

Doing the dishes

The simplest products work best when it comes to washing up

How we test

User trials

We give each product to users for a week and ask them to rate how well it cleans and removes burnt-on stains, and how comfortable and convenient it is to use.

Tackling spills

To test sponge scourers and cloths, we pour on to a work surface 100ml each of cola, vegetable oil and red wine, and 50ml of bolognese sauce that has been heated and allowed to cool on the surface for an hour.

Do they damage pans?

We use a machine that rubs each product against a pan for 250 cycles to check whether it will damage non-stick surfaces.

Our experts check the pans for any signs of wear after every 50 cycles.

The kitchen is full of dirty plates and work surfaces are covered with a sticky reminder of last night's dinner. It's time to clean up, but what should you use?

We've tried five washing-up brushes, 11 sponge scourers, five dishcloths, two sponge/brush hybrids and a very odd-looking pair of gloves to find the answer. Some products are definitely best suited to washing-up duties, while others are great at tackling spills.

In general, the most straightforward products cleaned best. Those that combined a brush with a sponge, for example, lacked the usefulness of either. We tested two such products including the Spontex Dishmop (below, left). Both have a scouring pad/sponge pad attached to a hollow brush handle, which you fill with washing-up liquid. It's a neat idea, but it used a lot of detergent. And while the head cleaned glasses well, our users found it wouldn't fit into smaller spaces.

Apart from own-brand items shown, the Best Buys should be widely available.

We looked at which washing-up liquids were best in *Which?*, August 2006, p62, and found that Fairy Liquid Original came top.

The Melody's comfortable to use, durable and efficient



BRUSH

77% Melody Dishwash Brush Recycled 99p

The Melody is the best brush we tested. It's comfortable to use, durable and efficient. Some users in our trial commented that the brush head was a little small, but others found that this was useful for cleaning glasses. The low price makes this great value for money, as well as a great cleaner.

WE LIKE This brush is recycled and has minimal packaging.

Cheapest store Waitrose



Budget Buy

UNBRANDED GENERIC BRUSH 19p

Without a brand name in sight and at a bargain price, this is the no-frills option.

It's not quite as good as the best brushes we tested. It didn't clean quite as well and wasn't as practical as some.

Our testers thought the brush head was a bit small and found it had an uncomfortable angular handle. But what do you expect for 19p?

Cheapest store Wilkinson
SCORE 66%



Don't Buys

SPONTEX DISHMOP £1.58 online

This dispenses washing-up liquid from its handle as you clean. You'll get through a huge amount of liquid. Its instructions recommend diluting it with water but that's a hassle through the small filling nozzle.

SCORE 36%

WILD AND WOLF LUSH HANDS £9.95 online

These are a combination of rubber gloves and a sponge. However, the spongy bits come unstuck easily and aren't hardy enough to shift burnt-on grime. They come in garish colours from pink and yellow to leopard print.

SCORE 33%



It's cute but uncomfortable

M&S PALM PUMP £1.49 online

There's no denying the M&S Palm Pump looks cute, dispensing liquid when you press its rubber nose. However, our panel found it uncomfortable to use and the lid falls off easily during vigorous scrubbing.

It was the worst brush on test.
SCORE 52%





BRUSH

71% Lakeland Professional Washing-up Brushes

£4.50 (pack of 2)

The packaging proudly announces that this brush is the industry standard for the catering business. This is no surprise. It's comfortable to use and a very good performer. But the price is steep, even allowing for the fact that you get two in a pack.

WE LIKE This is the best brush for burnt-on stains.

Cheapest store Lakeland

WHICH?
BEST BUY



DISHCLOTH

65% J Cloth £9.58

(pack of 50)

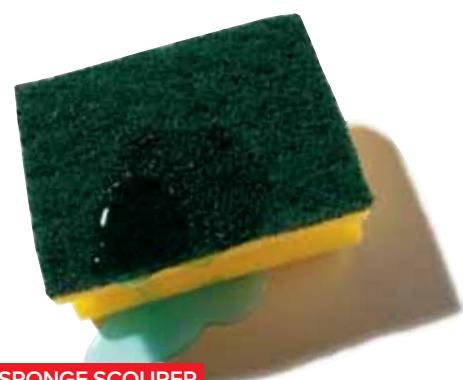
The iconic blue and white design aside, the J Cloth's spongy texture makes it the most effective for general washing up and for cleaning up spills. Its one weakness is that it lacks the durability of other cloths that we tested, so the packs of 50 it comes in may not be the lifetime supply it first appears.

WE LIKE These were the only dishcloths on test that really stood out for their absorbency.

Cheapest store Ryman

WHICH?
BEST BUY

The J Cloth is the most effective for general washing up and for cleaning up spills



SPONGE SCOURER

78% Lidl AquaPur

48p (for six)

This is the best-performing sponge on test and the cheapest, too.

It's a bit harsher on non-stick surfaces than other Best Buys. However, it performed well for all types of cleaning and was also effective at mopping up spills.

WORTH KNOWING At 8p a sponge, the Lidl AquaPur may well be the cheapest Best Buy in Which?'s history.

Cheapest store Lidl

WHICH?
BEST BUY
EXCEPTIONAL VALUE



SPONGE SCOURER

74% Asda Sponge Scourers

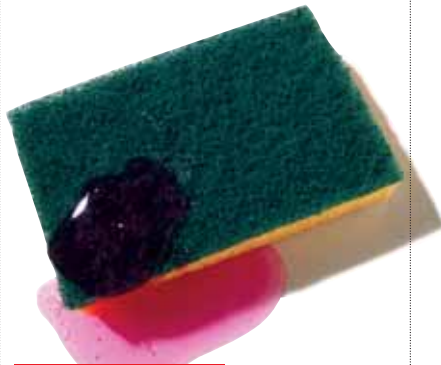
32p (for three)

These distinctive, wave-shaped scourers are cheap, at just over 10p a sponge. They were the least durable Best Buys and also the least effective at wiping up spills. Nevertheless, they were the kindest scourers for non-stick surfaces.

WORTH KNOWING These scourers were well liked by our testers.

Cheapest store Asda

WHICH?
BEST BUY



SPONGE SCOURER

75% Scotch-Brite Heavy-duty Washing-up Pad

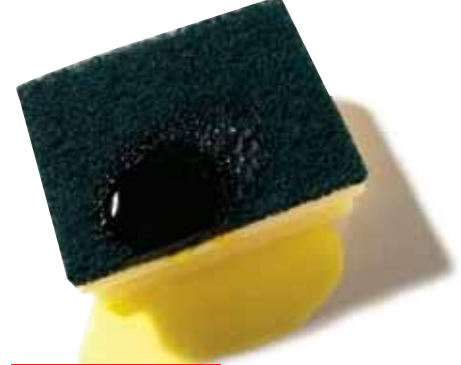
£1.09 (for one)

This 'heavy-duty' sponge cleaned well. The foam has a slightly different, more matted texture than the other sponges we tested – though this seemed to have little effect on its cleaning ability.

WE THINK The pad is expensive but performs well.

Cheapest store Waitrose

WHICH?
BEST BUY



SPONGE SCOURER

74% Spontex Washups

51p (pack of two)

Grooves on either side of the Spontex Washup are designed to protect your nails from whatever it is you're scouring – and help you to grip it, too. Our testers found the Washups comfortable and effective.

WORTH KNOWING These are better for non-stick pans than most sponge scourers on test.

Cheapest stores Sainsbury's, Tesco

WHICH?
BEST BUY

Score

Sponge scourers and dishcloths

User trial	50%
Cost	20%
Durability	15%
Cleaning spills	10%
Pan safety ^a	5%

Brushes

User trial	60%
Cost	20%
Durability	15%
Pan safety ^a	5%

^a Whether the cleaner damaged non-stick pans