

## How we test



A light touch helps us to test how well the tablets work

### Light fantastic

Getting glasses really clean can be difficult. After the dishwasher finishes its drying cycle, traces of magnesium and calcium from the water can leave a film on glasses.

This can often be removed through rinsing or wiping with a cloth. If it is not removed after the first wash, further washes can lead to more build-up, which is more difficult to shift.

To check how well the tablets prevent this filming, we put glasses through ten continuous wash cycles and then place them on a light box to see how clear they are. The best results on test were with the Finish Powerball Classic and Fairy Powder Bursts.

# Finish sparkles

Our test of 16 dishwasher-detergent tablets reveals the best

More and more homeowners in Britain own dishwashers, and last year, for the first time, we spent more on dishwasher detergent than on washing-up liquid.

But if you are thinking of chucking out the cleaning brush and joining the machine age, which detergent works best?

Your choice is between a separate detergent – together with rinse aid and dishwasher salt – or a combination product such as a 3-, 4- or 5-in-1. We tested six detergent-only and ten combination tablets.

The big winner was Finish, which came top for both separate and combination products. Its Finish Powerball Classic got the best results and was cheaper per wash than our other Best Buys.

It's a detergent only, so you'll also need to buy rinse aid and dishwasher salt. This adds about 3p to the cost of a wash, but even then, it's our cheapest Best Buy.

In most cases, you're better off buying the biggest pack available, (provided that you can carry it home), as larger sizes will work out cheaper per tablet.

A word of warning, though.

If you choose all-in-one tablets, check your dishwasher manual first. If you have an older machine that doesn't have a 3-in-1 button and isn't designed to work with all-in-one products, you may invalidate your warranty. In this case, choose one of our Best Buy separate detergents.

With all-in-one tablets it's best to add dishwasher salt in hard-water areas. Sainsbury's 3-in-1 and Asda 5-in-1 Citrus tablets fail to mention this. See 'Adding salt', below, for more.

## Contacts

**Asda**  
0113 243 5435  
www.asda.co.uk  
**Cyclon (Morrisons)**  
01274 494166  
www.morrisons.co.uk  
**Fairy**  
0800 328 5901  
www.fairyactivebursts.com

**Finish**  
0845 769 7079  
www.finish.co.uk  
**Glist**  
0800 216730  
www.glistinfo.co.uk  
**Sainsbury's**  
0800 636262  
www.sainsburys.co.uk

**Somerfield**  
0117 935 9359  
www.somerfield.co.uk  
**Tesco**  
0800 505555  
www.tesco.com  
**Waitrose**  
01344 424680  
www.waitrose.com

## Facts & scores

Some facts we found during testing

### Last orders

Morrisons will soon replace its own-brand Cyclon 4-in-1 with a newer formulation so it may not be in shops much longer.

### Detergent only

If you buy separate tablets, you need to add rinse aid and dishwasher salt to your wash. All separate products mentioned this on their packaging apart from the Asda Smart Price and Tesco Dishwasher Tablets.

### Don't buy

We rate Waitrose Dishwasher tablets as a Don't Buy because of their poor cleaning ability.

## Jargon buster

There are plenty of choices on the market but what do the different available options mean?

■ **SEPARATES** These are detergent-only tablets so if you use them, you will also need to buy rinse aid and dishwasher salt to add to your wash. We tested all the detergent-only tablets in this way with the dishwasher on a normal program setting.

### Combination products/ all-in-ones

■ **3-IN-1** These contain detergent, rinse aid and a salt function. We tested all

these on a 3-in-1 program without adding rinse aid or dishwasher salt.

■ **4-IN-1** Like 3-in-1, but with an ingredient which claims to keep glasses looking newer for longer.

■ **5-IN-1** As with 4-in-1, plus an ingredient that claims to give a better shine to stainless steel.

The fourth and fifth components vary from one brand to the next so check packs for details.

## Adding salt

Most combination tablets include a salt function in the wash, helping to leave glasses streak free. But your machine may suffer if you don't add separate dishwasher salt, as Brian Collin discovered. Brian used 3-in-1 tablets which cleaned well but after about 18 months his machine's heating element stopped working and had to be replaced. Brian's fitter told him that the 3-in-1 tablets hadn't replenished the model's softener unit in the way separate dishwasher



Brian Collin with the element that failed

salt would. Deposits built up, damaging the element and costing £100 to repair.

Many all-in-one tablet packages warn that you should use extra dishwasher salt in hard-water areas and it is advisable to use a little regularly to keep your machine working well.



## 80% Finish Powerball Classic

14p per wash

WHICH?  
BEST BUY

This detergent-only tablet cleaned impressively. It removed baked-on milk, the toughest stain on test. Most tablet types left glasses free of watermarks but none matched the high shine and minimal clouding that the Finish Powerball Classic achieved. It's available at Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose.

**WE FOUND** The largest pack size we found in shops was 66 tablets but Finish says it also makes packs of 100.

Tablet type Detergent only Pack sizes 16, 32, 66, 100



## 79% Finish 5-in-1 Powerball

20p per wash

WHICH?  
BEST BUY

The 5-in-1 cleaned well across the board. It left no watermarks – a result helped by the extra 20 minutes' drying time given by the 3-in-1 setting on our dishwasher. As with all other tablets on test, glasses were cloudier after ten washes than with Best Buy separates. It's available at Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose.

**WE LIKE** It gave the best results on egg, a test all-in-ones mostly tackled better.

Tablet type All-in-one Pack sizes 15, 30, 45, 60



## 77% Fairy Powder Bursts

20p per wash

WHICH?  
BEST BUY

The Fairy Powder Bursts left traces of tea on cups but cleaned milk effectively

Once removed from the pack, these detergent-only tablets need no unwrapping. The outer layer dissolves in the wash to release the detergent. They left traces of tea on cups but cleaned milk effectively and left little clouding on glasses. At 17p a tablet they're the most expensive separate tablets on test. Add about 3p for dishwasher salt and rinse aid, and the cost is similar to Best Buy Finish 5-in-1. It's available at Morrisons and Tesco.

**WE LIKE** Its packaging is recyclable.

Tablet type Detergent only Pack sizes 16, 32

MODEL	SPECIFICATION				WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE						SCORE %
	ALL-IN-ONE	COST PER PACK (£)	PACK SIZE	COST PER WASH (p)	TEA	MILK	STARCH	EGG	RINSING	CLOUDINESS	
1 <b>FINISH</b> Powerball Classic		6.98	66	14p	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	80
2 <b>FINISH</b> 5-in-1 Powerball	✓	11.78	60	20p	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	79
3 <b>FAIRY</b> Powder Bursts		5.34	32	20p	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	77
4 <b>FINISH</b> Quantum Powerball	✓	9.48	36	26p	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	74
5 <b>TESCO</b> 5-in-1	✓	4.86	45	11p	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	72
6 <b>SAINSBURY'S</b> 3-in-1	✓	5.14	64	8p	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	71
7 <b>FINISH</b> 3-in-1 Powerball	✓	7.00	64	11p	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	70
8 <b>CYCLON</b> 4-in-1	✓	4.25	48	9p	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	68
9 <b>GLIST</b> 5 Complete	✓	6.29	30	21p	★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	66
10 <b>FAIRY</b> Active Bursts	✓	8.98	45	20p	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	63
11 <b>TESCO</b> Dishwasher Tablets		1.98	32	9p	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	61
12 <b>SOMERFIELD</b> 4-in-1 Power	✓	2.39	20	12p	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★	60
13 <b>ASDA</b> 5-in-1 Citrus	✓	4.86	45	11p	★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	55
14 <b>SOMERFIELD</b> Original		1.89	20	12p	★★★★★	★★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	★	46
15 <b>ASDA</b> Smart Price		1.98	30	10p	★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	44
16 <b>WAITROSE</b> Dishwasher Tablets		2.79	44	9p	★	★★★★★	★	★	★★★★★	★	34

### USING THE TABLE

We tested separate and all-in-one dishwasher tablets from shop's own brands and leading manufacturers. The more stars the better.

### Specification

**Cost per pack** The lowest high-street price of the largest widely available pack.

**Pack size** The largest size that is widely available.

### Cost per wash

The average cost of a tablet calculated from price and largest pack size. For detergent-only tablets this includes 3p for rinse aid and salt.

### Test performance

**Rinsing** Based on brilliance and how it stops watermarks on glasses after one wash.

**Cloudiness** How well it stops a film building up on glasses.

### Score

Ignores price and based on:

Performance	70%
Rinsing efficiency	15%
Cloudiness	15%