

Calling the shots

You needn't pay over the odds for a designer cordless phone when all five of our Best Buys cost less than £80

Cheapskates and design snobs could equally lose out when it comes to finding a good cordless phone, our latest test of 18 models suggests. Although prices ranged from £15 to £265, our Best Buys averaged around £60 – ranging from £35 to £76.

The latest handsets seem to be morphing into mobile phones. Their displays look and feel like a mobile phone, and you can easily upload your mobile phone contacts to them and send and receive text messages with them (see 'What you should look for', below). Signal strengths are now so good you could

probably use your handset across the road from your house. So this raises the question – why not dispense with a landline altogether?

We now have more mobile phones than people in the UK, according to First Direct bank – but don't ditch the landline just yet. You're guaranteed a good signal, it's cheaper for people to call you and usually cheaper for you to call them back. And with some cordless models, you can make calls over the net (see below, right). For tips on cutting your phone bill, check out our report on phone bundles (see p20).



SAVING MONEY CALLING FRIENDS ABROAD

Helen Bayton

30, departmental administrator

Helen regularly calls friends in South Africa and the US using her BT landline. We gave her the most expensive Voip phone in our test – the Panasonic BB GT1520E (9), which is tied to an account with Joip. It was easy to set up and use, and Helen called South Africa for a tenth of the cost of using BT. But she couldn't Skype her friends free, and the echo on the line was 'annoying'.

'I wouldn't use the Voip line for everyday calls,' she says.

What you should look for



TEXT MESSAGING

Some models allow you to send and receive text messages

SIM CARD READER

This lets you easily transfer all your mobile phone contacts



DISPLAY

- Look for colourful 'matrix' displays like those on your mobile phone (below right)
- '14-segment' displays are OK
- Avoid ugly monochrome displays like those on old calculators



One in five of you

Nearly one in five Britons (18 per cent) makes calls over the net, a Which? poll suggests. More than five million of us use Skype, the biggest voice over internet protocol (Voip) provider.

Using Voip can shrink your phone bills through cheaper calls to landlines – especially to overseas numbers – and free calls to friends who are with the same Voip provider. Voip calls can suffer from echoes. But usage is growing fast, with 60 per cent of those we polled saying they might make internet calls in future.

Although people used to make internet calls via their PC with a USB phone or a microphone and headset,

**1 ANSWERING MACHINE****70% Panasonic KXTG8090E**

£60/80/100/135

This top-scoring Panasonic performed well in all our tests. The answering machine records clear messages that you can access from both the base unit and the handset. You can send and receive text messages. It's easy to use, there's a long-lasting battery and the range is first class. It's cheapest at Argos and Currys.

WORTH KNOWING The hands-free speakerphone is useful for group conversations.

Available Argos, Currys Weight 138g Max number of handsets 5 Speed dial No Text messages Yes Display Matrix Sim card reader No Phonebook 200

WHICH? BEST BUY**2 ANSWERING MACHINE****70% Philips CD4451**

£50/50/70/150

Chatterboxes will love the nearly 16 hours of talk time you get from the excellent battery. Both the phone and the integrated answering machine are easy to use, and the blue backlit display and buttons look funky. You can't send or receive text messages, but it does have speed dial. You'll find it cheapest at Argos, Comet and John Lewis.

WORTH KNOWING Call the phone to access voicemail, but change its Pin from the factory setting.

Available Argos, Comet, John Lewis Weight 139g Max number of handsets 5 Speed dial Yes Text messages No Display Matrix Sim card reader No Phonebook 100

WHICH? BEST BUY**3 ANSWERING MACHINE****69% BT Domus**

£76/100

The stylish BT Domus looks more like a mobile handset than a cordless phone. It's quite pricey, but is packed with features and is simple to set up and operate. Its range is good, although sound quality on the answering machine could be better. Its huge phonebook holds 255 numbers, and uploading contacts from your mobile is easy. Cheapest online as a single, otherwise it's Comet.

WE FOUND The hands-free speakerphone was the best in our test.

Available Argos, Comet Weight 91g Max number of handsets 5 Speed dial No Text messages Yes Display Matrix Sim card reader Yes Phonebook 255

WHICH? BEST BUY

Uploading contacts from your mobile is a doddle

makes calls over net

some cordless phones can make Voip calls too. Each time you pick up the handset you decide whether to call someone over the net or via your landline. The main downsides of Voip cordless models is they can be tricky to set up and the sound can be poor. We tested four Voip handsets in this latest batch (see table, p51), and two for an earlier report (see October 2007, p44). Since Voip is an additional feature, it doesn't count towards total scores.

PHILIPS VOIP8411B £97

This sleek, black Philips phone from our October 2007 report (p46) is still our favourite Voip handset. It's easier to use



than the other five Voip cordless models we've tested, but it's not quite good enough to be a Best Buy. However, the Voip is easy to set up – there's no software to download. And the phone has a detailed display from which you can access your Voip phonebook and Skype account even when your PC is switched off. **SCORE 59%**

How we test

Our experts perform **83 tests** to find you the best cordless phone with a clear reception

Sound quality

We measure noise and distortion, the loudness of the earpiece and how well it reproduces speech.

For the answering machine, we judge the quality of the sound via the internal speaker and on the handset, where applicable. We also judge the sound quality of the message that callers hear when you're out.

Signal strength

We compare reception across nine rooms, several floors and through steel and sandstone walls. And we record the phone's maximum range when clear of obstacles.

All handsets tested could receive calls from at least 280 metres from the base station – in a straight line with no obstructions at all.



12 NO ANSWERING MACHINE

64% Panasonic KXTG7200E

£35/60/70/95

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

This great-value phone lacks the advanced features of some of its rivals – there's no text messages facility and it can't read Sim cards. But the base's simple design mirrors the phone's ease of use. The range is also impressive. Sound quality is first rate, especially when using it hands-free. Cheapest at Argos and John Lewis.

WE FOUND The battery lasts an impressive 22 hours – ideal if you often forget to recharge it.

Available Argos and John Lewis Weight 126g Max number of handsets 6 Speed dial No Text messages No Display Matrix Sim card reader No Phonebook 50



13 NO ANSWERING MACHINE

62% Tesco Siemens Dualphone DP450

£70 (single pack only)

This cordless phone can also make cheap calls over the internet, but they have poorer sound quality. On the plus side, it's got an excellent range – ideal for a large house – and it's pretty easy to use. You can send and receive text messages, and the phonebook holds 150 numbers.

Exclusive to Tesco.

WORTH KNOWING You needn't turn on your PC to make internet calls.

Available Tesco Weight 128g Max number of handsets 3 Speed dial Yes Text messages Yes Display Matrix Sim card reader No Phonebook 150

The Panasonic BB GT1520E can record 45 minutes of incoming messages

OUR RESEARCH

When choosing phones to test, we consult manufacturers, market research and experts, then check availability on the high street and online. We include top sellers, some lesser-known brands and those with innovative features. In October 2007, we polled 2,637 online panel members about Voip.

WHICH? ONLINE

For reviews of more than 56 phones, including seven older Best Buys, visit www.which.co.uk/cordlessphones. The website includes tips on choosing the right phone for you. We update this regularly with new models and prices. Go to www.which.co.uk/loginhelp for help logging on.

MODEL		SINGLE HANDSET PRICE (£)
ANSWERING MACHINE		
1	PANASONIC KXTG8090E	60
2	PHILIPS CD4451	50
3	BT Domus	76
4	BT Verve 450	50
5	BT Aqua	60
6	BT Studio 3500	30
7	BT XD5500	60
8	iDECT X3i	50
9	PANASONIC BB GT1520E	90
10	BINATONE Style 1210	20
11	DORO 615	20
NO ANSWERING MACHINE		
12	PANASONIC KXTG7200E	35
13	TESCO SIEMENS Dualphone DP450	70
14	BANG & OLUFSEN BeoCom 4	265
15	DORO 635ipw	58
16	BINATONE Veva 1200	15
17	PHILIPS XL3401	42
18	TESCO GG100	40

a Speed dial only b Base station, not charger c Charger, not base

Which should you choose?

Best for those on the go

PANASONIC BB GT1520E If you're rarely in, you'll appreciate the Panasonic BB GT1520E's answering machine (9). It can record 45 minutes of incoming messages – that's more than double the next best model.



Best for socialites

BT DOMUS Not only does the BT Domus (3) have the largest phonebook in our test, but you can transfer your contacts from your mobile, using its Sim card reader.

Best for large houses

TESCO SIEMENS DUALPHONE DP450

BANG & OLUFSEN BEOCOM 4 Choose a phone with a good range, such as the Tesco Siemens Dualphone (13) or the trendy black Bang & Olufsen (14). The Tesco phone outperforms its pricey rival at a quarter of the cost, plus one base can support up to three handsets.



USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price at the time of going to press. Prices for other models are a guide. Prices quoted are for a single handset and twin, triple or quad packs where available. Online prices in *italics*. **Weight** For handset, including batteries. **Wall mounting** Whether phone can be attached to a wall. **Compatible handsets** The maximum number of handsets that can be shared by a single base station. **Voip** You can use the phone to make calls over the internet. **Speed dial** You can press a single button to call pre-programmed numbers.

SMS text messaging You can send and receive text messages. **Sim card reader** You can transfer all your contacts from your mobile phone to your cordless phone. **Phonebook** How many phone numbers it can store.

Test performance

Sound quality: phone How clearly you can hear through the earpiece, mouthpiece and speakerphone. **Sound quality: answering machine** For incoming and outgoing messages. **Range** We test at distances of up to 35 metres from the base station and through various kinds of walls to mimic the conditions of a normal home. **Battery** How long it lasts in continuous use. A rating of ★★ means the battery lasts for eight

or more hours, ★★★★★ is for a battery life of 12 or more hours, and ★★★★★★ is for batteries lasting 16 hours or longer. **Ease of use: phone** How easy it was to set up and use the phone, and whether the instructions were clear. **Ease of use: answering machine** How easy the answering machine was to set up and use, and whether the

instructions for using it were clear.

Score

This ignores price and is based on:

Ease of use	30%
Sound quality	30%
Features	20%
Battery	10%
Power consumption	5%
Range	5%

Contacts

Bang & Olufsen
www.bang-olufsen.com

Binatone
0845 345 9677
www.binatoneonline.com

BT 0870 243 0126

www.bt.com/shop

Doro 0870 861 0200
www.doro-uk.com

iDect 0845 345 9677
www.idectonline.com

Panasonic
0870 535 7357
www.panasonic.co.uk

Philips
0845 601 0354
www.philips.co.uk

Tesco
0845 301 1101
www.tesco.com

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

Joip www.joip.com
Skype www.skype.com

SPECIFICATION											WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE						SCORE %
TWIN HANDSET PRICE (£)	TRIPLE HANDSET PRICE (£)	QUAD HANDSET PRICE (£)	WEIGHT (g)	WALL MOUNTING	COMPATIBLE HANDSETS	VOIP	SPEED DIAL	SMS TEXT MESSAGING	SIM CARD READER	PHONEBOOK	SOUND QUALITY: PHONE	SOUND QUALITY: ANSWERING MACHINE	RANGE	BATTERY	EASE OF USE: PHONE	EASE OF USE: ANSWERING MACHINE	
80	100	135	138	5				✓		200	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	70
50	70	150	139	5			✓			100	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	70
100			91	5				✓	✓	255	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69
90			110	5				✓		200	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
80	110	195	128	5				✓	✓	250	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	66
50	70	85	108	5						50	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65
80	100	60	104	5						50	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	63
70	710		104	4				✓		200	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	62
29			164	6		✓				100	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	61
28	40	50	106	4						20	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	60
	36	50	134	✓	4		✓			0 ^a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	54
60	70	95	126	6						50	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	64
			128	✓ ^b	3	✓	✓	✓		150	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	62
			119	1						200	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	57
			138	4		✓				50	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	56
25			105	4						40	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	55
89			171	✓ ^c	4		✓			12	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	52
60			124	4		✓				0 ^d	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	47

station ^d PC needed to enter numbers