

Sanders

NEED TO KNOW

DELTA

Delta, or detail, sanders are great for getting into corners and other hard-to-reach places. They use a scrubbing sanding action. The small triangular sanding head is good for restricted areas but slow on large surfaces.

RANDOM ORBITAL

Random orbital, or eccentric, sanders have a distinctive sanding action that rotates and scrubs. They're best used when you want to remove a lot of surface quickly. Two handles make big jobs more comfortable.

ORBITAL

These have a large rectangular sanding plate and a slower, gentler scrubbing action. They have two handles and are well suited to smoothing large areas of woodwork. The best models can also get into tight corners.

PALM

These are a hybrid between orbital and delta sanders. Compact and light, they have rectangular or triangular sanding plates, with a mushroom-shaped handle to fit in the palm of your hand. They're good for smaller jobs and for sanding in awkward places.

MULTI

These have interchangeable plates and profile attachments so you can use them for surface removal, finishing and polishing, or getting into tight corners.



THREE-WAY SANDING PLATE

The triangular plate on many delta sanders, such as on this Metabo, can be rotated 120 degrees at a time. This means you can sand with all three points of the triangle, tripling the life of the sanding sheet and the plate.



1 Metabo
DELTA

DUST EXTRACTION

Dust bags are convenient and the best, such as the one on this DeWalt, collect more than 70 per cent of dust. However, they get clogged up so regular cleaning is necessary. Attaching a vacuum cleaner will give better dust extraction. But this can be unwieldy and you need to make sure the hose fits.



5 DeWalt
RANDOM ORBITAL

BEST BUYS

Our Best Buys combine good sanding performance (including surface removal and finish) with ease of use and durability.

If you're a keen DIYer, buy two sanders – a random orbital and a delta. This isn't as rash as it sounds – you needn't spend more than £100. It's also the only way to guarantee top-notch sanding on a range of surfaces. Watch out for running costs, though, as both types use expensive hook-and-loop sanding sheets (see 'Sanding sheets', p42).

DELTA

For fiddly jobs, such as banisters or chair legs, a delta sander is ideal. All our Best Buys do a good job. The

Metabo (1) is the heaviest but a slim handle makes it comfortable to use. At £88 from independents it's not cheap but it does come with a carrying case. The **Black & Decker (2)**, £38 from Homebase and Focus DIY, is lightweight but effective. Dust extraction is good, and the cylindrical handle is comfortable to hold. Alternatively, try the **Bosch (3)**, £60 from independents. Another good machine, it has a lock-on button, which makes longer jobs more comfortable.

RANDOM ORBITAL

For a machine that will sand large surfaces fast and effectively, consider a random orbital model. The **DeWalt (5)**

is big and powerful with a large sanding area. It has two orbit settings – 6mm for surface removal and 3mm for finishing – plus adjustable speed control and an automatic braking system. It's quite heavy but the soft-grip handle is comfortable, and you can use a vacuum adaptor or dust bag. With a price tag of £175 from B&Q, the DeWalt is best suited to the enthusiast.

Another option is the **Metabo (8)**, £88 from Machine Mart. This offers the best surface removal and good dust extraction. The three from **Bosch (6, 7, and 9)** are reasonably quiet with excellent durability. However, as none has a vacuum adaptor, things can get messy. They



11 Bosch
ORBITAL

SANDING SHEETS

This Bosch uses clamps (inset) to hold plain sanding sheets in place, though it can be fiddly to attach them. Hook-and-loop sanding sheets are easier to use but pricey – for example, Pirana hook-and-loop paper costs 96p a sheet, three times as much as Pirana clamp paper, 32p a sheet. The best compromise might be to buy a sander that offers both systems.



cost from £50 to £90 from B&Q and independents.

ORBITAL

Orbital sanders are ideal for preparing surfaces for painting or varnishing. The **Bosch (11)**, £35 from Focus DIY, is the best – finish quality is great but it is also good at surface removal and getting into corners. An alternative is the **Black & Decker (12)** which costs around £25 from B&Q. This is a lighter model and is easy to use. It takes two types of sanding paper and has two dust extraction systems and variable speed. It's not great at sanding in corners, as the paper clamps get in the way.

PALM SANDERS

Palm sanders are versatile – but you do compromise on performance. The best is the **Black & Decker (18)**, £30 from B&Q and Machine Mart.

Finish quality is good but surface removal isn't as fast as other Best Buys. It has some good features, such as a vacuum adaptor for dust extraction, but no variable speed control. Its gel-grip handle is comfortable but, as it's bigger than the sanding plate, it can stop you from sanding right into tight corners.

MULTI

The delta profiles on multi sanders make sanding in corners easy, but surface removal and finish are a let down, so neither model on test makes it as a Best Buy.

DON'T BUY

The Focus (17) orbital sander might be cheap at £13, but it's slow and difficult to use, you can't get it into corners, it vibrates intensely and it has poor durability.

PRIO cordless sander

The Bosch PRIO, £60 from B&Q and Robert Dyas, is a battery-powered palm sander. A delta profile makes sanding in corners very easy and it's light and comfortable to use. A three-way rotating sanding plate increases the life of your sanding sheets, but surface removal is slow and finish isn't up to much, either. And the battery, which takes 30 minutes to charge, lasts only between 10 and 20 minutes. You'd be better off using a Best Buy sander with an extension lead.



TABLE NOTES

We tested 32 sanders from leading brands at a range of prices. For results of sanders that did less well, see www.which.co.uk/whicheextra.

Specification

Price Typical high-street price.

Sanding sheets Whether the sander takes hook-and-loop (HL) sheets or plain sanding sheets held with clamps (C). **Dustbag or vac** See 'Dust extraction', p41.

Performance

Surface removal We measure how many grams of wood are removed using a range of sanding sheet grits. Those that remove more in the allotted time score more highly. **Finish** The quality of the finish across a range of sanding sheets. **Dust** How much dust is held in the dust bag (if present) using a range of sanding sheet grits. Models with a vacuum adaptor score more highly.

SCORE

This ignores price and is based on:

Sanding (corners, surface removal, finish)	45%
Convenience	20%
Durability	15%
Features, accessories and instructions	12.5%
Noise and dust	7.5%

KEY

★	☆	○	◐	●
Best				Worst
■ Best Buy				■ Don't Buy



18 Black & Decker
PALM

Sanders

DELTA

- 1 Metabo DSE 300 Intec
- 2 Black & Decker KA 511 EKA
- 3 Bosch PDA 240E
- 4 Powerbase 862817

RANDOM ORBITAL

- 5 DeWalt D 26410
- 6 Bosch PEX 420 AE
- 7 Bosch PEX 400 AE
- 8 Metabo SX E 425
- 9 Bosch PEX 270 AE

ORBITAL

- 11 Bosch PSS 240 A
- 12 Black & Decker KA 197 EKA
- 13 Metabo SR 10-23 Intec
- 14 Worx 240 W
- 15 Skil 7320
- 16 Ryobi S 33 K
- 17 Focus Basics

PALM

- 18 Black & Decker KA 170 GT
- 19 Bosch PSM 160 A

MULTI

- 20 Performance Power PP Pro 200 W
 - 21 Black & Decker KA 260 GTK
- a Vac accessory available as extra

VARIABLE SPEED

Variable speed is important, especially if you're sanding different surfaces. Higher speeds are suited to wood and plaster but you'll need to slow down on veneers and plastics or between coats of paint or varnish. This Black &

Decker has six speeds, and the control is at the back.

BEST BUY**2 Black & Decker**
DELTA**BEST BUY****3 Bosch**
DELTA**BEST BUY****6 Bosch**
RANDOM ORBITAL**BEST BUY****7 Bosch**
RANDOM ORBITAL**BEST BUY****8 Metabo**
RANDOM ORBITAL**BEST BUY****9 Bosch**
RANDOM ORBITAL**BEST BUY****12 Black & Decker**
ORBITAL

Specification					Performance							Score
Price (£)	Sanding area (cm ²)	Sanding sheets	Variable speed	Dust bag or vac	Surface removal	Finish	Sanding in corners	Dust	Noise	Durability	Ease of use	(%)
88	49	HL	✓	Bag ^a	☆	○	★	●	☆	★	☆	71
38	49	HL	✓	Vac	☆	○	★	☆	○	★	☆	71
60	49	HL	✓	Vac	☆	○	★	●	☆	★	☆	68
15	49	HL		Vac	○	○	★	☆	○	★	☆	63
175	170	HL	✓	Bag & vac	☆	☆	○	★	○	☆	☆	71
90	172	HL	✓	Bag	☆	○	○	●	☆	★	☆	71
60	117	HL	✓	Bag	☆	○	○	●	☆	★	☆	71
88	117	HL	✓	Bag & vac	★	○	○	★	☆	☆	☆	69
50	117	HL	✓	Bag	○	☆	○	●	☆	★	☆	66
46	117	HL	✓	Bag	☆	○	○	○	☆	☆	☆	62
35	166	HL & C	✓	Bag	☆	☆	★	●	○	★	☆	71
25	172	HL & C	✓	Bag & vac	○	☆	●	☆	○	★	★	68
88	169	C		Bag & vac	○	☆	★	●	☆	★	○	65
30	165	HL & C	✓	Bag	○	☆	●	●	○	★	☆	64
30	169	C	✓	Bag	☆	☆	★	●	☆	☆	☆	63
32	175	C		Bag & vac	○	☆	●	☆	☆	★	○	61
13	167	C		Vac	●	☆	●	☆	☆	●	●	14
30	113	HL & C		Bag & vac	●	☆	●	☆	○	★	★	66
50	108	HL		Bag	☆	☆	★	●	○	☆	★	63
35	166/159/119	HL & C		Bag	○	○	★	●	○	★	☆	63
39	136/117	HL		Bag	○	○	★	●	●	★	○	62