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Our promise

Expert advice when you need it

Which? aims to help you choose the best goods and services – and avoid the worst. We're entirely independent – we take no ads, no freebies and everything we test is paid for at full price. Since

1957 we've informed, influenced and campaigned on behalf of all consumers in the UK.



Best Buys

These are products that achieve high total test scores.

Don't Buys

These are products that have performed extremely poorly in at least one of our key tests or that have achieved very low total test scores.



Exceptional Value

Our coveted award is given on those rare occasions to products that are both of superb quality and outstandingly priced.



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Even the best helpdesk service can't always resuscitate your computer, which is why you should always regularly back up your data **PAGE 38**



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Comment

Housing's new twist

The roller-coaster ride known as the UK housing market has been the central concern in life for many consumers for numerous years. Its ups and downs have broken hearts or made fortunes as well as having been seen by many commentators as the main barometer of the economic wellbeing of the nation.

It has gone through various phases over the years, often sparking spending sprees or financial troughs leading to boom or bust for many related industries. In recent years the growth of buy to let has been the market's main phenomenon, which has led, in particular, to spikes in house prices in university cities and towns.

But our research on p25-27 appears to confirm the existence of the latest trend: that of more parents giving major assistance to their grown-up children in buying their first house – and not just to help ease the costs while they are at university. The increase in house prices looks unlikely to halt in the near future, resulting in a whole new area of concern for many parents.

Some will be lending or giving their children substantial sums of money; others will be borrowing cash against their homes, long after they have paid off their own mortgage. All will be extending their own debt to ensure their children are not left behind. Their decisions will have major ramifications on their overall spending patterns.

There's an increasing choice of financial products to help them raise the necessary cash, which means the opportunities for making the wrong decision are multiplied. We've offered some solutions in our report, but the main ones are simple: plan carefully and come to considered conclusions. You should then be happy – and your children will be on their way up the property ladder.

October's special celebration

Next month we celebrate our 50th birthday with a special edition that will highlight the successes that we and you together have enjoyed in this journey of promoting the rights of the UK consumer over the last half century.

We look forward to sharing it with you – and thank you for your loyalty. Here's to the next 50 years.

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THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

100

The number of stock cubes used to test our 14 slow cookers, plus 20 jars of tomato purée, 30 500g cartons of passata...Take a long, slow look at our report – it's on p66.

65,716

The number of millimetres of card cut by our special cutting machine to test the sharpness of our 13 sets of kitchen knives. For the blades of glory, see our report on p69.

2,900+

The number of plates washed by our 'washing machine' in our test of 20 washing-up liquids. Find out which bubbles got the plates squeaky clean on p72.