

When the dust settles

A good vacuum sucks up dust, but a great vacuum keeps it sucked up. In our latest test we've even found a Miele Best Buy that retains a dust-busting 100% of particles

So you want a vacuum that effortlessly picks up dust, but there's more to the latest models than that. As leading manufacturers up their game, you'll find everything from dinky compact models to innovative techie features.

Dyson leads the way in smaller vacuums with its two space-saving models: the upright DC24 and the cylinder DC22 (see 'Small talk', p62). Some uprights – like the Hoover DM5530 Dust Manager Pets & Stairs – now have stabilisers to keep them standing rock steady in the hallway while you zip up and down the stairs. Meanwhile, Miele has fitted a hi-tech electronic sensor on its Allervac Sensor 5000, so there's no chance you'll inadvertently leave the carpet dusty.

However useful the features, you'll still need a vacuum that does the basics – and not all of them do.

Our latest test results have turned up some winning machines, but also a few howlers. Time after time the same brands are putting in the star performances, with new Miele, Bosch and Dyson models taking all of the latest Best Buy honours (see 'Miele's clean sweep', p61).

Our results table includes newly tested vacuum cleaners alongside previously tested Best Buys from the broadest range of manufacturers.

For more Best Buys and Don't Buys, as well as advice and more than 90 reviews of currently available models, see www.which.co.uk/vacuumcleaners.



What you get for your money

We currently have test results for nearly 100 vacuums (see them all at which.co.uk, where reviews are continually updated). With prices from as little as £30 to more than £400, here's the lowdown on what you can expect to get

Less than £100

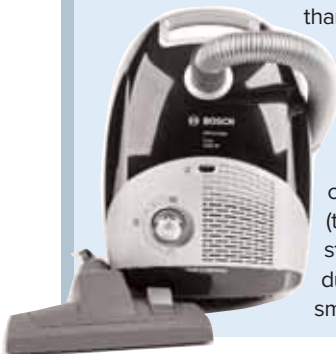
Number of vacuums reviewed: 45
(29 cylinders, 16 uprights)

Number of Best Buys: 4

Number of Don't Buys: 7

Even if you're spending less than £100 you can still find a vacuum that's good enough to be a Best Buy. The vacuums we test start at about £30, but typically you'll need to spend closer to £90 for a Best Buy.

Cylinders in this price range perform better than uprights, and the best models are often from Bosch. In our experience, the cheapest models (those under £50) struggle to retain dust, especially smaller particles.



£100 to £200

Number of vacuums reviewed: 36
(23 cylinders, 13 uprights)

Number of Best Buys: 9

Number of Don't Buys: 1

Cylinder vacuums come into their own in the mid-price range. Several previous Best Buy Miele vacuums can be found in this group. Where similar-looking models differ in price, you'll probably find the costlier version has a

more advanced filter. Models in this price band come with all the standard nozzles, and might also include a turbo nozzle.

Although it's easy to find a cylinder to suit your needs at this price, uprights are trickier: models suited to hard floors are your best bet for under £200.



More than £200

Number of vacuums reviewed: 14
(5 cylinders, 9 uprights)

Number of Best Buys: 7

Number of Don't Buys: 0

Decent cylinders are available more cheaply, but to get a really good upright for all floor types, you're looking at £200 plus. Uprights are generally more expensive than cylinders and those made by Dyson dominate our Best Buys.

Hang around and your money will go a little further, as some older models drop in price. The reductions aren't huge but you could save £20-30.



How we test



We calculate the amount of dust that manages to get away

The great escape

A vacuum needs to keep dust in, not deposit it back on your spotless carpet. To measure the amount of dust escaping, we place the vacuum into a chamber, feeding the hose out through a hole in the wall and into a special tube attachment used to measure the amount and size of the dust particles entering the cleaner. We also measure the dust escaping from the body of the vacuum into the chamber. Then we calculate the percentage of particles that the cleaner is struggling to contain.

Smaller particles are usually harder for vacuums to keep in, but the best model on test retained 100% of the dust it sucked up. How good each vacuum is at retaining dust particles is factored into our floor-cleaning ratings.



1 CYLINDER

76% Miele
S4281 £180



The S4281 is an incredibly high scorer. It's light, gets in close to walls and corners, and cleans well on all surfaces even without a turbo brush. It's good at picking up pet hair and excellent at allergen retention, though its strong ability to pick up dust tails off slightly as the bag fills.

This model is similar to the more widely available S4211 – another Best Buy – but the S4281 comes with a Hepa filter, which is better for allergy sufferers. The 8.7-metre reach means you can't cover as much distance as some of our other Best Buys. Cheapest at Currys.

WORTH KNOWING It's due to be replaced by the identical S4282, which comes with the new HyClean bag – see Miele's clean sweep, right.

Available Currys Bagless No Weight 6.6kg Reach 8.7 metres Replacement bags £7.99 for five, includes one motor filter and one Super Air Clean filter

The filtration with the HyClean bag is impressive, and none of the dust escapes back into the room



2 CYLINDER

75% Miele Allervac
Sensor 5000 £200



This Miele is a great choice for any floor. The filtration with the HyClean bag is impressive and none of the dust escapes back into the room, making it a great choice for allergy sufferers. The standard nozzle does a good job of vacuuming carpet and hard floors and it's reasonable at picking up pet hairs.

You'll need to buy replacement bags, but because suction remains strong even as the bag fills up, you shouldn't need to change the bag early. Cheapest at Argos.

WORTH KNOWING It has a dust sensor that indicates when an area is cleaned. It's good, but a bit too sensitive to tiny amounts of dust.

Available Argos and Comet Bagless No Weight 8.2kg Reach 10.1 metres Replacement bags £7.99 for four, includes one motor filter and one Super Air Clean filter

Which should you choose?

Best for a budget

BOSCH BSGL4000GB This bagged Bosch (5) puts in a good performance on every floor surface in our tests and is pretty good at picking up pet hair. It's £96, but you might find it even cheaper online.



Best for low energy use

DYSON DC24 BALL ALL FLOORS This three-quarter size Dyson (15) is an energy saver, using half the energy of some other vacuums to clean an area the same size. It's a light model, too, so you'll use a little less energy yourself when carrying it upstairs.





3 CYLINDER

73% Bosch BSG71266GB Pro Energy £130



This nifty Bosch cleaner has a long reach, so you can cover more than 10 metres of floor space without unplugging.

It does a great job on all surfaces even without a turbo brush, and pick-up remains good as the bag fills up, so you can get your money's worth from the bags. Suction is quite strong at its maximum setting, but it's easily adjustable if you find it's too strong.

It's not quick to pick up pet hairs, but this model's allergen retention is good. Cheapest at John Lewis.

WE LIKE This Bosch is the quietest of these Best Buys, so you can still hold a conversation while you clean.

Available John Lewis Bagless No Weight 7.1kg Reach 10.1 metres Replacement bags £6.99 for five, including one filter



4 CYLINDER

70% Dyson DC21 Motorhead £330



Currently our only bagless cylinder Best Buy, this strong Dyson works well on all surfaces.

The motorised brush head makes this vacuum a speed demon on pet hairs. It only takes a moment to clean the hairs from the brush afterwards, but untangling long hairs is more time-consuming.

However, the large main head makes it difficult to get under low furniture. Allergen retention is excellent, but this model's heavy – something to be aware of if you're carrying it upstairs – and, as with most Dysons, it's a touch noisy. It's cheapest at Argos.

WORTH KNOWING This model is disappearing from distribution, so get it while stocks last.

Available Argos Bagless Yes Weight 10.5kg Reach 9.6 metres

The motorised brush head makes the Dyson DC21 Motorhead a speed demon on pet hairs



5 CYLINDER

69% Bosch BSG4000GB £96



This Bosch is a worthy Best Buy: it's a good choice for any floor, and won't break the bank.

There's no turbo brush, but that doesn't stop it from picking up dust from all types of surface and making reasonably swift work of picking up pet hair – and you won't spend long cleaning the nozzle afterwards.

It weighs only 6.4kg and the handle is positioned well, making it easy to lift and manoeuvre.

There are better models for allergy sufferers though.

WE LIKE When you press the power button it pops up so you can easily turn it to adjust the suction.

Available Debenhams and independents Bagless No Weight 6.4kg Reach 10.2 metres Replacement bags £6.99 for five, including one filter



MIELE'S CLEAN SWEEP

One manufacturer has a Best Buy for each of its vacuums on test, so what's its secret?

Miele cylinder vacuum cleaners have proven to be superior performers in our tests time and again. We currently have test results for eight Miele vacuums, and all eight are Best Buys.

Our research shows that Miele has found a winning formula and stuck with it. Most of its vacuums

look alike, with only minor differences between nozzles and filters. Miele vacuums consistently deliver good results in our dust pick-up and emissions tests.

Their design looks simple, making them intuitive to use – and when you open the compartment, all the filters are accessible.

We asked Stefan Pichetta (pictured right), Miele's vacuum cleaner product manager, about the company's attitude to design. 'Miele products are designed and tested for a 20-year lifespan,' he said. 'Our approach has always been one of gradual improvement...We

look into the whole system to improve dust pick-up, hygiene and user convenience.'

We've noticed that the dust bag has been evolving. The just-tested Miele Allervac Sensor 5000 Best Buy comes with a new HyClean dust bag. It achieved an impressive 100% dust retention – a figure that no other model achieved. But the thought of buying replacement bags can be a turn-off for some consumers, and Miele doesn't produce any bagless models – a position that is unlikely to change.

'Our laboratories have tested many methods of dust pick-up and retention and have come to



the conclusion that using a dust bag is the most effective and hygienic method of removing dust from the home,' Stefan said.

It seems fans of bagless vacuums will have to look elsewhere, but Miele is due to launch an upright cleaner soon. Rest assured, we'll test whether it matches the high standards set by Miele cylinders.





14 UPRIGHT

69% Dyson DC14 All Floors £260

The DC14 All Floors does exactly what it says on the dust container. Few other uprights in our tests performed as well as the DC14 on every surface. The sides of the vacuum get in close to walls and the container is good at keeping the dust in, but there are better models around for allergy sufferers.

Although it's not the quickest at picking up pet hair, it's certainly capable. Like most Dysons it's noisy, but it does offer some extra features like 'brush control', which turns off the motorised brush bar for delicate surfaces. It's cheapest at Currys.

WORTH KNOWING The DC14 range also includes an Allergy version with high-efficiency filters and an Animal version for picking up pet hair.

Available Currys Bagless Yes Weight 8.3kg Reach 10 metres



15 UPRIGHT

64% Dyson DC24 Ball All Floors £204

This dinky upright Dyson is a space saver and, as the name suggests, does a good job on both carpet and hard floors.

You'll need to empty the dust container more frequently than with a larger vacuum, but, because it's bagless, regular emptying will only cost you time, not money. It's energy efficient compared with other vacuums, using half as much energy as some other models to clean the same area of carpet. There are a few slightly better models around for allergy sufferers though. Cheapest at John Lewis.

WORTH KNOWING Emptying can be tricky – the one-handed push-button release mechanism is a good idea, but we found it a little temperamental on some models.

Available Argos, Comet, Currys, John Lewis Bagless Yes Weight 5.4kg Reach 6.6 metres



SMALL TALK

The long and the short of compact vacuums

The Dyson DC24 Ball All Floors (15), Dyson DC22 Baby Animal (8) and Electrolux Z5020A Intensity (16) are designed with storage in mind.

The Best Buy Dyson DC24 is three quarters of the size of a regular Dyson upright, and the handle collapses to give it a storage height of just 76cm.

The DC22 Baby Animal disappointed when it came to picking up pet hair, but it's a good choice for allergy sufferers as it retains small particles well.

The hose can be coiled around the appliance and clipped into place, making it the most space-efficient of our compacts.

The Electrolux Intensity is an upright/cylinder hybrid. The handle folds down for ease of storage, but the button to release it can be a bit stiff, and there's no hose. If this model appeals, you'd better be quick – as it's being discontinued and Electrolux has no current plans to launch a similar foldaway upright.

MODEL	SPECIFICATION		
	PRICE (£)	WEIGHT (kg)	CAPACITY (litres)
CYLINDER			
1 MIELE S4281	180	6.6	2.4
2 MIELE Allervac Sensor 5000	200	8.2	3.1
3 BOSCH BSG71266GB Pro Energy	130	7.1	2.7
4 DYSON DC21 Motorhead	330	10.5	2.3
5 BOSCH BSGL4000GB	96	6.4	1.4
6 PHILIPS FC9171	94	8.1	2.9
7 MORPHY RICHARDS 70066 PerformAir	90	6.5	1.9
8 DYSON DC22 Baby Animal	199	7.3	0.9
9 ELECTROLUX ZSH730	80	6.4	2.1
10 DIRT DEVIL DDCLBG7	70	8.2	2.8
11 VAX VZL-7022P Mach 2	75	9.1	2.2
12 RUSSELL HOBBS 14165	60	6.8	3.4
13 HOOVER Alyx Pets & Parquet TC1209	68	6.2	1.6
UPRIGHT			
14 DYSON DC14 All Floors	260	8.3	2.8
15 DYSON DC24 Ball All Floors	204	5.4	1.1
16 ELECTROLUX Z5020A Intensity	160	7.6	0.8
17 HOOVER DM5530 Dust Manager Pets & Stairs	100	8.5	1.9
18 VAX VZL-6014 Mach 4	140	9.2	2.9
19 VAX VZL-6017 Mach 7	200	10.6	2.8
20 MORPHY RICHARDS 73381 PerformAir	80	8.0	3.6
21 SAMSUNG SU2931	67	7.2	2.6

Contacts

Bosch 0870 240 0060
www.boschappliances.co.uk
Dirt Devil 0800 525089
www.dirtdevil.co.uk
Dyson 0800 279 5127
www.dyson.co.uk
Electrolux 0870 605 5055
www.electrolux.co.uk
Hoover 0870 950 2943
www.hoover.co.uk
Miele 01235 554455
www.miele.co.uk
Morphy Richards 0844 871 0948
www.morphyrichards.co.uk
Philips 0845 601 0354
www.philips.co.uk
Russell Hobbs 0845 658 9700
www.russellhobbs.com
Samsung 0845 726 7864
www.samsung.com
Sebo 01494 465533; www.sebo.co.uk
Vax 0870 606 1248; www.vax.co.uk

HUGHES DIRECT

Great discount offer

Hughes Direct is offering Which? members an exclusive discount on our Best Buy vacuums until 24 December 2008, offering the Miele Allervac Sensor 5000 for £172, Bosch BSG71266GB Pro Energy for £92, Dyson DC21 Motorhead for £290, Bosch BSGL4000GB for £79 and the Dyson DC14 All Floors for £219 (delivery will be £5).

To find out more details about this offer and other member-only discounts from Hughes Direct log on to www.hughesdirect.co.uk/which or call 01473 321883. This offer is subject to availability. Each month Which? members can take advantage of the great deals offered by Hughes Direct. All goods are guaranteed to be a minimum of 10% below high-street prices published in Which? product reports and if you find the same product cheaper elsewhere (including delivery) within seven days of purchase, Hughes Direct promises to refund 110% of the difference.

So long, suckers

SAMSUNG SU2931 £67
MORPHY RICHARDS 73381
PERFORMAIR £80
HOOVER ALYX PETS & PARQUET
TC1209 £68

Although we were impressed with the Samsung's (21) pet hair pick-up from carpet, it's let down by an inability to retain all of the dust it picks up. It's particularly poor at retaining smaller particles. The Morphy Richards (20) and the Hoover Alyx Pets & Parquet TC1209 (13) were also let down by their ability to keep dust in. Note that the Hoover Alyx Pets TC1208 is the same but without the parquet nozzle. You'd be well advised to give these a miss.



USING THE TABLE

We've tested new models from leading brands and brought forward Best Buys from a range of brands from previous tests. 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 to what you can expect to pay. Go to www.whichcompare.co.uk for the latest prices. **Weight** Includes accessories. **Reach**

Distance from plug to cleaning head.

Test performance

Carpet/Laminate/Wooden How well the vacuum picks up and retains dust from these surfaces. **Pet hair** How quickly the vacuum can collect pet hair from carpets. **Stairs** How easy it is to use on stairs. **Moving** How easy the vacuum is to move around. **Emptying/changing** How easy/hygienic it is to empty bag/canisters and change filters. **Allergens** How well the filter retains pet allergens. **Noise** The

more stars the quieter.

Reliability A brand is expected to be rated at least average in our annual reliability survey before it can be a Best Buy. High-scoring models from manufacturers with five-year guarantees – like Dyson – can be Best Buys. A blank means we don't have enough data to judge reliability.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:
 Cleaning/filter **55%**
 Convenience **35%**
 Noise and energy use **10%**

		WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE										SCORE %
REACH (m)	BAGLESS	CARPET	LAMINATE	WOODEN	PET HAIR	STAIRS	MOVING	EMPTYING/ CHANGING	ALLERGENS	NOISE	RELIABILITY	
8.7		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	Above average	76
10.1		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	75
10.1		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	Average	73
9.6	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	Below average	70
10.2		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	Average	69
12.6		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★		65
9.0		★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★	Average	55
7.9	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	Below average	53
7.3	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★	Average	53
11.8		★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★		50
11.4	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★	★★	Average	47
7.9	✓	★★	★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★	★		38
7.5	✓	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	Average	32
10.0	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★	Below average	69
6.6	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	Below average	64
6.7		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★	Above average	55
6.5	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	Average	54
9.4	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★	Average	54
8.8	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★	Average	51
9.4	✓	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★	★		30
8.1	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★		29