

How we test

We strip away the bump and reveal the secrets of our tests

Wallpaper strippers

We time how long it takes the steam-powered wallpaper strippers to remove high-quality washable wallpaper, which is difficult to strip.

We compared the results with a chemical stripper, which is as effective and quick as a steam-powered wallpaper stripper but works out more expensive if used over a large area.

Heat guns

We measure how quick and effective the heat guns are at stripping old gloss paint from a one-metre length of skirting board. We repeat the test on skirting that's been newly painted with a layer of primer and two layers of gloss paint – one white and one dark green.

We also put a chemical remover through exactly the same tests, and discovered that it was quicker but less effective than a heat gun.

Be prepared

Using a paint or wallpaper stripper makes DIY preparation easier – especially if you use one of our Best Buys

With a string of bank holidays just around the corner, thoughts across the land turn to decorating and DIY. The key to a professional finish is in the preparation, and two of the most dreaded DIY tasks are stripping paint from woodwork and removing wallpaper – so we've taken a look at some tools that will help make your life a little easier.

If you've ever tried to get rid of ten-year-old wallpaper with just a stripping knife and a bowl of warm soapy water for company, it's time to drag your DIY kit into the 21st century with a steam-powered wallpaper stripper. We found that steam strippers remove unwanted paper quickly and effectively, by loosening the adhesive that holds the paper in place.

In our tests, the Best Buy heat guns were great for getting old paint off

Drag your DIY kit into the 21st century

woodwork, such as doors and skirting boards. They heat paint to a high temperature so that it softens and can be removed using a shave hook or sharp scraper. If there's any paint left over, we found that you can remove it using a sander or elbow grease and sandpaper.

So now you know that there's an easier way to strip walls, doors and skirting boards, you've got one fewer excuse to delay the decorating.

What you should look for

CONCENTRATOR NOZZLE

A concentrator nozzle focuses the heat on a smaller area so the gun can be used as a soldering tool

HEAT SETTINGS

Some heat guns have only two high-heat temperature settings, which is fine for just stripping paint. Others let you select a wide range of temperatures – ideal if you need to shape plastic pipes, for example

SPOON REFLECTOR OR REFLECTOR NOZZLE

By wrapping this around a pipe to direct the heat, you can defrost any metal pipes that have frozen

GLASS PROTECTOR NOZZLE

Pointing a heat gun directly at glass will shatter the pane, so use a glass protector nozzle when stripping window frames

Don't Buy

We were disappointed by the Performance Power PP1600HAG heat gun from B&Q. The motor burned out after only 90 seconds on the first sample we tested and a second model became too hot to hold after just three minutes. When we spoke to B&Q, it said it had not seen an unusual return rate for this product and has sold many thousands. Although it's cheap – just £16 – we suggest you spend your money on a Best Buy.



1 HEAT GUN

81% Black & Decker KX2000K £34



This was by far the most effective heat gun we tested, taking just ten minutes to remove 80 per cent of the old paint from a metre of skirting board. However, it's noisy and some may find the handle a little large and uncomfortable. Available online from www.amazon.co.uk and Tesco Direct.

WE LIKE This model comes with a

wide range of nozzles.

Available Online Heat settings Variable, from 50°C to 600°C Cable length 300cm Weight 970g Power 2,000 watts

Contacts

B&Q

0845 609 6688

www.diy.com

Black & Decker

01753 511 234

www.blackanddecker.co.uk

Bosch

0844 736 0107

www.boschpowertools.co.uk

DeWalt

0700 433 9258

www.dewalt.co.uk

Earlex

01483 454 666

www.earlex.co.uk

Wickes

0870 608 9001

www.wickes.co.uk

USING THE TABLES

We tested models from the leading brands. The more stars the better. Online prices in *italics*.

HEAT GUNS**Specification**

Accessories provided C = concentrator or cone nozzle (concentrates heat); F = fish tail nozzle (spreads heat); G = glass protector; P = paint stripper; R = reflector or spoon reflector nozzle (for defrosting metal pipes); S = scraper nozzle.

Test performance

Instructions How detailed and easy to understand the instructions are. **Ease of use** How easy and comfortable the machine is to use. **Performance** Speed at removing paint from a one-metre section of both old skirting board and a newly painted and dried skirting board.

Score

This ignores price and is based on:
Performance **45%**
Ease of use **35%**
Features and size **10%**
Instructions **10%**

HEAT GUNS		SPECIFICATION				WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE			SCORE %
		PRICE (£)	WEIGHT (g)	HEAT SETTINGS (°C)	ACCESSORIES PROVIDED	INSTRUCTIONS	EASE OF USE	PERFORMANCE	
1	BLACK & DECKER KX2000K	34	970	from 50-600	C,F,G,P,R,S	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	81
2	DEWALT DW340K	25	930	from 50-600	C,G,R,S,	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	67
3	WICKES 2000W	15	840	300 or 600 ^a	C,G,R,S,	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	57
4	BOSCH PHG 500-2	20	790	300 or 500 ^a	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	56

^a Two heat settings

WALLPAPER STRIPPERS		SPECIFICATION				WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE			SCORE %
		PRICE (£)	HOSE LENGTH FROM STEAM TANK (m)	STEAM HEAD AREA (cm ²)	STEAM HEAD WEIGHT (g)	MINUTES UNTIL REFILL	INSTRUCTIONS	EASE OF USE	PERFORMANCE
5	EARLEX SS76	30	3.7	555	160	85	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
6	PERFORMANCE POWER NLEPPS	24	3.5	550	230	105	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
7	BLACK & DECKER KX3300T	30	3.65	549	270	68	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
8	BOSCH PTL 1	30	3.0	541	200	56	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★

WALLPAPER STRIPPERS**Test performance**

Instructions How detailed and easy to understand any accompanying instructions are. **Ease of use** How easy and comfortable it is to both use and refill

the wallpaper strippers.

Performance How long the steamer can be used before additional water needs to be added to the tank, plus how quickly the strippers could remove both naturally and artificially dried washable wallpaper from two

square metres of plastered wall.

Score

This ignores price and is based on:
Performance **40%**
Ease of use **30%**
Size **20%**
Instructions **10%**

2 HEAT GUN**67% DeWalt DW340K £25**

The variable heat control knob on this DeWalt allows you to select temperatures between 50°C and 600°C. It comes with a good range of nozzles in the box, so you can use the heat gun as a soldering tool or to shape plastic pipes. Although performance could have been better (it took ten minutes to remove 50 per cent of aged paint from a one-metre stretch of skirting), we think it would be fine for small jobs. Available from Screwfix.

WE FOUND Our testers found the handle comfortable and easy to grip.

Cheapest store Screwfix **Heat settings** Variable, from 50°C to 600°C **Cable length** 320cm **Weight** 930g **Power** 2,000 watts



WHICH?
BEST BUY

5 WALLPAPER STRIPPER**79% Earlex SS76 £30**

This Earlex model is easy to use and was the most effective on test. A full tank generates steam for 85 minutes, coming second only to our other Best Buy (right). The electric flex is short, but the long 3.7-metre hose means you can easily reach high ceilings and walls. This

model is due for a cosmetic update and will soon change from black to dark grey.

Available from Homebase.

WE FOUND The steam head on this model was the largest on test.

Cheapest store Homebase **Minutes of steam** 85 **Hose length** 3.7m **Weight of steam head** 160g **Power** 2,000 watts



WHICH?
BEST BUY

6 WALLPAPER STRIPPER**70% Performance Power NLEPPS £24**

You won't have to refill this model very often, as it's capable of generating steam for a generous 105 minutes. However, it was a little slower at stripping older wallpaper than our other Best Buy (left), and our testers felt that the handle got a little too warm when in use. Available exclusively from B&Q. **WORTH KNOWING** Find your nearest B&Q by going to www.diy.com and typing your postcode into the store-finder tool.

Cheapest store B&Q **Minutes of steam** 105 **Hose length** 3.5m **Weight of steam head** 230g **Power** 1,800 watts



WHICH?
BEST BUY