

Repair or replace?



If your TV, oven or washing machine breaks, don't write it off – getting it repaired could save you hundreds of pounds

According to Which? research, a third of you would replace a TV that wasn't working, rather than get it repaired. But a new Best Buy Panasonic television would set you back around £500, whereas we've found that repairing an older model could cost as little as £55 – that's £445 less.

Our research also showed that a fifth of you would replace your washing machine if it developed a serious fault.

To find out whether it's worth holding on to your old appliances a little longer, we've asked independent

repairers across the UK to give us quotes for fixing common faults on washing machines, TVs and electric ovens. We've compared the cost of repairs with the price of a new appliance to find the best-value option.

We've also looked at other faults that could be worth fixing, and explain when it really is time to wave goodbye to your old electricals.

WHICH.CO.UK

Six million electrical items are thrown out a year. Want to recycle yours?

www.which.co.uk/recyclingelectricals

Washing machines

Broken door seal

Our reliability survey (*Which?*, January 2009, p40) shows that a broken door seal is one of the most common problems with washing machines, so we investigated the cost of replacing the door seal on a four-year-old Siemens model (see table, right).

The average cost is £70. Electrical chain Comet charges approximately £100 for this repair (the washing machine is then guaranteed for three months for the same fault).

Replacing the machine with the cheapest Siemens model we've tested recently (the WM1 4S493) would cost £479. There isn't a Siemens Best Buy, but if you bought the Best Buy Zanussi ZWF16581 you'd pay £360.

Other faults

MOTOR BRUSHES FAIL
Symptoms: The drum won't spin.

In most cases, this fault is worth repairing as you just need to replace one part: the motor brushes. These can vary in price from £27.50 to £125, plus labour of around £45.

Verdict: Get a quote for repairs

DRUM BEARINGS FAIL
Symptoms: The machine makes a lot of noise, like an aircraft taking off. If you rotate the drum by hand the movement will be rough. In most cases, this is so expensive to put right it's just not worth it.

Verdict: Replace

Expert advice

Appliance repairman Jason Falkner has been highly recommended by Which? members on Which? Local (www.which-local.co.uk). He told us: 'It's often worth repairing a washing machine, but this is particularly true if you have a premium brand such as a Bosch or Miele.'

He says, though, that before you call out the repairer, you should check whether you can fix it yourself.

For example, if the machine isn't spinning, this is often because the filter is blocked. Most machines have a small hatch on the front; open it, remove the filter and clean and refit it. The machine should then start working again.

Region	Repair cost (broken door seal) ^a
N Ireland (27)	£60
North East and Yorkshire (24)	£63
North West (33)	£65
South West (33)	£70
Midlands (37)	£70
Wales (36)	£70
Scotland (33)	£73
East Anglia (36)	£76
South East and London (36)	£77
Overall average (295)	£70

Sample sizes are in brackets.
^a Average prices. Prices include parts, VAT where applicable and call-out charge.



Our research

To compare prices, we called 295 washing machine repairers in June 2008, and 280 TV repairers and 316 oven repairers in February and March 2009. Calls were made across nine regions of the UK.

In March 2009 we asked 1,838 Which? online panel members what they would do if their appliance developed a serious fault.



A new Best Buy washing machine could cost £360, but you'd pay only around £70 to replace a door seal

Televisions

Frame collapse

If you have a traditional, big-box cathode ray tube (CRT) television, rather than a flat-panel LCD or plasma TV, fixing it is often worthwhile, particularly if it's a premium brand. We checked the cost of repairing a six-year-old Panasonic CRT TV.

We told repairers that a white line was appearing across the screen for few seconds and the TV was then turning off. The most likely cause of this is a fault called frame collapse – a relatively common problem with CRT TVs. Replacing the TV with a current Panasonic Best Buy would cost £500, but the average cost of fixing this fault (see table below) is only £55 – a saving of £445.

Other faults

CRT FAILURE

Symptoms: If the cathode ray tube is about to fail, you'll see a predominance of one colour (red, blue or green) on screen; thin, horizontal lines in the background of a dark scene; or intermittent flashes of red, blue or green.



Repairing an old Panasonic with 'frame collapse' would cost around £55 – a new LCD TV like this one could cost £445 more

Replacement tubes are no longer widely available, so you'll find it difficult to repair a TV with this problem.

Verdict: Replace

POWER SUPPLY FAULT

Symptoms: The TV is completely dead – there is no standby light.

This can be worth repairing – it should just be a case of replacing some components in the power supply. This can cost anything from £40 to

£100 for labour and parts.

Verdict: Repair – but get a quote first

Expert advice

Michael Mead, a TV expert in the Which? lab, says that LCD and plasma TVs may not be economical to repair when they break. You can't fix individual components and often need to replace a complete printed circuit board, which can cost almost as much as a new TV.

Region	Repair cost (frame collapse) ^a
North West (33)	£48
Wales (36)	£50
North East and Yorkshire (34)	£50
South West (29)	£55
East Anglia (35)	£55
N Ireland (13) ^b	£58
Scotland (36)	£59
South East and London (34)	£61
Midlands (30)	£63
Overall average (280)	£55

Sample sizes are in brackets ^a Average prices. These prices include parts and VAT where applicable. Some quotes include call-out charges and others don't, depending on the way the TV repairers work. There was no difference between the average quote with call-out or without. ^b Note small sample size

WHICH LOCAL

If you're looking for a good repairer, visit Which? Local at www.which-local.co.uk. Which? Local lets you search for traders in your area that have been recommended by Which? members. And if you've found a good trader, posting a recommendation on the site is easy.



Electric ovens

Built-in oven – element failure

If the element in an oven goes, the fan will work but the oven won't heat up. According to our reliability survey, this is the most common fault with built-in ovens. We investigated the cost of replacing the element in a five-year-old, built-in, double fan oven from Hotpoint (see table, right). The average quote from independent repairers was £73; Comet would charge approximately £90.

Replacing the old model with the cheapest Hotpoint double oven we've tested recently (the DY46X) would cost £374. There isn't a Best Buy built-in oven from Hotpoint, but if you replaced your oven with the Best Buy New World NW90DOSS, you'd pay £329.

Other faults

DOOR PROBLEMS

Symptoms: The door won't shut properly.



The most common cause of this is the hinges going. New hinges cost from £40 plus £45 for labour, so this is invariably worth it.

Verdict: Repair

FAN BREAKS

Symptoms: the oven works but the fan doesn't.

This can be worth repairing, but the cost will depend on how much the manufacturer charges for a replacement fan – this can be anywhere from £40 to £200.

Verdict: Get a quote for repairs

Expert advice

Repairman Jason Falkner says that ovens are generally worth repairing. He says: 'The only real exceptions are if your oven is more than 15 years old or an unusual make.' This is because it can be difficult to get hold of the parts. And even if you can get hold of them, they can be very expensive as they're not mass produced.

Some kitchen shops have their own brand of kitchen appliances, and it can be harder to track down parts for them.

If the element on a five-year-old Hotpoint failed, it would cost around £73 to fix it. A new Best Buy double oven could cost £329



Region	Repair cost (element failure) ^a
N Ireland (36)	£58
Wales (35)	£68
North East and Yorkshire (38)	£70
Scotland (33)	£73
North West (36)	£73
Midlands (36)	£74
South West (34)	£77
South East and London (33)	£81
East Anglia (35)	£85
Overall average (316)	£73

Sample sizes are in brackets.
^a Average prices. These prices include parts, VAT where applicable and call-out charge.

NORMAL SERVICE RESUMED

Alan Meekings, consultant, Lincolnshire

When your television breaks down, you may just decide to get rid of it. That was Alan Meekings' first thought when his TV's power supply failed. However, he decided to call a local TV repair service on the off chance that it might be fixable. He was surprised to find that it could be repaired for a fraction of the cost of a new set.

Alan told us that the repairer conducted a quick and accurate diagnosis over the phone, quoted an attractive price of £69 – only payable if the TV could be repaired – and offered to collect it. Within a week the TV was fixed. The repairer even put the TV back, reconnected it and checked it was working perfectly.

