





# Cordless calls

Find the right home phone for your needs with one of our Best Buy basic, family or advanced models from just £20

**T**hough mobile phones have increased in popularity over the past 10 years, home telephones have refused to fade into the background. The vast majority of British households still retain their trusty landlines – and when you consider all the benefits that home phones offer, it's hardly surprising. Unlike mobiles, home phones guarantee a good signal, usually have better sound quality, and calls made and received typically cost less than mobile calls.

And it's not just the call costs that are easy on your budget. In our latest batch of testing we found an Argos handset on sale for just £13. Its performance wasn't great, but happily there are much better models available that won't break the bank. In our introduction to basic handsets (opposite) we've highlighted a range of great bud-

et models that cost as little as £20. We've also provided you with some handy tips to help keep your phone bill to a minimum.

These budget models are fantastic value, but they tend to be pretty simple, so won't suit everyone. We've therefore also put together a selection of phones that are great choices for families. These are typically mid-priced models with good ranges – making them suitable for bigger houses – large phonebooks, and answering machines. If money's no object, then we've also picked the best feature-packed handsets that you can buy.

For each category, we've also suggested several models that don't quite make the cut, but are still worth considering – to find out more about these phones, log on to [www.which.co.uk/cordlessphones](http://www.which.co.uk/cordlessphones).

## How we test



### Can you hear me?

We measure noise and distortion, the loudness of the earpiece and the frequency response via our head and torso simulator. This allows us to see how good each phone is at reproducing speech.

### Going the distance

We assess each phone's reception in nine different rooms in our laboratory, on different floors and through steel and sandstone walls. We also record the maximum range of the phone when there are no obstacles.

To test their durability, we put all our phones in a rotating barrel – with each rotation the phone is dropped a metre in distance on to a metal surface.

## ACCESSIBLE PHONES

Costing less than £100, the Geemarc 250 (pictured) is an expensive model, but it does have features that make it suitable for older users. It's one of the loudest phones we've ever tested, so it's particularly suitable for hearing-impaired people. Plus it's hearing-aid compatible and comes with a brochure on the special accessories, such as ring flashers, that can be used with it. There's also an emergency function, which, when set up, will call a pre-programmed number at the press of any number.

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
**Geemarc AmpliDECT**  
**200, £59, and**  
**Panasonic KX-**  
**TG7180, £100**



## Which? Online Compare

Looking for a great deal on any of the phones you've read about here?

At the time of going to press, Which? Compare could have saved you as much as £29 on the Best Buy BT Synergy 4100.

Simply go to [www.whichcompare.co.uk](http://www.whichcompare.co.uk) and search for your favoured handset, then click through for a bargain. Already got the phone sorted? You'll also find great prices on landline accessories from cables to Voip adaptors.



## Contacts

**Binatone**  
0845 345 9677  
[www.binatoneonline.com](http://www.binatoneonline.com)  
**BT** 0800 800150  
[www.bt.com](http://www.bt.com)  
**Doro** 0870 861 0200  
[www.doro-uk.com](http://www.doro-uk.com)  
**Geemarc** 01707 384 438  
[www.geemarc.com](http://www.geemarc.com)  
**iDect** 0845 345 9677  
[www.idectonline.com](http://www.idectonline.com)  
**Magicbox**  
01959 565525

[www.magicboxproducts.co.uk](http://www.magicboxproducts.co.uk)  
**Panasonic**  
0870 535 7357  
[www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)  
**Philips**  
0845 601 0354  
[www.philips.co.uk](http://www.philips.co.uk)  
**Siemens**  
020 7526 4861  
[www.siemens.co.uk](http://www.siemens.co.uk)  
**Wharfedale**  
0845 458 0011  
[www.wharfedale.co.uk](http://www.wharfedale.co.uk)

## Best Buy basic phones

It's possible to buy a fantastic cordless phone without breaking the bank. If you're not interested in manufacturers' latest 'must have' features, and just want a phone for making and receiving calls, we've found a great selection.

While these may be simple devices, as Best Buys they all perform the essential tasks extremely well. That means that sound quality is always good, the range will be enough to cope with most houses and they'll be easy to set up and use.



### 70% Siemens Gigaset A165 from £25

The Siemens Gigaset A165 is one of the cheaper phones in the Gigaset range, but it's still reasonably well-equipped, and its overall performance is very good. It has speed dial and a built-in answering machine, and sound quality on this is good. We also like that the A165 has a ringer in both the

base station and handset. It's available in single, twin and triple packs, and is cheapest at Currys.

Phone sound quality ★★★★★ Answering machine sound quality ★★★★★ Range ★★★★★ Battery ★★★★★ Answering machine Yes Display Monochrome matrix Sim-card reader No Phone book size 40

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
**Binatone Symphony 2610, £29**

### 68% BT Synergy 4100 from £40

The BT Synergy 4100 has quite a few advanced features for a cheaper model. It has a Sim-card reader and SMS text messaging as well as a clear display and huge phonebook. Both the range of the handset from the base and the battery life are good. The sound quality is good, if a little rough, and it's fairly easy

to use. A pair of handsets can be used as an intercom system, and there's a built-in handset paging facility. It's cheapest at Argos.

Phone sound quality ★★★★★ Range ★★★★★ Battery ★★★★★ Answering machine No Display Monochrome matrix Sim-card reader Yes Phone book size 225

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
**Panasonic KX-TG1100, £22**

### 66% BT Freestyle 710 from £20

The BT Freestyle 710 is the non-answering-machine version of the BT Freestyle 750 (see p66). Its overall performance is good, but the speakerphone isn't great. It has a ringer in both the handset and the base station, and it's easy to operate, though we'd prefer a proper printed manual to

BT's online-only instructions. It's available in single and twin packs, and is cheapest at Argos and Currys.

Phone sound quality ★★★★★ Range ★★★★★ Battery ★★★★★ Answering machine No Display Monochrome matrix Sim-card reader No Phone book size 44

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
**Wharfedale Florence, from £24**

## Slash your phone bills

**Five ways to save on calls from your landline**

■ **SWITCH AND SAVE** Our customer satisfaction research shows 7 out of 10 people who switched to a different company felt they ended up paying less.

■ **OPT FOR PAPERLESS BILLING** Many landline providers give discounts for opting to get bills via email rather than post.

**BT's normal line rental is £13.25 a month, but with paperless billing and direct debit payment, it's just £10.50 a month – saving £33 a year.**

■ **CHANGE TO CALLS ONLY** If you want to stick with BT for phone-line rental but use another firm for calls, choose one that offers a calls-only option. You get



a bill for calls from your chosen provider, and one from BT for line rental, plus any dial-up internet access you use.

■ **BUNDLE TELECOMS SERVICES TOGETHER** Bundles of phone, broadband and TV services give you more than one telecoms service from the same company, usually for a lower price than if you paid separately.

■ **PREFIX NUMBERS** If you make a lot of calls to mobiles or overseas, use a prefix number.

**18185.co.uk charges 2p a minute to UK mobiles at weekends, and 5p a minute at other times – up to 75% cheaper than standard BT rates.**

**which? MONEY SAVER**



# Best Buy family phones

Budget cordless phones offer great value, but won't be suitable for everyone. If you're looking for a new phone for a busy family home, then you may prefer a good mid-range model.

Our Best Buy family phones still offer the same excellent sound quality and good ranges – especially important for families

living in larger houses. And battery life is crucial, if more calls are being made and received, and you have forgetful family members who don't return the handset to the charger.

Mid-range phones also tend to have better displays and menus, which make them easier to use, and they come with a broader range of handy features.

Probably the most useful of these is the addition of a built-in answering machine. These are really useful for a busy family, and we've put together a short guide (below) setting out what you should look for when choosing one. Other family-friendly features to look for are decent-sized phonebooks and speakerphones.

The latter allow you to chat even while busy with young children, and also let the whole family talk to friends and relatives at the same time.

The Best Buys we've selected are all available in multi packs, so you can have handsets dotted around your house (prices quoted are for the single handset versions).



## 76% Siemens Gigaset C475 from £34

This fantastic cordless phone is well equipped and has an excellent battery and answering machine. It was designed with Siemens' new energy-saving technology and uses up to 60% less energy than its conventional phones. It can send and receive text

messages, has a speed dial and even includes a baby monitoring function. It's cheapest at Currys.

Phone sound quality ★★★★★ Answering machine sound quality ★★★★★ Range ★★★★★ Battery ★★★★★ Answering machine Yes Display Colour matrix Sim-card reader No Phone book size 150

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
BT Domus, £69



## 70% Philips CD4451 £35

The BT Synergy 4100 has quite a few advanced features for a cheaper model. It has a Sim-card reader and SMS text messaging as well as a clear display and huge phonebook. Both the range of the handset from the base and the battery life are good. The sound quality of both incoming and outgoing calls

is good, if a little rough, and it's fairly straightforward to use. If you happen to misplace a handset there's a built-in paging facility. It's cheapest at Argos.

Phone sound quality ★★★★★ Answering machine sound quality ★★★★★ Range ★★★★★ Battery ★★★★★ Answering machine Yes Display Monochrome matrix Sim-card reader No Phone book size 100

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
Panasonic KX-TG1100, £22



## 71% iDect S2i from £50

The iDect S2i is an impressive Best Buy cordless phone and answering machine. Its overall performance is very good, and it's equipped with a range of useful features. It has a handy speed dial and a large, 100-number phonebook, though there's no Sim-card reader. The range is also reasonable and it sounds a warning tone if you stray too

far from the base station. The answering machine is easy to use and has good sound quality. It's available in single, twin and triple packs, and is cheapest at Argos.

Phone sound quality ★★★★★ Answering machine sound quality ★★★★★ Range ★★★★★ Battery ★★★★★ Answering machine Yes Display Monochrome matrix Sim-card reader No Phone book size 100

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
BT Freestyle 750, £39

## Answering machines

### Helping you get the message

Most cordless phones now include answering machines, though, as with the handsets themselves, they're of varied quality. The most important factor to consider is sound quality, as there's little use in recording a message if you won't be able to understand it.

Ease of use is also crucial, especially when setting up your outgoing message and retrieving any that have been left. While many phones change the ring tone to indicate you have a message, you'll only notice this when you next make a call. It's far better if your phone includes a display that provides a visual indicator.

Recording capacity is also important, especially if you're away from home for long periods. Most models record for up to 15 minutes.

Most models allow you to access your messages remotely by calling your own phone, but a new feature is the presence of different mailboxes on the same phone, so you can leave different messages for different people. In our recent tests, only the Magicbox Touch (pictured), £48, has this feature.





# Best Buy advanced phones

If you want top performance plus the latest features, and money is no object, our Best Buy advanced phones should be right up your street. They're more expensive than our basic and family models – sometimes considerably so – but all these models offer outstanding performance and an array of useful extras.

Some of these extras, such as Bluetooth connectivity and colour matrix displays, are more commonly found on mobile phones rather than their cordless cousins. And it's not just their features that are becoming similar. With their cool, modern designs, they look far more like mobile

phones than the bakelite telephones of yesteryear.

Many premium cordless phones can even send and receive text messages, or double as baby monitors.

Some phones can also be used to make cheaper calls over the internet – see our 'Voip phones' guide (right) for more.



which?  
**BEST BUY**

## 79% Siemens Gigaset SL565 £87

This cordless phone is one of the best we've ever tested. It's crammed with the type of cutting-edge technology that you'd normally expect to see on a mobile, such as voice dialling, text messaging and Bluetooth connectivity. There's a simple menu system, so using the phone is straightforward. The answering machine is

also impressive, and it can record up to 33 minutes of messages, almost three times what some models manage. It's cheapest at John Lewis.

Phone sound quality ★★★★★ Answering machine sound quality ★★★★★ Range ★★★★★ Battery ★★★★★ Answering machine Yes Display Colour matrix Sim-card reader No Phone book size 250

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
Doro 760, £66



which?  
**BEST BUY**

## 74% Siemens Gigaset S685 £70

The Siemens Gigaset S685 comes equipped with all manner of handy features. There's a speed dial and an impressive speakerphone. Then there's the huge phonebook, which allows you to save three numbers per person, plus emails and even caller pictures. But this phone is also reassuringly

easy to use. It's available in single, twin, triple and quad packs, and is cheapest at Currys. A Voip-equipped version is also available.

Phone sound quality ★★★★★ Answering machine sound quality ★★★★★ Range ★★★★★ Battery ★★★★★ Answering machine Yes Display Colour matrix Sim-card reader No Phone book size 250

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
BT Reveal, £79



which?  
**BEST BUY**

## 71% Panasonic KXTG8321EB from £65

The KXTG8321EB includes a handy speed dial and can send and receive text messages. Its call-barring function allows you to block incoming and outgoing UK and international calls, and it has an impressive answering machine. It's also easy to use. It's available in single, twin,

triple and quad packs, and is cheapest in the twin pack version at Comet, John Lewis and Tesco.

Phone sound quality ★★★★★ Answering machine sound quality ★★★★★ Range ★★★★★ Battery ★★★★★ Answering machine Yes Display Colour matrix Sim-card reader No Phone book size 200

**WORTH CONSIDERING**  
Panasonic KX-TG7180, £100

# Voip phones

## Making calls via the internet

Voip phones look and act like traditional phones, but they make and receive cheap calls over the internet, often when your computer is switched off. A Voip phone usually has the ability to receive both Voip and standard calls, plugging into your router for Voip calls, and a regular phone jack point for regular calls.

The best Voip phone we've tested recently is the Magicbox VOICE 440 (right). Available online for £40, it scored 63% in our tests. It may not have an answering machine, but it's a good option for those who wish to make cheap phone calls over the internet.

You'll need to set up a Skype account with this phone, and your computer will need to be on whenever you wish to make or receive Voip calls. Speech quality is worse over the internet, especially if it's a poor connection. However, if you regularly call Australia, for example, and can do it free using this phone, you may not be too worried about sound quality.

Range and battery life are both decent, and it's fairly easy to use. There's a clear colour-matrix display and, handily, there's a ringer in both the base station and handset.

An older model that's worth a look if you can track it down is the Philips VOIP8411B (below). This versatile and modern-looking model costs £100 online, and it works with MSN software that you install on your PC.

