

Sleep on it

We help you choose the best mattress for a good night's sleep

Contrary to popular myth, a mattress doesn't have to be hard to be good for you. As long as it has a good supporting structure, the amount of padding on top is a matter of your own personal comfort.

What type of mattress?

The distinction between types of mattress is becoming blurred, as many are hybrids made up of several different materials.

■ **Continuous coil** This is the cheapest type, made from a single looped wire. Because the springs move as one unit, you're more likely to be disturbed by your partner moving around in the night. The coils wear out more quickly than pocket springs (see right), so you're likely to end up rolling together eventually.

■ **Open coil** One step up from continuous coil, and also widely available, open coil mattresses are made up of single springs fixed together by wire.

■ **Pocket sprung** In these mattresses the springs are sewn into individual fabric pockets. They provide better support for your body, as each coil absorbs the weight individually. So they're good if you sleep on your side, which puts different pressures on your spine. And if you move a lot, your partner is less likely to feel it.

■ **Memory foam** These mattresses are topped with a layer of temperature-sensitive visco-elastic material (memory foam). They're good at relieving pressure on painful joints, but are usually pricier than sprung mattresses. Memory foam reacts to body

heat, so it can feel hard when you first get into bed. As it warms up, it moulds to your shape, which can make it difficult for you to move or get out of bed.

■ **Pure foam or latex** These can be a good option if you're allergic to house dust mites.

■ **Mattress 'toppers'** These add a layer of memory foam or extra padding to your existing mattress. But they can be as expensive as buying a new mattress and won't provide more support if your old mattress is already sagging.

For this report we've tested 16 pocket sprung mattresses for double beds, as they're popular and widely available. We've also included the Best Buy memory foam mattresses that are still available from our report in January 2006 (p62).

What you should look for

PADDING

Spring systems are usually padded with man-made polymers, but some contain natural fibres such as horsehair or wool. More layers aren't always better – the support from the springs is more important.

WASHABLE COVERS

None of the sprung mattresses we tested has a removable cover, but you can buy one separately.

HANDLES

Handles help with flipping, turning and positioning. Many new mattresses don't have to be flipped – though they may still benefit from being turned head to foot a few times a year.

SPRING DENSITY

The number of springs is less important than how they're constructed. We tested mattresses with a density of 440-1,085 springs and found wide variation in support.

ODOUR

All the mattresses in our test lost any manufacturing odour after a week, so, if you can, it's best to leave your mattress to air before using it.

How we test

Our testers don't just lie down on the job

Bouncing back

To test durability, we roll a barrel weighing 127kg (20 stone) over each mattress 60,000 times – equivalent to 10 years' normal use – and check for significant rips in the material or permanent damage to the springs. If a mattress compresses by more than 15mm, we rate it as poor.

Support

Our tester lies on a liquid silver pressure-measuring mat on top of a mattress to see whether any areas of the mattress put too much pressure on different parts of the body.

Ventilation

Everybody sweats during a night's sleep. Our tester lies on a mattress for an hour in a chamber at 23°C until he is sweating heavily. We then measure the relative humidity between him and the mattress. We do a similar test to see whether the mattress gets uncomfortably hot.

We also measure the contact area between a tester's back and the surface of the mattress. If you sweat a lot, don't choose a mattress with a large contact area.

OUR RESEARCH

When selecting which mattresses to test, we consult manufacturers, market intelligence reports and industry experts, then check availability on the high street and online. Tested mattresses include top sellers from the most popular brands, those with innovative features, interesting products from lesser-known brands and widely available Best Buys from previous tests.



1 POCKET SPRUNG

74% John Lewis JL Pocket Comfort 1 £295

This double-sided mattress is great value for money if you like a very soft bed. It supports your body well, particularly your back, without too much pressure. It doesn't get too hot or retain too much moisture, either. It's not very heavy, but it hasn't got handles to help you turn it over.

It smelt fairly strongly to start with, but the odour was gone after a week. It came rolled up in a handy bag, so you can take it home straight away if it's in stock.

WORTH KNOWING The mattress lost only 4mm depth in our durability test, so it should last a long time.

Weight 22.3kg Size (hwxwd) 189.5x136.9x18.6cm
Guarantee One year, plus five-year warranty



2 POCKET SPRUNG

70% John Lewis JL Natural Pocket 2 £350

If you'd prefer a medium-firm mattress, this one might suit you. It supports your body well, and distributes body pressure evenly, though it doesn't support your lower back quite as much as the other JL Best Buy (1).

It doesn't need turning over – just rotating head to toe every so often. Our durability test didn't damage it, so it should last well. Overall, you get quite a lot for a modest outlay.

WE FOUND It didn't get too warm or clammy.

Weight 30.1kg Size (hwxwd) 190.5x136.5x20.5cm
Guarantee One year



'IT'S EASIER TO MAKE THE BED'

Ann Mills 64, nurse

Ann Mills, from London, recently bought a pocket sprung mattress to replace one that was more than 30 years old. She also bought a slatted base to put it on so that she could get rid of her old divan base.

She is happy with her choice. 'I decided on a pocket sprung mattress, as they have been around for many years,' she told us. 'I didn't want to buy a memory foam mattress, as they haven't been around for nearly as long and I don't know how many years they'll last compared with sprung mattresses.' Ann liked the flexibility of being able to choose the level of firmness, and she could decide whether to go for artificial or natural padding.

The slatted base is lighter than her old divan base, which makes it easier to make the bed. A word of caution, though: 'The mattress slips on the slats and I fell out of bed on the first night!'



Best Buy memory foam mattresses

These Best Buys from 2006 are still available

■ HEALTHBEDS MEMORY FLEX £539

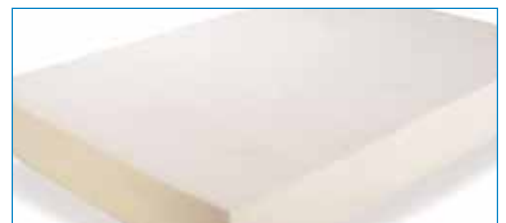
This foam mattress (17) doesn't engulf you like some of the others, but you'll still get the pressure-relieving benefits from the foam. The removable cover can be dry cleaned. It's the softest of our foam-only Best Buys. Available online and from independents.

■ SLEEPShAPER ORIGINAL £634

The Sleepshaper (18) supports your back well and should last a long time, according to our durability test. The washable cover makes it another good choice if you suffer from dust mite allergy. Since we tested it, the name has changed from Sleepshaper Memory Regular Feel – everything else is the same. It comes in various thicknesses; we tested the 20cm version. Available online and from independents.

■ HEALTHBEDS MEMORY MED 1400 £569

This is a pocket sprung mattress (19) with a memory foam top layer. It's the thickest and heaviest of the Best Buys, but it feels soft and provides good body and lumbar support. Available online and from independents.



How to buy

Don't get taken in by medical-sounding ads



MATTRESS MYTHS

Medical-sounding terms like 'orthopaedic' and 'posturepaedic' usually just mean that mattresses have more springs than most, which gives more support.

A study published in medical journal *The Lancet* in 2003 found that a very firm mattress isn't always best for bad backs, and that a moderately firm one may be better. But there's no definitive medical answer to what's best, so don't be lured by adverts claiming 'the ultimate solution to back problems'.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

Buying online may be cheaper and more convenient, but, if you can, it's best to try a mattress before you buy. Go to www.sleepcouncil.com for the Sleep Council's advice on buying a bed.

Wear comfortable clothing and take off your outdoor gear. Lie on a mattress for at least 10 minutes, in positions that you normally sleep in. Don't let sales assistants influence you – they can't decide comfort for you.

If the bed is for two, shop together. Sit on the edge – it should be firm, not saggy. Don't shop for beds when you're tired, as they'll all feel great.

MATTRESS AND BASE

Manufacturers encourage you to buy the mattress and base together, and this is a good idea if you've had your old base for many years. If you buy them separately, or are going to keep your old base, measure carefully to make sure they're a good fit. All the mattresses we tested are doubles, but their dimensions vary slightly.

ROLL UPS

Our Best Buy John Lewis (1) came vacuum-packed in a handy cotton bag. These 'roll ups' are a welcome innovation, as you can take one home with you instead of waiting for delivery. Our testers say it was easy to unpack – and there wasn't much to throw away.



GUARANTEE

Most guarantees will not cover gradual wear and tear leading to loss of support. Ask whether anything you do, such as removing labels or using a base other than a recommended one, would invalidate the guarantee.



Facts & scores

Our experts bounced and pummelled the mattresses to sort the sturdy from the flimsy

Size matters

Ikea mattresses are slightly larger than standard size, so you may need to buy an Ikea base as well if you go for the Sultan Hamno (9). Measure carefully before buying.

Heavyweights

The mattresses weighed in from around 20kg to 40kg. The John Lewis Pocket Spring (5) and Rest Assured Deluxe 1200 (11) were heaviest. The Healthbeds Memory Flex (17) and Sleepshaper (18) were lightest.

Handle with care

The position and size of handles make a big difference to the ease of shifting mattresses. Instructions for the Rest Assured Caramel 1000 (16) recommend turning it periodically, but it has no handles to help with this. Some handles are meant only to help position the mattress, not take the full weight.

MODEL

POCKET SPRUNG

- 1 **JOHN LEWIS** JL Pocket Comfort 1
- 2 **JOHN LEWIS** JL Natural Pocket 2
- 3 **HUSH** Options Pocket Mattress
- 4 **MAGNIFICENT 7** Pocket
- 5 **JOHN LEWIS** JL Pocket Spring Mattress
- 6 **WINDSOR BED COMPANY** Crown Supreme
- 7 **WINDSOR BED COMPANY** Crown Pocket 08
- 8 **AIRSPRUNG** Woburn Pocket 1000
- 9 **IKEA** Sultan Hamno
- 10 **HUSH** Ortho Dream 1000
- 11 **REST ASSURED** Deluxe 1200
- 12 **REST ASSURED** Apollo 1000 classic
- 13 **AIRSPRUNG** Woburn Pocket 800
- 14 **FORTY WINKS** Deluxe 800 Pocket
- 15 **FORTY WINKS** Super Deluxe 1000 Pocket
- 16 **REST ASSURED** Caramel 1000 (Bedstead Classic)

FOAM ONLY

- 17 **HEALTHBEDS** Memory Flex
- 18 **SLEEPSHAPER** Original

SPRING AND FOAM

- 19 **HEALTHBEDS** Memory Med 1400



Checklist

Here's some advice from the Sleep Council on how best to look after your mattress

■ **Protect it with covers** Use washable mattress (and pillow) covers to protect your bedding from stains. Buy them in a purpose-made 'barrier' fabric if you have a dust allergy.

■ **Give it some air** Throw back bedclothes in the morning and leave the bed to air for 20 minutes to allow body moisture to evaporate.

■ **Turn it regularly** Turn your mattress over (if advised) and end to end every three or four months, and every week for the first three

months, to help upholstery fillings to settle down more evenly.

■ **Ban bouncing** Don't sit on the edge of the bed regularly and don't let the children bounce on it.

■ **Unwrap it immediately** Don't leave any plastic wrappings on a new mattress – this could lead to rot.

■ **Keep it clean** Vacuum the mattress and base from time to time.

■ **How to remove stains** Use a cloth with mild detergent and warm or cold water to tackle stains. Never soak a mattress.

SPECIFICATION								WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE						SCORE %
PRICE (£)	FIRMNESS	DEPTH (cm)	WEIGHT (kg)	SINGLE- OR DOUBLE-SIDED	HANDLES	COVER	VENTILATION	BODY	LUMBAR	PRESSURE	CONTACT	DURABILITY	CONVENIENCE	
295	very soft	18.6	22.3	D		n/a		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	74
350	medium	20.5	30.1	S	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	70
300	firm	26.5	33	D	✓	n/a		★★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	67
249	soft	24.5	28.5	D	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	65
395	soft	28.5	40	D	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	64
479	soft	25	27.7	S	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★★	64
459	medium	26	31.6	D	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	63
250	medium	22	27.8	D	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	62
200	medium	25.5	24.3	D	✓	n/a		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	62
299	firm	25.5	33.5	D	✓	n/a		★★★★★	★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	61
681	medium	29.5	38.7	D	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	61
330	medium	25	33.3	D	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	59
230	soft	25	28.8	D	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	58
200	firm	25	32.1	D	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	57
200	medium	27.5	29.7	D	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	56
349	soft	22	24.7	S		n/a		★★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★	54
539	soft	23.7	19	S		dc		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	81
634	medium	20.9	19.1	S		mw		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	77
569	soft	25.5,5.0	31.2	S	✓	n/a	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★	74

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better. All mattresses are double-bed sized.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price. If we couldn't find them at major high-street shops, we give the most common online price. Prices for other models are a guide to what you should expect to pay. **Firmness** This is our rating according to BS EN 1957. It may differ from the manufacturer's rating. **Single- or double-sided** Single-sided (S) mattresses don't need flipping; double-sided (D) mattresses do. **Cover** Also known as ticking. dc = dry clean, mw = machine

washable, n/a = non-removable cover. **Ventilation** Whether the mattress has metal 'button' side air vents.

Test performance

Body/Lumbar How well the mattress supports the whole body and lower back, respectively, before and after the durability test. **Pressure** How well the mattress minimises pressure on the body. **Contact** How much of the body is in contact with the mattress. Too much contact makes it harder to move about, for moisture to escape and for the temperature to stay at a comfortable level. ★★★★★ means 65-68% body contact; ★★ means 73% or more. **Durability** Indicates

damage caused to mattress by having the equivalent of 20 stone rolled over it 60,000 times.

★★★★★ means no damage after testing and little height loss (up to 5mm); ★★ means some damage to spring pocket or ticking and more height loss (16-20mm). **Convenience** How easy it

is to turn the mattress, if applicable, and use the handles. Heavy mattresses score less.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:
Performance **55%**
Durability **35%**
Convenience **10%**

Contacts

Airsprung 01225 754411
www.airsprungbeds.co.uk

Forty Winks 0845 640 2020; argos.co.uk

Healthbeds 01709 559977
www.healthbeds.co.uk

Hush 01225 779135
www.hush-collection.com

Ikea 0845 358 3364; www.ikea.co.uk

John Lewis 0845 604 9049
www.johnlewis.com

Magnificent 0844 556 5500
www.dreams.co.uk

Rest Assured 01924 474477
www.rest-assured.co.uk

Sleep Council 0845 058 4595
www.sleepcouncil.com

Sleepshaper 01235 811866
www.sleepshaper.co.uk

Windsor Bed Company 01225 779132
www.airsprung-furniture.co.uk