

Make the most of small spaces

Best Buys for the kitchen and how to use the room that you have to the best advantage

Demand for smaller properties has increased in the past few years. When house prices shot up in the late 1990s, flats and maisonettes provided a crucial first step on to the property ladder. And changing lifestyles mean that more of us now live alone – one third of UK households contain only one person.

Unfortunately, a small property often means a 'bijou' kitchen, which has limited space for storage and appliances. This doesn't mean that you have to go without

modern essentials. A growing range of kitchen appliances are smaller than standard, and are known as either slimline or compact. There are also increasing numbers of appliances, such as washer-dryers, that do more than one thing, which is handy when space is tight.

Read on for space-saving tips and to find which compact and combined appliances did best in our tests. Visit www.which.co.uk for further details on products featured in this report.



REFRIGERATION

A range of solutions for keeping your food cool

Slimline fridges are about 10cm narrower than the standard 60cm width. However, there aren't many available and we have no Best Buys. Other space-savers include keeping a fridge or freezer in another room (see 'Shopping around', opposite). In theory, you shouldn't keep refrigeration appliances in unheated garages or sheds, as it will affect the internal temperature.

SLIMLINE WORKTOP-HEIGHT FRIDGE

DAEWOO FR-143WH

SCORE 70%, £125

PROS Even temperature

CONS Not suited to cold rooms

SIZE H86 x W48 x D55cm

SLIMLINE TALL FRIDGE

LEC L5546W

SCORE 77%, £225

PROS Accurate thermostat, excellent temperature stability, ample storage, easy to use, quiet

CONS Could cool fresh food more quickly

SIZE H144 x W55 x D63cm

FRIDGE-FREEZERS

JOHN LEWIS JLFFW1807

SCORE 84%, £449

PROS Cools food quickly, stable, keeps food frozen for about 30 hours in a power cut

CONS No bottle grips in door

SIZE H185 x W60 x D66cm

HOTPOINT FF187E FUTURE

SCORE 81%, £400

PROS Good use of space, fridge and freezer maintain temperature well, can racks in the door

CONS Won't keep food frozen in a power cut as long as some Best Buys

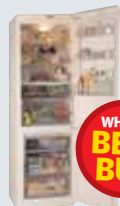
SIZE H188 x W60 x D67cm



DAEWOO



LEC



JOHN LEWIS



HOTPOINT

WHICH?
BEST BUY

WHICH?
BEST BUY

LAUNDRY

Compact appliances and combined washer-dryers

Compact washing machines are usually the same height and width as full-size models, but not as deep. Compact tumble dryers are generally smaller all round. Best Buy washer-dryers wash well, but none dries as well as a Best Buy tumble dryer.

COMPACT WASHING MACHINE

BOSCH WLX 24162 CLASSIXX

SCORE 57%, £365

PROS Our only Best Buy compact, good drum capacity, good brand reliability, excellent low-temperature wash, quick easy-care wash

CONS Poor rinse, noisy, slow cotton wash

SIZE H85 x W60 x D44cm



WHICH?
BEST BUY

COMPACT TUMBLE DRYER

HOTPOINT V3D01P

SCORE 51%, £140

PROS Space-saving compact model

CONS Poor energy consumption, small drum capacity

SIZE H67 x W49 x D48cm



Top tips

Save space and avoid problems

■ **PLAN** Before buying appliances, do a scale drawing of the kitchen to ensure everything fits. Use an online kitchen planning tool or graph paper.

■ **SIZE** Appliances' size may differ from what is online or on the label.

■ **DEPTH** Check depth of appliances (including hoses and handles) as well as width or they may stick out more than cupboards.

■ **GOING UP** Maximise space by, for example,

buying a tall fridge-freezer instead of two appliances. Or buy a stacking kit to put a tumble dryer on top of a washing machine. Most manufacturers sell kits for their models. Or you can buy kits for standard 60cm x 60cm machines from about £25 online.

■ **PRICE** Use www.which.co.uk/shopping to check latest prices for Best Buys.

■ **SPACE** Save space by putting appliances in another room.



DISHWASHERS

There is a range of non-standard options

Slimline dishwashers clean as well as standard models. They usually cost less, are narrower and take nine place settings rather than the standard 12. They're becoming more popular, so there should be a range to choose from. Compacts sit on a worktop or table and hold four settings. They're less common, tend to be noisy and most don't clean brilliantly. We have one Best Buy.

WORKTOP DISHWASHER BOSCH SKT5102 CLASSIXX SCORE 77%, £300

PROS Great cleaning and drying, easy to use, energy efficient, reliable brand

CONS Noisy, no delay timer (so you can't set it to run at night, for example)

SIZE H45 x W56 x D46cm

WHICH?
BEST BUY



SLIMLINE DISHWASHERS MIELE G1102SC SCORE 73%, £535

PROS Performs well, energy efficient, quiet, above-average brand reliability

CONS It's relatively expensive compared to some Best Buys

SIZE H85 x W45 x D61cm

WHICH?
BEST BUY



BOSCH SRS45E32GB EXXCEL SCORE 72%, £330

PROS Excellent washing, above-average reliability

CONS None

SIZE H85 x W45 x D61cm

WHICH?
BEST BUY



WASHER-DRYERS MIELE WT2670

SCORE 67%, £1,000

PROS Easy to use, good washing and drying, energy efficient

CONS Costs much more than our other Best Buy, poor rinsing, small drum

SIZE H85 x W60 x D60cm



WHICH?
BEST BUY

AEG-ELECTROLUX L16830

SCORE 65% (Oct 2006), £479

PROS Good washing and drying, many extra functions and program choice

CONS Poor rinsing (though you can choose an extra rinse program)

SIZE H85 x W60 x D63cm



WHICH?
BEST BUY

SHOPPING AROUND

Joseph Kelly 44

Last year, Joseph decided to revamp his 30-year-old galley-style kitchen into a modern U-shape with more cupboard space and new appliances.

He bought kitchen units from Homebase but shopped around for appliances. The room measured just 2.7 metres by 2.3 metres, so space was at a premium. He felt that a tall fridge-freezer would be 'overpowering', so he chose a worktop-height fridge and put the freezer in the cupboard under the stairs to save space.

Joseph also bought a new washing machine and a slimline dishwasher. All were Bosch appliances recommended by Which?. He looked at them in high-street stores before finding cheaper prices online.

He told us: 'Using Which? made my decision-making easier and it saved me money.'

So far, Joseph is pleased with all the appliances and the clean lines of his new kitchen.

He told us: 'It doesn't look too overcrowded, yet it works well and I've got all the appliances that I want and need.'

Getting the best from built-ins

The models to choose, whether you're revamping the kitchen or replacing an existing appliance

Built-in appliances give a kitchen a stylish look and can maximise space. They have become more popular in the past five years and are available from all major brands. In fact, Neff (Bosch's sister brand) produces only built-in equipment.

Two thirds of ovens bought are built-ins, which tend to have more advanced features. However, less than a third of dishwashing, laundry and refrigeration products are built-in. We have a few Best Buy built-in models in these areas, but there are far more freestanding

appliances and they tend to do better in our tests.

Built-ins tend to cost more than freestanding machines, because they need more advanced technology, for example to minimise vibration.

They can also be more expensive to repair. Removing built-in appliances from surrounding cabinets can be awkward, so engineers might charge more as it takes longer to diagnose and repair problems. For the same reason, they may cost more to install (see 'How to buy', opposite).

COOKING

BUILT-IN SINGLE ELECTRIC OVEN AEG-ELECTROLUX B8871-4

SCORE 80%, £599

PROS Preheats quickly, cooks evenly on three shelves simultaneously, accurate controls, a pyrolytic lining for self-cleaning, a meat probe

CONS Delay start can be tricky to use, the grill cooks more evenly if you don't use turbo grill

SIZE H60 x W59 x D57cm



WHICH?
BEST
BUY

BUILT-IN DOUBLE ELECTRIC OVEN SIEMENS HB55M550B

SCORE 73%, £965

PROS Great all round, ovens cook evenly, accurate controls, good turbo grill, oven and grill easy to use

CONS It preheats slowly in fan mode, there's a heavy grill pan and the grill in the top oven is not even

SIZE H89 x W60 x D55cm



WHICH?
BEST
BUY

DISHWASHING

BUILT-IN DISHWASHERS AEG-ELECTROLUX FAVORIT F86011VI (PREVIOUSLY F86070VI)

SCORE 73%, £720

PROS Excellent performance, easy to use, adjustable upper basket, timer

CONS Below average energy efficiency



WHICH?
BEST
BUY

SIZE H82 x W60 x D55cm

WHIRLPOOL ADG 7560

SCORE 67%, £380

PROS Top-notch cleaning, dries well, few watermarks, not too noisy

CONS Below-average energy efficiency

SIZE H82 x W60 x D56cm



LAUNDRY

BUILT-IN WASHING MACHINE MIELE W 2809i WPM

SCORE 66%, £765

PROS Excellent cleaning, good spin, good brand reliability, time-remaining display, delayed start option, quiet

CONS Poor rinsing

SIZE H82 x W60 x D59cm



WHICH?
BEST
BUY

AEG-ELECTROLUX L12510VI

SCORE 58%, £498

PROS Excellent short wash, simple controls, easy loading and unloading

CONS Below-par rinsing, which may concern those who have sensitive skin

SIZE H82 x W60 x D58cm



WHICH?
BEST
BUY

BUILT-IN WASHER DRYER HOTPOINT BWD129

SCORE 62%, £429

PROS Good energy efficiency, quiet, acceptable drying, large drying capacity





compared to wash capacity
CONS High creasing, poor brand reliability
SIZE H82 x W60 x D57cm

BUILT-IN TUMBLE DRYER **MIELE T4809Ci HONEYCOMB CARE**

SCORE 65%, £679
 This condenser dryer is our only built-in Best Buy tumble dryer
PROS Swift drying, very quiet, very even, lots of special care programs, very reliable brand, child lock should be a comfort for parents
CONS Quite expensive, bad for creases, not suitable for people with visual problems because the buttons are small, the lights are dim and the markings confusing
SIZE H85 x W60 x D63cm



How to buy

The issues to think about when you are looking for built-in appliances

■ **ORDERS** If you can't see the model you want, ask. Many shops will order.

■ **APPLIANCES** When buying a kitchen, you don't usually have to buy appliances from the same firm. You might get better or cheaper models separately.

■ **ENERGY** All appliances display a rating of how energy efficient they are.

■ **DELIVERY** Most firms charge for this (usually about £15 to £25).

■ **INSTALLATION** Most large shops do this for an extra fee. Some won't fit built-in appliances or may charge more for this.

■ **DISPOSAL** If you're buying a new appliance, ask the retailer to get rid of the old one. It can charge you for collection. Your council must collect waste electrical items if you ask, but it can also charge. You can take the item to your local waste recycling point yourself for free.

REFRIGERATION

BUILT-IN TALL FRIDGE **NEFF K4624X4GB**

SCORE 91%, £849
PROS Stable internal temperature, quick to cool food, plenty of space
CONS None
SIZE H177 x W55 x D54cm

**WHICH?
 BEST
 BUY**



BUILT-IN WORKTOP HEIGHT FRIDGE **WHIRLPOOL ARG585/A**

SCORE 74%, £299
PROS Quiet, good temperature stability, accurate thermostat
CONS Uneven shelf temperature
SIZE H82 x W60 x D54cm

**WHICH?
 BEST
 BUY**



BUILT-IN FRIDGE FREEZER **HOTPOINT HMB313I**

SCORE 72%, £500
PROS Very good cooling and temperature stability performance
CONS Small freezer, not frost-free
SIZE H178 x W54 x D55cm

**WHICH?
 BEST
 BUY**



NEFF K9524X4GB

SCORE 68%, £710
PROS Good cooling, bottle grips, stable temperature in fridge and freezer
CONS Not frost-free, small freezer, more expensive than our Hotpoint Best Buy
SIZE H178 x W55 x D54cm

**WHICH?
 BEST
 BUY**



DOING IT YOURSELF

Andrew Murray 40, teacher

When Andrew and his partner Julie put in a new kitchen/diner, they chose Ikea units and a range of stainless-steel built-in appliances.

He said: 'We felt they made better use of space and gave us more flexibility in design. They look better, too – giving the kitchen a clean and uncluttered look. We didn't want freestanding appliances that would create gaps in the work surfaces and become dirt traps.'

The couple saved money by shopping around and buying all the appliances on the internet.

Andrew fitted the cabinets and appliances himself, with the exception of the gas hob, which had to be fitted by a Corgi-registered plumber.

He'd never fitted a kitchen but didn't have any major problems.

He told us: 'My top tips would be to invest in a decent cordless drill, a spirit level and a tape measure.'

'And make sure that you buy door panels that match your appliances – they come in lots of different sizes!'