

How we test

We test the bags' strength, leakage and ease of tying

Breaking point

Our tests are designed to compare strength and leakage. We load each bag with sand to determine its 'break load' – the point where the filling causes the bag to split far enough for a ball to fit through the hole (61mm). We then drop the filled bag from a height of 120cm on to the floor, to see if any more splits occur. The bags proved very strong, most accommodating at least 25kg of sand – a lot more than a typical household bin – before splitting. To test leakage, we load the bags with water until more than 20 drops per minute escape. We assess which tying methods are the easiest to use, check for any problems removing bags from the roll and also count the number of bags supplied.



It's in the bag

Find out which bin bags aren't rubbish

Whereas 30 years ago we threw our waste straight into dustbins, nowadays the plastic bin liner proliferates and supermarket tills ring to the tune of £130 million a year from disposable bin bags. Our analysis of 23 different bin-liner options shows they almost all do a good job, which is why we haven't singled any out as Best Buys in our table.

Even when you factor in price per bag, you may be surprised and heartened to know that some of the best choices are recycled or biodegradable. Given that most bin liners move from your dustbin to languish underground in landfill sites, our findings are another great reason to choose a greener option the next time you buy a bin bag.

On the downside, our tests also revealed that some of the cheaper bags, such as Tesco Value Refuse

Sacks, are a false economy as the bags need to be doubled up to avoid messy spillages.

Tying options

Your most significant relationship with a bin liner comes at the point when you need to fathom how to tie it up. Our testers preferred liners with drawstrings, but were less impressed with the 'tuk'n'tie' bags. These involve poking a flap through a hole and then tying, which we found confusing. Other options include 'tie top' or 'four flap', where you are provided with four sections to tie together. Some bin liners have a flat top (described as 'none' in our table), where you need to leave enough room to let you grab and pull together opposite edges. This simple design works well, as long as you don't overfill the bags.



Dress to impress with this season's top bin bag

Which should you choose?

Best green choice

TESCO STANDARD £1.89 for 20 bags

Most supermarkets offer green own-brand choices and our tests show there's no compromise in performance and value. Tesco has several versions: its best (4 in our table) is made from 100 per cent recycled materials and costs just 10p per bag. There's also a tie-handle version (7). Alternatively,

consider Tesco's bag offering 90 per cent recycled content (14) – it was the only bag tested that is both recycled and biodegradable. It's slightly pricier but is still excellent value and was impeccably strong and leak resistant. You can also find good recycled options at Asda (5) and the Co-op (2).

Best for value

SAINSBURY'S BASICS 74p for 30 bags **HOMEBASE** £5.99 for 100 bags

Cash spent on bin-liners is, quite literally, throwing good money away. Happily, there are several good economy options. If there's space in your cupboard, buy in bulk and choose Homebase's roll of 100 bags (3) for £5.99. They're strong and reliably leak-

free. Alternatively, try Sainsbury's Basics (1) which cost just 3p a bag. These tie-top bags were among the best we tested – in stark contrast to the Tesco Value equivalent (23), also 3p a bag. These could take only 8kg of weight before breaking.



MODEL

- 1 **SAINSBURY'S** Basic Refuse Sacks
- 2 **CO-OP** Black Sacks
- 3 **HOMEBASE** Refuse Sacks
- 4 **TESCO** Standard
- 5 **ASDA** Recycled Refuse Sack
- 6 **CO-OP** Degradable Black Sacks
- 7 **TESCO** Tie Handle
- 8 **WILKINSON** Tie Top
- 9 **ASDA** Refuse Sack
- 10 **BACO** Degradable
- 11 **WILKINSON** Drawstring
- 12 **B&Q** Value
- 13 **SNAPPIES** Refuse Sacks
- 14 **TESCO** Large
- 15 **WAITROSE** Drawstring
- 16 **MORRISONS** Polyline Large Heavy Duty
- 17 **SAINSBURY'S** 100% Recycled Refuse Sack
- 18 **SAINSBURY'S** Tie Handle Refuse Sacks
- 19 **MORRISONS** Dustbin Sacks
- 20 **ASDA** Smart Price^a
- 21 **HOMEBASE** Tie Handle Refuse Sack
- 22 **CO-OP** Everyday Black Sacks
- 23 **TESCO** Value Refuse Sacks

^a Has increased in thickness since testing

Can I just use a carrier bag?

Our tests reveal which bag is best for use in a smaller capacity bin

■ **Pedal-bin liners** These bags are intended for small bins, with a capacity of around 20-25 litres, and have a usable size of approximately 560mm x 530mm. The eight types we tried proved surprisingly strong – Tesco's version (which worked out at just 3p a bag) proved unbreakable when we loaded it with as much weight as in our tests for full-sized bin liners. One brand – Landsaver Biowaste – is slightly weaker and

leakier than the others on test.

For this size of bin, many of us try to assuage our environmental consciences by reusing carrier bags. So we also tested a typical supermarket freebie alongside the purpose-made, bought options. Sadly, the carrier bag didn't match most of the others for strength, and proved fountain-like in our leakage test, but it is perfectly adequate for holding lightweight, dry waste.

■ **Swing-bin liners** Swing-bin liners are for middle-sized bins – those sold as 50-litre capacity. We tested seven supermarket brands, typically costing less than 10p a bag. We found no discernible differences in strength or leakage in our tests, so it's not really worth shopping around or agonising about your decision. With that in mind, our recommendation is to help the planet by buying recycled ones.

USING THE TABLE

We've tested a selection of own-brand bin liners from supermarkets because this is what most people buy. The more stars the better.

Specification

Price We give the price as we went to press. **Number of bags** As stated by manufacturer. **Tie method** Method used to seal bag.

Test performance

Measurements How much of the bag's capacity can be filled and whether the correct number of bags were supplied. **Strength**

The more stars, the heavier the weight a single bag can contain without splitting.

Leakage The more stars, the more water the bag can contain before leaking.

Ease of use How easy it is to take a bag from its roll, open it, and seal it once full.

Value for money Cost per bag combined with the strength and leakage tests.

Score

This is based on:

Strength and leakage **60%**
Ease of use **20%**
Cost per bag **10%**
Measurements **10%**

Contacts

Asda 0845 300 1111
www.asda.co.uk

Baco 01494 656843
www.baco.co.uk

B&Q 0845 850 0175
www.diy.com

Co-op 0800 068 6727
www.coop.co.uk

Homebase 0845 077 8888
www.homebase.co.uk

Morrisons 0845 611 6111
www.morrisons.co.uk

Sainsbury's 0800 636232
www.sainsburys.co.uk

Snappies 01494 656843
www.baco.co.uk

Tesco 0845 722 5533
www.tesco.com

Wilkinson 0800 032 9329
www.wilko.co.uk

SPECIFICATION						WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE					SCORE %
PRICE (£)	NUMBER OF BAGS	COST PER BAG (p)	RECYCLED CONTENT (%)	BIODEGRADABLE	TIE METHOD	MEASUREMENTS	STRENGTH	LEAKAGE	EASE OF USE	VALUE FOR MONEY	
0.74	30	3			Tie top	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	92
2.39	20	12	36		None	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	91
5.99	100	6			None	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	91
1.89	20	10	100		Tuk'n'tie	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	91
1.27	20	6	98		Tie top	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	89
1.99	10	20		✓	None	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	89
1.98	20	10	100		Tie handle	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	89
0.99	30	3	60		Tie top	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	89
1.88	20	9			Drawstring	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	87
1.99	10	20		✓	None	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	87
1.09	10	11	60		Drawstring	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	87
2.28	30	8			Tie top	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	85
1.49	50	3			None	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	85
1.89	10	19	90	✓	Tuk'n'tie	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	85
2.99	15	20			Drawstring	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	84
1.29	10	13	100		Tie top	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	81
3.85	40	10	100		Tie top	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	78
1.96	20	10			Tie handle	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	78
1.99	20	10			Drawstring	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	76
0.74	30	3			None	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	73
4.49	30	15			Tie handle	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	72
1.19	25	5			None	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	66
0.74	30	3			Tie top	★★★★	★	★	★★★★★	★★★★	35