

Looking past the spin

Washing your clothes has never been easier. But the dizzying choice of models is enough to put your head in a whirl

Save time, hassle and even the planet – that's how many manufacturers try to sell us their washing machines.

They give us bigger drums to take more clothes, faster spin speeds to reduce drying time and specialist washes for our sports clothes and shoes. For the ethical consumer, there are models that use less energy and water.

In January, we featured the Indesit Moon machine and the Electrolux time manager system, two ideas that promised a better fit with more hectic modern lifestyles than traditional machines (see *Which?*, January 2008, p54).

This time, we've looked at steam-cleaning machines from Whirlpool and LG that promise better stain removal and

fewer creases. We check these claims in a head-to-head test (p64).

In reality, most of us ignore specialist programs and features, research shows. We tend to stick to just three programs (40°C and 60°C cotton washes, and an easy-care 40°C wash), regardless of how many options our machine offers.

This may explain why many of us are buying cheaper machines with fewer features. In January, for example, the top 50 per cent of models sold in the UK cost £260 on average.

There are more than 300 machines on sale in UK shops, which is why we now test 80 new models a year to make sure you can choose the machine that's right for you.

Many of us are buying cheaper machines with fewer features

PRICE CUTS FOR GREENER CLEANERS

A pilot scheme cut the prices of some 'greener' machines

Comet says that a trial scheme to cut VAT on some of the most energy-efficient washing machines saw sales shoot up.

The chain removed VAT from the cost of selected A-rated appliances from 21 March, giving savings of up to £134. The trial ended on 16 April.

It says that sales of the energy-efficient machines increased by 332 per cent, while sales of those not covered fell by 20 per cent.

Gordon Brown and French President Nicholas Sarkozy put the idea of reducing VAT from 17.5 to 5 per cent on green appliances across Europe to the European Council in March. It didn't gain immediate backing but is to be debated later this year.

What you should look for

■ WHICH SIZE?

A *Which?* member typically washes 4.5kg of clothes in every load. As an example, this might include six t-shirts, two pairs of jeans and four pairs of socks. The machines we tested have drums that can take loads ranging from 5kg to 10kg, so would all be adequate. Models with 8-10kg drums are handy if you have a large family or want to wash large items, such as duvets.



Spin speeds are reduced for delicate wash programs. Most machines also let you reduce them manually. A faster spin speed should mean drier clothes, so they'll need less time on the line but this isn't always the case.

■ DELAYED START

This lets you delay the start of a wash by one to 24 hours (depending on your machine). This is useful if your electricity tariff, such as Economy 7, is cheaper at night as you can set a load to wash overnight.

■ ELECTRONIC DISPLAY

Some machines have a display that shows which stage a

program has reached. Some new models have LCD touchscreens with pop-up menus instead of buttons and dials. The display on the Bosch WAE24467 Exxcel (7) is particularly good, clear and easy to use.

■ OVERDOSING

Some pricier machines detect if too much detergent is used in a wash, and add an extra rinse cycle. This is handy – even if you follow the manufacturer's recommendations on dosage, you can't get it right every time.



OUR RESEARCH

We choose the products we test by talking to manufacturers about their bestselling models and future plans. We consult industry experts and marketing intelligence reports, and check which models are available in main high-street shops and on popular websites. Where possible, machines are the most recently launched top sellers from brands with the largest market share and some from previous tests. We also include some with innovative features from less well-known brands. We've updated the stains and programs in our tests. The new stains, which include olive oil, milk and cosmetics, show more accurately how good a machine is. As a result, we've changed the way we evaluate machines, so there are some changes to results for previously tested models.


1 FREESTANDING

72% Whirlpool SCW 1012 £570

Big families will like the 10kg drum of this model – the largest we've tested. It cleans well at 40°C and is impressive on easy-care washes, too. Annual running costs are very low, provided you fill the machine regularly. However, it's noisy and rinsing isn't great. A digital display tells you when washing is done. Cheapest online.

WE FOUND It's 12cm taller, 8cm wider and 15cm deeper than standard models, so ensure it fits in your home.

Available Online Capacity 10kg Spin speed 1200rpm
Energy label AAB Cotton 2hr 31min Colour Silver
Delay start Yes


2 FREESTANDING

69% Zanussi-Electrolux ZWF 14581 £370

This washes excellently on cotton and easy care. It has a feature that automatically adjusts water and energy to the amount of washing, but cleaning is as good without it and ten minutes quicker. You can delay a wash's start and hold clothes in rinse water without spinning to use cheap night electricity without waking neighbours. Cheapest at John Lewis.

WE LIKE Reliability is above average.

Available John Lewis Capacity 7kg Spin speed 1400rpm Energy label AAB Cotton 2hr 3min Colour White Delay start Yes



Time vs temperature

Whether you want to save energy, money or time, here are the best wash programs to use

■ SAVE TIME Most washing machines have a program which is shorter than standard. Short washes save you time, but in order to clean well, they usually heat water more quickly, which can use more energy and cost you more money.

■ SAVE ENERGY If you want to save energy, a low-temperature wash has beaten a short wash on every machine we've tested. They usually last about as long as a standard wash but could use up to 40 per cent less energy. Short washes are generally for smaller load

sizes only (typically half the capacity of the machine). You can also manually reduce the temperature, for example select 30°C instead of 40°C. Some models have eco or economy programs, others have a button to modify a standard wash. These generally reduce temperature or extend program time while using less energy and water.



Which should you choose?



Indesit WIB111



Whirlpool SCW 1012



Bosch WAE24467



Bosch WAE24363



Candy GO1482

Best for saving time

INDESIT WIB111 £200 The Indesit WIB111 (10) has a shorter-than-average standard cotton program, but still cleans and rinses well. Its standard 40°C wash takes 1hr 39 min, more than an hour quicker than some on test. It's a simple model but it has all the basic programs you would expect. There's no clear indicator of how long washing has to go and the buttons are a little small.

For a large family

WHIRLPOOL SCW 1012 £570 The Whirlpool's (1) 10kg drum is great for washing lots of clothes in one go. See also Best Buys above.

For limited mobility

BOSCH WAE24467 £400 The door on this Bosch (7) can be opened easily with one hand. The door swings out 180°, the drum tilts upwards to make loading easier and the controls are easy to use.

For people with visual impairments

BOSCH WAE24363 £350

The clear labelling on the control panel of this Bosch (6) and lights to highlight selected options make this a good machine for those with impaired vision. The detergent dispensers are easy to find, use and replace after cleaning. It's also easy to program. The large door opening makes loading and unloading easy.

For saving energy

CANDY GO1482 £300

If you want to reduce your carbon footprint, a great energy-saving machine like this Candy (9) might be for you. It's one of the most energy-efficient models on test, so running costs are low.

It cleans and rinses well and the brand offers average reliability. However, the easy-care program was only average at cleaning.



3 FREESTANDING

68% Bosch WAS32466 Logixx £530

The Bosch is one of the fastest machines we tested. It cleans well, rinses better than most and has a large 8kg drum. The spin cycle is powerful (if noisy) and will leave clothes drier than other machines. Like all latest Bosch models, it's set up to clean light stains such as sweat, using shorter programs. If you have dirtier laundry or a large load we recommend the wash-plus option. You can delay the start to a time that suits you. It's cheapest online.

WORTH KNOWING There's a large, clear LED display.



Available Online Capacity 8kg Spin speed 1600rpm
Energy label AAA Cotton 2hr 19min Colour White
Delay start Yes



4 FREESTANDING

68% Whirlpool AWO/D AS128 £440

This cleans well on its 40°C cotton and easy-care programs, and includes three steam-cleaning options (see below). The 8kg drum means you can wash lots of clothes in one go.

The electronic display is easy to see and there are plenty of extra programs to choose, including delicates, eco, hand and synthetic washes. However, rinsing is noisy and not particularly good. Cheapest at Currys.

WE LIKE The 40°C + steam program cleans better than the normal 40°C, but it doesn't use any extra water or energy.



Available Currys Capacity 8kg Spin speed 1200rpm
Energy label AAB Cotton 2hr 12min Colour White
Delay start Yes



20 BUILT-IN

70% Miele W 2809i WPM £758

This built-in machine is one of the most expensive around, but it washes quietly and excellently at 40°C. Its features include a buzzer that tells you when your washing is done. It spins better than most and isn't too loud either, compared with many machines.

The 5kg drum is at the smaller end of the range but perfectly adequate for a normal-sized household. Miele is above average for reliability, according to our annual survey.

WORTH KNOWING Miele won a 2007 Which? Award for 'Best Domestic Appliances'. See Which? July 2008 for the results of this year's awards.



Available Online Capacity 5kg Spin speed 1400rpm
Energy label AAB Cotton 1hr 58min Colour White
Delay start Yes

The Miele W 2809i WPM washes quietly and excellently

Steaming ahead?

We test whether steam cleaning is better at tackling stains and creases

WHAT DO THEY DO?

The Whirlpool AWO/D AS128 (4) and the LG WM14440TDS (13) do everything you'd expect from a normal washing machine. They also offer a range of extra steam programs which use fine mists of hot water sprayed into the drum through jets.

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT STEAM?

In theory, steam cleaning is gentler on clothes and uses less water and energy than standard washing. Steam is supposed to be more effective at removing stains and to leave clothes less creased to make ironing easier.

DO THEY WORK?

40°C cotton wash + steam

We washed identical stains using the 40°C wash + steam and a standard 40°C wash. On both machines, using the steam option improved cleaning slightly, but the difference was so small, we doubt whether

you'd notice it. Using the steam option had little effect on a wash's length, or how much energy and water were used.

Steam-refresh

This gives clothes a quick steam rather than a thorough wash. It's supposed to get rid of smells and leave clothes less creased. To test this, we put men's shirts, which had been worn for half a day, through this cycle on both machines. We found that both machines left the shirt damp. With the Whirlpool, the shirt came out more creased than at the start of the cycle and would need ironing. However, with the LG it needed much less ironing.

VERDICT

Both machines perform well as normal machines. The Whirlpool is better and its steam clean is also more effective at getting rid of stains than the equivalent LG program.



WHIRLPOOL
AWO/D AS128

£440
Load 8kg

COTTON 40°C

Cleaning ★★★★★
Rinsing ★★★

COTTON 40°C
+STEAM

Cleaning ★★★★★
Rinsing ★★★

LG
WM14440TDS

£500
Load 7kg

COTTON 40°C

Cleaning ★★★
Rinsing ★★

COTTON 40°C
+STEAM

Cleaning ★★★
Rinsing ★★

WASHING MACHINE BRANDS

Here's how leading brands did in our tests in 2006 and 2007. The Electrolux company has several different brands of machine and results for these are given under the brand name



Brand reliability Average
Best Buys 5 out of 6 tested
0870 535 0350
www.aeg-electrolux.co.uk
 Pricier than some, but running costs are low, cleaning is consistently good and most have a wide range of programs. Like many brands, rinsing ability varies.



Brand reliability Insufficient data
Best Buys 0 out of 6 tested
01923 818121; www.beko.co.uk
 Good-value machines that clean reasonably and regularly outscore more expensive rivals. Machines have a wide range of spin speeds and programs. Programs are a little long compared with other machines. Beko is relatively new to the UK, so we don't have enough information to judge long-term reliability.



Brand reliability Above average
Best Buys 4 out of 12 tested
0870 240 0060
www.bosch.co.uk
 Bosch models are reliable and often among top scorers in our tests. The Classixx range is good for those on a budget as they're simple and clean well. Exxcel and Logixx machines generally have more features and programs.



Brand reliability Average
Best Buys 1 out of 5 tested
01685 721222

www.candy-domestic.co.uk
 Candy's inexpensive ranges, the Smart and the Grand O, were revamped in 2006 to brighten their image. Smarts are more basic and usually cost less than £300. Most Candys clean reasonably, but washes are noisy and rinsing can be poor.



Brand reliability Insufficient data
Best Buys 0 out of 4 tested
0870 595 0950
www.electrolux.co.uk

Machines clean well, but we don't have enough reliability data to consider them for Best Buys. Like other brands, rinsing can be poor. Inspire models tend to have smaller capacity. Insight models have a tilted drum to make them easier to load.



Brand reliability Below average
Best Buys 0 out of 7 tested
01685 721222

www.hoover.co.uk
 Hoover's Nextra 6 (6kg), VisionHD 8 (8kg) and VisionHD 9 (9kg) rarely cost more than £350, so a Hoover might look like a good deal. However, reliability is a big concern. Some models clean well, but they can be noisy, weak spinners or poor at rinsing.



Brand reliability Below average
Best Buys 0 out of 14 tested
0870 150 6070
www.hotpoint.co.uk
 Hotpoint's wide range of models

rarely match our Best Buys for cleaning, and reliability is disappointing.



Brand reliability Below average
Best Buys 0 out of 13 tested
0870 442 7665

www.indesit.co.uk
 Indesits sell well and are aimed at young, busy buyers. To save time, programs are often shorter, but this can affect cleaning.



Brand reliability Average
Best Buys 2 out of 3 tested
0845 604 9049

www.johnlewis.com
 Machines are usually well equipped and you get a lot for the £300 to £400 price including a three-year warranty, longer than most. However, they're noisy. We know which company makes John Lewis machines and it has average reliability in our survey.



Brand reliability Average
Best Buys 6 out of 11 tested
0870 873 5454; uk.lge.com
 LGs are easy to use and cheap to run. Cleaning at 40°C for cotton loads is OK. They're advertised as quiet, but they're not always quiet when compared with other brands. Rinsing is better than most brands, therefore LGs are good for those people who have sensitive skin or allergies.



Brand reliability Above average
Best Buys 5 out of 5 tested
01235 554455; www.miele.co.uk
 Consistently high scoring and reliable. Prices start from £500. Cleaning on cotton and easy care is normally excellent. Rinsing is better than most.



Brand reliability Average
Best Buys 2 out of 9 tested
0870 600 8989
www.whirlpool.co.uk
 Whirlpool has steam-cleaning and 10kg models, both Best Buys. It usually offers impressive cleaning and low running costs.



Brand reliability Above average
Best Buys 1 out of 9 tested
0870 572 7727
www.zanussi-electrolux.co.uk
 Zanussi-Electrolux has produced one of the highest-scoring models we've tested – the ZWF14581 – featured in this test. Models often have user-friendly controls, are packed with features and have above-average reliability.

Similar models

You will see many machines in the shops that look almost identical to the ones we test. Here's how to tell the difference

We test as many washing machines as we can, but some models are so similar that we don't test them all.

For example, a machine might be almost identical to one we've already tested, apart from a different colour or spin speed.

A different spin speed won't generally affect cleaning or rinsing,

although it might affect how noisy the machine is; and, obviously, the colour of a machine shouldn't affect performance at all.

We list similar models here, so that if you come across them in the shops you'll have an idea of how they perform, even if we haven't tested that exact model.

SIMILAR MODELS	PRICE	TESTED MODELS	DIFFERENCES
CANDY GO1282	260	CANDY GO1482	1200 rpm spin speed
HOOVER VHD8122	270	HOOVER VHD8142	1200 rpm spin speed
SERVIS M6852	280	SERVIS M6854W	1200 rpm spin speed
SERVIS M6500S	260	SERVIS M6500W	S = silver

GREAT SAVINGS WITH HUGHES DIRECT

Exclusive member discounts

This June Hughes Direct is offering exclusive discounts for Which? members on selected Best Buy laundry products in this month's report. The Bosch WAS32466 Logixx is on offer for £470 including delivery, and the Miele W2809i is on offer for £649 including delivery.

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. Offer valid until 30 June 2008 and is subject to availability.

Each month thousands of Which? members take advantage of the great deals offered by Hughes Direct. All

goods are guaranteed to be a minimum of 10 per cent below high street prices published in Which? product reports. In the unlikely event that you find the same product cheaper elsewhere (including delivery) within seven days of purchase, Hughes Direct promises to refund 110 per cent of the difference. Call now or go online to see how much you can save.



WHICH? ONLINE

See www.which.co.uk/washing_machines for reviews of more than 135 models and 28 Best Buys.

The information on our website is regularly updated with new models, prices and availability.

On our website, you will also find advice on choosing the right model for your needs plus tips on getting the best from your machine.

Under **Compare products** you can look at models side by side to find the one that is right for you. **Features**

explained covers many of the things you are likely to find on modern machines, such as extra rinsing, and variable spin speed, and why you might want them. We also look at reliability, discussing the main reasons why machines break down and which are the most and least reliable manufacturers according to our members. If you have problems logging into our website you can visit www.which.co.uk/loginhelp for a step-by-step guide to the process.

MODEL	SPECIFICATION			
	PRICE (£)	CAPACITY (kg)	SIZE (cm) (HXWDXD)	SPIN (RPM)
FREESTANDING				
1 WHIRLPOOL SCW 1012	570	10	97x68x78	1200
2 ZANUSSI-ELECTROLUX ZWF14581	370	7	84x60x67	1400
3 BOSCH WAS32466 Logixx	530	8	84x60x64	1600
4 WHIRLPOOL AWO/D AS128	440	8	84x60x61	1200
5 BEKO WMA510	170	5	85x60x57	1000
6 BOSCH WAE24363 Classixx	350	6	85x60x60	1200
7 BOSCH WAE24467 Exxcel	400	7	85x60x59	1200
8 BOSCH WAE28363 Classixx	370	6	85x60x59	1400
9 CANDY GO1482	300	8	84x60x58	1400
10 INDESIT W1B11	200	5	84x60x54	1100
11 INDESIT W1XL123	200	6	84x60x54	1200
12 SERVIS M6500W	300	5	85x60x56	1500
13 LG WM14440TDS	500	7	85x60x60	1400
14 HOTPOINT WT741	270	7	85x60x57	1400
15 HOOVER HNL8146	250	6	85x60x58	1400
16 MATSUI MWM145	200	5	85x60x52	1400
17 HOOVER VHD8142	280	8	85x60x58	1400
18 HOOVER HNL7166	270	6	85x60x58	1600
19 SERVIS M6854W	300	8	85x60x61	1400
BUILT-IN				
20 MIELE W 2809i WPM	758	5	82x60x59	1400
21 CANDY CWB110	380	5.5	82x60x56	1100
22 BAUMATIC BTWM6	499	6	90x59x55	1300
23 CDA CI330	369	6	82x59x54	1100

Facts & scores

Some facts we discovered during our testing

Narrow spaces

If you want a model to fit under a narrow worktop check the depth of machines as these can vary by 10cm or more.

The Beko WMA510 (5) is a good choice for shallow spaces. It's only 57cm deep, but has a 5kg drum, which should be fine for

the average home. Or you could try the Indesit W1B11 (10) which is 54cm deep.

Water use

The 10kg-drum Whirlpool SCW 1012 (1) is our biggest machine inside and out. However, it is the most water-efficient on test if filled regularly.

ENERGY LABEL	WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE										SCORE %
	RUNNING COST	COTTON	EASY CARE	COTTON TIME (h:m)	EASY CARE TIME (h:m)	RINSE	SPIN DRY	EASE OF USE	NOISE	BRAND RELIABILITY	
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	2:31	1:27	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	Average	72
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	2:03	1:21	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	69
AAA	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	2:19	0:56	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	Above average	68
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	2:12	1:22	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	Average	68
AAC	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	2:20	1:46	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★		66
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	2:12	0:54	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	65
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	2:50	0:56	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	65
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	2:14	1:27	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	65
AAA	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	2:45	1:26	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	Average	64
AAB	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	1:39	1:17	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	Below average	63
AAB	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	2:28	1:07	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	Below average	62
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	1:47	1:14	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	Average	62
AAA	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	1:42	1:12	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Average	61
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	1:51	1:02	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	Below average	60
AAA	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	2:30	0:49	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	Below average	58
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	2:04	1:28	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★		58
AAA	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	2:55	0:57	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★	Below average	57
AAA	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	1:45	0:52	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	Below average	56
AAB	★★★★	★★★★	★★	1:44	0:46	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	Average	42
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	1:58	0:57	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	70
AAC	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	2:25	1:15	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Average	61
AAB	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	1:20	0:59	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★		57
AAC	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	1:20	0:58	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★		54

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 to what you should expect to pay. Go to www.which.co.uk/shopping for latest prices. **Size** Includes hoses and other attachments.

Test performance

Running cost Energy costs for a full load. Those rated ★★★★★ cost about half as much as ★★ models. **Cotton** Rating for standard 40°C wash. **Easy care** Rating for standard wash for synthetic and delicate clothes.

Cotton/Easy-care time Program time measured by our testers rather than claimed in the manual.

Rinse How well a model rinses on cotton and easy-care loads. **Spin dry** How dry the load was after the

final spin. **Ease of use**

How easy a machine is to load, unload, clean and use. **Brand reliability** Best Buys have at least average reliability in our survey. A blank means there wasn't enough data to judge reliability.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Cleaning **55%**
Running costs **20%**
Convenience **10%**
Spin dry **10%**
Noise **5%**

How we test

We look at whether poor rinsing is a problem

Poor rinsing

Many models, even good ones, fail to rinse well – leaving traces of detergent in washed clothes. We are yet to give a machine five stars for rinsing. It's likely this is because manufacturers use less water to make models more energy efficient.

Usually, rinsing isn't poor enough to be a problem, so models with two stars for this can get good scores overall. Poor rinsing may be a problem if you have allergies or sensitive skin. You could try an extra rinse or buy a machine such as the **Bosch WAS32466 (3)** or the **Indesit WIB111 (10)**.