

Fridge-freezers for less than £500

There's no need to bust the budget if you want to buy a great fridge-freezer – we've found five Best Buys that keep their cool for less than £500

Spending a fortune on a fridge-freezer doesn't guarantee you've got the best on the market. We've previously tested the Smeg FPD34 which, with online prices starting at £1,750 (see 'Which? online', opposite), is one of the most expensive fridge-freezers we've ever tested, but its Which? test score is only 68%. It was trounced by the exceptional value Best Buy Indesit BAN12NF (5), which scored 79%, yet costs just £250.

When you are buying on a budget, it is also important to look for low running costs. This is the cost of electricity to run a fridge-freezer. Running costs are shown on our table on p68, and we explain on the right how buying the Beko CDA645F (6) could save you £45 over five years when compared with the cheaper Proline PLC55FFS (12).

Further savings can be made by avoiding extended warranties. We don't think they're worth it, because fridge-freezers are generally reliable – the cheapest five-year extended warranty for a fridge-freezer from Argos costs £80 – roughly a third of the price of the Indesit BAN12NF (5).

In our annual reliability survey, we found Indesit fridge-freezers to have a reliability rating of 90%. This puts Indesit leagues ahead of below-average manufacturers who score as little as 77%.

If a Best Buy fridge-freezer still seems expensive at £250 and you don't tend to freeze much, a fridge with a small freezer compartment could be a good alternative – we've found a great one that costs less than £200 (see 'Fridge-freezer alternatives', p68).



Running costs

The price tag won't tell you how much a fridge-freezer will add to your annual electricity bills. Use our data at www.which.co.uk to compare running costs

It can be hard to gauge the true cost of your fridge-freezer, because the price paid at the checkout bears no relation to the cost of the electricity the fridge-freezer will use.

Some fridge-freezers are cheap to buy, but not cheap to run. At current energy rates, running costs can vary from just £25 to as much as £100 a year. After central heating, fridges and freezers are the biggest domestic guzzlers of energy,

notching up a staggering £1.2 billion in electricity bills each year.

The Proline PLC55FFS (12) may seem low-priced at £250, but it costs £47 a year to run. Meanwhile, the Beko CDA645F (6) costs £290 to buy and

approximately £30 per year to run. Though the Proline seems cheaper, the Beko would actually cost you £45 less over five years.

For more on running costs, see the individual product reviews at www.which.co.uk/fridgefreezers.



Proline PLC55FFS	£250	£235
Beko CDA645F	£290	£150

KEY ■ Purchase price ■ Running cost over five years

1 TRADITIONAL

84% John Lewis
JLFFW1807 £499

It may not be the fastest at cooling food, but this Best Buy fridge-freezer from John Lewis is good at maintaining a stable internal temperature when the room temperature fluctuates. And while John Lewis claims this model freezes 10kg in 24 hours, in our tests it actually froze 20kg. It's available exclusively at John Lewis.

WE LIKE John Lewis fridge-freezers come with a three-year guarantee and qualify for free delivery.

Available John Lewis Running cost £40 Fridge volume 179 litres Freezer volume 65 litres



2 TRADITIONAL

81% Hotpoint
FF187E £300

This model has some nifty storage features, and is good at maintaining a stable internal temperature. It has a good door layout, with can racks as well as two adjustable shelves. However, it's not as good as other Best Buys at keeping food frozen during a power cut – in our test, food started to defrost after 22 hours. It was cheapest at John Lewis.

WORTH KNOWING This model is being discontinued, so get it while you can.

Available John Lewis, Argos Running cost £42 Fridge volume 148 litres Freezer volume 84 litres



3 TRADITIONAL

79% Electrolux
ENB35405S £450

This frost-free fridge-freezer is a great all-rounder with some useful extra features, such as a digital display on the outside of the fridge and an alarm to let you know if the internal temperature gets too high. The large interior is cooled very evenly, and its internal temperature remains stable when the room temperature fluctuates. It was cheapest at John Lewis.

WE LIKE It has a water dispenser with a handy Brita water filter.

Available John Lewis, Currys Running cost £37 a year Fridge volume 187 litres Freezer volume 65 litres



4 TRADITIONAL

79% Indesit
BAN12NF £250

This Indesit fridge-freezer lacks some of the extra features the other Best Buys have, but it's still a really good budget option. It has excellent temperature stability, and will cope well in the event of a power cut, keeping food frozen for more than 28 hours. This is a frost-free model, and freezing speed is good, but the fridge cooling speed is poor. It was cheapest at John Lewis.

WORTH KNOWING The recommended thermostat settings are spot on.

Available John Lewis, Currys Running cost £46 a year Fridge volume 147 litres Freezer volume 78 litres



5 TRADITIONAL

75% Frigidaire
FRC150FF £240

The popular FRC150FF is a petite fridge-freezer, but it works very well and it's also great value. Too few Which? members own Frigidaire fridge-freezers for us to give a reliability score, but the brand's very good record for fridges and freezers makes us confident that this is a worthy Best Buy. It was cheapest at Dixons.

WORTH KNOWING Frigidaire's recommended thermostat setting for the freezer is slightly too warm.

Available Dixons, Currys Running cost £34 a year Fridge volume 95 litres Freezer volume 49 litres

**Which? online**
Fancy fridge-freezers**Find full results of our**
fridge-freezer tests online

If your budget stretches to a more expensive machine, visit www.which.co.uk/fridge-freezers. There were 97 previously tested models online as we went to press, including the high-priced but stylish Smeg FPD34 (pictured), and more are added every month. We also have reviews of 81 fridges and 83 freezers, so you're sure to find something suitable, whatever your refrigeration needs. If you're ready to buy, www.whichcompare.co.uk is the place to go for the most up-to-date prices.



How we test

We use gel packs to simulate groceries when testing fridge and freezer cooling power



Cooling power

To see how quickly the fridge can cool groceries, we set the room temperature to 20°C and allow the fridge to acclimatise.

Each fridge is then loaded with room-temperature gel packs weighing 6kg – the equivalent of around 12 tomatoes, one large chicken and four pints of milk.

Using probes in the packs, we record the average time the packs take to cool to 5°C. Poor fridge-freezers can take more than 24 hours to reach 5°C. Long cooling times allow bacteria to grow, resulting in food deteriorating faster than expected.

Freezer compartments

We test the weight of fresh food the manufacturer states can be frozen in 24 hours and how long the freezer will keep food safely frozen in a power cut.

We test only four-star freezer compartments, as freezers with fewer stars aren't able to freeze fresh food quickly enough to preserve taste and texture.

Freezers with three stars or fewer can store only pre-frozen food. Compartments with no stars are only suitable for making ice cubes.

To simulate a power cut, we load the freezer compartment and fridge with gel packs.

When all of the packs in the freezer are below -18°C, we switch the power off. We then record the time it takes for the first pack in the freezer to rise to -9°C.

Fridge-freezer alternatives

A fridge with a freezer compartment is usually a cheaper option

If you live alone or simply prefer fresh food to frozen, a fridge with a four-star freezer compartment can be a cheaper alternative. Most cost less than £200.

The **Beko RAP614W** (17) is an 84-litre fridge with a 13-litre four-star freezer compartment. It cools to less than 5°C in 12 hours, and freezes quickly to -18°C.

These temperatures are the best for keeping and freezing food, but some fridges with freezer compartments don't meet them.

Another plus point with the RAP614W is that



the recommended setting for this thermostat hits the less-than-5°C standard, so it's easy to set up. Unlike some other models, both the fridge and freezer compartment of this Beko model maintain these optimum temperatures when room temperatures fluctuate. According to our reliability survey, Beko fridges are also unlikely to break down.

This model is currently hard to find – we've found it only online, at retailers including Marks Electrical and Appliance Planet – but Beko says it will be more widely available soon.

MODEL		SPECIFICATION							
		PRICE (£)	SIZE (cm) (h x w x d)	ENERGY LABEL	ROOM TEMP (°C)	FRIDGE VOLUME (litres)	FREEZER VOLUME (litres)	FROST FREE	COLOUR
TRADITIONAL FRIDGE-FREEZERS									
1	JOHN LEWIS JLFFW1807	449	185x60x66	A	10 to 38	180	65	✓	W
2	HOTPOINT FF187E	400	188x60x66	A	10 to 38	148	84	✓	X,G,K
3	ELECTROLUX ENB3540S	450	186x60x66	A	10 to 38	187	66	✓	W,S
4	INDESIT BAN12NF	250	175x60x65	A	10 to 38	147	72	✓	W,S
5	FRIGIDAIRE FRC150FF	240	144x56x56	A	16 to 32	95	48	✓	W,S
6	BEKO CDA645F	290	171x60x60	A	10 to 32	142	65	✓	W
7	HOTPOINT FF200E	400	200x60x66	A	10 to 38	162	83	✓	W,X,G,K
8	BOSCH KGH33V03GB Classixx	308	182x60x63	A	10 to 38	158	56	✓	W
9	LEC TF 5586 W	264	153x55x58	A	10 to 32	102	60	✓	W,S
10	HOTPOINT RF175B	278	174x60x69	A+	10 to 38	159	83		W,G
11	BEKO TDA 531	195	136x54x63	A	10 to 32	116	70		W,S
12	BEKO CDA540	211	136x54x62	A	10 to 32	132	49		W
13	PROLINE PLC55FFS	250	172x55x62	A	16 to 32	135	67	✓	S
14	FRIGIDAIRE FRE196A	200	144x55x56	A	16 to 32	100	57		W,S
15	BOSCH KGV28V01GB Classixx	300	171x54x61	A	10 to 32	135	78		W
16	FRIDGEMASTER MTRF140	150	116x48x51	A	16 to 32	67	32		W
FRIDGES WITH FREEZER COMPARTMENTS									
17	BEKO RAP614W	160	84x54x62	A+	10 to 32	84	13		W
18	JOHN LEWIS JLUCFRW6001	230	86x60x63	A	10 to 38	98	18		W
19	LEC R5526S	200	85x55x61	A	16 to 32	82	12		W,S

American-style models

They look stylish, but your energy bills will soar

American-style fridge-freezers may look stylish, but the 13 we've recently tested cost more to buy and run than traditional models. Running costs for the traditional type range from £25 to £58 per year, while the running cost ranges from £47 to £103 for the American style.

We currently have no Best Buy American-style fridge-freezers. The **Electrolux ERL6296KK1** (71%) and the **Bosch KAN58A40GB** (70%) score highly, and have relatively low running costs at £47 and £52 respectively, but their freezing power isn't up to the high standard set by our Best Buy traditional models.



Contacts

Baumatic 01189 336900
www.baumatic.co.uk

Beko 0870 774 1050; www.beko.co.uk

Bosch 01908 328200; www.bosch.co.uk

Electrolux 0870 595 0950
www.electrolux.co.uk

Fridgemaster 0845 052 9006
www.fridgemaster.co.uk

Frigidaire 0845 052 9005
www.frigidaire.co.uk

Hotpoint 0870 150 6070
www.hotpoint.co.uk

Indesit 0870 150 6070; www.indesit.co.uk

John Lewis 0845 604 9049
www.johnlewis.com

Lec 0871 222 2635; www.lec.co.uk

Proline 08705 425 425; www.comet.co.uk

Smeg 0870 990 9907; www.smeguk.com

Zanussi 0870 572 7727; www.zanussi.co.uk

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price as we went to press. Prices for other models are a guide to what you can expect to pay. See www.whichcompare.co.uk for the latest prices. **Size** Including hinges, with door closed. Add several cm on each side and at the rear for air circulation.

Energy label Manufacturer's claimed rating. **Room temp** Optimum room temps as claimed by the manufacturer.

Fridge/freezer volume Our measurement of usable space. **Frost free** These models won't need defrosting. All others will. **Colour** W = white, S = silver, X = aluminium, G = graphite, K = black.

Running costs Estimate based on energy prices in January 2009.

RUNNING COSTS (£/yr)	WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE						SCORE (%)
	FRIDGE COOLING POWER	FREEZING POWER	FRIDGE STABILITY	FREEZER STABILITY	EASE OF USE	RELIABILITY	
40	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	Average	84
42	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	Average	81
37	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	Average	79
46	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Average	79
34	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	75
30	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	74
45	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Average	73
42	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	71
35	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Average	67
28	★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Average	66
28	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	64
25	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	63
47	★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	62
29	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	60
32	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	Above average	59
36	★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	43
17	★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	Above average	80
19	★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	Average	71
18	★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	Average	70

Test performance

Cooling power How quickly the fridge cools food from room temperature to 5°C. **Freezing power** How much fresh food it can freeze relative to its size.

We do not test freezer compartments for this. **Fridge/freezer stability** How well the fridge and freezer maintain internal temperature when room temperature changes. **Ease of use** Ease of cleaning, and using the controls. **Reliability** Below average models are not eligible to be Best Buys. An n/a means there was insufficient data to judge reliability.

Score

Ignores price and based on:

Fridge-freezers

Temperature stability	20%
Evenness and insulation	20%
Ease of use	15%
Noise and vibration	15%
Cooling power	10%
Freezing power	10%
Recommended setting	10%

Fridges with freezer compartments

Temperature stability	25%
Evenness	25%
Ease of use	20%
Noise and vibration	10%
Cooling power	10%
Recommended setting	10%