S. government to prohibit the routine use of antibiotics in livestock production.



1983 Chicken McNuggets are sold nationwide at McDonald's for the first time.

SAVVY SHOPPER

Can You Get a Better Price Even After You've Paid?

IMAGINE THIS: You purchase a big-screen TV for \$1,000—but a week later, you see that the price dropped to \$800. You could have saved \$200 if only you had waited! Returning the TV and then buying it again at the lower price can be a cumbersome process: Who wants to lug the TV back to the store or pay for return shipping?

But there may be an easier way to recoup that money. Some retailers will refund you the difference between the price you paid and the store's current sale price if you ask within a specified time period—and several retailers will even match a lower price you find at another store. Company policies vary, but they can be more generous than you might think. And around the holidays, some retailers, such as Best Buy and Target, make their policies more generous. At right, we compiled a look at the policies of eight major U.S. retailers.

RETAILERS THAT PRICE MATCH AFTER PURCHASE

How many days do I have to ask for a price match?	How do I ask for a partial refund?	Does the retailer match lower prices found at other stores?
HOME DEPOT 30 to 90 days	If you bought the item in the store, visit in-store customer service. If you bought it online, request a refund on homedepot.com.*	Yes
CRUTCHFIELD 60 days	Ask for a price-match refund via phone or chat at crutchfield.com.	No
COSTCO 30 days	If you bought the item in the store, visit in-store customer service. If you bought it online, request a refund on costco.com.	No
BEST BUY 15 days for most items; longer for items purchased between 10/18/21 and 1/2/22	If you bought the item in the store, visit in-store customer service. If you bought it online, request via help chat on bestbuy.com. Requests must be made during the return and exchange period of the item.*	Yes
BED BATH & BEYOND 14 days	Call or visit customer service with your receipt, invoice, or shipping confirmation and documentation of a lower price.*	Yes
KOHL'S 14 days	If you bought the item in the store, visit in-store customer service with documentation of a lower price. If you bought it online, request a refund on kohls.com. Online prices from competing retailers are not honored.*	Yes
TARGET 14 days; longer for items purchased between 10/10/21 and 12/24/21	Call or visit customer service with your receipt and documentation of a lower price.	Yes
MACY'S 10 days	Email proof of an exact product match with a lower price to customerservice@macys.com.*	Yes

*There are restrictions on certain items.



1988 We test chicken offerings and find that only Burger King's Chicken Tenders are solely made from breast meat; McDonald's tenders include chicken skin.



1992 Chicken surpasses beef as Americans' most popular meat: Annual consumption is now 66.5 pounds eaten per person.



1997 CR's expert tester samples 15 chicken offerings from six food chains; McDonald's Grilled Chicken Deluxe is the best nutritional buy.

2010 Our tests find contamination in 66 percent of chicken. We call on the USDA to "make chicken less risky to eat."



2014 We analyze 316 raw samples of chicken from major brands. All contain worrisome levels of bacteria.

2022 Labels on grocery store chicken indicate how "humanely" a chicken is raised. Shown here: a good label to look for. Turn to page 37 for details.



HOW TO CLEAN PRACTICALLY ANYTHING™

Keep Pet Hair From Going Everywhere

REMOVING PET HAIR from clothing, throws, or even your own bedding can be a real chore—for you and your washing machine. Throwing fur-covered items directly into the wash can result in clumps of pet hair that stick to fabrics and the sides of the washer drum, potentially clogging the appliance's pumps and preventing water from

draining properly. And hair that's still plastered to the drum can end up in your next load of laundry.

That's why it's important to reduce the amount of pet hair on your bedding and clothing before you put it in the wash. Here's how to keep pet hair off your wardrobe and bedding—and out of your washing machine.



30 MINUTES
+ regular wash
and dry cycle

TOOLS NEEDED

- Lint roller or masking tape
- Rubber gloves
- Dryer sheets
- Fabric softener
- Rag or cloth



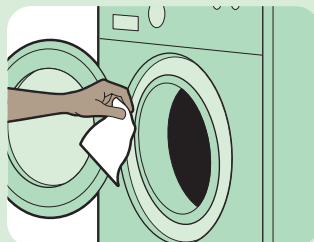
STEP 1

Brush your pet every day, or as close to every day as possible, placing what's in the brush directly into a trash bag. This helps keep loose pet hair to a minimum.



STEP 2

Remove embedded hair with a lint roller. For large items like sheets, put on a rubber glove, dampen it, and run it over the fabric. The hair will cling to the glove, so it's easier to gather and discard.



STEP 3

Run items through a 10-minute, no-heat dryer cycle with a dryer sheet. The tumbling helps loosen stubborn pet hair while the dryer sheet prevents hair from bonding to fabric. Once out of the dryer, give items a good shake. Clean the dryer's lint filter (where pet hair collects) after every load.



STEP 4

Move the items into the washing machine, and add a small amount of fabric softener, which helps loosen pet hair. (Don't use more than the bottle directs, because too much can build up in the machine and cause other problems.) Once the laundry is done, move it back to the dryer.



STEP 5

Run a wash cycle without laundry to clean the washing machine. After the cycle ends, wipe down the machine's drum with a wet cloth, which should pick up any leftover pet hairs still clinging to the sides.

TIME FOR A NEW WASHING MACHINE?

Here are some of CR's top-rated models under \$900.

✓ **Maytag**
MHW5630HW
\$855

81

OVERALL
SCORE



✓ **Samsung**
WF45T6000AW
\$760

78

OVERALL
SCORE



Amana
NFW5800HW
\$720

77

OVERALL
SCORE



For more ratings, Digital and All Access members can go to [CR.org/wash0122](https://www.consumerreports.org/wash0122).



FOOD IQ™

Alcohol-Free Libations You'll Love

THESE TASTY, ZERO-PROOF drinks are the perfect way to celebrate a special occasion or to simply unwind at the end of the day. The recipes at right, created for CR by dietitian Stephanie Clarke, RDN, all contain good-for-you ingredients such as probiotics, and they're also fairly low in sugar and calories.

Our virgin **Kombucha Mule** (a twist on a traditional Moscow Mule) uses blood oranges, robust winter citrus that's loaded with vitamin C. It also includes kombucha, a probiotic-rich fermented tea drink. The **Spiced Hot Toddy** is a warming choice on a cold day: It's slightly sweet and infused with spices like nutmeg. It's also rich in vitamin C and other antioxidants that may help ward off inflammation. The **Cranberry-Apple Fizz**—with vitamins C and E from cranberry juice—is festive enough for New Year's Eve and easy to make.

1. Kombucha Mule

8 ounces blood orange juice (juice of 3 to 4 blood oranges)
8 ounces ginger kombucha
2 tsp. lime juice
2 orange slices for garnish (optional)
Fresh mint leaves for garnish (optional)

CALORIES 63

CARBOHYDRATES 15 g

TOTAL SUGARS 12 g

SODIUM 3 mg

DIRECTIONS

Place 3 to 4 ice cubes or crushed ice into a traditional copper mule mug (shown above) or a short cocktail glass. Pour half the blood orange juice, half the kombucha, and a teaspoon of lime juice (or more to taste) into each mug and stir. Garnish with orange slices and mint sprigs, if desired.

2. Spiced Hot Toddy

16 ounces water
2 green tea bags
2 tsp. honey
¼ cup orange juice
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
¼ tsp. turmeric
¼ tsp. cinnamon
⅛ tsp. nutmeg
Cinnamon sticks and lemon wedges for garnish (optional)

CALORIES 40

CARBOHYDRATES 11 g

TOTAL SUGARS 8 g

SODIUM 8 mg

DIRECTIONS

Heat the water in a small saucepan until almost boiling. Reduce heat to low and add the tea bags. Let steep for 2 minutes. Remove tea bags. Add remaining ingredients and whisk in the pan until combined and heated through. Serve in glasses meant for hot liquids. Garnish with a cinnamon stick and lemon wedge, if desired.

3. Cranberry-Apple Fizz

6 ounces (¾ cup) unsweetened cranberry juice
6 ounces (¾ cup) sparkling apple cider
½ cup fresh (or frozen) cranberries
2 sprigs fresh rosemary

CALORIES 80

CARBOHYDRATES 20 g

TOTAL SUGARS 19 g

SODIUM 4 mg

DIRECTIONS

Add ice cubes to a short cocktail glass. Pour half the cranberry juice into each glass, then top with half the sparkling cider. Add cranberries (which, when frozen, double as extra ice cubes). Garnish with rosemary sprigs.

For more nutrition tips, turn to "Best Ways to Renew Body & Mind," on page 24.

PHOTOS: STEPHANIE CLARKE

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Get Cleaner Tap Water With an Under-Sink Filter

UNDER-SINK WATER FILTERS can deliver cleaner, better-tasting drinking water from a dispenser right next to your kitchen faucet. These filters make removing lead, chlorine, and other contaminants much easier than water filter pitchers. “They’re inherently more convenient,” says Richard Handel, the CR project leader who oversees water filters. “You just flip the tap on and filtered water comes out.” Of course, under-sink models cost more to purchase, install, and maintain (the filter cartridges typically need to be replaced every few months) than water filter pitchers—so you’ll want to make sure to pick one that offers excellent filtration.

We tested eight under-sink models, all certified to the NSF certification standard (an independent organization that has requirements for the safety and performance of water treatment products) for removing lead and chlorine, as well as for flavor and odor reduction. First, we spike a “control water” sample with contaminants that smell or taste like metal, compost, damp soil, a sewage treatment

plant, or a chlorinated pool. Then the water is put through each filter before we examine how well the filter removed those taints. Our experts also measure “flow rate,” how quickly a model filters 1 gallon of water. Our “clogging” score reflects how much the filter’s flow rate slowed over the filter’s life span; the slower the flow became, the lower the clogging score.

The four models below did the best across our rigorous tests, at a variety of prices.



✓ **Multipure Aquaversa MP750**
\$430

87

OVERALL SCORE



■ 5/5 FLAVOR & ODOR REDUCTION

■ 5/5 FLOW RATE

■ 5/5 CLOGGING

\$90 COST/YEAR

✓ **Brondell Coral UC100 Single-Stage**
\$100

86

OVERALL SCORE



■ 5/5 FLAVOR & ODOR REDUCTION

■ 4/5 FLOW RATE

■ 5/5 CLOGGING

\$100 COST/YEAR

✓ **Brondell Coral UC300 Three-Stage**
\$150

86

OVERALL SCORE



■ 5/5 FLAVOR & ODOR REDUCTION

■ 4/5 FLOW RATE

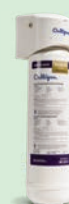
■ 5/5 CLOGGING

\$75 COST/YEAR

✓ **Culligan US-EZ-4**
\$85

83

OVERALL SCORE



■ 5/5 FLAVOR & ODOR REDUCTION

■ 4/5 FLOW RATE

■ 5/5 CLOGGING

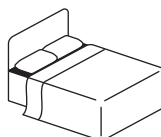
\$98 COST/YEAR

JANUARY
IS THE
BEST TIME
TO BUY ...

FITNESS TRACKERS



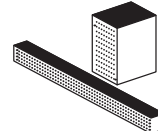
BEDDING



ELLIPTICALS



SOUND BARS





RECALLS

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

MAGNUSSEN HOME NOVA SERIES 5-DRAWER CHESTS

Magnussen Home is recalling about 13,200 Nova Series five-drawer chests (shown at right) because they are unstable if not anchored to the wall, posing tip-over and entrapment hazards that can result in death or serious injuries to children. The chests do not comply with the performance requirements of the voluntary industry standard. The chests were sold at furniture stores nationwide from August 2009 through August 2015 for about \$600.

What to do: Stop using the chest and call 833-748-0210 or go to magnussen.com for details. The amount of the refund will be prorated based on the age of the chest.

HUISH OUTDOORS SNORKELS

Huish Outdoors is recalling about 76,000 Oceanic adult dry top snorkels because the bottom purge valve on the snorkels can leak, allowing water entry and posing a drowning hazard. The snorkels were sold at Costco stores nationwide and online at costco.com from February 2021 through July 2021 for about \$40.

What to do: Stop using the snorkel and follow the instructions online at oceanicsnorkel.com to register for a free replacement, shipping included. You can also call 833-493-1029 for details.

MYCHARGE POWERBANKS

MyCharge is recalling about 67,000 myCharge powerbanks because the lithium-ion battery can overheat and ignite, posing fire and burn hazards. The powerbanks were sold at Best Buy, Brainstorm, Hirsch Gifts,

Hudson News, InMotion, Lapine, Power Sales, Projector World, and Target stores nationwide; online at Amazon, mycharge.com, and target.com; and through the U.S. Marine Corps/Navy Exchange from August 2018 through December 2019 for \$70 to \$100.

What to do: Stop using the powerbank. Contact myCharge at 888-251-2026 or go to mycharge.com for details and instructions on returning the battery to obtain a refund in the form of an electronic voucher for the full purchase price plus a 25 percent bonus for redemption.

KOHL'S ANTIGRAVITY CHAIRS

Kohl's is recalling about 31,000 Sonoma Goods for Life branded antigravity chairs because the chair can break or collapse when weight is applied, posing a fall hazard. The chairs were sold at Kohl's stores nationwide and online at kohls.com from January 2019 through June 2021 for about \$240.

What to do: Stop using the chair and return it to the nearest Kohl's store. Consumers with a receipt will receive a full refund, and consumers without a receipt will receive a store credit. Call Kohl's at 855-564-5755 or go to kohls.com for details.

MARTHA STEWART COLLECTION OIL AND VINEGAR CRUETS

Macy's is recalling about 26,150 Martha Stewart Collection oil and vinegar cruets because the glass portion of the cruets can break during use, posing a laceration hazard. The cruets were sold at Macy's stores nationwide and online at macys.com from July 2017 through July 2021 for about \$22.

What to do: Stop using the cruet. Return it to a Macy's store or call Macy's at 888-257-5949 for details and to return the product with free shipping for a full refund.



Magnussen Home Nova Series five-drawer chest

GAS ONE PROPANE HOSES

Gas One is recalling about 19,500 propane adapter hoses because the hose can swell during use and cause gas to leak, posing a fire hazard. The hoses were sold online at Amazon, eBay, gasone.com, homedepot.com, and walmart.com from December 2020 through February 2021 for \$9 to \$18.

What to do: Stop using the adapter hose. Contact Gas One at 800-698-5070 or go to gasone.com for details and to get a free replacement hose.

HOBBY LOBBY WOOD STOOLS

Hobby Lobby is recalling about 14,000 white wood stools because they can break during use, posing fall and injury hazards. The stools were sold at Hobby Lobby stores nationwide from June 2021 through July 2021 for about \$80.

What to do: Stop using the stool and return it to the nearest Hobby Lobby store for a full refund. Call 800-326-7931 or go to hobbylobby.com for details.

JOOVY JOGGING STROLLERS

Joovy is recalling about 9,200 Zoom 360 Ultralight jogging strollers because the stroller's front-wheel bearing can fail or detach, posing fall and injury hazards. The strollers were sold at independent specialty juvenile stores nationwide and online at joovy.com, Amazon, buybuybaby.com, and target.com from May 2020 through December 2020 for about \$250.

What to do: Stop using the stroller. Call 800-495-8718 or go to joovy.com for details and to get a free repair kit to replace the front-wheel fork bearing.

POLARIS PHOENIX 200 ATVs

Polaris is recalling about 13,000 model year 2011-2021 Phoenix 200 ATVs because the throttle speed control stop can break and become stuck, posing a crash hazard. The ATVs were sold at Polaris dealers nationwide from September 2010 through June 2021 for \$3,500 to \$4,300.

What to do: Stop using the ATV. Call 800-765-2747 or go to polaris.com and click on "Off-Road Safety Recalls" for details and to get a free replacement throttle speed control bracket.

PRODUCT UPDATE



THE LATEST
RATINGS FROM
OUR LABS



\$ BROTHER
HL-L2370DW
BLACK-AND-WHITE
LASER PRINTER
\$140

80 OVERALL
SCORE



✓ EPSON ECOTANK
ET-2720 ALL-IN-ONE
INKJET TANK PRINTER
\$200

62 OVERALL
SCORE



✓ CANON PIXMA
TR7020 ALL-IN-ONE
INKJET
\$150

64 OVERALL
SCORE

Save Big on a Great New Printer

The best models in our tests deliver crisp text and sharp images—and won't cost you hundreds for ink.

by Thomas Germain

IT'S EASY TO see why you might want a printer at home, even in the digital age. They're great for seeing your work on paper, for homework, and for art projects. Certain official documents may need handwritten signatures. Or you might want to print a recipe, letter, or shipping label.

But buying a printer can be oddly complicated. You'll have to decide which basic type you want—laser or inkjet—and which features you need. And if you've been burned by high ink prices before, you know how important it is to find one that won't waste your money. To streamline the decision process, start by asking yourself a few simple questions. Then refer to our ratings starting on page 22 to see the top models in our tests.

How Much Do You Print?

Ink costs can quickly add up, so it's essential to factor your usage into the equation when choosing a printer. (See "The Real Cost of That Bargain Printer," at right.) Begin by thinking about how you plan to use your printer.

If you need to print in color and expect to print upward of 30 or 40 pages a month, we recommend investing in a tank printer, which is an inkjet that uses a refillable ink reservoir instead of ready-to-use cartridges. Tank printers do typically cost more up front—between \$200 and \$600—but the savings add up fast because annual ink costs are usually under \$10. By comparison, the cheapest traditional inkjets sell for about \$50, but many use well over \$100 worth of ink per year. Expert tip: Our testers say you should be skeptical about any printer that costs less than \$100. That's often the sign of a printer that will gouge you on ink.

A conventional all-in-one inkjet can make sense for those who need color and print fewer than 30 pages



THE REAL COST OF THAT BARGAIN PRINTER

Start shopping for a new printer and you'll see prices from \$35 to \$700. Which would you rather pay? The answer isn't as easy as it seems, because you also have to factor in the cost of ink over time, just like you think about fuel efficiency when you're buying a car.

Take the Epson Workforce WF-2850, for example. This all-in-one inkjet sells for as little as \$70, which sounds like a deal—except we've found that the average user would spend \$171 per year on ink.

To help you find a model's real price, CR's testers measure how quickly a printer burns through ink or toner during typical use, and factor in the cost of replacement cartridges. We've found that ink costs per year range from \$3 to well over \$100.

You can use that number to help you compare models as you shop. As shown below, a seemingly low-priced printer may in fact be no bargain.

Epson EcoTank ET 2720		Brother MFC J491DW	
\$200	RETAIL PRICE	\$95	
\$6	ANNUAL INK	\$88	
AFTER 5 YEARS			
\$230	TOTAL	\$535	

a month. But an unused inkjet will pump ink through the machine to keep the printheads unclogged. So if you don't print often, look for a Very Good or Excellent rating for maintenance ink use or you'll waste money on ink that doesn't even wind up on a page. Excluding the exceptionally good and bad performers, typical ink costs range from about \$30 to \$150 per year.

If you don't need color, go for a black-and-white laser printer. Median toner costs for all-in-one black-and-white lasers are just \$15 per year. That's so cost-effective you might consider sacrificing color. Lasers are great no matter how often you print because they don't have printheads to clean. Plus they use toner, a powder that has a much longer shelf life than ink.

Are Graphics Important?

Color laser printers are best for professional-quality graphics, but they're expensive: \$300 and up. (For our color laser recommendations, Digital and All Access members can go to [CR.org/printers0122](https://www.consumerreports.org/printers0122).)

Inkjets are more affordable, and the best deliver graphics that are clear and legible, though images may have under-saturated colors and edges that aren't perfectly crisp. If you want to print photos, look for an inkjet that scores well for photo quality—but know that those models tend to use a lot of ink.


Do You Need Other Features?

If you want a printer that can also copy, scan, and fax, look for an all-in-one model—laser or inkjet—the most widely sold printer type on the market.

Almost every new printer works wirelessly. Certain models don't have an Ethernet port, so double check if you want to hardwire your machine to the internet instead of using WiFi.

Another feature that isn't available on every model is auto-duplexing, for printing on both sides of a page. It saves paper—and money.

Ratings ➤ **The Fine Print** Don't overlook regular black-and-white lasers. You'll give up the scanner and color printing, but ownership costs can be exceptionally low, and most boast excellent reliability.

Brand + Model		Overall Score	Price	Survey Results	Test Results						Features + Specs									
<div></div>				Predicted reliability Owner satisfaction	Text quality	Text speed	Graphics quality	Photo quality	Maintenance ink use	Scan quality	Ink cost/year	Auto-duplex printing	Automatic document feeder	Text speed (ppm)	Color text speed (ppm)	8x10 photo time (min.)	Individual color cartridges	Can print if color is empty	Networking	Standard sheet capacity

ALL-IN-ONE INKJET PRINTERS


💰	Brother MFC-J895DW	69	\$130	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	\$88	●	●	10.7	10.3	1.1	●		A, W	150
💰	Canon Pixma MG3620	64	\$80	🟡	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟢	\$56	●		8.8	8.3	3.4		●	A, W	100
✔️	Canon Pixma TR7020	64	\$150	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢	\$78	●	●	9.7	9.1	3.6		●	A, W	100
✔️	Canon Pixma TS6420	64	\$130	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	🟢	\$79	●		10.3	9.4	3.4		●	A, W	100
✔️	HP OfficeJet 250 Mobile	63	\$420	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	\$48			10.0	10.0	1.7		●	A, W	50
✔️	HP Envy Photo 7155	62	\$200	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	\$77	●		9.4	9.4	2.4		●	A, W	125
✔️	Brother MFC-J491DW	61	\$95	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	\$88	●	●	10.7	9.4	7.3	●		A, W	100
✔️	Brother MFC-J497DW	61	\$90	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	\$88	●	●	10.7	9.4	7.3	●		A, W	100

ALL-IN-ONE TANK INKJET PRINTERS

✔️	Epson EcoTank Photo ET-8500	72	\$600	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	NA	🟢	\$7	●		10.7	10.7	5.9	●		A, E, W	100
✔️	Epson EcoTank ET-15000	63	\$600	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	NA	🟡	\$5	●	●	12.5	11.5	3.2	●		A, E, W	250
✔️	Epson EcoTank ET-2720	62	\$200	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟢	NA	🟢	\$6			8.8	7.9	9.5	●		A, W	100
✔️	Epson EcoTank Pro ET-5170	62	\$550	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	NA	🟢	\$9	●	●	4.8	4.8	3.2	●		A, E, W	250
✔️	Epson EcoTank Pro ET-5150	62	\$500	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	NA	🟢	\$9	●	●	4.8	4.8	3.2	●		A, E, W	250
✔️	Epson EcoTank ET-3760	61	\$400	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟢	🔴	🟡	NA	🟡	\$4	●	●	12.5	11.5	3.0	●		A, E, W	150
✔️	Epson EcoTank ET-3710	61	\$330	🟡	🟢	🔴	🟢	🟡	🟡	NA	🟢	\$4	●		12.5	10.7	3.3	●		A, E, W	150

ALL-IN-ONE BLACK-AND-WHITE LASER PRINTERS

✔️	Brother MFC-L5700DW	78	\$365	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	NA	🟢	🟢	\$6	●	●	23.1					A, E, W	250
✔️	Brother DCP-L5500DN	78	\$320	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	NA	🟢	🟢	\$6	●	●	23.1					A, E	250
✔️	Brother MFC-L2750DW	78	\$270	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	NA	🟢	🟢	\$11	●	●	14.3					A, E, W	250
✔️	Canon ImageClass MF269dw	78	\$300	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	NA	🟢	🟢	\$5	●	●	27.3					A, E, W	250
✔️	Canon ImageClass MF267dw	77	\$250	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡	NA	🟢	🟢	\$10	●	●	20.0					A, E, W	250
💰	Brother HL-L2395DW	77	\$200	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	NA	🟢	🟢	\$16	●		18.8					A, E, W	250
💰	Canon ImageClass MF264dw	77	\$200	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	NA	🟢	🟢	\$13	●	●	20.0					A, E, W	250
💰	Brother MFC-L2690DW	76	\$200	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	NA	🟢	🟢	\$16	●	●	16.7					A, W	250
💰	Brother MFC-L2710DW	76	\$220	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	NA	🟢	🟢	\$9	●	●	16.7					A, E, W	250
✔️	Canon ImageClass D1620	76	\$500	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔴	NA	🟢	🟢	\$15	●	●	13.0					A, E, W	550

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results	Test Results	Features + Specs
			Predicted reliability Owner satisfaction	Text quality Text speed Graphics quality Photo quality Maintenance ink use Scan quality	Ink cost/year Auto-duplex printing Automatic document feeder Text speed (ppm) Color text speed (ppm) 8x10 photo time (min.) Individual color cartridges Can print if color is empty Networking Standard sheet capacity

ALL-IN-ONE BLACK-AND-WHITE LASER PRINTERS *Continued*

✓ Brother MFC-L2720DW	76	\$235	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑↑	↑	\$11	●	●	18.8				A, E, W	250
✓ HP LaserJet MFP M234sdw	75	\$300	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	NA	↑	↑	\$18	●	●	20.0				A, E, W	150
✓ HP LaserJet MFP M234dw	75	\$250	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	NA	↑	↑	\$18	●		20.0				A, E, W	150
✓ HP LaserJet MFP M234dwe	75	\$230	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	NA	↑	↑	\$18	●		20.0				A, E, W	150

BLACK-AND-WHITE LASER PRINTERS

💰 Brother HL-L2370DW	80	\$140	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$15	●		17.6				A, E, W	100
✓ Brother HL-L2370DW XL	80	\$240	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$15	●		17.6				A, E, W	100
💰 Brother HL-L2350DW	80	\$140	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$10	●		16.7				A, W	250
✓ HP LaserJet M209dwe	78	\$170	↑↑	↑↑	↑	↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$18	●		20.0				A, E, W	150
✓ Brother HL-L5200DW	77	\$230	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$6	●		23.1				A, E, W	250
✓ Brother HL-L6200DW	77	\$275	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$5	●		25.0				A, E, W	520
✓ HP LaserJet Pro M404dw	75	\$380	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$13	●		25.0				A, E, W	250
✓ HP LaserJet Pro M203dw	74	\$190	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$9	●		16.7				A, E, W	250
✓ HP LaserJet Pro M404n	74	\$300	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$13			23.1				A, E	250
💰 HP LaserJet Pro M15w	73	\$120	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$22			14.3				A, W	150
✓ Canon ImageClass LBP162dw	72	\$200	↑↑	↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$14			21.4				A, E, W	250
✓ HP Neverstop 1001nw	72	\$290	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$2			10.7				A, E, W	150
✓ HP LaserJet Pro M404dn	72	\$380	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$12	●		21.4				A, E	250
💰 HP LaserJet Pro M118dw	71	\$130	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$11	●		18.8				A, E, W	250
✓ Lexmark B2338dw	71	\$200	↑	↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$14	●		21.4				A, E, W	250
✓ Canon ImageClass LBP113w	71	\$170	↑↑	↑	↑↑	↑↑	↓	NA	↑	NA	\$16			15.8				A, W	150

> Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at [CR.org/printers](https://www.consumerreports.org/printers).

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score combines test results with survey data for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction. Predicted reliability estimates the likelihood that a newly purchased model from a given brand will develop problems within the first four years. Owner satisfaction reflects the proportion of CR members who are extremely likely to recommend the printer they bought.

Text quality assesses clarity and crispness of black text. Text speed reflects how quickly the model can print text on five plain, letter-sized pages. For 30 seconds or less, the printer receives an Excellent score; 31 to 60 seconds, Very Good; 61 to 90 seconds, Good; 91 to 120 seconds, Fair; and longer than 120 seconds, Poor. Graphics quality assesses the appearance of color

graphics produced by the printer. Black-and-white lasers are judged on black-and-white graphics. Photo quality reflects a photo's appearance. Maintenance ink use reflects the amount of extra ink used by a printer to maintain its printheads. (We don't test tank models for maintenance ink use; laser models, which use toner, don't measurably waste any.) Scan quality is for color

photos, graphics, and text scanned at each model's default settings. Ink cost/year is the estimated cost for ink or toner in a year of typical use, based on our tests and how members told us they print. Text speed (ppm) is our measure of how many pages of monochrome text the printer can produce per minute. Under Networking, A=Apple AirPrint, E=Ethernet, and W=Wifi. Price is approximate retail.



Best Ways to Renew

BODY

&

by **Ashley Abramson**
and
Sally Wadyka

MIND

Self-care is more than a buzzword—it's a must right now. Here are 17 fresh ideas that can shake up your routine and make this year healthier and happier.



PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
ROB AND JULIA CAMPBELL/STOCKSY; GETTY IMAGES (2)



You know that you should probably get more exercise and sleep. You know that you should meditate and

that it's important to eat less sugar and rein in your binge-watching.

You know, you know, you know.

But it has been a challenging and in some ways catastrophic year and a

half. So you're probably in a rut—almost everyone is—and don't know how to get your mojo back.

Quit blaming yourself, behavior scientist BJ Fogg, PhD, says in his book “Tiny Habits” (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020). And don't waste time searching for one magic product that will make everything better.

Instead, “take your aspirations and break them down into tiny behaviors.” The truth is, small adjustments and actions can add up.

And if the tried-and-true just doesn't motivate you, we've found a bunch of novel ways to help you get unstuck and restore your sense of well-being.

Let's get started.



CALM YOUR MIND



Feeling worried and nervous is a reasonable response to uncertain circumstances. In an October nationally representative Consumer Reports survey of 2,036 people, 42 percent of Americans said they're experiencing more anxiety than they did before the pandemic.

Untended, chronic stress can lead to digestive issues and headaches, and is linked to a higher risk of anxiety, depression, and heart disease. But therapists are in short supply. So if your normal coping mechanisms aren't cutting it and you're looking for practical new ways to ease your unease, consider the following de-stressors. (If you suspect an anxiety disorder or depression, alert your primary care provider, or call 800-273-TALK if you're in a moment of crisis.)

—Ashley Abramson



GREEN YOUR SPACE

IT'S NOT SURPRISING that sales of houseplants are absolutely booming right now. The greenery can keep indoor air cleaner, and seeing and nurturing it can help you feel more tranquil and more connected to nature.

Case in point: In a 2021 survey of 4,205 people, published in the journal *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, three-quarters of respondents said the presence of indoor vegetation positively contributed to their mood and was linked to greater calmness, cheerfulness, and optimism, and less fearfulness, sadness, and stress.

This all makes good sense when you think about our ancestral conditions, says Kate Truitt, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Pasadena, Calif. "The brain and body are designed to live immersed in plants and to have a symbiotic relationship with the world around us," she says.

PHOTO: TOP: GETTY IMAGES; TOP RIGHT: ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

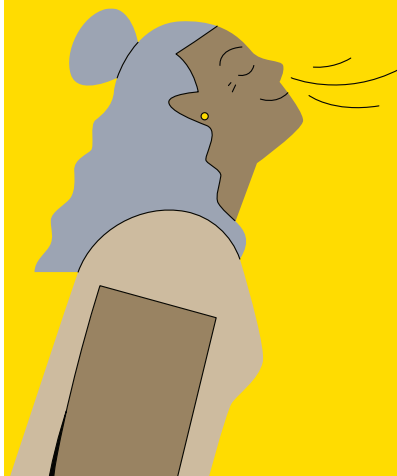
Cozy Up Under a Weighted Blanket

AS WE'VE LOOKED FOR WAYS to cope with anxiety, sales of weighted blankets—which are filled with small glass or plastic beads—have risen. Think of the soothing effect of a hug, and you get a sense of the appeal. "It's giving your body an external stimulus of comfort and safety, which can create comfort and safety in the brain," says Kate Truitt, PhD.

There's some scientific reason for their popularity. A review published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* in 2020 suggested that weighted blankets can be an effective way to quell anxiety. And a 2020 trial found that they reduced insomnia and daytime fatigue in people with ADHD, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and depression.

Interested? Aim for a blanket that's about 10 percent of your body weight.

Try Nasal Breathing



If you don't have much of a green thumb, check out harder-to-kill items such as the baby rubber plant, cast-iron plant, Chinese evergreen, corn plant, heart-leaf philodendron, parlor palm, snake plant, spider plant, and pothos. And you don't need a whole lot of flora. Even adding a few plants to your home can bring major mood benefits, Truitt says.



WHEN WE'RE NERVOUS, we tend to take quick, shallow breaths—often only through our mouth (like a panting dog).

But that simply increases the anxious feelings. Nasal breathing, or breathing in through your nose instead of your mouth, makes it much easier to take long, calming breaths because it brings a lot more oxygen into the body.

"Shallow breaths cause us to hold in CO₂, which depletes energy

stores and triggers the brain into thinking something's wrong," says Truitt, the clinical psychologist. "Oxygen essentially sends a message to the brain that we're okay."

Bonus: Breathing this way warms the air you take in, which helps your lungs make better use of oxygen and relaxes you even more.

Truitt recommends that you inhale through your nose, hold it, and inhale through your nose again. Exhale through your mouth for

longer than you've inhaled. (Aim for a slow count of 2, then a slow count of 3 for the extra inhalation.)

Or try this simpler approach: Inhale slowly through your nose, then exhale even more slowly through your mouth. Doing this even three to four times, which takes less than a minute, should help calm you.

You can add this sort of breath work to your daily routine, or use it anytime you feel particularly stressed.

CR
TESTED

RELAXATION TOOLS

SUPER-CUSHY



HEMINGWEIGH 1-INCH-THICK YOGA MAT

FROM \$30

■ 5/5 CUSHIONING

GREAT GRIP



LULULEMON TAKE FORM YOGA MAT

FROM \$130

■ 4/5 CUSHIONING

MACHINE-WASHABLE



LUNA WEIGHTED BLANKET

\$70-\$75

■ 14.44 LB. WEIGHT (72"x48")



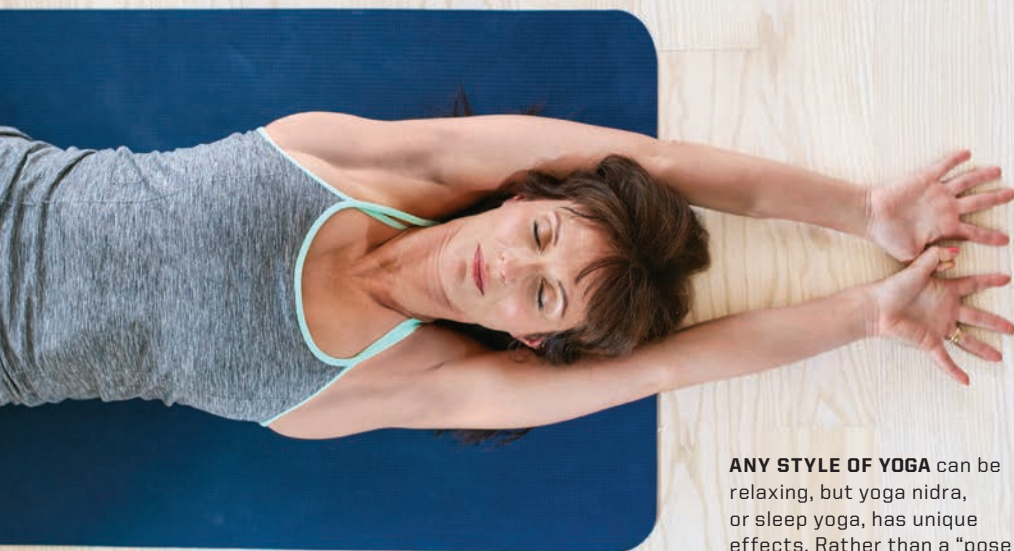
CHILL OUT WITH A SLOW BEAT

HEARING FAVORITE TUNES can boost your mood, reduce anxiety and blood pressure, and even slow a rapid heart rate. Formal music therapy—listening to or creating music with a therapist to achieve certain mental health goals—may alleviate pain, minimize stress, and ease symptoms of depression.

But research suggests that not all music has such effects. One study found that while Mozart—notably his Symphony No. 40—lowered participants' heart rates, ABBA did not.

So if you want sound to soothe, consider a DIY version of music therapy using a carefully curated playlist. For maximum calm and cool, choose music with a slow beat. Research shows that songs with a tempo of 60 beats per minute (such as Elton John's "Can You Feel the Love Tonight") create an alpha wave brain state, which Truitt describes as a "low-grade chilling brain wave." (Want song suggestions? You can find alpha wave playlists on many streaming services.)

If even slow beats are not relaxing enough, consider a sound bath, a meditative practice that uses sound waves from Tibetan singing bowls and other instruments. In a small 2016 study, most people reported improvements in anxiety, mood, and pain after a 60-minute sound bath. Some yoga studios host these aural experiences; or do it at home via a sound bath channel on YouTube.



RECLINE INTO SLEEP YOGA

ANY STYLE OF YOGA can be relaxing, but yoga nidra, or sleep yoga, has unique effects. Rather than a “pose and hold till your muscles are shaking” yoga, it’s more akin to a guided meditation—except you can lie on your back the whole time. The result, for many, is a deep quietude that physiologically mimics sleep and leaves practitioners feeling restored.

Studies suggest that yoga nidra can induce calm by activating what’s called the parasympathetic nervous system and triggering the release of the sleep-regulating hormone melatonin.

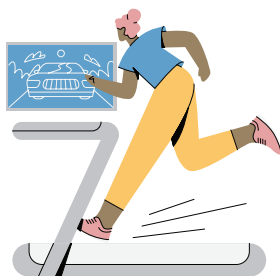
A 20- to 40-minute class is a great way to try out yoga nidra, but you can also explore it at home using instructions from YouTube. In a class, you’d lie on a yoga mat or sit up with support; at home, you can sit in a chair or lie on your bed.

While you can do yoga nidra anytime, it may be ideal right before bed, says Michelle Schultz, director of Firefly Yoga Loft in Wauwatosa, Wis. Before you begin, take two simple steps, she says: Find a comfortable position, and prepare yourself to be still.

Ditch the Bad Habits and Create Better Ones

MAKING AND BREAKING habits isn’t just a matter of willpower. Indeed, tested strategies can short-circuit negative patterns and move you toward the positive. These three steps can really help, says psychologist Wendy Wood, PhD, a professor at USC and the author of “Good Habits, Bad Habits” (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

1 Watch Netflix while you work out.



If you dread a task, you’ll be far less likely to commit to it. Set yourself up for positive change by making your new behaviors more pleasurable. Wood suggests “temptation bundling,” or pairing a not-so-enjoyable activity with one you enjoy. Not looking forward to 30 minutes on a treadmill? Turn on the show you’re currently binge-watching or listen to a compelling podcast. Build a walking habit by meeting up with a friend,

or prep healthy meals with your favorite music on. “We’re more likely to repeat what’s fun and rewarding in some way,” Wood says.

2 Drive home by the gym, not the bakery.

Ever notice how much easier it is to shift routines when you move to a new place or start a new job? Habits go hand in hand with context, Wood says. When your surroundings stay the same, it’s that much harder to create meaningful changes. But you don’t have to shift your residence. Switching up context in minor but creative ways can also help old habits fade and set the stage for new ones. For example, if you usually stop at a fast-food restaurant on your way home from work, reroute

your commute so you drive by the park or gym instead.

3 Keep your running shoes by the door.

Removing roadblocks between yourself and your positive habits can make a big difference. When a data analytics company tracked people through their phones, they found that those who traveled 3.7 miles to the gym went about five times a month, while those with a 5.1-mile trip went only once a month. “That’s a very small difference [in mileage], but represents that convenience makes it more likely you’ll do something,” Wood says. So consider what you can do to make your habits feel like no-brainers, whether it’s keeping your sneakers in plain sight, joining the closest fitness center, or stocking your fridge with healthy, easy-prep foods.



MOVE IN NEW WAYS



Routine exercise is key for wellness, and 24 percent of people in CR's survey said they ramped up activity during the pandemic. (Almost one-third, though, reported a drop.) Wherever you are, keep this in mind: What all those reminders to get moving don't tell you is that over time, your body adapts to physical challenges. So while a mile run might have given you a heart-

pumping workout when you first started doing it, once it starts feeling easy, you won't get the same health gains.

Switching up your regular fitness practice is a powerful way to get more out of exercise. "Variety isn't only good for the body, but also for your mental state," says exercise physiologist Kyle Kercher, a certified American College of Sports Medicine personal trainer. "It can prevent workouts from feeling repetitive and stale." Whether you're hoping to increase the benefits of workouts or just want to find a fun physical activity, these ideas can leave your body feeling stronger and better.

—Ashley Abramson

Add Some Weight to Your Walks

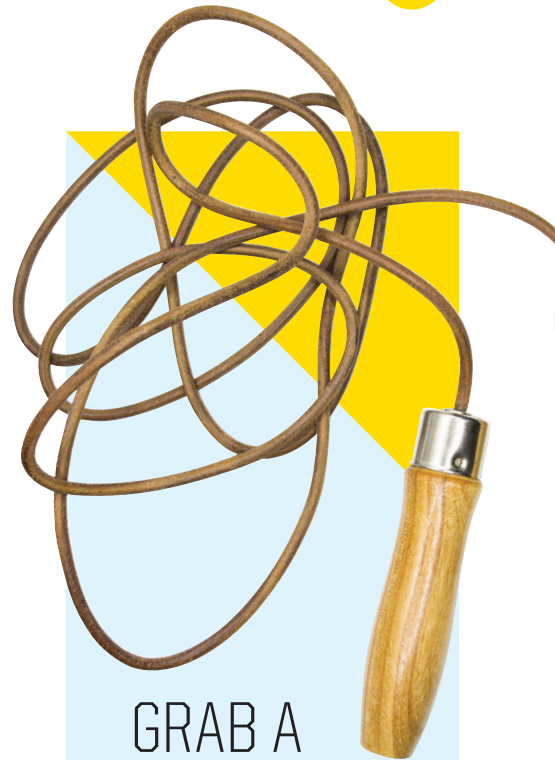


WALKING IS a great way to stay active, but adding a bit of weight to this workout can force your heart to work harder and, in turn, increase the cardio benefits you receive.

Rucking, where you wear a weighted vest or carry a weighted backpack, offers one possible approach for augmenting a walk or hike. Vests that carry 20- or 30-pound flat, compact weights called ruck plates are an easy way to increase the load while reducing strain on

your back; one example is the Ruck Plate Carrier 2.0, \$95. But you can also simply carry a free weight or two in your backpack. If you have neck or back pain, check with your doctor before toting weights around.

Want to add intensity to your workouts without additional equipment? Incorporate occasional lunges, squats, or pushups, Kercher says. Vary your pace and diversify walking terrain to keep your heart challenged and your walks interesting.



GRAB A JUMP ROPE

NOT A RUNNER but want to reap the sport's cardiovascular benefits? Try jumping rope. "You can get a really great jump rope workout in 5 or 10 minutes," says exercise physiologist Kyle Kercher.

While jumping rope is pretty straightforward, it's intense, and you may need to ease into it. Kercher suggests splitting your jump rope workout into 30-second or 1-minute sets, depending on your fitness level. Start with two or three sets, then work your way up to five to 10 as your endurance improves (and your calves and ankles feel better about repetitive jumps).

For those who want to do more, a weighted jump rope can make the workout more challenging, while a smart jump rope can count your revolutions and track your cardio exercise when you connect it to your smartphone.



TREAT YOURSELF TO A SELF-MASSAGE

MASSAGE IS a research-backed method for soothing aches, pain, and stiffness—and can help reduce muscle soreness after exercise. If seeing a massage therapist isn't an option, you can try self-massage using basic tools you may have at home. Just be sure to avoid massaging bones, joints, and injured areas, and talk to a doctor about any soreness that doesn't go away.

Kercher suggests foam rollers for large muscles, such as your upper back, calves, hamstrings, and glutes: Lie on the floor with the roller beneath you and roll on the area that needs relief. Or use two tennis balls taped together with athletic tape. Simply place the balls between your body and the wall, then roll up and down.

Powered devices, such as massage

guns, can be useful because they vibrate faster and can go deeper into the muscles. Simply pinpoint the spot where you are experiencing muscle soreness, and gently run the massager over it for 5 or 6 minutes to relieve pain, says Shashank Davé, DO, an associate professor of clinical physical medicine and rehabilitation at the Indiana University School of Medicine.



Put Tech to Work for You



AMONG PEOPLE who have made positive changes to their health habits during the pandemic, 1 in 5 say they are more often using apps designed to improve physical or mental health, according to CR's survey. These three tech tools can provide an exercise routine or relaxation on demand.

Alexa's Mini-Workouts

Amazon's Alexa offers various workouts, relaxation exercises, yoga instructions, and more. You'll need a smart speaker that works with Alexa, such as an Amazon Echo device. On your Alexa app, tap More, then Skills & Games, and enter "fitness" in search. See something you

like? Ask Alexa to start the "skill," or select it, then tap Launch. (Some may have a fee.)

Apple Watch Walks

If you're an Apple Fitness+ subscriber, the Time to Walk feature may help you take more (and longer) walks. Each episode simulates a walk with a public figure—such as Dolly Parton—who shares inspiring stories while they, too, are on an actual walk. After the story, you'll hear a playlist of motivating songs curated by the week's guest. Fitness+ is available inside the Fitness app on any Apple device. After a free trial, it costs \$10 per month or \$80 annually.

Fitbit's Mood Monitor

Feeling a little overwhelmed? Some wearable devices can make it easy to monitor and even alter your physiological state. The Fitbit Sense smartwatch, starting at \$300, has a built-in sensor that quantifies stress by measuring tiny changes in sweat that are linked to spikes in stress. Simply place your palm over the screen for 2 minutes to get a reading, then log your mood. With a Fitbit premium membership, \$10 per month, you can also practice guided meditation using the device, then measure your stress again afterward to see how much it has come down.



Learn This Treadmill Skill

IF YOU HAVE access to a treadmill, you can do more than just walk or run in place. Consider trying a so-called sled workout, which Kercher says can engage your core and work your upper and lower body at the same time. To do this, turn the machine off. Then hold on to the handrails and manually push the belt with your feet to mimic the effects of pushing a weighted sled across the floor. (If you're at the gym, make sure to ask first; at home, make sure your treadmill can withstand a sled workout without voiding the warranty.)

For another challenge, you can try your machine's interval training programs or increase the incline. Kercher also likes to use the treadmill as part of a DIY circuit workout. He advises starting with short, intense intervals of 10 to 20 seconds on the treadmill, then (after stopping the machine completely and stepping off), 60 seconds of lifting. Rest for 30 seconds, and repeat, aiming for five to 10 rounds.

USE HEAT TO MELT AWAY PAIN



SAUNAS HAVE BEEN found to ease muscle, joint, and back pain, promote relaxation, and reduce the risks of high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. Mayo Clinic research suggests the health effects are similar to moderate-

or high-intensity physical activity.

Full-on home saunas can cost thousands, but less expensive, one-person options—some of which look like small, wearable tents—are on the market, too. Also available: the HigherDose Sauna

Blanket, \$500, which uses infrared heat, though there are no studies yet on its efficacy or safety. The simplest saunalike experience of all might be the one you can create by steaming up a home bathroom and sitting inside.

Note that the latter two options may be soothing but might not have the same benefits as traditional saunas, which are healing largely because of their unusual high-heat, low-humidity environment, says Jari Laukkanen, MD, PhD, a professor of cardiology at the University of Eastern Finland.

The good news? Finding a real sauna may be as easy as taking a trip to a local gym or community center.

CR
TESTED

FITNESS FINDS



SORE-MUSCLE SOOTHER

RENPHO R3 MASSAGE GUN
\$100

5/5 EASE OF USE



BUDGET BUY

NAUTILUS T616 TREADMILL
\$1,150

84 OVERALL SCORE



MULTITASKING PRO

APPLE WATCH SE SMARTWATCH 40 MM (GPS + CELLULAR)
FROM \$330

86 OVERALL SCORE



CHECKS STEPS AND STRESS

FITBIT SENSE SMARTWATCH
FROM \$300

80 OVERALL SCORE



EAT SMARTER



To reset your eating habits, experts suggest thinking about the kinds of foods you want to add to your diet, instead of those you feel like you should ditch. "By focusing mental energy on ways to include more whole, plant-based foods, there's no

wasted time or effort fixating on what is 'wrong' or what needs to be cut out," says Rachel Cheatham, PhD, adjunct assistant professor at the Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy.

—Sally Wadyka



Get More Protein From Plants

WE'VE LONG KNOWN that plant foods such as lentils and soybeans can supply protein, but today, companies such as Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods seek to mimic the taste and texture of meat with plant products. Sales of plant-based meats jumped 45 percent in 2020.

Studies have linked plant-based diets with a lower risk of heart disease. Here's why: Whole plant foods offer plenty of heart-healthy fiber and nutrients, but eating them also probably means consuming less red and processed meat.

You don't have to give up meat entirely to get the benefits of plant-based eating. A study published in

2019 in the journal *Circulation* found that even swapping a single serving of red meat for nuts or soybeans could improve cholesterol.

With so many plant-based options, the trick is sorting through them to find the healthiest choices. "Being plant-based doesn't automatically make it healthy," says Penny Kris-Etherton, PhD, a professor of nutritional sciences at Penn State. The smartest move, she says, is to stick to actual plants—such as beans, legumes, and nuts.

With newer products, opt for those that are more plant-forward, with few ingredients and little or no sugar and sodium, she says.



Tuck Into Healthy Fats

WE'VE BEEN TOLD forever that the key to losing weight is to take in fewer calories than you burn off and that having a surplus of calories means you'll store more fat and gain weight. But "we need new thinking," says David Ludwig, MD, PhD, co-director of the New Balance Foundation Obesity Prevention Center at Boston Children's Hospital. "Focus on where your calories come from, instead of the number."

Highly processed carbohydrates, for example, raise insulin levels more than other foods. Try replacing processed, carb-laden foods such as white bread and sugary drinks with more nutritious and more satisfying options. "If you eat a meal with fewer processed carbs and more nutrient-dense, high-fat foods such as avocados, nuts, and oils, you might consume more calories," Ludwig says. "But you'll also stay fuller longer." Plus, higher-quality calories may reward you with more energy throughout the day.

Grow Your Own Microgreens

MICROGREENS MAY BE TINY, but they pack a big nutritional punch. These seedlings of edible plants come in a variety of types, such as broccoli and arugula, and can typically be found in the produce sections of food stores. They are also easy and fast to grow yourself (just search online for “grow microgreens at home”).

Microgreens, baby plants in a rapid

growth phase, “can provide 20 to 30 times more nutrients,” like iron, magnesium, potassium, and zinc, than mature plants, says Rachel Cheatham, PhD. The flavor of microgreens is also highly concentrated, making them better as an accent than a meal. Toss a handful into a salad or use as a garnish on soup or pasta.



Give Teff a Taste

WHILE THERE'S NO official definition for the term “ancient grain,” it generally refers to heirloom grains that have gone unaltered for several hundred years. Those currently enjoying a comeback from years ago include amaranth, farro, freekeh, millet, and teff.

Like all whole grains, which can help lower cholesterol and decrease colon cancer risk, these are better for you than white rice, white flour, or plain pasta. And many “have much more protein than the traditional grains, plus fiber, vitamin A, folate, and calcium,” says Celine Beitchman, MS, director of nutrition at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City.

They can also make mundane meals more interesting by adding variety and texture. “Buy small quantities of many different grains to try,” Beitchman says. “Work one new one into your repertoire each week to find new favorites.”

Small ancient grains—such as amaranth, millet, and teff—cook fast and are highly versatile. You can make them into a breakfast porridge or a vegetable pilaf side dish, or shape into a loaf, slice, and bake like polenta.



EASY TO CUSTOMIZE



HOME CHEF MEAL DELIVERY KIT

\$9 and up per serving, plus shipping

■ 5/5 USABILITY

OFFERS NEW OPTIONS



SUNBASKET MEAL DELIVERY KIT

\$9 and up per serving, plus shipping

■ 5/5 USABILITY

TOPS IN TIMELINESS



SHIPIT ONLINE GROCERY DELIVERY FEES VARY

79 OVERALL SATISFACTION SCORE



DISCOVER ENTICING NO-ALCOHOL SPIRITS

THE DAYS of O'Doul's, seltzer, or nothing are long gone. You can now get beer, wine, gin, whiskey, rum, and other boozy drinks without the alcohol, thanks to products such as Tost sparkling wine alternative, Monday Zero Alcohol Gin, and craft IPAs from Athletic Brewing Co. Sales of these low- and no-alcohol spirits increased almost 33 percent between 2019 and 2020 as the options proliferated. (For tasty DIY alcohol-free cocktail recipes, see page 17.)

But isn't an alcoholic drink a day good for you? “Supporting evidence is weak, and even moderate alcohol consumption is linked to other health issues—like sleep interference and cancer, especially breast cancer in women,” says Michael Criqui, MD, MPH, distinguished professor emeritus in the division of preventive medicine at the UCSD School of Medicine. “In a recent study that analyzed information from nearly 600 studies, we concluded that the amount of alcohol that improves health is none.”

Still, remember that a drink without alcohol isn't necessarily healthy. Watch out for added sugars, sweeteners, and other ingredients you want to minimize, and enjoy in moderation.



Mass Production

Workers process about 200,000 birds per day at a Costco meat processing plant in Nebraska.





IS COSTCO CHICKEN GOOD FOR YOU?

Americans love the company's rotisserie chicken. But there are concerns about how birds sold there and elsewhere are raised. Here's what you need to know.

BY RACHEL RABKIN PEACHMAN





Costco's rotisserie chickens are a phenomenon.

Sold under the franchise's brand name, Kirkland Signature, the chickens are **super-tasty, super-popular, and super-cheap**. At just \$5, they can be less expensive than a whole uncooked bird. But they're **also the focus of controversy**. In 2020 the animal rights group Mercy for Animals sent an undercover investigator to work at—and film inside—one of Costco's factory chicken farms in Nebraska. The resulting video, released in February 2021, **showed swollen, injured, and deformed chickens** living in a **crowded, darkened warehouse**. It was the subject of a New York Times opinion piece and has become part of an initiative by Mercy for Animals called Costco Exposed.

Since then, Mercy for Animals has pressured Costco to sign the Better Chicken Commitment, a petition from the organization and several other animal rights groups. It urges the poultry industry to change how it raises its birds, improving their welfare as well as the safety of the meat that's sold.

While more than 200 companies—including Whole Foods, BJ's, Burger King, Chipotle, and Subway—have signed on to that commitment, Costco and other major chicken producers have not. A Costco spokesperson told Consumer Reports that the company has “no current plan to adopt in total the requirements of the Better Chicken Commitment,” but added that its “internal standards for our dedicated producers ... enforce appropriate requirements for broiler welfare.”

Here's what you need to know about how Costco raises its birds. We also have information about the other chickens the company sells, as well as alternatives from other retailers.

▼ Rotisserie Birds = Salty Birds

Although Costco's whole roasted rotisserie chicken has become famous because of its convenience, flavor, and low price, it isn't unique. Other chains also sell inexpensive rotisserie chicken. For instance, ShopRite offers a roasted broiler from one of its house brands, Bowl & Basket, listed at \$5.99 online.

While rotisserie chickens are convenient and easy on your wallet,

they're not necessarily so good for your health. That's because they can be loaded with a salt and sugar solution to enhance flavor and tenderness.

Costco's rotisserie chicken has 460 mg of sodium per standard 3-ounce serving, one-fifth the maximum amount adults should consume in a day (2,300 mg). ShopRite's Bowl & Basket chicken has even more: 520 mg per 3-ounce serving. Many people eat more than that amount—and get even more sodium.

So check the nutrition label before buying a rotisserie chicken and avoid those that are flavored, because they tend to be saltier, says Amy Keating, RD, Consumer Reports' resident nutritionist. Instead, choose one that's simply “roasted chicken.”

► A BETTER OPTION

Cook your own. Of course, people buy rotisserie chickens when they don't want to cook at home. But Keating says a roast chicken can be simple to prepare once you get your recipe down. It can be healthier, too. “You can roast your own, even using a multi-cooker, grill, or convection toaster oven,” she says. “But skip the salt or use just a touch, and season it with a variety of dried herbs and spices, such as pepper, thyme, rosemary, sage, and garlic powder. For extra flavor, you can put several garlic cloves and a lemon sliced in quarters in the cavity of the bird.”

▼ The Problem With Factory Farming

Costco also sells uncooked chicken under its Kirkland Signature brand, similar to the birds it uses for its rotisserie version. Most of the estimated 9 billion chickens raised in the U.S. each year by Costco and other chicken producers are housed on factory farms in windowless buildings with tens of thousands of other birds. The

crowded conditions have an impact on animal welfare and can foster the spread of dangerous bacteria, such as salmonella and campylobacter, which are particularly prevalent in chicken.

► A BETTER OPTION

Choose organic. Costco carries a Kirkland Signature Organic whole chicken. You'll pay more for it: \$2.49 per pound at a Costco in metro New York in early November compared with 99 cents per pound for the company's conventionally raised bird. But that's less, on average, than what chickens cost at grocery stores nationwide: \$3.12 per pound for organic vs. \$1.09 per pound for conventional.

Chickens bearing the USDA Organic label differ from conventionally raised birds in several important ways. First, they must be raised without any antibiotics. Conventionally raised birds, on the other hand, can be given antibiotics before they get sick to ward off disease, a practice that reduces the effectiveness of those antibiotics over time and can lead to widespread antibiotic resistance. Note, though, that if organic chickens do become ill and need antibiotics, organic regulations require that the animals be treated, but their meat can't be sold as organic.

In addition, chickens with the organic label must be fed organic feed, which means it was produced without pesticides or genetically modified seed.

Last, any chicken bearing the USDA Organic label is supposed to be raised in slightly more humane conditions. Costco's spokesperson said the company adheres to the Department of Agriculture's standards for organic birds—meaning they live in less crowded conditions than conventionally raised chicken—and its organically raised chickens “have access to the outdoors.” Indeed, the USDA's standards for organic chickens stipulate that they should be provided exposure to sunlight, fresh air, shade, and exercise areas.

What Does Humanely Raised Mean?

Chicken labels often bear claims related to how the birds were raised. But “humane treatment” means different things to different groups—and may not match what you'd expect. CR surveys* show that for many people, such labels indicate at a minimum that animals were raised in living conditions that allowed them to engage in their natural behaviors, such as scratching and pecking. Below, CR rated several labels on how well they meet those expectations. (Note that the score for animal welfare shown below relates to chicken raised for meat.) For more information, go to [CR.org/foodlabels0122](https://www.consumerreports.org/foodlabels0122).



USDA ORGANIC

OVERALL SCORE	⬆️
ANIMAL WELFARE	⬇️

Overall, this is one of the most meaningful labels a food can carry, indicating that producers adhere to strict federal standards requiring, for example, that animals be raised without added antibiotics. But it falls short as far as animal welfare is concerned, mainly because the Department of Agriculture hasn't enforced rules on outdoor access.



CERTIFIED HUMANE RAISED & HANDLED

OVERALL SCORE	⬆️
ANIMAL WELFARE	⬆️

Humane Farm Animal Care, a nonprofit, oversees this seal. Outdoor access isn't required, but birds are given slightly more room than the industry norm and living conditions are carefully controlled. An “animal welfare officer” must oversee slaughter to ensure that proper procedures are followed.



ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED

OVERALL SCORE	⬆️
ANIMAL WELFARE	⬆️

Standards for this seal are set by a nonprofit group, A Greener World. Chickens must have access to the outdoors and be pasture-raised on family farms, meaning the farmer owns the animals. Painful procedures, such as beak trimming, are forbidden, and birds must be stunned before slaughter.



AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED

OVERALL SCORE	⬇️
ANIMAL WELFARE	⬇️

Under this seal from the nonprofit American Humane Association, outdoor access isn't required and indoor space can be minimal. Birds must be given at least 4 hours of continual darkness, which is more than required but less than what some other animal welfare programs ask for.



*Consumer Reports nationally representative surveys of 1,005 U.S. adults conducted in 2018 and 2019.



BRIAN VINES

Confessions of a Costco Virgin

I didn't think warehouse club culture was for me. Could the lure of its rotisserie chicken broaden my horizons?

SOMEHOW I'D MANAGED to reach the ripe old age of 40 and had never seen the inside of a Costco, the world's third-largest retailer. But my colleagues at CR were determined to change that. They said they would pay for my membership if I agreed to check out the place and write about it. They talked up the deals and the quality of the products on offer.

"And you gotta try the rotisserie chicken, at least once," they all said.

Still, I was hesitant. Like many other urban hipster transplants with big-city ZIP codes and

flyover roots, I have neither a car nor a pantry. A warehouse club membership seemed like part of the deal you make with the devil when you trade bike riding and bodegas for the comfort of a den and a basement deep freezer. I love a bargain but worried about dancing on the edge of the slippery slope to the suburbs.

Not only that: I wasn't much of a meat eater.

Before face masks and working from home, I had a primarily plant-based diet. Aside from my boiled egg breakfast and sardines and greens daily lunch, it was meatless Monday

for me every day for a decade.

But the pandemic changed a lot, including my eating habits, and those famed Costco chickens were starting to sound tempting. I only half-jokingly thought that whatever people are shopping for at Costco, be it a hearing aid or a 93-inch teddy bear, they probably don't leave without that bird.

So when I arrived at Costco Warehouse No. 318 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, I expected to be greeted at the door by an industrial-sized rotisserie filled with chickens twirling their way to golden-brown perfection.

In reality, I had to walk past big-screen TVs, mattresses, and more bottled water than I have ever seen in one place.

I even got a whiff of those chickens. And when I approached the bank of well-cooked and oddly uniform birds in their black-bottomed to-go containers, I realized I had a lot more store to explore before committing to loading one of them into my cart.

My rejection of the birds at

hand led me to a bird and a half in the proverbial bush. Not that far away stood an open refrigerator case stocked with ready-to-cook herbed butter salmon fillets plus—big, happy surprise—chilled rotisserie chickens. They were split into halves, packaged three to a container for \$1 more than a freshly cooked whole bird. Why do the hot ones get all the love when these guys almost guarantee dinner and several days' lunch?

Reader, it reheated beautifully.

So now that I've tasted the delights of Costco's rotisserie chickens, am I consigned to a life of khaki pants and lawn maintenance?

First off, I don't have a lawn, and second, shopping at Costco is no more likely to transform me into my dad than his wearing skinny jeans will turn him into me.

Still, while I can't imagine the folks at the warehouse will be learning my name anytime soon, they will be seeing me from time to time. At least, that is, as long as they keep selling that cold rotisserie chicken for just \$5.99.



Still, there are limitations when it comes to animal welfare with the USDA Organic label, and it gets only a Fair rating in CR's food label analysis on that measure. (See "What Does 'Humanely Raised' Mean?" on page 37.)

For instance, while the chickens are supposed to have access to the outdoors, the USDA hasn't enforced that requirement. Further, the organic label doesn't prohibit farmers from making physical alterations to the animals, such as trimming the chicken's beaks, and it doesn't cover animal welfare requirements en route to the slaughterhouse or while there.

▼ How to Find a Humanely Raised Bird

If you're particularly concerned about animal welfare, look for chickens sold with either the Certified Humane Raised & Handled label or the Animal Welfare Approved label.

CR rates the Certified Humane Raised & Handled label as Very Good when it comes to the welfare of poultry raised for meat. Though outdoor access isn't required, the birds are given slightly more room than the industry norm. Plus, the litter in the chicken house must be kept clean and the birds must be given environmental enrichment, like straw bales, to keep them active. The standard also dictates that farmers aren't allowed to leave the lights on continuously in the chicken houses, a practice that prevents the birds from sleeping so that they eat more and grow faster—a major animal welfare concern. Last, a company-appointed "animal welfare officer" must be at the slaughterhouse to ensure that the birds are stunned adequately before being killed to reduce suffering. You can find retailers that carry these birds at certifiedhumane.org.

Birds with the Animal Welfare Approved Seal can be an even better



Rotisserie Chicken FAQs

When is it best to buy one?

Buy one that has been cooked recently. You're most likely to get a freshly cooked bird around the evening rush hour, because that's when most places pick up production, says Anne-Marie Roerink, founder of the grocery market research firm 210 Analytics.

Are rotisserie chickens made from raw birds sold at the store near their sell-by date?

Nope. Most grocery stores have a different supply for their rotisserie chickens than what they sell in their meat departments, Roerink says. Unsold rotisserie chickens, on the other hand, may be used to make chicken soup or chicken salad at the store.

Why do the rotisserie chickens sometimes look pink inside?

Probably not because they're undercooked. Instead, there can be more pigmentation in and around the bones of the smaller, younger birds often used for rotisserie chickens.

How long can you keep a rotisserie chicken?

Cut it into several pieces and refrigerate in a covered container for up to four days, or freeze it. Frozen leftovers are safe indefinitely but best eaten within four months, after which moisture and flavor are compromised.

—Perry Santanachote

option, because requirements for that seal are even more demanding; it's rated Excellent for animal welfare by CR's food analysts. You can find retailers that sell the birds at agreenerworld.org.

Birds sold with that label must be raised in a pasture rather than in close confinement. If chicken houses are used at all, ventilation and natural light are required, and—as required for the Certified Humane Raised & Handled label—the lights can't be left on continuously. Further, this seal indicates that painful procedures, such as beak trimming, are prohibited. Last, the Animal Welfare Approved label means the chickens were gently handled and properly stunned during the slaughtering process.

You can also purchase chicken from a local farmer or farmers market, where you can ask about farming practices.

▼ The Safest Way to Prepare Chicken

Whichever type of chicken you choose, always practice rigorous hygiene. Even precooked rotisserie chickens can be inadvertently contaminated with germs. Here's how to stay safe:

- ▶ Cook or reheat your chicken to an internal temperature of 165° F. That kills any bacteria before you dig in to eat.
- ▶ Wash your hands well with soap and water before and after handling raw chicken.
- ▶ Consider using separate cutting boards and utensils for meat and produce so that you don't spread bacteria from the meat to vegetables or fruit.
- ▶ Never rinse raw chicken in a sink; that spreads bacteria in the sink and to surrounding countertops. There's no need to rinse or clean chicken.
- ▶ Always use a clean plate to serve cooked meat; don't reuse the same one you used to prepare the raw chicken.



Sleep-challenged CR tech editor Allen St. John donned half a dozen sleep trackers before bed for 14 nights in his quest for uninterrupted slumber. See which gave him the rest he needed.

For a Better Night's Sleep, Try This

What two weeks with six wearable trackers taught me about getting more ZZZ's

BY ALLEN ST. JOHN ■ PHOTO BY CHRIS BUCK

NIGHT 1

■ TOTAL SLEEP
7 HOURS, 44 MINUTES

■ SLEEP PERFORMANCE SCORE
88

■ REM SLEEP
2 HOURS, 1 MINUTE

THAT'S WHAT THE SMARTPHONE APP for my Whoop 3.0 fitness tracker told me about how I slept on my first night of evaluating wearable sleep trackers. Those positive stats were at odds with what I scribbled in my handwritten sleep log only moments before: "I woke up feeling like death warmed up."

Welcome to the promising, and

sometimes confusing, world of personal sleep tracking.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, my generally solid sleep had become more fitful. And after trying the easy stuff—buying a cheap, squishy down pillow and asking my golden retriever Rugby to stop snoring—I turned to technology. Because I'm a tech editor at Consumer Reports, I planned a deep dive, as part of our Outside the Labs program, to find a device that would help me understand my disrupted slumber and maybe even sleep better.

Wearable sleep trackers are part of a \$30 billion sleep improvement market that has taken on added momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Sleep Foundation named the disruption coronasomnia.

Available in a wide range of shapes



and sizes, wearable trackers claim to monitor many of the same metrics as laboratory sleep studies prescribed for people with insomnia or other sleep disorders. Evaluations like those usually involve an overnight stay at a clinic, wearing an array of sensors.

Today's consumer-grade trackers are relatively inexpensive, rechargeable devices that may use your movement to log sleep duration, sleep stages (like physically restorative deep sleep, or rapid eye movement [REM] in which most dreaming is done), or the number of times you awaken at night. Most devices roll that info into a sleep score.

But as I looked at the numbers on my phone, it seemed equal parts problem and promise. Should I embrace the stats that told me I slept fine? Or give in to my can't-I-just-go-back-to-bed feeling?

The answer, I came to realize, was that I needed to spend less time fretting about sleep data and more time thinking about the devices themselves.

6 TRACKERS, 14 NIGHTS

"People buy these things thinking they're a weight-loss program," Michael Grandner, PhD, director of the sleep research program at the University of Arizona, told me. "But they are usually more of a bathroom scale."

That sage advice helped me come to grips with sleep trackers and, ultimately, to select an Editor's Choice model. (See "With This Ring," on page 44.)

To begin with, I consulted with five sleep doctors and researchers who helped me narrow the field to six models: the Apple Watch Series 6, Fitbit Charge 4, Garmin Vivosmart 4, Muse S headband, Oura Ring, and Whoop 3.0 Strap.

I wore all six at once for 14 nights. At the end of the two weeks, I poured my data into a six-page, 16-column spreadsheet (consumers can skip Excel and just see the data on their

The Right



APPLE WATCH, SERIES 6

\$350+

The Apple Watch is a bit of a paradox. It sports a Swiss-Army-Knife-like range of functionality, from tracking workouts to answering phone calls. That said, its sleep-tracking features are quite rudimentary. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. Instead of a detailed breakdown of sleep stages, the Apple Watch provides a big-picture look at your sleep habits. Apple recently introduced a Series 7 watch with a larger display and charging that's claimed to be slightly quicker, but no real changes that should affect the sleep-tracking functions.

BEST FEATURE: The app shows two weeks of sleep data and helped me to identify trends.

BIGGEST DRAWBACK: With about only 18 hours of battery life, the Apple Watch required me to find time during the day for charging.

BEST FOR: The Apple fan who's interested in, but not obsessed with, sleep.

CLAIMED BATTERY LIFE:
18 hours



FITBIT CHARGE 4

\$130

GOOD
VALUE

The Fitbit is a full-featured fitness tracker aimed at the casual user, who might toss the device into a gym bag after a workout. I found its monochrome screen easy to read, but a detailed review of my sleep data required a visit to Fitbit's smartphone app. The first Charge 4 purchased by CR worked fine at the start but stopped yielding full sleep data halfway through. After consulting with Fitbit, I bought another Charge 4, which worked fine. The newer Charge 5 has a sleeker case and color screen, but Fitbit says its sleep-tracking performance should be similar.

BEST FEATURE: When it's not monitoring your sleep, the Fitbit doubles as a full-featured fitness tracker with a wide user base and plentiful training tips.

BIGGEST DRAWBACK: The deeper dive into the Fitbit's sleep metrics requires a \$10/month Fitbit Premium membership.

BEST FOR: The gym rat looking for better slumber.

CLAIMED BATTERY LIFE:
Up to 7 days

Tracker

Comfort, value, and sleep insights: How each of these six devices performed in CR's Outside the Labs evaluation



**GARMIN
VIVOSMART 4**

\$130

When it comes to sleep tracking, it feels like the Vivosmart 4 can't quite make up its mind. The device tries to be low-profile, like the Whoop and the Oura, but I found its tiny display more distracting than useful. The Garmin smartphone app focuses mainly on total sleep but does provide easy-to-follow graphics about sleep stages, while a chart with seven-day sleep averages helped me spot and analyze my longer-term sleep patterns.

BEST FEATURE: Replete with an array of fitness tracking functions, the Garmin carries an often-discounted \$130 MSRP, one of the lowest in the group.

BIGGEST DRAWBACK: I found the narrow silicone band uncomfortable, and it actually irritated my skin, which may be a problem for some people.

BEST FOR: The value-conscious sleep nerd.

CLAIMED BATTERY LIFE:
Up to 7 days



**MUSE S HEADBAND
GENERATION 1**

\$350

The headband-mounted Muse is, in many ways, the most ambitious sleep-monitoring device I evaluated: It measures sleep stages directly using electrical activity, similar to the sophisticated brainwave monitors in sleep labs. Unfortunately, the execution was lacking. I found that it was uncomfortable and sometimes took a half-hour to get and keep a solid connection. I also often awoke with the device askew. (Muse explained that my connection issue was caused by a since-rectified production problem; I did find that a second Muse S worked somewhat better.) Note: The Muse S has been replaced by a slightly modified 2.0 version.

BEST FEATURE: Meditation and mindfulness scripts on the app might help you relax.

BIGGEST DRAWBACK: Unlike the other devices I evaluated, the Muse is a sleep-monitoring monotasker—so it's not something that you'd wear outside of bed.

BEST FOR: A serious student of sleep stages ... who has a lot of patience.

CLAIMED BATTERY LIFE:
10 hours



**OURA
RING**

\$300+

EDITOR'S
CHOICE

The titanium Oura, which looks like a big wedding ring, lacks the wow factor of trackers with flashy displays (it doesn't even tell you if it's charged). But its low-key personality makes it a genial everyday companion. In addition to tracking body temperature, movement, respiratory rate, and resting heart rate, the app includes advanced recovery metrics like heart rate variability, which is great for athletes. The new Oura Ring Gen 3, which wasn't available for my evaluation, has additional body temperature and heart rate sensors, and can measure blood oxygen levels.

BEST FEATURE: In addition to abundant sleep data, the Oura app offers actionable advice based on your sleep history. ("The amount of deep sleep ... was on the low side. ... Can you make sleep a priority tonight?")

BIGGEST DRAWBACK: Oura now requires a \$6 monthly membership for full access to the app's sleep data.

BEST FOR: Anyone who's made a long-term commitment to understanding sleep.

CLAIMED BATTERY LIFE:
4 to 7 days



**WHOOP 3.0
STRAP**

Free*

*WITH
\$30/MONTH
MEMBERSHIP
FEE

The Whoop strap, endorsed by some professional athletes, sees sleep as a performance metric. It makes concrete—and useful—training suggestions based in part on your sleep patterns. The device is minimalist: a nylon wrist strap with a prominent buckle that houses the sensors and rechargeable battery, a simple LED battery-level indicator, and no display. I found the strap to be scratchy, and recharging was surprisingly fussy. The smartphone app is robust but a bit hard to read. Note: Whoop has since introduced a Whoop 4.0, which has a slightly smaller strap and additional sensors.

BEST FEATURE: The Whoop's five-day battery life was commendable.

BIGGEST DRAWBACK: While the Whoop strap is technically free—you get the device when you sign up for a subscription program—the ongoing fees add up quickly: Two years of membership could total \$720.

BEST FOR: The dedicated athlete in search of a 24/7 recovery coach.

CLAIMED BATTERY LIFE:
5 days



smartphone apps). But when I took a step back from the raw numbers, I realized that the most important takeaways from the experience were actually quite simple.

My first revelation was that devices that were comfortable during the day could be downright annoying at night. I found the Whoop 3.0's strap scratchy, while those on the Fitbit Charge 4 and the Apple Watch seemed either too loose or too tight. The narrow band on the baby blue Garmin Vivosmart 4 irritated my skin, and the Muse S headband flat out kept me awake. The Oura ring? I hardly noticed it.

The other big takeaway: Don't get distracted by the data. At first, I looked at the previous night's results right after writing in my sleep diary. That led me to go to bed earlier in an attempt to juice my scores. The net result was more time in bed but not more actual sleep.

Unlike so many things, sleep doesn't respond to sheer effort. "No one has ever slept longer or better by trying harder," Grandner, who consults with Fitbit, told me—a little too late.

I also began obsessing over minor data discrepancies. On night 13, for example, the Fitbit warned me that I had logged only 5 hours, 50 minutes. The Garmin, meanwhile, congratulated me on snoozing for 7 hours, 36 minutes. With sleep stages, the devices varied even more.

It turns out, I was worrying over nothing. My experts explained that sleep science can feel maddeningly inexact to consumers. The algorithms in each device differ a little in how they track the micro-awakenings that litter even a good night's sleep. Which meant that I shouldn't freak out if the stats said I got only 7 hours, or less REM or deep sleep than the night before.

"There's a general notion that you need to get 8 hours of sleep, but it really depends on the person," says Molly Atwood, PhD, an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at

Better Sleep Tricks

To turn your tracker's insights into sweet dreams, try the following.

Keep a Diary

A sleep tracker makes it fun and easy to keep track of how much you slept. But it's also important to know how well you slept. Which is why many sleep doctors suggest that patients also keep a sleep diary. Entries can include when you ate and exercised and how you felt when you woke up. That weird dream with Tom Hanks riding a llama? Totally optional.

Wind Down

Sleep trackers often offer settings to remind you to spend time unwinding before bed. To do this, turn off electronics (some apps can even limit your notifications) and begin a ritual that might include a hot bath and a good book. Avoid evening snacks, caffeine, and alcohol, and settle down in a cool, dark, comfortable room.

Dialogue With Your Doctor

If you're not sleeping well, don't hesitate to see your doctor and share the data from your tracker. Insomnia can often be remedied without medication or invasive procedures, and the gold standard treatment—cognitive behavioral therapy, which involves building better bedtime habits—can help you in as little as six sessions.

the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore. "Getting less than 6 hours of sleep a night is not great." Week-to-week trends, she says, are what you should watch.

As for sleep staging? "People ask me about sleep stages, but, honestly, I don't care very much about them," says Grandner. While consumer-grade devices are improving, he explains, most of them are at their weakest when measuring REM and deep sleep.

And reasonably healthy sleepers tend to regulate their own sleep stages pretty effectively without any effort. "You can't make yourself get more REM sleep," says Dimitri Gavriloff, a sleep medicine researcher at the University of Oxford in England.

WITH THIS RING

A few days after I ended my evaluation, I realized my answer was right in front of me: While I was happy to shed most of the trackers after two weeks, I had forgotten to take off the Oura ring.

This elegant device wins my Editor's Choice award because of how easily it slips into the background. It's a light ring-style band that's sized like a piece of jewelry. I found it comfortable enough to wear it 24/7.

On the data front, there's no display, so I could pretend the Oura was a dumb device. That meant I went to the robust app not when prompted by a teaser stat on a device's screen, but whenever I had the time and inclination to absorb the Oura's granular sleep info.

I began using the Oura as my "bathroom scale," a companion that became part of my everyday routine. It served as a gentle but persistent reminder about good sleep habits while keeping me from obsessing over them. In the end, I started sleeping like I did before the pandemic, and I learned a simple but powerful lesson: The best sleep tracker is the one you can ignore.

ROAD REPORT

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



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TIP FROM OUR TEST TRACK

Cold Weather Tire Safety

If you see a tire pressure warning light on your dashboard this season, you might not have a leak or a flat: It could be just the weather. Tire pressure drops along with the mercury—about 1 pound per square inch for every 10° F drop in air temperature. The warning light may go off while you're driving and the air in the tires expands, but check the pressure and top off the tire if necessary as soon as possible. In general, check the pressure monthly and don't wait for the warning light to come on. It's meant to alert you to a tire losing air while you're driving, not serve as a maintenance reminder.

ASK OUR EXPERTS

What is a turbocharged engine?



Turbocharging—**forcing more air into the engine** so that it burns more fuel—enables a small, fuel-efficient four-cylinder to produce V6 power when needed. But there can be trade-offs, such as the vehicle's need for premium gasoline. And CR surveys have found that manufacturers that have been building turbocharged engines for several years tend to have **more reliable powertrains** than manufacturers that have produced these engines more recently. Always check CR's reliability ratings before buying any new or used vehicle.

THE VITAL STATISTIC

18.4%

Estimated year-over-year increase in deaths due to vehicle crashes in the first half of 2021, the steepest such rise since 2006. Precise causes aren't known yet, but speeding and a failure to wear seat belts were also elevated during that time compared with before the pandemic.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

RECALL



Volvo

Volvo is recalling 194,546 V70 and XC70 wagons from model years 2001 through 2007. A component in the driver's-side airbag could rupture and launch metal fragments toward occupants if the airbag deploys, potentially causing injury or death. This expands an earlier recall of more than 259,000 S60 and S80 sedans for the same reason.

WHAT TO DO: Volvo will replace the faulty airbag free of charge. Owners may contact Volvo customer service at 800-458-1552.

FIRST DRIVE

Hyundai Ioniq 5



Hyundai's Ioniq 5 EV, sized between the automaker's Tucson and Santa Fe SUVs, is available with either rear-wheel or all-wheel drive. With a 77.4 kWh battery, it promises a range of 300 miles (270 for AWD), and employs 800-volt battery technology for fast charging in public places. **CR'S TAKE:** The Ioniq 5 is quick,

quiet, comfortable, and agile, with a roomy interior and generous rear seat. Though it exudes a high-tech vibe, its controls are fairly easy to use. It's an exciting new entry in the growing EV market.

BASE PRICE RANGE
\$40,000-\$50,000 (EST.)

DESTINATION CHARGE \$1,185

PRICE AS DRIVEN \$48,000 (EST.)



88

Ford Bronco Sport
Compact SUVs

68

Ford Ranger
Midsize PickupsROAD
REPORT

The Most Reliable New Cars of the Year

With prices for new vehicles at all-time highs, now isn't the time to drive home a problem-plagued car. We use CR's exclusive survey data to guide you to the models least likely to bring you repair-related headaches.

BY JONATHAN LINKOV



100

Chevrolet Trailblazer
Subcompact SUVs

THE SUPPLY CHAIN disruptions caused by the global pandemic have created a widespread shortage of cars for sale, leaving many consumers unable to find the new car, SUV, minivan, or truck that they really want. Even when they find one, they are forced to pay the full sticker price—or more. Today's shortages and high prices make vehicle reliability all the more important: A ride you can count on means you won't be stuck waiting on parts for repairs.

CR's Annual Auto Reliability Survey asks our members about problems they've had with their vehicles in any of 17 trouble areas during the previous 12 months. We use the responses to calculate predicted reliability ratings for every new mainstream vehicle on the market.

The data from our survey will guide you to the new vehicles you can buy with confidence, and warn you off of the ones most likely to give you trouble. Here are some of the significant findings from this year's survey.



90 Buick Envision
Luxury Compact SUVs

71 Ford Mustang Mach-E
Electric SUVs

91 Chrysler 300
Midsize/Large Cars

Models That Gained- or Lost-Their CR Recommendation

CR RECOMMENDS models that shine in our road tests, perform well if crash-tested, and are reliable and satisfying in our owner surveys. The following models gained or lost their recommended status this year because of changes in their predicted reliability ratings. For more details and comments from manufacturers that lost recommendations, go to [CR.org/reliability0122](https://www.caranddriver.com/reliability0122).

NEWLY RECOMMENDED

Models With Improved Reliability

Acura MDX, RDX, TLX, **Audi** Q7, **BMW** X3, **Chevrolet** Blazer, Trailblazer, Traverse, **Ford** Bronco Sport, Mustang Mach-E, Ranger, **Genesis** G70, **Honda** Odyssey, Passport, **Infiniti** QX50, **Kia** Niro EV, **Nissan** Rogue Sport, **Ram** 1500, **Volkswagen** Atlas, Atlas Cross Sport, Jetta, **Volvo** XC60

NO LONGER RECOMMENDED

Models With Declining Reliability

Buick Enclave, **Chevrolet** Bolt, Bolt EUV, **Ford** Mustang, **Hyundai** Kona Electric, Santa Fe, **Jeep** Gladiator, **Kia** Sorento, **Mercedes-Benz** E-Class, **Nissan** Rogue, **Toyota** Corolla Hatchback, **Volvo** S60

1 Models from domestic automakers took the top spot in seven categories.

The Buick Envision; Chevrolet Trailblazer; Chevrolet Silverado 2500HD and its twin, the GMC Sierra 2500HD; Chrysler 300; and Ford Bronco Sport, Mustang Mach-E, and Ranger all topped the reliability lists.

2 Hybrids and plug-ins are some of the most reliable models.

These include the Honda Insight; Kia Niro; and Toyota Prius, Prius Prime, RAV4 Prime, and Venza. Most of these are well-established models that haven't seen radical changes over the years; even the new-for-2021 Venza uses a tried-and-true powertrain.

3 EV SUVs are among the least reliable vehicles.

The Tesla Model X and Model Y, Audi E-Tron, and Volkswagen ID.4 all have a high rate of problems in areas other than their electric powertrains. Some of these areas include climate controls, in-car electronics, and power equipment.

4 Some Hyundai, Kia, Subaru, and Toyota models continue to have transmission troubles.

Their continuously variable and/or 8-, 9-, and 10-speed transmissions remain problem-prone. Conversely, many Mazda models use an older 6-speed automatic that has proved bulletproof.

How the Brands Stack Up

TAKING A BRAND'S reliability ranking into account when buying a new car can improve your odds of finding a dependable vehicle. But always do research on the individual model; few brands manufacture a lineup that is consistently reliable across all of their models. Consider Toyota: If you bought a Corolla Hatchback based on the brand's strong reputation, you'd probably end up being disappointed because it's among the less reliable models in this year's survey.

RANK	CHANGE FROM 2021		BRAND RELIABILITY	NUMBER OF MODELS	MOST RELIABLE MODEL	LEAST RELIABLE MODEL
1	▲ 2	LEXUS	76	4	100 GX	60 UX
2	▼ 1	MAZDA	75	5	88 MX-5 Miata	46 3
3	▼ 1	TOYOTA	71	13	93 Prius Prime	27 Corolla Hatchback
4	▲ 6	INFINITI	69	2	90 Q50	49 QX50
5	▼ 1	BUICK	66	4	90 Envision	25 Enclave
6	▼ 1	HONDA	66	8	87 Insight	50 Odyssey
7	▲ 1	SUBARU	66	6	85 Crosstrek	18 Ascent
8	N/A	ACURA	64	3	87 TLX	43 RDX
9	▲ 4	NISSAN	63	5	84 Rogue Sport	30 Rogue
10	▲ 13	MINI	60	2	82 Cooper Countryman	37 Cooper/Clubman
11	▼ 4	HYUNDAI	56	8	87 Tucson	26 Santa Fe
12	N/A	CHRYSLER	54	2	91 300	18 Pacifica
13	▼ 2	PORSCHE	52	2	61 Macan	43 Cayenne
14	▲ 4	CHEVROLET	48	11	100 Trailblazer	2 Tahoe
15	—	AUDI	47	8	79 A5	5 E-Tron
16	▲ 6	CADILLAC	47	3	89 XT5	17 XT4
17	▼ 4	BMW	45	5	58 X5	10 4 Series
18	▲ 5	FORD	44	12	88 Bronco Sport	8 Explorer
19	▼ 3	KIA	43	9	95 Niro EV	5 Sorento
20	▼ 1	VOLVO	42	4	61 XC60	17 XC90
21	▼ 12	RAM	40	3	57 2500	11 1500 Classic
22	▼ 5	GMC	37	6	78 Sierra 2500HD	2 Yukon
23	▼ 2	MERCEDES-BENZ	34	3	63 GLC	5 GLE
24	▲ 1	VOLKSWAGEN	31	4	47 Jetta	17 Tiguan
25	N/A	GENESIS	30	2	55 G70	5 GV80
26	▼ 5	JEEP	26	3	30 Cherokee	23 Gladiator
27	—	TESLA	25	4	59 Model 3	5 Model X
28	—	LINCOLN	18	3	31 Nautilus	3 Aviator

CR's brand-level rankings are based on the average predicted reliability score of all the vehicles in a brand's model lineup currently offered for sale.

For a brand to be ranked, we must have sufficient survey data for two or more models. The rank change is based on a brand's relative position

from the 2021 to the 2022 rankings. This year we added three brands—Acura, Chrysler, and Genesis—to our rankings but dropped Dodge, which

had insufficient data. Consequently, we haven't ranked Alfa Romeo, Dodge, Fiat, Jaguar, Land Rover, Maserati, Mitsubishi, or Polestar.

Most & Least Reliable Models

THESE VEHICLES SCORE at the very top and very bottom of our reliability ratings. Each model's predicted reliability score (in the circle) is based on data for at least two model years. Having multiple years of data gives you more confidence in your buying decision.

MOST RELIABLE MODELS



100

LEXUS
GX



95

KIA
NIRO EV



93

TOYOTA
PRIUS PRIME

91

TOYOTA
PRIUS

89

CADILLAC
XT5

88

MAZDA
MX-5 MIATA

87

HONDA
INSIGHT

86

TOYOTA
HIGHLANDER

85

SUBARU
CROSSTREK

MAZDA
CX-9

LEAST RELIABLE MODELS



18

SUBARU
ASCENT

PROBLEM AREAS:
Transmission, power equipment, brakes, in-car electronics, climate system



CHRYSLER
PACIFICA

PROBLEM AREAS:
Transmission, power equipment, drive system, engine

TESLA
MODEL Y

PROBLEM AREAS:
Body hardware, paint & trim, climate system, noises & leaks



17

VOLKSWAGEN
TIGUAN

PROBLEM AREAS:
Brakes, noises & leaks, drive system, power equipment

VOLVO
XC90

PROBLEM AREAS:
Brakes, climate system, body hardware, drive system

13

CHEVROLET
CORVETTE

PROBLEM AREAS: Engine, transmission, drive system, paint & trim

11

CHEVROLET
SILVERADO 1500/
GMC SIERRA
1500

PROBLEM AREAS:
Engine, drive system, transmission, power equipment, in-car electronics

9

FORD
MUSTANG

PROBLEM AREAS:
Steering/suspension, transmission, power equipment, brakes, drive system, in-car electronics

8

FORD
EXPLORER

PROBLEM AREAS:
Transmission, power equipment, in-car electronics, drive system, noises & leaks

5

MERCEDES-BENZ
GLE

PROBLEM AREAS:
Power equipment, climate system, engine, in-car electronics, noises & leaks

Reliability Predictions

2022 MODELS WITH FULL DATA

OUR PREDICTIONS FOR the 2022 models presented here are based on the overall reliability of each for the past three years. Only one or two years of data are used if the model was new or redesigned in 2021 or 2020. Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. A score of 41 to 60 is considered average.

SUBCOMPACT SUVs

Chevrolet Trailblazer	100
Subaru Crosstrek	85
Nissan Rogue Sport	84
Mini Cooper Countryman	82
Chevrolet Trax	82
Mazda CX-30	75
Honda HR-V	54
Hyundai Kona	48
Ford EcoSport	29
Kia Seltos	8

COMPACT SUVs

Ford Bronco Sport	88
Hyundai Tucson	87
Toyota RAV4 Prime	82
Subaru Forester	80
Honda CR-V	80
Mazda CX-5	80
Chevrolet Equinox	58
GMC Terrain	58
Kia Sportage	48
Toyota RAV4	44
Nissan Rogue	30
Jeep Cherokee	30
Ford Escape	25
Volkswagen Tiguan	17

MIDSIZE 2-ROW SUVs

Toyota Venza	92
Nissan Murano	77
Chevrolet Blazer	75
Subaru Outback	60
Honda Passport	58
Ford Edge	56
Hyundai Santa Fe	26
Jeep Wrangler	25

MIDSIZE 3-ROW/ LARGE SUVs

Toyota Highlander	86
Mazda CX-9	85
Kia Telluride	84
Toyota 4Runner	71
Hyundai Palisade	68
Ford Expedition	55
Honda Pilot	53
Chevrolet Traverse	49
Volkswagen Atlas	41
Subaru Ascent	18
Ford Explorer	8
Kia Sorento	5
Chevrolet Tahoe	2
GMC Yukon	2

LUXURY COMPACT SUVs

Buick Envision	90
Buick Encore	83
Buick Encore GX	68
Audi Q5	64
Mercedes-Benz GLC	63
Volvo XC60	61
Porsche Macan	61
Lexus UX	60
Volvo XC40	59
Infiniti QX50	49
BMW X3	47
Acura RDX	43
Audi Q3	35
Lincoln Corsair	20
Cadillac XT4	17

LUXURY MIDSIZE/ LARGE SUVs

Lexus GX	100
Cadillac XT5	89
Lexus RX	76
Acura MDX	61
BMW X5	58
Audi Q7	45
GMC Acadia	43
Porsche Cayenne	43
Cadillac XT6	37
Lincoln Nautilus	31
Buick Enclave	25
Volvo XC90	17
Genesis GV80	5
Audi Q8	5
Mercedes-Benz GLE	5
Lincoln Aviator	3

ELECTRIC SUVs

Ford Mustang Mach-E	71
Volkswagen ID.4	21
Tesla Model Y	18
Audi E-Tron	5
Tesla Model X	5

ELECTRIC CARS

Kia Niro EV	95
Nissan Leaf	77
Tesla Model 3	59
Chevrolet Bolt	34
Hyundai Kona Electric	33
Tesla Model S	20

COMPACT HYBRIDS/ PLUG-INS

Toyota Prius Prime	93
Toyota Prius	91
Honda Insight	87
Kia Niro	67
Hyundai Ioniq	50

COMPACT CARS

Subaru Impreza	77
Toyota Corolla	75
Hyundai Elantra	55
Volkswagen Jetta	47
Mazda3	46
Toyota Corolla Hatchback	27
Kia Soul	23
Kia Forte	7

MIDSIZE/LARGE CARS

Chrysler 300	91
Hyundai Sonata	77
Honda Accord	75
Subaru Legacy	73
Toyota Camry	70
Toyota Avalon	67
Kia K5	49
Nissan Altima	46

LUXURY COMPACT CARS

Infiniti Q50	90
Acura TLX	87
Audi A4	77
BMW 3 Series	58
Genesis G70	55
Volvo S60	29

LUXURY MIDSIZE CARS

Audi A6	69
Lexus ES	68
BMW 5 Series	51
Mercedes-Benz E-Class	33

SPORTS/SPORTY CARS

Mazda MX-5 Miata	88
Audi A5	79
Mini Cooper	37
Chevrolet Corvette	13
BMW 4 Series	10
Ford Mustang	9

MINIVANS

Toyota Sienna	60
Honda Odyssey	50
Chrysler Pacifica	18

MIDSIZE PICKUPS

Ford Ranger	68
Honda Ridgeline	68
Toyota Tacoma	59
Chevrolet Colorado	29
GMC Canyon	29
Jeep Gladiator	23

FULL-SIZED PICKUPS

Chevrolet Silverado 2500HD	78
GMC Sierra 2500HD	78
Ford F-250	59
Ram 2500	57
Ram 1500	52
Ford F-350	33
Ford F-150	29
Ram 1500 Classic	11
Chevrolet Silverado 1500	11
GMC Sierra 1500	11

2022 MODELS WITH LIMITED DATA

NEW-CAR RELIABILITY PREDICTIONS for models with limited survey data, including all-new and redesigned models (indicated with a *), are based on our evaluations of the brand's reliability history and the reliability of previous generations of the model and of other models the vehicle shares components with. These receive a rating rather than a numeric score.

SUBCOMPACT SUVs

Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross	↓
Mitsubishi Outlander Sport	↓
Toyota Corolla Cross*	↓
Fiat 500X	↓
Jeep Compass	↓
Jeep Renegade	↓
Volkswagen Taos*	↓

COMPACT SUV

Mitsubishi Outlander*	↓
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MIDSIZE 2-ROW SUVs

Volkswagen Atlas Cross Sport	↓
Ford Bronco	↓
Jeep Grand Cherokee*	↓

MIDSIZE 3-ROW/ LARGE SUVs

Toyota Sequoia	↑
Dodge Durango	↓
Jeep Grand Cherokee L	↓
Jeep Wagoneer*	↓
Nissan Armada	↓

Nissan Pathfinder*	↓
Chevrolet Suburban	↓
GMC Yukon XL	↓

LUXURY COMPACT SUVs

Lexus NX*	↑
BMW X1	↓
BMW X2	↓
BMW X4	↓
Genesis GV70*	↓
Infiniti QX55*	↓
Jaguar E-Pace	↓
Jaguar F-Pace	↓
Land Rover Defender	↓
Land Rover Discovery Sport	↓
Land Rover Range Rover Evoque	↓
Mercedes-Benz GLA	↓
Mercedes-Benz GLB	↓
Alfa Romeo Stelvio	↓

LUXURY MIDSIZE/ LARGE SUVs

BMW X6	↓
BMW X7	↓
Lexus LX*	↓
Lincoln Navigator	↓
Cadillac Escalade	↓

Infiniti QX60*	↓
Infiniti QX80	↓
Land Rover Discovery	↓
Land Rover Range Rover*	↓
Land Rover Range Rover Sport	↓
Land Rover Range Rover Velar	↓
Maserati Levante	↓
Mercedes-Benz GLS	↓

ELECTRIC SUVs/ PICKUPS

Audi Q4 E-Tron*	↓
BMW iX*	↓
Cadillac Lyriq*	↓
Ford F-150 Lightning*	↓
Hyundai Ioniq 5*	↓
Jaguar I-Pace	↓
Kia EV6*	↓
Nissan Ariya*	↓
Rivian R1S*	↓
Rivian R1T*	↓

ELECTRIC CARS

Mazda MX-30*	↓
Toyota Mirai	↓
BMW i4*	↓
Chevrolet Bolt EUV*	↓
Mercedes-Benz EQS*	↓
Polestar 2	↓
Porsche Taycan	↓

COMPACT CARS

Chevrolet Spark	↓
Honda Civic*	↓
Hyundai Accent	↓

Hyundai Venue	↓
Kia Rio	↓
Mitsubishi Mirage	↓
Nissan Kicks	↓
Nissan Sentra	↓
Nissan Versa	↓
Toyota C-HR	↓

MIDSIZE/LARGE CARS

Dodge Charger	↑
Nissan Maxima	↑
Volkswagen Passat	↓
Chevrolet Malibu	↓

LUXURY COMPACT CARS

Acura ILX	↑
Audi A3*	↓
BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe	↓
Kia Stinger	↓
Lexus IS	↓
Volkswagen Arteon	↓
Cadillac CT4	↓
Cadillac CT5	↓
Mercedes-Benz A-Class	↓
Mercedes-Benz C-Class*	↓
Mercedes-Benz CLA	↓
Alfa Romeo Giulia	↓

LUXURY MIDSIZE/ LARGE CARS

Audi A7	↓
Audi A8	↓
BMW 7 Series	↓
BMW 8 Series	↓
Lexus LS	↓
Porsche Panamera	↓
Genesis G80	↓
Genesis G90	↓
Jaguar XF	↓
Maserati Ghibli	↓

Mercedes-Benz CLS	↓
Mercedes-Benz S-Class	↓
Volvo S90	↓

SPORTS/SPORTY CARS

Audi TT	↓
BMW 2 Series*	↓
BMW Z4	↓
Dodge Challenger	↓
Lexus LC	↓
Lexus RC	↓
Porsche 718 Boxster	↓
Porsche 718 Cayman	↓
Porsche 911	↓
Subaru BRZ*	↓
Toyota 86*	↓
Toyota Supra	↓
Chevrolet Camaro	↓
Nissan Z*	↓
Subaru WRX*	↓
Volkswagen Golf R*	↓
Volkswagen Golf GTI*	↓

MINIVANS

Kia Carnival*	↓
Chrysler Voyager	↓

SMALL/MIDSIZE PICKUPS

Ford Maverick*	↓
Hyundai Santa Cruz*	↓
Nissan Frontier*	↓

FULL-SIZED PICKUPS

Toyota Tundra*	↓
Nissan Titan	↓

Stop Paying Too Much for Your Car Loan

Some borrowers, including those with great credit, are charged interest rates as high as 25 percent, a CR investigation has found. Here's what we learned, and how you can get a fair deal when you buy.

by RYAN FELTON
Illustrations by HARRY CAMPBELL



T

TWO YEARS AGO a Maryland resident with sterling credit financed a 2018 Toyota Camry with a loan that had a 19 percent annual percentage rate (APR) and a monthly payment of about \$823. By the time the loan is expected to be paid

off, in late 2025, the borrower will have spent roughly \$59,000—more than twice the car's value and about what you would pay for a high-end Tesla Model 3.

Another borrower who got stuck in a car loan with a sky-high APR suffered even more serious consequences. The man, an insurance account manager from Connecticut who earns about \$80,000 per year, bought a used Toyota Tacoma pickup truck at a local dealership in early

2019. But the monthly payments on his loan—with a 17 percent APR—came to \$900. Though he was able to make those payments for a while, by the spring of 2020 he had fallen behind. His truck was repossessed in June 2020.

These are just two stories out of many about the effects of what has become a widespread practice: auto lenders giving consumers expensive car loans, even to borrowers whose incomes and credit credentials ought to qualify them for far better rates.

Over the past decade, auto loan debt held by Americans has skyrocketed, surpassing \$1.4 trillion—more than the gross domestic product of Australia. And Americans today with new-car loans are paying a lot more every month, roughly 25 percent



more than 10 years ago, on average.

To understand why this is happening, and to investigate the effect on consumers, Consumer Reports assembled and analyzed almost 858,000 loans, from 17 major lenders, that had been bundled into bonds sold to investors in 2019 and 2020.

Details about these loans, the vast majority of which were arranged through a dealership—the primary way Americans finance cars—are required by the Securities and Exchange Commission to be made public, including information about the terms of the loan and the borrower's finances. The data, while not nationally representative, provide a close-up look at what Americans can pay, or overpay, when they borrow money for a car.

Read on to see what we found.

WHAT ONE LOAN WILL END UP COSTING

A 2018 Toyota Camry
loan in Maryland, from
CR's data analysis

Borrowed
\$34,943

AT 19% APR

Total Payment
\$58,785

OVER 6 YEARS

1

Similar consumers got very different loans.

THE COST OF BORROWING was all over the map and often not tethered to the borrower's credit score. Some borrowers with super-prime credit scores—720 or higher—were in loans with a 0 percent APR, while others with similar scores got loans with APRs of more than 25 percent. We found the same wide range of APRs when we looked at deep subprime borrowers, those with scores below 580.

And we found examples of loans with vastly different terms given to borrowers with almost identical finances—for the same car.

“Sadly, this is all too common,” says Ian Ayres, a lawyer and economist at Yale University’s School of Management and Yale Law School who has studied disparate pricing in auto lending. “I’ve seen a surprising number of consumers with excellent credit who are nonetheless written into subprime loans with high APRs.”

A TALE OF TWO BORROWERS

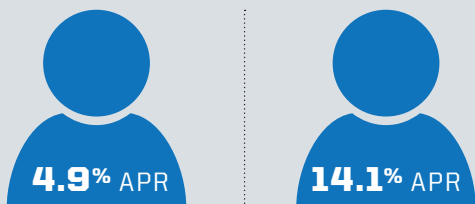
2017 Chevrolet Trax

About \$18K in financing

\$60K to \$66K annual incomes

Prime credit scores

California residents



TOTAL PAYMENTS

\$20,448 | **\$27,540**

2

Dealers and lenders appeared to charge what they could get away with.

TO UNDERSTAND why interest rates varied so much among borrowers with similar credit scores, CR statisticians considered numerous factors, including payment-to-income ratio, when the loan was issued, whether a co-borrower was present, the length of the loan, the amount of equity in the car, and whether the purchaser received financial incentives on the loan. None could fully explain the vast

differences in costs.

So what’s going on? Experts CR spoke with say dealers and lenders may be setting interest rates based not only on risk—standard loan underwriting practice—but also partly on what they think they can get borrowers to agree to. Studies show that many borrowers don’t know they should, or even can, negotiate the terms of a loan or shop around for other offers.

“The financing you get has a lot more to do with how prepared for battle you are when you walk onto the showroom floor than your financial history.”

R.J. Cross Tax and budget advocate, U.S. PIRG

5

Many people were given loans they couldn’t afford.

LENDING EXPERTS recommend that consumers spend no more than 10 percent of their income on car debt. That’s because paying more than you can afford poses serious financial risks, including default.

But in our data, almost

25 percent of borrowers spent more than that on a car loan.

People with low credit scores, who tend to have lower incomes, appear to be particularly likely to spend more than 10 percent of their monthly income on car loans.

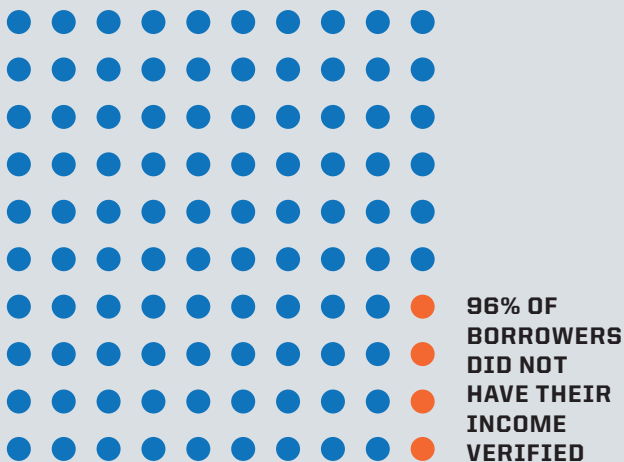
3 Some good-credit customers got pricey loans.

THE AVERAGE APRs for borrowers with credit scores of 660 or higher ranged from 3.73 percent to 5.94 percent. But in the data CR reviewed, almost 21,000 consumers

in those credit tiers—about 3 percent of the entire group—paid exorbitant rates of 10 percent to about 25 percent for their car loans. Over time, the cost of those high

rates can be significant. A typical borrower among that group of people would spend \$4,500 more over the life of the loan than if they paid average rates.

4 Income verification was rare.



WHEN FINANCING a home, lenders typically check a borrower's income and employment. But in the car loans CR reviewed, lenders verified income just 4 percent of the time and employment even less often.

Consumers such as Oklahoma resident Lana Ash learned the hard way about lax underwriting. In April 2020, she received a loan arranged by a dealer through the lender Santander Consumer USA.

But when Ash received her first bill from Santander, she learned she owed \$428 per

month—about 20 percent more than she'd agreed to with the dealer. She discovered the dealer had overstated her income on her loan application, according to a lawsuit she later filed.

Santander ultimately repossessed her car in August 2020, her attorney says. (The lawsuit is pending. Santander declined to comment.)

Income verification could have prevented this. "I think they should take the steps to make sure the person can afford the payments," Ash says.

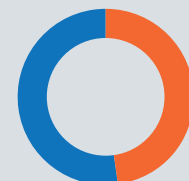
Of course, owning a car is not so much a choice as a requirement—to drive to a job, to a doctor, or to shop for food.

"Lower-income people spend a higher percentage of their budget on cars out of necessity," says John Van Alst, an attorney and expert on auto lending at the National Consumer Law Center, a consumer advocacy nonprofit.

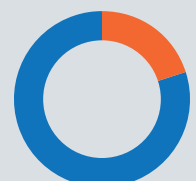


Experts say payments that high can be unaffordable

WHO'S SPENDING OVER 10% OF INCOME?



48%
of borrowers with low credit scores
UNDER 620



20%
of borrowers with high credit scores
660 AND OVER

Delinquencies and repossessions were common.

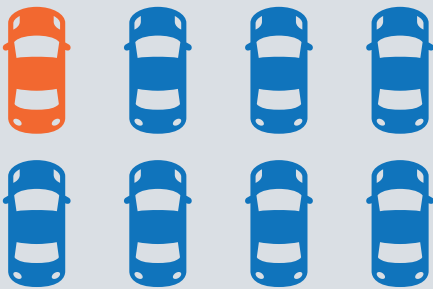
WITH SO MANY PEOPLE devoting so much of their monthly incomes to car loans, you'd expect a lot of late payments and forfeited cars. And there are.

Five percent—or 1 in 20—were reported to be delinquent on their loan.

After 30 to 90 days, lenders generally start the process of repossessing cars. Consumers with low credit scores are more likely to be affected.

A 2020 survey of 28 nonprime* lenders, representing billions of dollars' worth of auto loans, reported that those lenders had a repossession rate of around 13 percent in 2019, or roughly 1 in 8 vehicles financed by them. Between 2017 and 2019, 1.6 million to 1.7 million cars were repossessed annually, industry estimates show.

1 IN 8 CARS OF NONPRIME BORROWERS IS REPOSSESSED



“ *You're not helping somebody get a car if the odds are that they're going to lose it. That's not getting somebody a car. That's taking their money.* **”**

Kathleen Engel Consumer Reports board member and research professor at Suffolk University Law School



How to Shop for a Car Loan

Whether you're a paragon of virtue when it comes to your credit—or not—there are steps to take before borrowing for a car that will help you make sure that you are offered fair terms and that you don't borrow more than you can afford.

Review your credit report and score.

.....
This is something you should do months in advance, says Jordan Takeyama, public relations manager at Experian, a credit reporting agency. Your report—which

lists your bill payment history and debts—is used to calculate your credit score, which in turn is used to help determine the interest rate you might be charged on a loan. Generally, the better your score, the lower the interest rate because you are considered by lenders to be low-risk.

To get a free credit report, go to annualcreditreport.com. To check your credit score, see whether your bank or credit card shows you a free version. Just knowing your score gives you a starting point so that you can manage your expectations.

Improve your score.

Sometimes improving a low score is as simple as correcting mistakes or discrepancies in your credit report. Most mistakes and disputes are addressed in 10 to 14 days, Takeyama says, and credit reporting agencies generally must complete investigations within 30 days.

Paying down existing debt and late bills can also give you a last-minute bump. As always, pay bills for credit cards, utilities, and goods promptly to avoid late fees and further damage to your credit score.

Set a loan budget and stick to it.

Dealer sales staff can be masters of the upsell. Consider your needs today and how they may evolve over the ownership period. Resist the urge to indulge in extras or to buy a bigger or fancier vehicle than you need, because you're likely to be paying on that depreciating asset for years to come.

Make the biggest down payment you can.

That shortens the loan, says Alain Nana-Sinkam, vice president of lending and insurance solutions at TrueCar, a CR partner that analyzes market trends. Putting down more money

up front also means you'll be paying interest on a smaller amount of money, costing you less overall.

Don't focus on just the monthly cost.

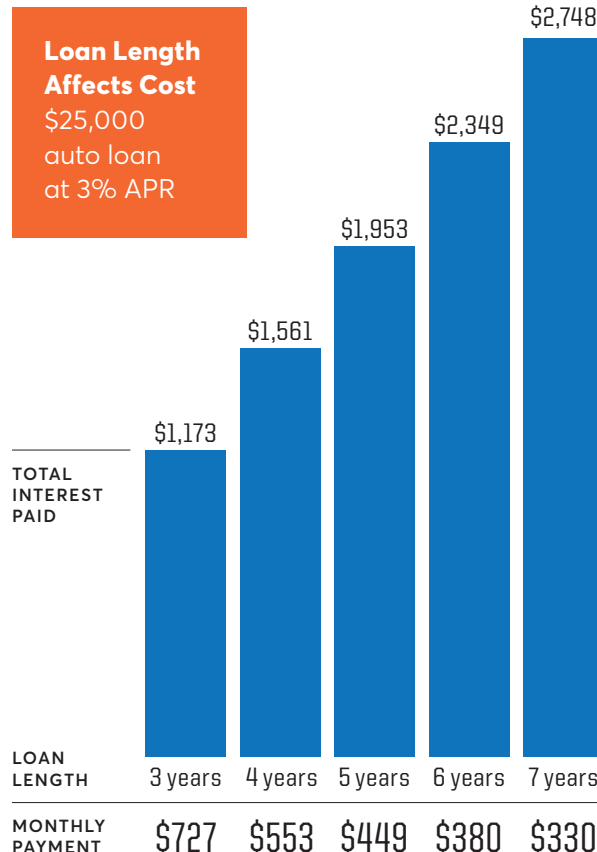
Dealers often try to sell you on a loan by emphasizing what you will have to pay each month. And that does matter, of course, for budgeting purposes. But to get low monthly payments, you probably will need an extended loan length, which can increase the overall cost. Another downside to long-term loans: They increase the chances that you will end up "underwater" or "upside down" on your loan, which is when you owe more on the car than it's worth. Of course, a monthly cost you can handle is important, too, so consider both factors when choosing a loan.

Get preapproval from your bank.

Before you set foot in a dealership—either physically or virtually—contact your bank or credit union and get preapproved for a loan. The dealer may be able to offer a better deal on financing, but having a loan secured ahead of time gives you a strong starting point for negotiations.

If your credit isn't great, check out deals from car manufacturers.

Some automakers, including Chrysler, Hyundai, Kia, Mitsubishi, and Nissan, offer financing for subprime borrowers, although it is usually focused on entry-level and economy cars.



Consider buying a used vehicle.

Used vehicles that are just a few years old are unusually expensive right now, but you can still save money by buying an older model. Although interest rates tend to be higher on loans for used cars, lowering the amount you're borrowing can result in significant savings.

Report suspected discrimination.

A recent academic study found that Black and Hispanic borrowers were 1.5 percentage points less likely to be approved for a loan and that they paid

interest rates that were 0.7 percentage points higher, even when their creditworthiness was the same. Loans offered by dealers are called indirect loans because the dealer arranges financing through a third-party company. But the dealer doesn't have to tell the borrower about all loan offers that lenders send. To make a profit, dealers mark up the loan they choose to share. The study suggests that loans to minority borrowers were marked up more. If you suspect discriminatory lending, file a complaint with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau or the Federal Trade Commission.

Ways to Make Auto Loans Fairer

Here are some changes that could make it easier for you to find a good deal on a car loan.



CR'S INVESTIGATION into auto lending raises serious questions about how the system can be unfair to consumers.

For one thing, we found that some consumers who are similar in terms of their income, credit score, and even the type of car they are buying can be offered loans with wildly different terms.

We examined about 858,000 car loans and found that the problem does not affect just people with poor credit scores. Some with excellent credit—the ones you'd think would get the best terms—are offered very expensive loans, CR found.

Experts have no shortage of ideas for ways to

make the system more equitable. Here are four key changes they'd like to see.

1

You should be able to easily compare loans.

Most people let the dealership handle the loan paperwork, rather than going directly to a bank or credit union. Dealers typically shop around at various lenders to fund the loan—perhaps as many as nine, according to a 2020 study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

But “the loan selected by the dealer is not

necessarily the loan that is best for the consumer,” says Ryan Kelly, acting auto finance program manager at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. “Consumers often do not realize that auto dealers are not required to select the cheapest loan,” and instead may present one that provides the most profit for them.

A requirement that dealers put loans up for bid and then tell borrowers about all the offers could correct this, says Ian Ayres, a lawyer and economist at Yale University's School of Management and Yale Law School, who has studied disparate pricing in auto lending.

Chuck Bell, programs director at CR, agrees. “Consumers would be much better served by a financing model where they can choose the best of competing loan offers. We also believe dealers should be required to disclose all the loan offers they currently receive to consumers because it's blatantly unfair to conceal that information,” Bell says.

2

You should be warned when offered a 'high cost' loan.

That's a protection provided to people shopping for home mortgages—but not to those seeking auto loans. Home buyers offered a mortgage with an annual percentage rate that is 6.5 percentage points higher than the average rate for people with good credit must be alerted that their loan is considered “high cost.” Presented with that info,

consumers may choose to shop around for a better loan.

A similar model could work for car loans, Ayres says. It could “help protect car buyers if dealerships had to warn them when they were likely paying too much for their loan.”

3

You should be able to 'cool off' before accepting a loan.

A three-day waiting period between when a car dealer offers a loan and you accept it could help in several ways, according to an article by Adam Levitin, a Georgetown University law professor.

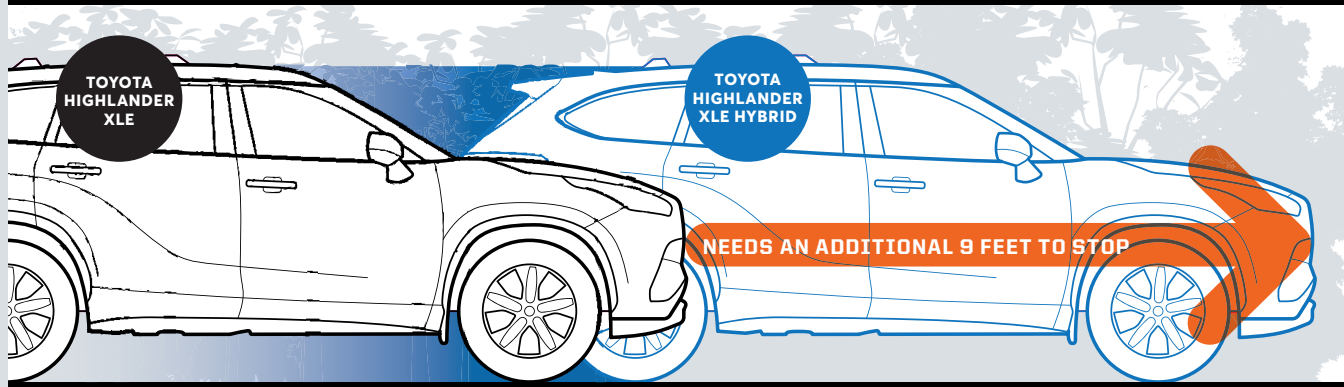
For one, it might help borrowers to avoid discretionary add-ons, such as vehicle service contracts or supplemental gap insurance, which dealers often try to load into loans. And it might motivate a borrower to shop around for a loan through a bank or credit union.

4

More data should be available.

Mortgage lenders must release certain information about the loans they make, including the race and income (but not the names) of their borrowers. That helps researchers, and the public, better understand problems such as discrimination in the housing market.

Auto lenders are under no such obligation. “That makes it far harder to understand, and fix, the inequities we know exist in the car lending world,” says CR's Bell.



Some Hybrids Take Longer to Brake

BRAKING TESTS AT CR's Auto Test Center show that some hybrids require longer stopping distances than gas-only versions of the same model. This difference is partly due to the fact that automakers often use low-rolling-resistance tires on their hybrids to maximize fuel economy. Those tires can require longer distances to safely come to a full stop.

For instance, we compared the stopping distances of the hybrid and nonhybrid versions of four Toyotas: the compact Corolla sedan, the midsize Camry sedan, the small RAV4 SUV, and the midsize Highlander SUV. We found that the hybrid models had a dry-braking stopping distance that was 8 feet to

12 feet longer than the gas-only version in stops from 60 mph.

That extra distance could mean the difference between a near-collision and a crash—for instance, if you have to brake suddenly to avoid a car, an animal, or another obstacle on the road.

Models from some other automakers also fared similarly in our testing, with the Chrysler Pacifica hybrid minivan needing an extra 9 feet to stop from 60 mph compared with its gas-only counterpart. The Hyundai Sonata hybrid sedan needed an additional 8 feet.

Before You Buy, Always Do This

CR's ratings provide a detailed evaluation of a vehicle's overall

performance. When comparing different hybrid models to buy, weigh the benefit of higher mpg against any potential loss in braking or handling.

Because tires play such a crucial role, do your homework when it's time to replace them. CR's tire ratings can help you find models that maximize both performance and fuel economy.

Consider Factors Other Than MPG

Instead of chasing maximum mpg, consider a hybrid model—such as the Hyundai Elantra, Ford Escape, or Honda CR-V—that gets slightly fewer miles per gallon but performs markedly better in braking

distance. Agility and grip are also important and are indicated in our avoidance-maneuver test. Strong performance in these areas could help you prevent certain types of crashes.

Fuel economy is an important concern, but always be sure to consider it along with other factors. "Giving up shorter stopping distances for incrementally better fuel economy is a bad choice," says Jake Fisher, senior director of auto testing at Consumer Reports. "You would be better off with a car that stops shorter, even if it means sacrificing a few mpg to achieve those goals."

COMPARE THE NUMBERS

Stopping distances of hybrids can be much longer than nonhybrid versions of the same model.

TOYOTA CAMRY LE HYBRID	138'
TOYOTA CAMRY LE	126' 12 FT. ↓
CHRYSLER PACIFICA LIMITED HYBRID	145'
CHRYSLER PACIFICA TOURING L	136' 9 FT. ↓
HYUNDAI SONATA HYBRID SEL	135'
HYUNDAI SONATA SEL	127' 8 FT. ↓



ROAD TEST

EXCLUSIVE RATINGS & REVIEWS
BASED ON TESTING AT CR'S
327-ACRE AUTO TEST CENTER



SMALL SUVs

Volkswagen Taos

A Powertrain That Fails to Impress

55

OVERALL
SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 74

HIGHS Rear-seat room, visibility, agility, braking

LOWS Uneven power delivery

POWERTRAIN 158-hp, 1.5-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder engine; 7-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 26 mpg on regular

PRICE
\$22,995-\$33,045 base price range
\$33,064 as tested

THE TAOS IS the latest model in Volkswagen's expanding SUV portfolio, slotting below the Tiguan in size and price. While it has a surprisingly roomy cabin for such a small vehicle, its powertrain has serious hiccups, and we're disappointed that FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, and BSW don't come standard on the base model.

It's the SUV's obstreperous powertrain that would keep us from buying one, especially the all-wheel-drive model with its seven-speed dual-clutch automatic. The Taos suffers from a big initial delay when trying to accelerate from a stop, followed by an abrupt burst of power as it gets going. This can make you feel vulnerable if, for instance, you need to accelerate and merge with traffic on a busy road. The sensation caused a CR driver to call the powertrain "manic," and another said she couldn't

wait to bring the Taos back to the office.

Once the Taos gets underway, however, its transmission shifts smoothly, and the 158-hp, 1.5-liter turbo has a meaty midrange punch. But overall, it's difficult to drive this SUV smoothly. Front-wheel-drive models come with a conventional eight-speed automatic that has far less of a delay off the line, though the engine's power can still burst forth unexpectedly at times.

On the plus side, its compact dimensions, responsive steering, and taut suspension help the Taos take turns tightly. The comfortable front seats are supportive and the rear seat is huge. We like our test model's two-tone seats and blue trim, but the cabin doesn't match its \$33,000 price. There are too many plastic pieces that have a cheap and hollow feel.



SMALL PICKUPS

Hyundai Santa Cruz

This Tiny Pickup Has a Carlike Ride

59

OVERALL
SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 77

HIGHS Acceleration, drives like a car, controls

LOWS Small bed, rear visibility

POWERTRAIN 281-hp, 2.5-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder engine; 8-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 24 mpg on regular

PRICE
\$23,990-\$39,720 base price range
\$37,290 as tested

THE SANTA CRUZ combines the attributes of a small SUV and a pickup truck into one unique vehicle. Similar in concept to the larger Honda Ridgeline, the Tucson-based Santa Cruz could be perfect for the buyer who wants a stylish vehicle with a carlike ride and handling but also occasionally needs an open bed to avoid getting their SUV's cargo area dirty.

At just over 4 feet long, the Santa Cruz's bed is smaller than that of any other pickup, including the Ford Maverick and Ridgeline. As such, it isn't well suited to carrying bicycles or any number of common recreational toys. But it's perfect for transporting grubby garden supplies, grills and coolers for tailgating, or wet gear when pulling a small boat back from the lake. Plus, the Santa Cruz fitted with the optional turbo engine and all-wheel drive can pull a trailer of up to 5,000 pounds, a capacity

more often associated with much larger vehicles.

With 281 hp, the 2.5-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine makes the Santa Cruz SEL Premium feel zippy, with especially strong low-to-midrange grunt. On our track, it sprinted from 0 to 60 mph in a quick 6.6 seconds. There is the occasional low-speed clunkiness from the dual-clutch automatic, its only demerit.

Given the Hyundai's smaller size, the handling feels more responsive through turns than that of any other pickup we've tested. The refined ride is more akin to that of a good SUV than a typical truck. The infotainment system is easy to use, and the front seats are comfortable. The rear seat has decent headroom, but the upright seatback compromises comfort on longer drives.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian and cyclist detection, LDW, and LKA come standard.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

Ratings ➤ **Heading West** We tested two new models that take their names from Western locales. The Santa Cruz is a pleasant pickup; the Taos suffers from an unrefined powertrain.

Make + Model	Overall Score	Survey Results		Road-Test Results														Active Safety Features			
		Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Road-test score	Overall mpg	Seat comfort, front/rear	Usability	Noise	Ride	Fit + finish	Routine handling	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Acceleration, 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking, 60-0 mph, ft.	Cargo volume (cu. ft.)	FCW	AEB, pedestrian	AEB, highway	BSW		
SUVs \$20,000-\$35,000																					
✔ Subaru Crosstrek 2.0L	86	⬆	⬆	87	29	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	54.5	10.2	125	27.5	0	0	0	0		
✔ Nissan Rogue Sport 2.0L	77	⬆	⬇	72	26	⬆ / ⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	52.5	10.3	134	24.5	S	S	S	S		
✔ Chevrolet Trailblazer 1.3T	76	⬆	⬇	66	27	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	54.0	9.5	133	24.0	S	S	—	0		
✔ Mazda CX-30 2.5L	70	⬆	⬇	64	27	⬆ / ⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	54.0	8.7	133	21.5	S	S	S	0		
✔ Buick Encore GX 1.3T	69	⬆	⬇	67	26	⬇ / ⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	54.5	9.4	126	23.0	S	S	—	0		
✔ Hyundai Kona 2.0L	66	⬇	⬇	71	26	⬆ / ⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	56.0	11.1	129	22.5	S	S	0	0		
Honda HR-V 1.8L	62	⬇	⬇	66	29	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	55.0	10.5	132	32.0	0	0	0	—		
Volkswagen Taos 1.5T	55	⬇	⬇	74	26	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	53.0	9.4	130	31.5	0	0	0	0		
Ford EcoSport 2.0L	45	⬇	⬇	61	24	⬇ / ⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	54.5	10.7	132	22.5	—	—	—	0		
Jeep Compass 2.4L	45	⬇	⬇	56	24	⬇ / ⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	53.5	9.8	137	27.5	S	S	S	S		
Kia Seltos 2.0L	43	⬇	⬇	72	28	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬆	55.0	9.0	128	28.0	S	S	S	0		
Jeep Renegade 2.4L	42	⬇	⬇	56	24	⬇ / ⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	51.5	9.9	130	30.5	0	—	0	S		
Fiat 500X 1.3T	37	⬇	⬇	50	23	⬇ / ⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	52.5	9.8	130	19.5	0	—	0	0		

PICKUP TRUCKS \$25,000-\$35,000																			
✓ Honda Ridgeline 3.5L	82	⬆	⬆	83	20	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	53.5	7.3	134	NR	S	S	S	0
✓ Ford Ranger 2.3T	62	⬆	⬆	55	20	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	47.0	7.4	143	NR	S	S	S	0
Hyundai Santa Cruz 2.5T	59	⬇	⬆	77	24	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆	51.5	6.6	132	NR	S	S	0	0
Toyota Tacoma 3.5L	51	⬆	⬆	42	19	⬇ / ⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	46.0	8.2	146	NR	S	S	S	0
Chevrolet Colorado 3.6L	45	⬇	⬇	61	18	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	48.5	7.5	132	NR	0	—	—	—
GMC Canyon 3.6L	45	⬇	⬇	61	18	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	48.5	7.5	132	NR	0	—	—	—
Chevrolet Colorado 2.8D	44	⬇	⬇	60	24	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	49.0	10.3	134	NR	0	—	—	—
GMC Canyon 2.8D	44	⬇	⬇	60	24	⬇ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆	49.0	10.3	134	NR	0	—	—	—
Jeep Gladiator 3.6L	38	⬇	⬆	52	18	⬆ / ⬆	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬇	49.5	7.8	135	NR	0	—	0	0

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

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

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

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

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

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A Not-So-Healthy New Year

These products and services may not give you the fresh start you were hoping for

Forever Young?

Some T-shirt models just don't age ...
Submitted by Gary Breitbord, via email



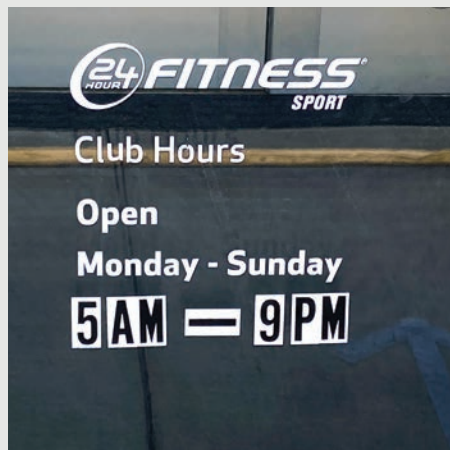
Infection Guaranteed

We wouldn't use these wipes to stay healthy.
Submitted by Alicia C., via email



No Round-the-Clock Workouts Here

24 hours isn't what it used to be.
Submitted by Jim Carter, via email



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The New Donut Diet

It may taste great, but winning this weight-loss challenge won't be easy.
Submitted by Gale Barr, via email



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