

Keep it cool

A good fridge will maintain a steady, stable temperature and cool food quickly. Most fridges can do this well – our Best Buys do it that little bit better

Our Best Buy refrigerators include built-in models to co-ordinate with your kitchen as well as freestanding models for those who need extra storage space. The freestanding John Lewis JLLFW1805 (16 in the table) is the only model from our latest test to get Best Buy status. The other Best Buys are from previous tests (see *Which?*, October 2006, p67, and September 2005, p45). We checked they're still available – see each Best Buy summary for more details.

All our Best Buys are quick to cool food and brilliant at maintaining an even temperature. Good stability means that a fridge's internal temperature won't increase when the room cools or decrease when the room heats up. To test this, we reduce the room temperature to 10°C and increase it to 32°C. Fluctuations in temperature may damage food and a drop to freezing will affect any stored medicine. Insulin vials, for example, must be stored between 2°C and 8°C.

If you have a poor fridge – such as the Lec L5526 (35) or the Don't Buy Hotpoint RLAV21 (36) – and the temperature of the room they're kept in reaches 32°C, the internal temperature of the fridge will drop to -7°C. This will result in a frozen fridge.

How to choose

To help you pick the model that's best for your home, first decide on the size and type of fridge you want. Once you've done this, take a look at our Best Buys, opposite, and 'Which should you choose?', p50.

Simply looking for the greenest fridge? The Miele K2319 (31) is the most energy-efficient model on test and is therefore the most economical, it costs only £7.12 a year to run and has an A++ rating. If you're worried about noise, all of the models we tested are quiet.

Turn to p50 to see the full results or go to www.which.co.uk/fridges.



1 BUILT-IN TALL

91% Neff K4624x4GB £849

This Neff has an exceptionally accurate digital thermostat. It works well at the setting that the manufacturer recommends and the temperature inside hardly varies when room temperature changes. It was also quick to cool food, taking five hours – this isn't as quick as the AEG Electrolux S72348KA (15) but is still respectable.

This model also has flexible storage. For instance, if you require more space, you can simply attach the extra drawer it comes with to the underside of any of the shelves. The useful grips in the bottle rack help keep different-sized bottles and milk cartons in place when you open the door. Cheapest at Currys.

WORTH KNOWING You can fit a whole watermelon in the extra-large crisper drawer. This model also comes with a second half-depth crisper.

Available Currys Volume 244 litres Running cost £13 a year

All our Best Buys are quick to cool food and brilliant at maintaining an even temperature



What you should look for

SOLID SHELVES

This type of shelving is easier to clean than grid shelves like these, and any messy spills are contained instead of dripping down on to the shelves below and contaminating food

SPLIT SHELVES

These allow for more flexible storage, as shelves can be split – a half shelf at the back leaves space in front for taller items, such as jugs. Look for models where the split shelves click together securely



ICEBOX

An icebox with no stars is suitable only for making icecubes. Those with two stars – in this report, the Frigidaire R5303 (28) and Indesit TFA1, (29) – can store pre-frozen food for a month. One with four stars – the Zanussi ZRC 243 (20), say – can store pre-frozen food for 12 months and freeze fresh food

FLEXIBLE DOOR STORAGE

Adjustable door guards allow you to maximise storage in what is a relatively small space. Door grips ensure that bottles stay securely in place



5 BUILT-IN WORKTOP

89% Whirlpool ARG
581/2 £230

This is a fantastic fridge and scores well across all of our tests. It may look like a basic model, but it is the best fridge at keeping an even and stable temperature. A generous 14-litre vegetable crisper should suit those who like their veggies, and there's plenty of space in the door racks for overly large smoothie bottles. Available online.

WE LIKE To maximise storage capacity in a tiny space, the adjustable door racks let you store lots of different-shaped bottles.

Available Online Volume 127 litres Running cost £11 a year

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

Adjustable
door racks
in the
Whirlpool
let you
store lots
of different-
shaped
bottles



15 FREESTANDING TALL

91% AEG-Electrolux
S72348KA £600

This truly impressive fridge maintains its internal temperature when the room temperature fluctuates. It's quick to cool, too, taking just four hours and 20 minutes to cool newly stored food to an acceptable level.

Flexible storage options include bottle racks and height-adjustable split shelves. And, for a large-capacity fridge, it's quite cheap to run, costing £9 a year. Cheapest at John Lewis.

WORTH KNOWING The quick-chill bottle rack is perfect for cooling wine.

Available Comet and John Lewis Volume 285 litres Running cost £9 a year

WHICH?
BEST
BUY



6 BUILT-IN WORKTOP

84% Indesit
GSE160I £190

The Indesit maintains an even temperature throughout, which remains stable when the room temperature fluctuates. The thermostat is good and when new food items are added, it quickly cools them to the correct temperature.

There's a grip in the door that lets you store taller orange juice cartons, for example – although the door racks can't be adjusted. Available online.

WE LIKE Simply designed, this fridge gave a strong all-round performance.

Available Online Volume 114 litres Running cost £11 a year

WHICH?
BEST
BUY



16 FREESTANDING TALL

89% John Lewis
JLLFW1805 £479

This John Lewis model cools fresh food in five hours, compared with an average of just over 14 hours for the other fridges on test. This model's excellent energy efficiency gets it an A rating and means its running costs are below average, at £12.30 a year.

Its thermostat is on the outside and an alarm sounds when the door's left open for more than five minutes – this can be turned off if necessary. Available exclusively from John Lewis.

WE LIKE The long five-year guarantee.

Available John Lewis Volume 274 litres Running cost £12 a year

WHICH?
BEST
BUY



7 BUILT-IN WORKTOP

83% Electrolux
ERU6470 £420

The thermostat in this fridge from Electrolux is excellent and it maintains an even temperature throughout the fridge, which means there is very little temperature difference between the top and bottom.

A bottle grip in the door lets you securely store tall cartons of juice and smaller pint bottles side by side. Available online.

WE LIKE The adjustable door racks can be adapted to suit the shape of whatever you're storing.

Available Online Volume 112 litres Running cost £7 a year

WHICH?
BEST
BUY



24 FREESTANDING WORKTOP

72% AEG Electrolux
S70170TK £258

The Electrolux was one of the cheapest-to-run worktop-height fridges on test. This model gets only one star for thermostatic accuracy in our table, p51, as the recommended setting isn't cold enough. This can easily be adjusted using the controls on the outside – however, for those with small children, these are at the perfect height for inquisitive little fingers. Available online.

WE LIKE You can see the internal temperature on the LED digital display without having to open the fridge.

Available Online Volume 120 litres Running cost £7 a year

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

MODEL	SPECIFICATION						WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE					SCORE %
	PRICE (£)	ENERGY LABEL	SIZE (cm) (hxxwxd)	VOLUME (litres)	RUNNING COST (£/yr)	ROOM TEMPERATURE (°C)	THERMOSTAT ACCURACY	STABILITY	EVENNESS	COOLING POWER	FLEXIBLE STORAGE	
BUILT-IN TALL												
1 NEFF K4624x4GB	849	A	177x55x54	244	13	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	91
2 NEFF K5624X6	570	A	122x55x55	188	12	10 to 38	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	71
3 JOHN LEWIS JLBILIC02	549	A	177x55x56	270	11	10 to 38	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	70
4 MIELE K9412i	582	A+	122x54x55	188	9	10 to 38	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	67
BUILT-IN WORKTOP												
5 WHIRLPOOL ARG 581/2	230	B	82x60x50	127	11	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	89
6 INDESIT GSE160I	190	B	81x58x51	114	11	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	84
7 ELECTROLUX ERU6470	420	B	82x60x48	112	7	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	83
8 HOTPOINT HDR190I	651	A+	84x90x55	151	8	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	76
9 BELLING BE 808	277	A	82x60x54	132	10	16 to 32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	69
10 HOTPOINT HUL 162I	349	A	82x58x57	111	12	10 to 38	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65
11 JOHN LEWIS JLBJUCL01	349	A	83x60x54	115	8	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★	★★★★★	65
12 INDESIT INE 160GI	240	B	88x54x56	133	15	16 to 32	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	61
13 ZANUSSI ZUD9154a	400	A	81x60x54	115	7	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★	★★★★★	61
14 WHIRLPOOL ARG420/4	287	B	87x56x55	124	12	16 to 32	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price as we went to press. Prices for other models are a guide. Prices for models that are available only online are in *italics*.

Energy label Manufacturer's claimed rating. **Size** Includes hinges with door closed. Add several cm on each side for the air circulation recommended by the manufacturer. **Volume** Usable space the fridge has inside. **Room temperature** The range of temperatures at which the fridge is designed to work.

Test performance

Thermostat accuracy

Performance at manufacturer's recommended temperature setting. **Stability** How well the fridge maintains its temperature.

Evenness Temperature difference between the warmest and coldest parts of the fridge. **Cooling power** How quickly food is cooled.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Stability	25%
Evenness	25%
Cooling power	10%
Ease of defrosting	10%
Ease of use and cleaning	10%
Noise	10%
Thermostat accuracy	10%

Don't Buy

The Hotpoint RLAV21's performance in our stringent tests was disappointing

This model (36) proved very slow to cool fresh food in our tests, taking more than 18 hours to cool groceries to below 5°C. It also responded poorly to high external temperatures. We set the room temperature to 20°C and the fridge's thermostat to 3°C, then increased the room temperature to 32°C. The temperature inside the fridge dropped to an icy -7°C. This can be avoided



by regularly altering the thermostat, but other fridges – including our Best Buys – keep their internal temperatures between 2°C and 5°C automatically. On this basis, we recommend that you don't buy the Hotpoint RLAV21. Our annual survey also shows that Hotpoint fridges have below-average reliability (see *Which?*, January 2007, p32).

Contacts

AEG-Electrolux
0870 535 0350
www.aeg-electrolux.co.uk

Beko 0845 600 4911
www.beko.co.uk

Belling 0871 222 2503
www.belling.co.uk

Bosch 0870 241 3381
www.boschappliances.co.uk

Electrolux 0870 535 0350
www.electrolux.co.uk

Fridgemaster 0845 052 9006
www.fridgemaster.co.uk

Frigidaire 0845 052 9005
www.frigidaire.co.uk

Hotpoint 0870 150 6070
www.hotpoint.co.uk

Indesit 0870 150 6070
www.indesit.co.uk

John Lewis 0845 604 9049
www.johnlewis.com

Lec 0871 222 2635
www.lec.co.uk

Miele 01235 554455
www.miele.co.uk

Neff 0870 240 0080
www.neff.co.uk

Proline (Comet own brand)
0870 542 5425
www.comet.co.uk

Whirlpool 0870 600 8989
www.whirlpool.co.uk

Zanussi 0870 572 7727
www.zanussielelectrolux.co.uk

MODEL	SPECIFICATION						WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE					SCORE %
	PRICE (£)	ENERGY LABEL	SIZE (cm) (hxxwxd)	VOLUME (litres)	RUNNING COST (£/yr)	ROOM TEMPERATURE (°C)	THERMOSTAT ACCURACY	STABILITY	EVENNESS	COOLING POWER	FLEXIBLE STORAGE	
FREESTANDING TALL												
15 AEG-ELECTROLUX S72348KA	600	A+	180x60x65	285	9	10 to 43	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	91
16 JOHN LEWIS JLLFW1805	479	A	175x60x63	274	12	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	89
17 WHIRLPOOL ARC1731	245	A	159x60x63	272	12	16 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★★	82
18 BEKO TLDA625	200	A	154x61x63	220	11	10 to 32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	81
19 LEC L5546	180	A	144x55x63	215	11	16 to 32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	77
20 ZANUSSI ZRC 243	211	A	125x55x62	170	16	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	74
21 MIELE K8452	326	A+	145x60x63	261	9	10 to 43	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	71
22 HOTPOINT RL175	370	A	175x60x67	307	12	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69
23 BOSCH KSR38N1	416	A	185x60x62	312	12	10 to 38	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	64
FREESTANDING WORKTOP												
24 AEG-ELECTROLUX S70170TK	258	A+	86x60x64	120	7	10 to 38	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	72
25 PROLINE PLF140	100	B	85x51x52	95	15	16 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★	67
26 WHIRLPOOL ARC0850	162	A+	85x61x62	123	10	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	67
27 HOTPOINT RLA34G	180	A	86x60x62	123	12	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	66
28 FRIGIDAIRE R5303	120	B	85x55x57	80	18	16 to 32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	65
29 INDESIT TFA1	140	A	84x55x65	80	13	10 to 38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★	64
30 FRIDGEMASTER MTRL 130	100	B	86x51x50	89	13	16 to 32	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	63
31 MIELE K2319	518	A++	85x60x62	122	7	10 to 32	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★★	63
32 BEKO LA120	130	A	84x55x61	113	12	10 to 32	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	61
33 ZANUSSI ZRT 163	149	A	85x55x61	122	12	10 to 38	★	★★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	56
34 BOSCH KTR15V20	199	A	85x55x61	123	12	10 to 32	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	55
35 LEC L5526	140	A	84x55x63	105	10	16 to 32	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★	★★★	46
36 HOTPOINT RLAV21	140	A	84x55x66	105	13	10 to 38	★★	★	★★★★	★	★★★★	36

Which should you choose?

Best for families

AEG-ELECTROLUX S72348KA £600

This model (15) has the biggest usable internal volume of all the Best Buys on test, at 285 litres. The large volume includes flexible storage – shelves can be split to accommodate larger items, such as birthday cakes. The thermostatic controls are high up and out of reach of small children.

Best on a budget

BEKO TLDA625 £200

This Beko (18) is a bargain at £200 and has running costs on a par with the Best Buy John Lewis (16), though it has less space and cools food more slowly. It comes with a handy humidity-controlled chiller, which stops cheeses from drying out. According to our members, Beko is a reliable brand (see *Which?*, January 2007, p32).

OUR RESEARCH

At the time of selection, we choose the products we test by talking to manufacturers about their best-selling models and future plans, consulting industry experts and market intelligence reports, and checking models available in the main high-street shops and websites. The models in this report include, where possible, the most recently launched top-sellers from brands with the largest market share and some previous Best Buys that are still available. We also may include models from less well-known brands with innovative features. Go to www.which.co.uk/fridges for 84 models previously tested. This is regularly updated with new models, availability and prices. See www.which.co.uk/loginhelp if you want help logging in.