

Fridges

NEED TO KNOW

The first thing to think about with a fridge is how much space you want. It's a good idea to leave a bit more room than you think you'll need because fridges take longer to cool food and drink when they're crammed full.

There are two main sizes of fridge: tall fridges and smaller, worktop-height fridges.

Capacity varies within each type but you can't trust the makers' claims about how much a fridge will hold. They don't allow for how the compartments and shelves affect how much you can fit in; two apparently identical fridges can differ in capacity by up to 25 litres.

BUILT-IN MODELS

Built-in fridges are designed to sit within your kitchen units behind a cupboard door.

You can't just stick a normal fridge behind your kitchen units for two reasons. First, it would amplify the amount of noise that the fridge makes when it vibrates. Second, the fridge needs a certain amount of space around it to release heat into the air, and normal fridges tend to be too big to allow for this.

Built-in models are smaller and use special technology to reduce noise levels. As a result, they're a lot more expensive – expect to pay roughly two to three times more for a built-in fridge than an equivalent freestanding model.



1 Hotpoint
FREESTANDING TALL

BEST
ON
TEST

BEST BUYS

A good fridge will maintain a steady temperature and cool food quickly. Most fridges can do this well; our Best Buys are those which are just that little bit better.

There is such a thing as a poor fridge, though, and this particularly shows up in one of our tests. When we raise the room temperature to 32°C, equivalent to a warm summer's day, some fridges overcompensate. They lower their temperatures to less than minus 7°C, so food freezes noticeably in the fridge; this spoils the texture of food. It happens with the Servis (17), Frigidaire (19), Zanussi (27) and Frigidaire (28).

FREESTANDING TALL

This type of fridge tends to be consistently good, with little to choose between models.

The **Hotpoint (1)**, £330 from Comet, has handy features such as adjustable door racks and a bottle shelf.

It comes in white, sandstone, graphite and aluminium.

The slightly larger **Gorenje (2)**, **Proline (3)** and **Frigidaire (4)** are almost identical to each other. The biggest difference is that the Gorenje comes in stainless steel and white, while the other two are white only. The Gorenje, £250 from Comet, also has glass shelves (the others have wire shelves). Pick up the Proline for £200 from Comet, and the Frigidaire for around £190, online only.

FREESTANDING WORKTOP-HEIGHT

There are bigger differences between the best and worst here. The best, the quiet **Beko (11)**, is a long-standing Best Buy. It's being phased out but is still available in silver for £150 from Miller Brothers.

It's followed by the Bosch (12). The most striking thing about this model is the design of its shelves, which pull out

BOTTLE STORAGE

A handy feature for shelves is a bottle grip, such as the one on this Hotpoint. All the tall freestanding Best Buys have this.

It also has a shaped bottle shelf, for safely storing bottles horizontally. The only other Best Buy with this feature is the Gorenje (2).



A bottle grip prevents spills when you open the door

smoothly on rollers. It costs £249 from John Lewis.

Iceboxes are more common in this category. The Hotpoint (14) and Whirlpool (16) have three-star boxes (which store pre-frozen food for up to 12 months). And the Daewoo (15) has a zero-star box (suitable for making ice cubes). All three models are good but not quite Best Buys.

BUILT-IN TALL

The **Whirlpool (21)** is easily the best option here. Its salad crisper is small but there are plenty of door racks. It costs £554 from Miller Brothers.

BUILT-IN WORKTOP-HEIGHT

The next Best Buy from **Whirlpool (23)** has a fairly basic internal design but it keeps food in good condition and the huge door racks offer plenty of space. You can find it in Currys for £330.

**GLASS SHELVES**

Solid shelves, like those on this Gorenje, are easier to clean than wire ones and stop spills dripping on food below.

If you want a fridge with wire shelves, check that the salad crisper has a cover. It will stop things dripping on your salad.

**BEST BUY**

2 Gorenje
FREESTANDING TALL

**BEST BUY**

3 Proline
FREESTANDING TALL

**BEST BUY**

4 Frigidaire
FREESTANDING TALL

**BEST ON TEST**

11 Beko
FREESTANDING, WORKTOP

**BEST BUY**

12 Bosch
FREESTANDING WORKTOP

EASY ACCESS

This fridge is from Bosch's Easy Access range. The shelves slide out smoothly on rollers, with only the lightest touch needed even when they're full.

You can store bottles on the bottom shelves or slot them into movable grips on the upper shelves.

Unusually, Bosch has decided to increase the space on the main shelves rather than including door shelves.



23 Whirlpool
BUILT-IN WORKTOP

BEST ON TEST

21 more fridges on test

The main table shows Best Buys from previous tests, as well as newly tested models. There are 21 more fridges from previous tests still in the shops. See www.which.co.uk/fridges for details. If you'd prefer a fridge-freezer, there are results for 35 models at www.which.co.uk/fridgefreezers. The following are all freestanding Best Buys (see p32 for American-style Best Buys).

Model	Price (£)	Frost-free	Score (%)
Siemens KG28XM40	900		88
Hotpoint FFA81P	360		79
Siemens KG36P320	530		78
Whirlpool ARC 7470	430	✓	76
Bosch KGU32125	530	✓	74

Last report March 2005

**BEST ON TEST**

21 Whirlpool
BUILT-IN TALL

Fridges

Fridges	Specification					Temperature				Convenience		Score
	Price (£)	Size hxxxd (cm)	Capacity (litres)	Running cost (£/yr)	Icebox	Thermostat accuracy	Stable	Even	Cooling power	Noise	Storage	(%)
FREESTANDING TALL												
1 Hotpoint RLA61	330	160x66x74	237	10		☆	★	★	☆	★	☆	86
2 Gorenje R2907MLA	250	149x70x66	253	9		☆	★	★	☆	★	☆	86
3 Proline PLF284A	200	148x62x70	253	9		☆	★	★	☆	★	☆	86
4 Frigidaire RLE1099A	190	149x62x65	253	9		☆	★	★	☆	★	○	86
5 Ocean m100U	200	167x66x71	241	9		★	☆	★	★	★	○	85
6 Servis M7611-6W	300	159x62x70	269	9		☆	★	★	☆	★	○	83
7 Beko TLA6018	260	179x63x71	256	8		☆	★	★	☆	☆	○	83
8 Frigidaire FL265	180	154x59x68	217	9		☆	★	★	☆	☆	○	82
9 Whirlpool ARC1910	250	145x62x71	237	9		☆	★	☆	☆	★	☆	81
10 Hoover HLA336K	350	174x62x68	328	9		●	☆	★	☆	☆	○	76
FREESTANDING WORKTOP-HEIGHT												
11 Beko LSA 426 SD	150	85x55x60	121	10		○	☆	☆	★	★	☆	78
12 Bosch KTR18425GB	249	95x62x70	132	6		☆	★	○	○	★	☆	74
13 Lec L1205W	142	88x55x64	103	6		☆	☆	☆	○	☆	○	71
14 Hotpoint RSA21VP	150	87x60x64	102	9	✓	☆	★	☆	☆	☆	○	71
15 Daewoo FR153SL	120	95x73x61	112	7	✓	☆	☆	★	●	☆	●	70
16 Whirlpool ARC 0170	150	91x56x66	80	16	✓	○	★	☆	○	★	○	69
17 Servis M7750-6	200	91x62x70	123	7		●	●	☆	☆	★	○	65
18 Beko LA720	150	95x57x64	114	8		●	○	☆	☆	★	○	64
19 Frigidaire R6003B	120	87x59x59	111	9		●	●	☆	○	★	○	57
20 Proline PLF131W	99	95x71x63	103	14		●	○	●	○	☆	●	54
BUILT-IN TALL												
21 Whirlpool ARG979/3	554	125x56x59	191	9		○	★	☆	☆	★	☆	77
22 Hotpoint HL232I	400	132x56x57	185	9		●	●	☆	★	★	☆	58
BUILT-IN WORKTOP-HEIGHT												
23 Whirlpool ARG 581/2	330	92x62x60	127	11		★	★	★	☆	★	○	89
24 Indesit GSE160I	216	91x60x60	113	11		☆	★	☆	☆	★	○	84
25 Electrolux ERU6470	390	92x62x56	112	7		★	★	☆	○	☆	○	83
26 Gorenje RIU1507LA	229	92x62x60	131	8		★	☆	★	○	★	○	83
27 Zanussi ZI9155a	280	99x57x59	130	8		★	●	☆	★	☆	○	64
28 Fridgemaster MTBL140	199	93x61x61	112	9		●	●	★	☆	☆	○	62

TABLE NOTES

We tested the most popular models from the leading brands.

Specification

Price Lowest widely available high-street price. If a product is available only online, its price is shown in *italics*.

Size The space required to install the model, including any extra space that is recommended by the fridge's manufacturer for air circulation. **Capacity** The amount of usable space.

Icebox Whether the fridge has an icebox. The Hotpoint (14) and Whirlpool (16) can store pre-frozen food for 12 months; the Daewoo (15) is suitable only for making ice cubes.

Temperature

Thermostat accuracy How well the fridge maintains the ideal temperature (3°C to 5°C) at the recommended thermostat setting.

Stable How closely the fridge maintains the right internal temperature when the room

temperature changes. **Even** The temperature difference between the coldest and warmest parts of the fridge. The fridges with even temperatures receive the highest rating. **Cooling power** How quickly the fridge cools down food and drink.



Convenience

Noise How noisy the fridge is when it starts and stops cooling cycles. None of the models in this test is intrusively noisy.

Storage How easily you can move shelves and compartments to store different-sized items.

SCORE

Ignores price and is based on:

Temperature	70%
Noise	10%
Ease of defrosting	10%
Ease of use and cleaning	10%