

Sew easy



87% Brother BC2100 £196

This sturdy, computerised machine is so easy to use that even novice sewers are able to produce almost perfect stitches on their first attempt.

We were very impressed with the quality of the straight, zigzag and overlock stitches and the machine's ability to handle different types of fabric. The LCD screen tells you which presser foot, stitch length and width to use for each stitch.

WE LIKE The reverse button also reinforces decorative stitches by stitching on the spot.

Available Argos **Stitch options** 40 **Weight** 5.8kg
Presser feet 6 **Instruction DVD** Yes

If you're new to sewing, we'll help you buy a great beginner's machine for less than £230

In the past year, sales of cheaper sewing machines have rocketed, as the recession has encouraged us to rediscover the skill of repairing clothes, or making our own.

which? MONEY SAVER You could save around £9-£12 on the cost of replacing a zip in a pair of men's trousers, or £12.30 on turning up a pair of women's jeans, if you do the repairs on your sewing machine rather than using an alterations service.

The price of basic sewing machines has fallen dramatically; you can now get an entry-level model for around £50. This has tempted many of us to buy one – only to leave it in its box, too intimidated to use it.

That's why, in our latest test of sewing machines, we set loose 40 novice users on eight machines. We asked them to sew three straight lines, with results ranging from near perfect to higgledy-piggledy. Our testers found that using the foot pedal, loading the bobbin and setting the thread tension correctly were the hardest things to master.

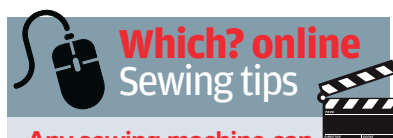
We also asked Wendy Gardiner, an experienced sewer and editor of *Sewing World* magazine, to rate the machines. She rated them all as acceptable for dressmaking and sewing soft furnishings.

We were looking for a machine for around £200 that would suit beginners, but be

sophisticated enough to take on more complex tasks as their ability grows.

which? MONEY SAVER If you're a beginner who's not sure if you will take to sewing, consider the Janome J1012 or John Lewis JL125. They're around £100 cheaper than the Best Buy Brother BC2100 and, though they don't score as highly, they're reasonable machines with a good straight stitch.

However, if you want the potential to take on bigger projects, our Best Buys have the accessories and versatility to take your sewing beyond the straight stitch and make it enjoyable for beginners and more experienced sewers alike.



Any sewing machine can be intimidating if you haven't used one before

To help you get started, we've got two video guides showing you how to set up a sewing machine, and how to make a simple cushion cover. Watch them both at www.which.co.uk/sewingvideos. For advice on choosing the right sewing machine for you, see www.which.co.uk/buysewingmachine, or visit www.which.co.uk/sewingmachines for detailed reviews of all the sewing machines we tested.





76% Janome Sewist 525s £229

This Janome is suitable for a wide range of sewing tasks thanks to its range of accessories. It's particularly good for beginners, too, as it's easy to use. It's a versatile machine that's suitable for stitching fine and thick fabrics. Unusually, the foot pedal can be set at low or high speed, which can help a beginner to control their speed more easily.

WORTH KNOWING This machine is also available as the Janome 7025 from John Lewis, which was only £189 as we went to press.

Available Online **Stitch options** 25 **Weight** 8.4kg
Presser feet 6 **Instruction DVD** No

Get to know your sewing machine

Bobbin winder

You need to wind thread onto a bobbin before you sew. The easiest bobbin winders stop the needle moving automatically while they wind.



Presser foot

This holds the fabric flat under the needle and helps it feed through evenly as you sew. There's a range of presser feet available, designed to do different jobs.

Stitch selector

Sewing machines usually offer a range of stitches. Basic machines have an illustrated or numbered dial, while more expensive models use a button or a touch pad.

MODEL	SPEC			WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE							SCORE (%)
	PRICE (£)	WEIGHT (KG)	NUMBER OF STITCH CHOICES	OVERALL SEWING PERFORMANCE	SUITABILITY FOR BEGINNERS	SUITABILITY FOR DRESS MAKING AND SOFT FURNISHINGS	VERSATILITY OF FEATURES	EASE OF USE	USING FOR THE FIRST TIME	BUILD QUALITY	
1 BROTHER BC2100	196	6	40	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	87
2 JANOME Sewist 525s	229	8	25	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	76
3 JANOME J1012	89	7	14	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	67
4 JOHN LEWIS JL125	99	7	18	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	64
5 SINGER Tradition 2263	147	7	23	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	57
6 TOYOTA RS2000-2D	166	7	24	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	57
7 BROTHER LS2125	78	6	14	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	55
8 TOYOTA SPA15	90	6	15	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	54

USING THE TABLE

Specification

Price See p37.

Weight With carry case if provided.

Test performance

Overall sewing

performance Based on quality of stitches, ability to handle different fabrics and sewing a buttonhole. **Suitability for beginners/dress making and soft furnishings** Based on

our expert's opinion. **Versatility of features** Stitch length and width options, accessories, options for flat bed, free arm and free-form sewing. **Ease of use** For setting up and

using the sewing machine. **Using for the first time** How easy novice sewers found it to set up and sew with a machine for the first time, and a rating of the quality of the results. **Build**

quality Assessed subjectively by our expert.

Score

Ignores price and is based on: Versatility and suitability for

beginners, dressmaking and upholstery **30%**
Ease of use **20%**
Performance **20%**
Using for the first time **20%**
Noise **5%**
Build quality **5%**