



# Sweet and shower

In a time-poor world, showers are the only way to get a quick, all-over wash. We test the latest electric models on the market

A lack of relaxation time and greater green awareness have made showers the popular choice when it comes to bathing. However, for those haunted by memories of sorry dribbles that trickled out of some electric showers in years gone by, the prospect of buying a new model may not be too appealing. So we've put the latest electric showers to the test to see whether they'll leave you invigorated or infuriated.

There are two main types of electric shower unit – conventional and power. We've tested conventional electric showers, as these are the most popular

and the least expensive. They use water from the mains cold-water supply, which is heated on demand by passing over a hot element housed in the control unit.

They're ideal if you don't have a stored hot-water supply, or have a family who all need to shower in the morning. The main drawback is the low flow rate, which means the spray will not be very forceful compared with a mixer or power shower. It's also weaker in winter than summer when the water temperature is lower.

Power showers, which we have not tested this time, use the stored water

**Electric showers are ideal if you have a family who all need to shower in the morning**

supplies in your home. They use far more water than a conventional electric shower – up to 15 litres a minute compared with an electric shower's typical five litres.

They are invigorating but a poor choice for people with water meters, large families or, given recent water shortages, those who are environmentally aware.

## Power matters

Most conventional electric showers are available in different power ratings, including 7.5, 8.5, 9.5 and 10.5kW. You pay more for higher-powered models. Generally, lower-powered showers cope less well with colder water supplies and give weaker sprays. Higher-powered showers consume more water and take more power to run.

We tested 19 conventional electric showers with a 9.5kW power rating, except the Mira Sport (1), which was available only in a 9.8kW model. Most of them will give a satisfactory spray force all year round on high power, but don't expect them to blow you away unless you use the blast spray pattern (using only the inner holes). Also, the average flow rate is higher in summer than in winter due to the fluctuation in water temperature, so you'll need to use the blast spray pattern for a stronger shower in winter.

## Money matters

Choosing the cheapest shower could be a mistake. The Gainsborough Deluxe (8) was the best shower under £100 in the test, but sadly it is hard to install. And to comply with new building regulations, installing an electric shower yourself is no longer an option for most people. So buying a cheaper shower when you'll have to pay someone to install it could be a false economy (see 'How to install an electric shower', p48).

You'd be best off choosing a Best Buy, which will give you a good combination of spray force, temperature stability, ease of use and installation, and useful features, at a reasonable price.

## What you should look for

### SPRAY PATTERNS

Many showers have five spray patterns. Using all the holes generally gives a weaker shower than using only one or two combinations of holes. Using only the inner holes provides a powerful blast

### PHASED SHUTDOWN

The shower runs some cold water through the head before turning off, which should help to prevent limescale

### BRACKET

Choose a shower with a long bracket, so the showering height can be adjusted to suit both children and adults

### POWER CONTROL

Most showers have three power levels: low, medium and high. Choose a shower with a medium setting if you want a cooler shower in summer

### RUB-CLEAN NOZZLES

Rubber nozzles make it easy to rub limescale from the head's holes

### TEMPERATURE CONTROL

This controls the flow of water passing over the heating element. The water becomes hotter as you turn the control and restrict the flow. But the hotter the shower, the less spray you get



**Our experts test the showers to separate the hot shots from the wet blankets**

We test how well the showers cope with producing a steady supply of water at a comfortable 40°C, while we try various ways of making it hard for them. For each of our tests, we record the temperature of water going into and coming out of the shower, as well as measuring the amount of water and electricity being used.

### Shower force

We check whether each shower can produce a powerful spray when the water coming into it is at 5, 10 and 15°C, representative of winter, autumn and summer water temperatures. We also look at how changing the spray pattern would alter the force of the water coming out at 40°C, both by measuring the flow rate and asking three people to subjectively rate the force of the shower on a scale of one to five.

### Temperature stability

We test how a shower responds to changes in cold water pressure by turning on a tap two metres upstream of the shower for 30 seconds. We record how much the temperature changes and how long it takes to recover.

### Safety cut-out

We analyse how hot the water can get by turning the power and temperature dials up to their maximum. We then measure the temperature at which the safety cut-out begins working to reduce the heat and prevent scalding.

## 72% Mira Sport 9.8kW £210



All of the Mira showers that we tested are worth considering, but the best of the bunch is the Mira Sport 9.8kW

The spray force is good for an electric shower, even with very cold water coming into the unit, so it should provide a decent shower all

year round. It also copes excellently with changes in water pressure, as happens when a nearby tap is turned on – the temperature rose by only 3°C and took just five seconds to recover when there was a sudden drop in pressure. So it's a great choice for chaotic households where people will often turn on taps on and off while others are in the shower.

The large on/off button is easy to see and the power controls and temperature

dials are well labelled, so it's great for visually-impaired people. The dials are also suitable for people with a poor grip because they take very little strength to operate.

Another handy feature is the 'low flow' light, which indicates a water supply fault or when you need to clean the showerhead.

The Mira Sport is also particularly easy to install, there are large connectors for the electrical supply and a swivelling water connection. It is available from Argos and Homebase but it's cheaper online at Screwfix.

**WE FOUND** This shower has three distinct spray patterns. The 'Eco' setting saves just 0.2 litres per minute.

**Cheapest stores** Argos and Homebase  
**Phased shutdown** Yes **Weight** 1.76kg  
**Bracket length** 45cm



## 66% Mira Sprint 9.5kW £165



The Mira Sprint looks similar to the Mira Sport and shares many of its Best Buy sibling's good features, such as easy connections for installation, large, clearly labelled controls, the handy 'low flow' light and dials that are easy to turn.

The maximum force of the 'soothe' and 'force' spray patterns is slightly lower than that of the Mira Sport, but the shower pressure remains fine with the high and low water input temperatures that you'll have in summer and winter.

And like the Sport, it also deals brilliantly with another tap being turned on; in our test,

the temperature rose by a mere 5°C and recovered within five seconds.

Its long bracket, which measures 56cm, means that children and adults can fit comfortably under the showerhead, but adjusting the height can be difficult – the release button is stiff and difficult to use with wet hands.

It is widely available from Argos, B&Q and Homebase.

**WORTH KNOWING**  
**At £165, the Mira Sprint 9.5kW is our best-value Best Buy**

**Cheapest stores** Argos, B&Q and Homebase  
**Phased shutdown** Yes **Weight** 1.65kg **Bracket length** 56cm



# How to install an electric shower

New building regulations could mean an end for DIY fitting



When installing an electric shower, you must abide by Part P

Fitting an electric shower could once be done by a proficient DIYer but changes to Part P of the building regulations, which deals with electrical safety, mean that it's unlikely you could now do the job.

The regulations set out the requirements for individual aspects of building design and construction to safeguard health and safety. If you carry out work yourself, responsibility for ensuring compliance rests with you; otherwise, it will usually rest with the person you employ to do the job. Failing to comply could result in a fine and an enforcement order that requires you to alter or remove work that contravenes the regulations.

## What does Part P mean?

In England and Wales, Part P states that installing a new electric shower circuit in a bathroom is considered notifiable work. You have two basic choices with notifiable work. The easiest option is to choose an installer who is a member of self-certification schemes run by one of the following bodies: BRE Certification, BSI, Elecsa, NAPIT Certification Limited or NICEIC Certification Services (see 'Contacts', p49). You can get more details from your council's building control office.

Before installers begin work, you should agree with them that they will take responsibility for ensuring that

the installation complies with the regulations and that they will provide the BS7671 certificate. You'll need it when you sell your home, to prove that electrical work has been carried out safely.

Alternatively, if you are experienced enough to install the unit, you must notify your local building control body with a building regulations application; it will check that the installation complies with the relevant British Standards. It is worth contacting your local authority building control body before you begin any electrical work, but it will probably advise you to consult a registered electrician. In Scotland, you must use a certified electrician if the job is covered by a building warrant – check with your local authority or one of the approval bodies, Select and NICEIC, that operate in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, there aren't any such regulations for electrical work.

## What if I replace?

Simply replacing a shower may involve as much work as installing a new one. You'll need to check that the electric cable and fuses are suitable for the shower you wish to install. Upgrading a 7.5kW shower to one of 9kW or more will require new electric cable and fuses. If in doubt, check with a qualified electrician.

## Facts & scores

A few watery facts about selected showers

### Hot stuff

When we turned the power and temperature to the maximum, the Triton T80si reached a scorching 73.2°C before its overheat protection function reduced the temperature. The average temperature reached by the showers was 67°C.

### A noise annoys

At 66 decibels, the Essentials shower was the noisiest we tested. It is equivalent to a spinning washing machine. You may want to avoid it if you have an en-suite bathroom.

#### MODEL

- 1 MIRA Sport
- 2 MIRA Sprint
- 3 TRITON Topaz T100si
- 4 IFLO Essence
- 5 TRITON T80si
- 6 MIRA Play
- 7 BRISTAN Evo
- 8 GAINSBOROUGH Deluxe
- 9 GAINSBOROUGH Satin Chrome
- 10 NEWTEAM nine.five
- 11 CREDA Chrome 550C
- 12 ESSENTIALS Electric Shower
- 13 TRITON Opal II
- 14 TRITON T80xr
- 15 TRITON Caselona
- 16 TRITON T100xr
- 17 TRITON T300Si
- 18 WICKES Aquatronic 3 Ultra
- 19 GALAXY Aqua 3000

## 64% Triton Topaz T100si 9.5kW £230

The Triton's unusual features include a digital water temperature display and a limescale trap which is removable for easy cleaning. The buttons are also easy to grip and operate.



At only 56 decibels, it was one of the quietest on test, equivalent to a washing machine on its wash cycle, so is perhaps the best choice in an en-suite bathroom.

Using the outer holes or middle- and inner-ring combinations gives a satisfying spray and the blast spray is very powerful. Installation is harder than other Best Buys as the connections are more complex, so it may take your electrician longer. It is available from Focus DIY and Homebase.

**WORTH KNOWING** Different coloured fascias can be ordered from Triton.

Cheapest store Focus DIY Phased shutdown Yes Weight 1.84kg Bracket length 47cm





SPECIFICATION		FEATURES			WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE								SCORE %
PRICE (£)	POWER (kW)	SPRAY PATTERNS	BRACKET LENGTH (cm)	RUB-CLEAN HEAD	FORCE	TEMPERATURE STABILITY	WATER USE	POWER USE	INSTALLATION	EASE OF USE	FEATURES	NOISE	
<b>210</b>	7.5, 9.0, <b>9.8</b>	4	45	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>72</b>
<b>165</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b>	3	56	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>66</b>
<b>230</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.5	5	47	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>64</b>
<b>179</b>	<b>9.5</b>	3	56	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>60</b>
<b>220</b>	7.5, 8.5, <b>9.5</b>	5	43	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>60</b>
<b>150</b>	<b>9.5</b>	3	56	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	<b>59</b>
<b>140</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b>	3	56	✓	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>58</b>
<b>70</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.5	1	44	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	<b>58</b>
<b>125</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.5	1	43	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	<b>57</b>
<b>244</b>	7.8, 8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.4	3	56	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	<b>56</b>
<b>130</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.5	3	43	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>54</b>
<b>89</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.8	5	56	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	<b>53</b>
<b>155</b>	<b>9.5</b> , 10.5	5	47		★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>52</b>
<b>122</b>	7.5, 8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.5	5	45	✓	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>52</b>
<b>85</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b>	5	43		★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	<b>51</b>
<b>210</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.5	5	44	✓	★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>51</b>
<b>280</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.5	4	43	✓	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>49</b>
<b>100</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.5	5	43		★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	<b>47</b>
<b>135</b>	8.5, <b>9.5</b> , 10.5	5	50	✓	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	<b>43</b>

### USING THE TABLE

We tested the latest and bestselling showers from leading brands. The more stars the better.

### Specification

**Price** For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price. Prices for other models are a guide. Online prices are in *italics*. **Power** Some models are available in different power levels – the higher the number, the more powerful the element. The shower tested is in **bold**.

### Features

**Spray patterns** How many spray patterns the showerhead can supply.

### Test performance

**Force** How powerful the spray feels producing water at 40°C with input water at 5°C, 10°C or 15°C. **Temperature stability** How well the shower copes with a tap being turned on, covering changes in temperature and recovery time. **Water use** How much water the shower uses a minute on full power. A ★★ shower uses up to 4.5 litres more for a ten-minute shower than a ★★★★★ shower. **Power use** How much electricity the shower uses running for ten minutes at full power. **Installation** How easy the shower is to install for an experienced fitter. This includes making the plumbing and electrical

connections. A complex installation may affect the price of the job. **Ease of use** How easy the controls are to use and how easy the shower is to clean. **Features** Based on the number of controls, spray patterns, easy-cleaning features and accessories such as a soap dish.

### Score

This ignores price and is based on:

Ease of use	<b>40%</b>
Performance and economy	<b>25%</b>
Temperature stability	<b>15%</b>
Features	<b>5%</b>
Noise	<b>5%</b>
Spray power	<b>5%</b>
Safety	<b>5%</b>

## Contacts

**Bristan** 0870 442 5555; [www.bristan.com](http://www.bristan.com)  
**Creda** 0870 900 0420; [www.creda.co.uk](http://www.creda.co.uk)  
**Essentials (B&Q)** 0845 850 0175; [www.diy.com](http://www.diy.com)  
**Gainsborough** 0195 956 0760  
[www.gainsboroughshowers.co.uk](http://www.gainsboroughshowers.co.uk)  
**Galaxy** 0845 600 5111  
[www.galaxy-showers.com](http://www.galaxy-showers.com)  
**Iflo** 0870 442 5555; [www.bristan.com](http://www.bristan.com)  
**Mira** 0870 241 0888; [www.mirashowers.com](http://www.mirashowers.com)  
**NewTeam** 0870 442 5555  
[www.newteamshowers.com](http://www.newteamshowers.com)  
**Triton** 024 7634 4441  
[www.tritonshowers.co.uk](http://www.tritonshowers.co.uk)  
**Wickes** 0870 601 1216; [www.wickes.co.uk](http://www.wickes.co.uk)

### BODIES TO CONTACT TO FIND A QUALIFIED INSTALLER

**BRE Certification** 0870 609 6093  
[www.partp.co.uk/](http://www.partp.co.uk/)  
**BSI** 0144 223 0442  
[www.bsi-global.com/kitemark](http://www.bsi-global.com/kitemark)  
**Elecsa Ltd** 0870 749 0080  
[www.elecsa.org.uk](http://www.elecsa.org.uk)  
**NAPIT Certification Ltd** 0870 444 1392  
[www.napit.org.uk](http://www.napit.org.uk)  
**NICEIC Certification Services Ltd**  
 0870 013 0382; [www.niceic.org.uk](http://www.niceic.org.uk)  
**Select (Scotland's electrical trade association)** 0131 445 5577; [www.select.org.uk](http://www.select.org.uk)