



# Cut-price kings of cool

Our latest fridge test offers more than Best Buys: we also show you how to save energy, food and money

Everyone wants quality, particularly for large items such as white goods. But, as we tighten the purse strings, we are increasingly looking for quality on a budget.

For that reason, Which? has tested eight freestanding worktop-height fridges, all of which are under £230. We've also included a selection of budget-friendly Best Buys from our last test, which will keep your food nicely chilled but won't freeze your assets.

If you are in the market for a tall freestanding fridge, the Beko TLDA521 (1) and TLDA625 (2) are competitively priced at £250 or less.

While most did their job effectively, few of them can cope with a range of room temperatures, particularly the heat, (see 'How we test', right) and the majority of their freezer compartments fail to live up

to manufacturer claims. This is the reason they aren't Best Buys. But if the icebox is not too important to you, the Lec R5526 (11) would make a decent addition to a small kitchen (see 'Which you should choose', below, and 'Worth considering', opposite).

For those looking for Best Buy built-in models, we have four that are still readily available on the high street (see 'Best Buy built-in fridges', opposite). And two of these are under £250.

But if you're looking to splash out, we've also tested four American-style, side-by-side fridge-freezers, which start at £750 and go up to £1,200 (see 'American-style fridge-freezers', p50).

With all budgets, sizes and shapes accounted for, you shouldn't have too much trouble finding the perfect fridge.

## How we test



## Our members' voice

In a July 2008 survey, we asked 4,000 members about the way they use their refrigerators. Less than 20% of Which? members ever adjust their refrigerator thermostat – so we don't either.

Once the fridge reaches a chilly 3 to 5°C in our 20°C climate-controlled vault, we drop the external temperature to 10°C. After at least 24 hours at this temperature, we turn the heat up to 32°C.

Some fridges, such as the Best Buy Neff (6), take this in their stride and stay between 3°C and 5°C (the range suggested by the Food Standards Agency). Others on test drop to -5°C. Fluctuations in temperature may damage food – defrosted lettuce and cucumber can be particularly unpleasant.

We use gel packs to simulate food and measure their internal temperatures. This is more accurate than measuring air temperature inside the appliances.

## Which should you choose?



### Best for ease of access

**HOTPOINT HDR190I**

**£620** This fridge comes with easy-to-view, pull-out drawers. The HDR190I (21) also has 151 litres of usable space. It is the largest under-counter built-in fridge on test. While the fridge did well in our test, in our January 2008 reliability survey Hotpoint fridges scored below average, so it isn't a Best Buy.



### Best on a budget and most energy efficient

**BEKO TLDA521 £180**

This Beko fridge (1) is a bargain at less than £200. It also has the lowest energy consumption of any of the fridges on test and so has the most economical running costs of all the fridges at £11 per year. See 'Best Buy freestanding tall fridges', p49, for more.



### Best for a big family

**HOTPOINT RL175**

**£315** At 315 litres, this Hotpoint (4) has the biggest volume of the fridges on test. The large interior also includes flexible storage, which means shelves can be split to accommodate tall items such as large jugs of juice. Parents will be pleased that the controls are high up, out of reach of small children.



### Best for a small kitchen

**WHIRLPOOL ARG 581/2 £230**

This Whirlpool (19) is a built-in, under-counter model. It has a tiny footprint but is huge inside – a little like the Tardis. Flexible storage means you can fit 127 litres of food inside. If you don't want a built-in model, try the LEC R5526 (11), (see 'Worth considering', opposite).

## Best Buy built-in fridges

If you are looking for a built-in model, here are four that are readily available on the high street



### Built-in tall fridges

**91% NEFF K4624X4GB £755**

This very impressive offering from Neff scores full marks for evenness of temperature throughout the fridge and its ability to maintain that temperature. The K4624X4GB (6) takes just five hours to chill food and has an exceptionally accurate thermostat. At £755, it's certainly not cheap, but, with a score of 91%, it outstrips all other fridges in this report.

**77% WHIRLPOOL ARG 979/3 £553**

While it's still a Best Buy, this Whirlpool (7) lags behind the brilliant Neff (above). On the plus side, it is £200 cheaper. It has good cooling ability and maintains temperature well.



### Built-in worktop-height

**89% WHIRLPOOL ARG 581/2 £230**

This Whirlpool fridge (19) is great for smaller kitchens and comes at a reasonable price. It scored five stars for evenness of temperature throughout the fridge and four for cooling power. We found the thermostat very reliable, meaning the manufacturer's setting is spot on and is unlikely to need adjusting in either hot or cold rooms.

**84% INDESIT GSE160I £190**

Coming a close second in the built-in worktop category, this Indesit (20) still scores well. It costs around £40 less than the Whirlpool and fits in a slightly smaller space, but it holds 13 litres less and has the same running cost (£22).



## Best Buy freestanding tall fridges

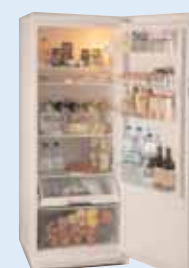
If you want a tall Best Buy from £250 or under, here are two excellent models from Beko

**82% BEKO TLDA521 £180**

This Beko (1) is cheap to run at £11 a year and easy to install. To get the optimum temperature, you simply position the thermostat to the manufacturer's recommended setting. It manages to keep an even and stable temperature inside the fridge, even when the temperature outside heats up or cools down.

**81% BEKO TLDA625 £250**

At £16 a year, this Beko (2) is still cheaper to run than the two freestanding tall Hotpoint models (3 and 4). It is also more stable, keeping within the optimum 3°C to 5°C in hot and cold rooms. Buy this fridge if your kitchen temperature is variable, as it will save you from constantly adjusting the thermostat dial.



## BEST BUY COMPETITION

### Win a Best Buy fridge and £300 worth of Waitrose vouchers

We have a Best Buy Beko TLDA521 fridge plus Waitrose vouchers worth £300 for four readers.

**Worth £1,920**

**TO ENTER, SIMPLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION**

What energy label does the Beko TLDA521 have?

(a) E (b) D (c) A

To enter our Best Buy competition online, go to [www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition](http://www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition) or send your entry on a postcard to 'Best Buy October 08', Which?, Gascoyne Way, Hertford SG14 1LH. Include your name, address and postcode, daytime phone number and Which? membership number (found on your Which? membership card as your user name).

Entries received by 16 October 2008 will be entered. Our competition is open only to current Which? members. Only one entry per household. Usual rules apply. See Which?, December 2007, p82, for a full set of rules.

Congratulations to the winners of our July competition: Miss J Griffiths, Looe; Mr G Prater, Birmingham; Mr N Clark, Pulborough; Mr M Critchley, Stroud; Mr M Randall, London

## Worth considering

### Freestanding worktop-height

**70% LEC R5526 £150**

If it weren't for the freezer compartment, this Lec (11) would be a Best Buy. The icebox only reaches -14°C, not -18°C, so it is only suitable for storing pre-frozen food. Yet, the main fridge compartment of this Lec works well, has excellent climate stability, which keeps the internal temperature stable on hot and cold days, and the cabinet is cooled very

evenly, so there are no warm spots where food can spoil.

Setting up is easy: simply use the recommended setting and the thermostat will reach the perfect temperature. And, best of all, it's a bargain at only £150.



## AMERICAN-STYLE FRIDGE-FREEZERS

### We've tested four popular side-by-side fridge-freezers

Alongside our range of fridges, we tested four American-style fridge-freezers to give you a greater choice when you're out shopping. For the style-conscious they can make a real statement, and they are great

for big families as they have a huge amount of storage space; but none of them are Best Buys and they are expensive. We found that overall they all did their jobs reasonably well and had ample storage space. However, if

you're feeling the financial pinch at the moment, you may be better off visiting [www.which.co.uk/reviews/fridge-freezers](http://www.which.co.uk/reviews/fridge-freezers) for a range of cheaper Best Buy fridge-freezers.



**70% Bosch KAN58A40GB**  
**£1,200**

This Bosch is pricey at £1,200 and while it looks great, we found the freezer to be a bit small. An icemaker reduces storage space to 109 litres. Changes in room temperature don't affect this model. We found that the recommended freezer temperature setting was a little out in our test. You'll need to play with the thermostat to get it right.



**69% Samsung RSH1DTMH**  
**£800**

The Samsung comes with some good extra features. As well as the standard water dispenser and icemaker, there is an accurate digital thermometer and visible and audible high-temperature and open-door alarms. The 291-litre fridge cools food in eight hours. And the 117-litre freezer stays frozen for more than 18 hours in a power cut.



**68% Beko AP930 £750**

This has the largest internal volume of all four models. The 325-litre fridge compartment cools food in seven hours, while the 134-litre freezer can freeze 13kg in 24 hours – good for this type of fridge-freezer. The recommended temperature setting is a little out – you may need to change the initial setting. Fluctuations in room temperature don't affect this model.



**62% LG GWL227YBQA £900**

This LG doesn't score as highly as the other models as you'll need to adjust the thermostat more often. You may need to use a cooler setting than the manufacturer recommends. If the room temperature cools to 10°C, you'll need to alter it again to maintain the optimum temperature. In a power cut food would stay frozen for only eight hours.

## Checklist

### How to save energy, food and money

#### ■ Close the door

Leaving the door open, even for a few moments, is as wasteful as leaving the tap running while you clean your teeth.

■ **Cold food (1)** Take cool bags when you go shopping. Food will stay cool in the shop and it will need less electricity to get to a safe temperature when you get home.

■ **Cold food (2)** Leave cooked food to cool before you put it away.

#### ■ Use your vacuum

Always keep the coils on the back of your fridge free from dust.

■ **Cover up** Seal any open liquids or the fridge will try to evaporate the liquid – this will use more electricity than usual.

#### ■ Keep seals clean

Dirt will stop the door sealing properly and chilled air may leak out.

■ **Save your food** Pop food in containers to maximise shelf life and prevent loss of moisture.

## Contacts

**Beko** 0870 774 1050  
[www.beko.co.uk](http://www.beko.co.uk)

**Belling** 0871 222 2503  
[www.belling.co.uk](http://www.belling.co.uk)

**Hotpoint** 0870 150 6070  
[www.hotpoint.co.uk](http://www.hotpoint.co.uk)

**Indesit** 0870 150 6070  
[www.indesit.co.uk](http://www.indesit.co.uk)

**John Lewis** 0845 604 9049  
[www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)

**Lec** 0871 222 2505  
[www.lec.co.uk](http://www.lec.co.uk)

**Miele** 01235 554455  
[www.miele.co.uk](http://www.miele.co.uk)

**Neff** 0870 240 0080  
[www.neff.co.uk](http://www.neff.co.uk)

**Proline (Comet own brand)**  
0870 542 5425  
[www.comet.co.uk](http://www.comet.co.uk)

**Whirlpool** 0870 600 8989  
[www.whirlpool.co.uk](http://www.whirlpool.co.uk)

**Zanussi** 0870 572 7727  
[www.zanussi.co.uk](http://www.zanussi.co.uk)

## OUR RESEARCH

We choose the fridges we test by talking to manufacturers about their bestselling models 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 may include models from less well-known brands with innovative features.

## WHICH? ONLINE

If the fridges in this report aren't to your taste, visit [www.which.co.uk/fridges](http://www.which.co.uk/fridges) to find 84 previously tested models. In addition to Best Buys, you'll also find great money-saving advice. The website is regularly updated with new models, availability and prices.

MODEL	SPECIFICATION						WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE						SCORE %
	PRICE (£)	ENERGY LABEL	SIZE (cm) (hxxwxd)	VOLUME (litres)	RUNNING COST (£/yr)	ROOM TEMP (°C)	THERMOSTAT ACCURACY	STABILITY	EVENNESS	COOLING POWER	FLEXIBLE STORAGE	RELIABILITY	
<b>FREESTANDING TALL</b>													
1 BEKO TLDA521	180	A	146x55x63	216	11	10-32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	AA	82
2 BEKO TLDA625	250	A	154x61x63	220	16	10-32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	AA	81
3 HOTPOINT RL150	299	A	175x60x66	260	18	10-38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	BA	77
4 HOTPOINT RL175	315	A	150x60x66	315	18	10-38	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	BA	74
5 MIELE K8452S	326	A+	145x60x63	261	14	10-43	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	A	71
<b>BUILT-IN TALL</b>													
6 NEFF K4624X4GB	755	A	177x55x54	244	20	10-38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	AA	91
7 WHIRLPOOL ARG 979/3	553	A	123x54x54	191	19	10-32	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	A	77
8 NEFF K5624X6GB	570	A	122x55x55	188	19	10-38	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	AA	71
9 JOHN LEWIS JLBILIC02	549	A	177x55x56	270	17	10-38	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	70
10 MIELE K9412i	582	A+	122x54x55	188	15	10-38	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	A	67
<b>FREESTANDING WORKTOP</b>													
11 LEC R5526	150	A	84x54x65	93	18	16-32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	A	70
12 BEKO RA80	130	A	84x55x61	93	15	10-32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	AA	68
13 BEKO LA85	130	A	84x55x61	118	16	10-32	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	AA	67
14 PROLINE PF120GWA	100	A	83x47x49	82	14	16-32	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	n/a	67
15 ZANUSSI ZRT143	220	A	85x55x65	96	20	10-38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	A	67
16 LEC L5026	140	A	84x49x62	81	19	16-32	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	A	66
17 BEKO LA620	160	A	84x55x61	118	18	10-32	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	AA	60
18 WHIRLPOOL ARC 103	160	A	84x55x60	106	19	16-32	★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	A	50
<b>BUILT-IN WORKTOP</b>													
19 WHIRLPOOL ARG 581/2	230	B	82x60x50	127	22	10-38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	A	89
20 INDESIT GSE 160I	190	B	81x58x51	114	22	10-38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	84
21 HOTPOINT HDR190I	620	A+	84x90x55	151	13	10-38	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	BA	76
22 WHIRLPOOL ARG585/A	300	A	82x60x54	122	16	16-32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	A	75
23 BELLING BE 808	277	A	82x60x54	132	15	16-32	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	n/a	69

**USING THE TABLE**

The more stars the better.

**Specification**

**Price** For Best Buys, we give the cheapest widely available high-street price. If we couldn't find a model at major high-street shops, we give the most common online price. Prices for other models are a guide. For the latest prices, go to [www.whichcompare.co.uk](http://www.whichcompare.co.uk)

**Energy label** Maker's

claimed rating. **Size**

Dimensions of the model, including hinges with door closed. Add several cm on each side for the air circulation recommended by the manufacturer.

**Volume** Usable space that the fridge has inside – from our measurements.

**Room temperature** The range of temperatures at which the fridge is designed to work.

**Test performance****Thermostat accuracy**

Performance at the maker's recommended temperature. **Stability**

How well the fridge maintains its internal temperature when we alter the room temperature. **Evenness** Temperature difference between the warmest and coldest parts of the fridge.

**Cooling power** How quickly food is cooled.

★★ means that it took longer than 14 hours to chill the food to below 5°C.

**Flexible storage** How easily you can move shelves and the suitability of other storage systems and accessories.

**Reliability** We show the reliability of this brand of fridge based on data, where available, from our reliability survey, published in January

2008. AA=Above average, A=Average, BA=Below average, n/a means there was not enough data for a reliability score.

**Score**

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