

Get back to basics

Toasters come with gadgets galore these days, but too many fail to do their main job well

Style-conscious homeowners can choose from a dazzling array of colours and designs to find the toaster that perfectly matches their kitchen.

For many of us, good design is high on the shopping list when it comes to buying a toaster. After all, most will do a similar job at browning bread, won't they?

Well, actually, no. Manufacturers have been busy adding gadgets such as digital controls, illuminated displays and motorised carriages that load bread at the touch of a button. But too many of their machines fail to master their main job – toasting bread evenly.

The Morphy Richards 2Perfection (11), for example, has a motorised lid to

concentrate the heat for faster browning. It's speedy, but it simply fails to brown the bread properly.

Some models try to tackle the problem of uneven toasting with centring guides so that the bread falls into the middle of the toaster. But even with such features, many machines produce only average results, failing to brown to the same degree on each side of the bread, or missing the top or bottom. Overall, slower toasters did a better job.

There were two- and four-slice star performers among this average bunch, so there's no need to put up with uneven toast. Of the four-slice models, those with two long slots did worse in general.

We found that slower models did a better job at toasting bread evenly



We time how long it takes for the bread to toast

Finding our Best Buys

We use more than 790 bread products, including fresh and frozen bread, crumpets and teacakes. We make more than 390 slices of toast using square, medium-sliced white bread. Our testers buy all loaves on the same day, store them in the same conditions and use them the day after. We carry out three toasting cycles with each model and measure the time taken, area of bread toasted and how evenly it browns – comparing both sides of every slice.

We use the setting most likely to produce golden-brown toast (we carry out a pilot test to find this setting). We leave the toaster to cool for 15 seconds between cycles – or longer if recommended by the manufacturer.

Reheating toast

Many models have a function to reheat toast. To test it, we record the temperature of freshly toasted bread, leave it for 30 minutes and use the reheat setting. When the toast pops up, we take its temperature again.

Bun racks

Bun racks are designed to warm items such as croissants and buns. We heat up fresh croissants on the manufacturer's recommended setting before checking whether they're warmed through.

What you should look for

DEFROST SETTINGS

These aim to take the guesswork out of toasting frozen bread, defrosting then switching to toasting so you don't have to change browning settings. The Kenwood TT560 (1), evenly toasting both sides in three minutes, was one of the best

EXTRA LIFT

Most toasters have an 'extra-lift' facility, which raises toasting slots higher than normal, so it's easier to remove small items like crumpets

SLOT SIZE

Slot widths vary by as much as a centimetre. If you like thicker slices of toast, wider slots like those on the Kenwood TT380 (13) are better

CRUMB TRAY

All models on test have crumb trays to make them easier to clean, but some are more convenient than others. We like the tray on the Prestige 50524 Symmetry (2), which slides out of the front





1 TWO-SLICE

74% Kenwood TT560 £15

The simple but sleek two-slice TT560 is a great all-rounder that consistently produced near-perfect toast from fresh or frozen bread.

Its pop-up bun rack was one of the most effective on test, warming croissants all the way through.

The toaster itself has clear, well-positioned controls for features such as reheating and defrosting and toasting frozen bread.

EXCEPTIONAL
VALUE *which?*WHICH?
BEST
BUY

The slots are wide enough for bagels, though one slight drawback is that it can be tricky to remove smaller items such as crumpets, despite the extra-lift facility.

The Kenwood TT560 is available from Comet.

WE LIKE The crumb tray is very easy to slide out.

Cheapest store Comet Extra lift Yes Bun warmer Yes Reheat Yes Defrost Yes Bagel setting No

The
Kenwood
TT560
warms
croissants
all the way
through



2 TWO-SLICE

70% Prestige Symmetry 50524 £36

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

As you might expect from a toaster called Symmetry, this is good at browning bread evenly on both sides. There are indicator lights that go out one by one to count down the time until your toast is ready.

It was good at browning crumpets, too, although it burned teacakes in places. It also has a bagel setting, which toasts only on one side. Motorised slots make it

exceptionally easy to load bread and we like the crumb tray being positioned at the front, which makes it easy to get to for cleaning. The Prestige Symmetry 50524 is available online.

WORTH KNOWING It's available in almond, white and black, as well as stainless steel.

Available Online Extra lift No Bun warmer No Reheat Yes Defrost Yes Bagel setting Yes



12 FOUR-SLICE

74% Bush BTL412 £23

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

Bush gets the basics right with the BTL412 – a great choice if you just want to toast fresh bread. There's no frozen bread setting or bun warmer, and it failed to toast teacakes all over.

However, it has a sensitive (if small) browning control and also produced crisp, evenly browned crumpets. There are wide slots to

accommodate thicker items and a separate bagel setting which toasts only the cut side. The Bush BTL412 is available online.

WORTH KNOWING You can save energy when you want just a couple of slices, thanks to the two- or four-slice selector.

Available Online Extra lift Yes Bun warmer No Reheat No Defrost No Bagel setting Yes



13 FOUR-SLICE

74% Kenwood TT380 £40

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

If teacakes and crumpets are your thing, this could be the toaster for you, as it toasts both very well. This was also one of the best models on test at toasting fresh bread. But with frozen bread, you get the best results only after the toaster has warmed up.

The Kenwood isn't quite as impressive at warming croissants all the way

through, and the crumb tray slides out of the back rather than the side, which isn't the most convenient. This model is available online.

WE LIKE Easy-to-read controls make this toaster good for those with poor eyesight.

Available Online Extra lift Yes Bun warmer Yes Reheat Yes Defrost Yes Bagel setting No

Matching options

Matching kettles and toasters look great, but you may have to compromise on quality, as we've yet to find a manufacturer that makes matching Best Buys. Take the results of this test and the kettles report on p68. The energy-efficient 2Perfection kettle is a Best Buy, but its matching toaster is a flop. The Prestige Symmetry 50524 toaster (2), on the other hand, is impressive, but the Symmetry kettle is average.

If you want a matching set, the Morphy Richards Complements kettle is a Best Buy and the matching four-slice toaster 44013 (17) is OK at toasting fresh bread, even if it does so a little unevenly.



MEMBER BENEFIT

FREE website access

More details online

You can find more information on toasters, kettles, sandwich makers and other kitchen equipment, by visiting our website. You can also use our product picker to choose the model that is right for you and find out more about the range of features on offer. Visit www.which.co.uk to find out more.

Which should you choose?



Budget buy

PROLINE PT2S, £4 This model (3) toasts fresh and frozen bread evenly, reheats effectively and comes at a bargain price. The slots are thin, so it's not great for teacakes.

Gadget lovers

BREVILLE LIGHTNING TT24, £50

The motorised slots, countdown lights, pop-up bun warmer and digital browning control of this machine (14) make it a good choice for a gadget lover. It's good at making toast, too.

Impaired sight or grip

PRESTIGE SYMMETRY 50524 £36 ONLINE

The Symmetry (2) has easy-to-grip controls with large, clear labelling. The other options for those with poor grip include the Morphy Richards and De'Longhi models, but only the Morphy Richards 44013 (17) is better than average at toasting fresh bread.

Facts & scores

We picked up these slices of information during our toasters test

Bun racks

We found the bun racks on the Breville Lightning PT15, the Kenwood TT560, and the Russell Hobbs Classic 9376 to be the most effective on test.

Toasted sandwich

The Russell Hobbs 9376 comes with a sandwich toasting rack, which is unusual for a toaster.

Easing the load

The Morphy Richards 2Perfection, Breville Lightning TT24, Prestige Symmetry are particularly easy to load as you touch a button to lower the bread carriages rather than pushing down a lever.

Is it done yet?

The Breville Lightning TT24 and PT15, and the Morphy Richards 44009 and 44013 have countdown features in which a series of lights count down the time left until your toast is done.

A round too many?

We tried each toaster 40 to 50 times during testing. By the end of this, the lever on the De'Longhi Crema CT04A had buckled.

MODEL

TWO-SLICE

1 KENWOOD TT560

2 PRESTIGE Symmetry 50524

3 PROLINE PT2S

4 BREVILLE Lightning PT15

5 RUSSELL HOBBS 12592

6 MORPHY RICHARDS Complements 44009

7 DE'LONGHI Crema CT02E

8 RUSSELL HOBBS Classic 9376

9 BOSCH TAT6901

10 COOKWORKS 422/5128

11 MORPHY RICHARDS 2Perfection

FOUR-SLICE

12 BUSH BTL412

13 KENWOOD TT380

14 BREVILLE Lightning TT24

15 TEFAL TT748515

16 DE'LONGHI Crema CT04A

17 MORPHY RICHARDS Complements 44013

18 COOKWORKS 420/7658

19 PHILIPS HL5224

20 MORPHY RICHARDS Opera 44082

21 PROLINE PT4S

USING THE TABLE

We tested some of the latest models from leading brands. The more stars the better.

Specification

Price For Best Buys, we give the cheapest widely available price. Prices for other models are a guide to what you should expect to pay. Online prices are shown in *italics*. **Matching range** Whether the toaster is part of a matching range with a kettle.

Test performance

Fresh bread/Frozen Bread/Teacake/Crumpet How evenly three runs of each of these toasted. **Bun warmer** How well the toaster warmed up a croissant

SPEC		WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE										SCORE %
PRICE (£)	MATCHING RANGE	FRESH BREAD	FROZEN BREAD	TEACAKE	CRUMPET	BUN WARMER	REHEATING	SPEED	CLEANING	EASE OF USE		
15		★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	74	
36	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★★	70	
4		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★	n/a	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	67	
20	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65	
20		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★★	★★	n/a	★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65	
20	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	61	
35	✓	★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	★	n/a	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	59	
35		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	58	
30	✓	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57	
7	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	n/a	n/a	★★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★★	54	
30	✓	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★	n/a	★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	52	
23		★★★★★★	n/a	★	★★★★★★	n/a	n/a	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	74	
40		★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	74	
50	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★	★★	★★★★★★	64	
50		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	n/a	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	63	
50	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★	n/a	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★★	61	
30	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	n/a	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	60	
10		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	59	
20		★★★★	★★★★★	★	★	n/a	n/a	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	54	
30	✓	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	50	
10		★★	★★	★★★★	★	n/a	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	43	

on the rack supplied.

Reheating How well the appliance reheated toast.

Speed How long the model took to toast a selection of baked goods. **Cleaning** How easy it is to clean the toaster's surface and crumb tray.

Ease of use How easy the machine is to use.

Score

This ignores price and is based on:

Performance
Convenience

80%
20%

Contacts

Bosch 0870 727 0446
www.boschappliances.co.uk
Breville 0161 621 6900
www.breville.co.uk
Bush 0161 621 6900
www.breville.co.uk
Cookworks 0161 947 3000
www.saltoneurope.com
De'Longhi 0845 600 6845
www.delonghi.co.uk
Kenwood
0239 239 2333
www.kenwoodworld.com/uk

Morphy Richards
0870 060 2614
www.morphyrichards.co.uk
Philips 0845 601 0354
www.philips.co.uk
Prestige 0151 482 8282
www.meyergroup.co.uk
Proline 0870 542 5425
www.comet.co.uk
Russell Hobbs 0161 947 3000
www.russellhobbs.co.uk
Tefal 0845 602 1454
www.tefal.co.uk

Looking back

We tested how toast from an automatic toaster compared with that made in front of a fire

The first electric toaster was invented in the 1890s, but these basic models browned just one side of the bread at a time and didn't shut off automatically, so getting the perfect slice could be a bit of a challenge. That was until 1926, when the first pop-up toaster for the home was unveiled by Charles Strite, who added springs and a timer.

By 1958, the pop-up design was standard and *Which?* named its first Best Buy, the Morphy Richards Automatic Electric Toaster, costing £6 10s. 9d (equivalent to about £92

today). As well as making the most evenly browned toast, it had the added advantage that the cable didn't catch fire when it was left on without bread in (unlike the Pifco model also on test) and it didn't heat the table top to more than 60°C.

We also asked 20 members of a women's organisation to compare toast made in an electric toaster, under gas and electric grills and in front of a coal fire. They found that toast made in the automatic toaster tasted satisfactory.

