



It's greener, but does it work?

Do greener household items work as well as regular ones?

We replace household items such as batteries, toilet rolls and detergents far more regularly than large household appliances, so the weekly shop is an easier way to start moving toward a greener lifestyle.



You can save nearly £50 over five years for every 100 watt incandescent lightbulb you replace with an energy-saving equivalent.

There's a growing range of greener household items and our tests show they can often, but not always, be just as effective as conventional products.

Going green

Being greener is clearly a step many of you want to take. About half of Which? readers in a recent survey told us they try to choose household products that minimise damage to the environment.

In this article, we show you the products which performed at least reasonably well in our tests and which are greener choices.

When we tested recycled toilet rolls, we were unimpressed by the comfort and degradability of those that we looked at.

Instead, you might want to choose one that has the Forest Stewardship Council logo which shows that the paper has been sourced responsibly.

Or you could try previous Which? Best Buy Velvet Quilted, which has a logo stating that three trees are planted for each one that has been felled.



WHICH.CO.UK

20 simple steps to a greener life

www.which.co.uk/20simplechanges

Reusable batteries cost a fraction of a penny to run each hour – good news considering the cost of buying disposables and given that a good AA battery typically gives only about 20 hours' use.

In some cases, we'll all have to go greener – traditional bulbs are being phased out by 2012 in favour of energy-saving varieties.

For cleaning products, there are recognisable green brands, and even mainstream products are now claiming green credentials. In this report, we've looked at their performance and at some natural alternatives.

Batteries

Saving energy and money

Reusable batteries cost more to buy than disposables but will save you money. They cost a fraction of a penny to run per hour and can be used repeatedly rather than binned. This is great news when you think that 600m batteries end up in landfill a year. Savings will be long term though, as you also have to buy a recharging unit. If you buy disposables, make sure to recycle them. By 2016, at least 45% must be recycled. For more on recycling schemes, see www.wrap.org.uk or www.recyclenow.com. Some standard rechargables can go flat quite quickly even when not used, so they're unsuitable for smoke alarms. It's claimed that newer rechargables retain up to 90% of their charge after a year. This is great, however alkalines can last several years. It's best to fully charge them before initial use. Our next test is in December.



100% GP ReCyko+ £6.80 (4 AA batteries)

These lasted more than 6.5 hours before running out of juice. Available at Amazon and other online stores.



Light bulbs

Use less energy and save money in the long run

Energy-saving bulbs use up to five times less power than traditional incandescent ones, last six to ten years and cost

just £1 – £3 a year to run (if used three hours a day). Our tests show that the latest generation (including these two) have

overcome the problems of earlier versions, which were less powerful than claimed and slow to light up.

75% Ikea Sparsam E27 20 Watt stick £2.93

Topped our results table and even did well at -10°C. It costs just £3 a year to run and it aced our durability test. Can't be used with dimmer switches or timers.






67% B&Q Energy Saving Stick £3.50

This can be used with a timer and maintains light well. It's slow to start, can't be used with dimmers and isn't suited to cold. It costs just £2 a year to run. Screw fittings only.



Typical energy use over five years

Electrical power consumed in watts (W)	Low-energy light bulb	Incandescent light bulb	Savings over five years
			
40W or equivalent	£5.62	£24.96	£19.34
60W or equivalent	£7.49	£37.44	£29.95
100W or equivalent	£12.48	£62.40	£49.92

Look out for results from our next tests in November. You can see current test results at www.which.co.uk/energysavingbulbs and read more on common concerns about using lightbulbs at www.which.co.uk/energybulbconcerns.

Laundry products

Many detergents wash well at 30°C, but eco-branded products weren't Best Buys

Mainstream detergents are going greener and increasingly work well at 30°C or lower. Some are more concentrated, so there's less packaging and you need to use less. In our tests of powders, liquids and tablets,



eco-branded products such as Ecover (recently reformulated) and Bio-D aren't Best Buys. They don't contain optical brighteners – chemicals that coat fabrics in a reflective solution to give them a

cleaner, whiter look. Ecover tablets did beat several supermarket brands, despite doing poorly for whiteness and fatty stain removal.

Alternatives such as soap nuts and wash balls sound like a good idea, but they didn't work as well in our tests at 30°C.

Green cleaning

Greener ways to clean around the house

In our tests of washing-up liquids, stain removers and window cleaners, we tried a range of household products with green claims. In many cases, there are also natural remedies you can use. Lemon is a natural bleaching agent and disinfectant, great at removing limescale.

The acid in **distilled white vinegar** cuts through grease and grime and is great for windows and descaling kettles.

SURFACES American brand Method uses only plant-based ingredients in its cleaning products. Its multi-surface cleaner, Method Natural Born All Purpose, aced our cleaning test in our report on all-in-one surface cleaners (Which? May 2009 p62). Its large bottle was awkward to hold, though.

DISHES The ingredients used in eco-options are less effective at breaking through grease than the oil-based petrochemicals used in mainstream washing-up liquid. It's a similar story for dishwasher detergents, though Ecover's dishwasher tablets have impressed us. They removed all food stains well and scored 73%, though weren't quite a Best Buy. One benefit is they

don't contain the phosphates that mainstream types have and which can cause excessive algae growth if they reach waterways.

STAINS Ecover was the best of four eco-friendly fabric stain removers tested. It was beaten by big-brand specialists but is worth considering. We couldn't find green options in our carpet stain remover test but baking powder and water, or white wine, tackled red wine stains well.

