

Handheld & stick cleaners

NEED TO KNOW

Handheld and stick vacs won't replace your full-sized one but, being small and light, they're ideal for confined spaces and dry spills. Only one vac on test – a Black & Decker (7) – can clean up wet spills.

HANDBELDS VS STICKS
Handhelds are lighter and more compact than sticks. They fit easily in confined areas – inside your car, say – and they're great for fiddly jobs such as cleaning computer keyboards.

Sticks, so called because of their broom-like handles, are bigger. They're ideal for cleaning stairs, for which your main vac is too bulky and most handhelds too small.

CORDLESS VS MAINS
A cordless model frees you from the restrictions of a power cable. But battery life is 25 minutes at best and recharging from flat takes up to 24 hours – so always return the cleaner to its recharge unit (most are wall-mountable) so you'll have power next time.

Mains power gives stronger suction, which is a real help for tough jobs such as removing pet hair. Speaking of which...

PET HAIR

Plenty of full-sized vacs struggle with pet hair and the same is true of most of their mini counterparts. The key to successful pet-hair cleaning is nozzle design – ideally a rotating brush head (sometimes called a turbo brush) which can loosen the hair.

BEST BUYS

Our Best Buys are brilliant cleaners, but they're also easy and comfortable to use. And they have handy accessories to make most tasks a doddle.

HANDBELD CLEANERS

For a light and versatile all-rounder that's great on stairs, look no further than the **Black & Decker (1)** mains vac. This little blue handheld is packed with accessories, including an extension hose and tube to give extra reach. It also has crevice nozzles, to reach into cracks, and brushes for keyboards or soft furnishings. Its compact size – just 30cm long – and accessories make it fantastic for most cleaning tasks. And it's great value at £30 from Miller Brothers.

If you want a cordless cleaner – ideal for cleaning car interiors – try the more expensive **Black & Decker (2)**. At only 11 minutes, battery life is rather short but, if you keep it on permanent recharge, that's not a big problem. The recharge unit is wall-mountable, and accessories include brush and crevice nozzles. It's £50 in Comet and Currys.

STICK CLEANERS

All of the stick cleaners are good but the mains-powered **Morphy Richards (9)** – £50 from Argos and Index – has the edge over its competitors.

Cleaning is excellent on carpets and worktops. And it's particularly useful on stairs: it's easy to manoeuvre and gets the job done quickly.

There are plenty of supplied accessories, including brush and crevice nozzles and an extension tube, which gives you that extra reach into awkward spaces.

An updated version, with an easily removable telescopic

handle, is being introduced from around now.

The mains-powered **Miele (10)** stick is too bulky for small jobs but it comes into its own on bigger carpet areas and it copes well with pet hair. At 1.4m long, it's bigger and heavier than other sticks but still twice as light as most full-sized vacs. It's a good choice if you have small rooms and don't like lugging around a normal vac. The best high-street price is £80 from Miller Brothers.

Both our Best Buy sticks are mains-powered. If you want a cordless model, the Hoover (11) and Electrolux (12) are worth considering. Both are good products but minor niggles prevent them from being up to Best Buy standard. The Hoover has short battery life and lacks accessories; the Electrolux's on-off switch is a touch hard to operate.

BEST ON TEST

STAIRS

Sticks, like this Morphy Richards, are half the weight of normal vacs and ideal for stairs. The long handle means you don't need to bend down, and the big head covers the floor quickly.

1 Black & Decker
HANDHELD

9 Morphy Richards
STICK

Handheld and stick cleaners

HANDBELD CLEANERS

- 1 Black & Decker VH780 mini
- 2 Black & Decker CV9605
- 3 Electrolux Ergorapido
- 4 Hoover S144DS Powermaster
- 5 Home-Tek HT807
- 6 Dirt Devil DD060
- 7 Black & Decker WV4815
- 8 Vax V-034 Power Reach

STICK CLEANERS

- 9 Morphy Richards 73090 Pod
- 10 Miele Alternative S143
- 11 Hoover Freejet Cyclonic SU144S2
- 12 Electrolux Supercombi ZB257X

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BEST
ON
TEST

Decker

SURFACES

Most models are good at eradicating crumbs from carpet but some – like this Miele Best Buy – are less effective at cleaning smooth surfaces, such as worktops.

The difference is caused by the shape of the head and the way it moves over the surfaces.



BEST
BUY



FILTERS

Many models are hamstrung by poor filters, which let dust and other fine-grained substances escape. The Black & Decker (7), shown above, is blowing out clouds of flour; by contrast, this Miele would keep it in perfectly.

2 Black & Decker
HANDHELD

BEST
BUY

10 Miele
STICK

TABLE NOTES

We tested best-selling cordless and mains-powered models from popular brands.

Specification

Price Typical high-street price.

Capacity How much dust the cleaners will hold.

Cleaning

Carpet/Worktop cleaning How well cleaners pick up crumbs and prevent dust escaping through filters. **Pet hair** Models marked n/a don't have a brush for pet hair so we didn't test them.

Ease of use

Features Number of accessories, such as furniture brushes.

Battery Battery life and recharge time for cordless models. **Stairs/Keyboards/Cars/Carpet** How easy it is to use the cleaner on these surfaces.

SCORE

This ignores price and is based on:

Cleaning	50%
Ease of use	40%
Features	10%

KEY

★	☆	○	◐	●
Best				Worst
■ Best Buy				

Specification				Cleaning			Ease of use							Score
Price (£)	Weight (kg)	Cordless	Capacity (litres)	Carpet cleaning	Worktop cleaning	Pet hair	Features	Battery	Comfort	Stairs	Keyboards	Cars	Carpet	(%)
30	1.7		0.4	☆	☆	◐	☆	n/a	☆	☆	○	◐	○	66
50	1.4	✓	0.7	☆	☆	●	○	◐	○	○	○	☆	○	61
50	1	✓	0.4	☆	★	n/a	●	◐	◐	◐	○	○	◐	54
40	1.5	✓	0.6	○	☆	●	○	◐	☆	○	○	○	◐	52
30	2.2		0.6	○	◐	○	☆	n/a	☆	○	☆	◐	○	50
35	0.9	✓	0.2	◐	○	●	☆	○	○	☆	☆	★	○	49
38	0.9	✓	0.4	○	○	n/a	○	●	○	◐	○	☆	○	43
50	2.8		1.7	○	●	○	☆	n/a	☆	◐	○	◐	○	42
50	3.8		1.2	☆	☆	◐	☆	n/a	☆	★	○	◐	○	65
80	4.6		1.9	★	○	★	○	n/a	☆	○	◐	●	★	62
50	2.7	✓	0.9	☆	★	n/a	◐	●	☆	★	●	●	☆	60
50	1.6	✓	0.7	○	☆	n/a	☆	☆	◐	☆	○	○	○	55