

Quick and easy

We've tested 18 kettles and come up with four Best Buys

When a favourite TV soap star gets shot or England's footballers lose on penalties (again), our first reaction is often to let off steam – from our kettles that is.

We love a brew. On average, we boil our kettles around four times a day, so it makes sense to look for a model that's comfortable, quick and energy efficient.

There are two basic shapes of kettle. We found traditional dome-style models

Dome-style kettles are the easiest to lift but not always the quickest to boil

easier to lift than jug kettles. However, as the handle is at the top, it can be difficult to lift the lid. There are only two dome-style models on test – the Best Buy Breville KT17 (3) and the Cookworks WEK04 (14).

All the rest are jug kettles, which are taller and thinner, with their handles at the side.

Boiling a litre of water in a kettle takes about as much energy as it does to run a fridge for eight hours, so it makes sense to boil only as much as you need.

However, some models give you little help with this. Just five kettles on test have a minimum level of one cup of water. Most require at least two cups, which can be wasteful. Also, while all models have a recommended minimum level, nearly half don't show it.

The Ecokettle (12) is designed to be efficient and uses the least energy of all models on test. However, you may find it confusing to use. It has an inner and outer chamber for storing and boiling water and three different sets of graduations.

Another point to note is that some kettles measure capacity in cups, others in litres. A mug of coffee needs about 250ml of water.

If you're worried about limescale, see 'Worth knowing', p70 for tips on how to clean your kettle. We're testing limescale descalers and will report the results in May's issue of *Which?*

Jargon buster

Here are terms you may hear when buying a kettle

■ **RAPID BOIL** Higher-wattage kettles boil more quickly. Those with a wattage of at least 3kW are usually classed as rapid boil.

■ **KEEP WARM** The Russell Hobbs Fenestra Glow (17) and Prestige Symmetry (18) can keep water warm after you've boiled it, so the kettle will reboil more quickly. But it takes less energy to reboil from scratch after half an hour than using the 'keep warm' feature. It's best to boil only the amount of water that you need each time.

■ **GRADUATIONS** These markers show the levels to which the kettle can be filled. Some models have them on both sides to suit right- and left-handed people. With others, they are under the handle, which can make them difficult to see when filling the kettle.

■ **CORDLESS** Most kettles are now cordless, which means you can lift them off a separate base which plugs into the wall. Many manufacturers advise against filling a kettle when it's on its base.

How we test



We use a probe to test each kettle's efficiency

A watched pot

We fill each kettle with a litre of water at 15°C and place a temperature probe in the centre. We boil each kettle and record the temperature at which it switches off and how long this takes. We do this three times to find the average boiling time and temperature.

Overboil

We heat a litre of water in each kettle until the

model reaches its average boiling temperature. We then time how long the kettle continues to boil before switching itself off. From this, we calculate how much energy it wastes.

Tea strain

We fill each kettle to a range of levels from minimum to maximum, to see how easy they are to lift, fill, carry, pour and clean.

The perfect cup of coffee

Whether you like real or instant coffee, experts agree you shouldn't make it with boiling water. Boiling water can create a bitter, burnt taste – noticeable even with instant, although adding milk helps disguise this. So how hot should the water be? Opinions range from 85°C to 98°C, but our expert recommends

92°C to 96°C as ideal.

We timed each kettle to find how long it took to cool from boiling to our coffee-ready temperature of 95°C. The Ecokettle (12) was fastest, at an average of



78 seconds, but other models took three to five minutes. With most models, the only other option is to turn your kettle off before it's boiled. The Morphy Richards 2Perfections (4, pictured left), however, has tea and coffee settings. For coffee, it turns off when the water reaches about 85°C, and 100° for tea.

80% Morphy Richards Complements 43596 £20

This Morphy Richards can be filled through the lid or spout. The lid release button is easy to press while holding the kettle with the same hand. This model is also light, easy to lift and well balanced when pouring. The filter's simple to remove but it's also easy to put back in the wrong position after cleaning. You shouldn't have to worry too



much about fingermarks, as they'll show up less on this plastic kettle than on some stainless-steel models. The Morphy Richards Complements is available from Comet in four colours: graphite (pictured), white, cream and blue.

WHICH? BEST BUY **WE FOUND** This kettle whistles when it boils, but you can turn this off if you prefer the quiet life.

Cheapest store Comet **Minimum fill** Two cups **Time to boil** 1 litre 2min 25sec **Cord length** 72cm **360-degree base** Yes

79% Breville JK40 £25

This Breville is well balanced and comfortable, and its handle suits even the largest hands. You'll need one hand on the kettle while opening the tightly fitting lid to fill it, as the spout is too small to fill through. The filter is easy to remove and put back, though you'll need to flex it slightly to get it through the



open lid. The Breville JK40 is one of the most energy-efficient stainless-steel kettles on test. It's available from Argos.

WE FOUND It keeps water warm for longer than our other Best Buys, taking almost five minutes for the water temperature to drop to 95°C after boiling.

Cheapest store Argos **Minimum fill** 0.5 litre **Time to boil** 1 litre 2min 27sec **Cord length** 74cm **360-degree base** Yes

79% Breville KT17 £25

A handle over the top, like the one on this Breville model, makes a kettle easy to lift. And you can keep your hand clear of rising steam by holding it as near to the back as possible when pouring.



correctly. Water-level markers are visible on both sides of the kettle and show every level that you can fill it from one to seven cups. The Breville KT17 is available from Argos.

You're best off filling the kettle via the lid, which you can remove with one hand. The lid's a tight fit but you do get used to it.

The filter is easy to take out for cleaning but take care to put it back in

WHICH? BEST BUY

WORTH KNOWING At two seconds, this Breville dome-style kettle had the shortest overboil time of all the Best Buys in this test.

Cheapest store Argos **Minimum fill** 0.4 litre **Time to boil** 1 litre 2min 26sec **Cord length** 75cm **360-degree base** Yes

The Breville JK40 is one of the most energy-efficient stainless-steel kettles we tested

79% Morphy Richards 2Perfections 43673 £30

Coffee drinkers will love this model (see 'The perfect cup of coffee', opposite) and it boils quickly for tea, too. The 2Perfections has a comfortable handle, is easy to lift and is our most energy-efficient Best Buy. It fills through the spout, so you won't have to open the lid until you clean the filter. Water-level markers



are visible from either side of the kettle, and show levels for four, six and eight cups, together with the maximum. It's available from Argos, Comet and John Lewis.

WE LIKE It's the fastest Best Buy at boiling four cups of water.

Cheapest store John Lewis **Minimum fill** One cup **Time to boil** 1 litre 2min 21sec **Cord length** 73cm **360-degree base** Yes

What you should look for

WIDE SPOUT OPENING

This makes it easy to fill your kettle without having to open the lid



EASILY REMOVABLE FILTER

The mesh filter in the spout should be easy to take out, so you can clean it. Look for a model with mesh fine enough to stop any limescale getting into your cup

CONCEALED ELEMENT

A concealed element (pictured) makes a kettle easier to clean. The only model on test with an exposed element is the Kenwood JK740 Series (16)



360-DEGREE BASE

This means you can replace the kettle on the base to face in any direction. There is usually space underneath the base to store the cable

Which should you choose?

Easy pour

BREVILLE SPECTRA JK115 £35/ PHILIPS CUCINA HD4682

£20 ONLINE The Breville (8), below left, came top in our test of how easy the kettles were to handle. There's plenty of space for larger knuckles and it feels well balanced when pouring, no matter how full.



It has interior lighting that changes from blue to red when boiling, but it also cycles through colours when not boiling. You can stop the light show only by switching it off at the wall. The Philips Cucina (7) is lighter than the Breville. Handle space is generous and you can fill it through the lid or spout. There is an audible ping when it finishes boiling.

Brisk brew

ECOKETTLE £40 The Ekokettle (11, top right) boiled a litre of water

fastest, at just over two minutes. The slowest to boil was the Kenwood JK740 (16), at three minutes and 13 seconds.

Fuss-free filter

DUALIT JKT2 JUG KETTLE £55 This Dualit (11) had the simplest filter to remove, clean and reposition.



Facts & scores

It was full steam ahead for our team of kettle testers

Take your time

These Cookworks and Kenwood models are the only non rapid-boil kettles on test. They take about three minutes to boil a litre of water – 30 seconds slower on average than rapid-boil models.

Keep on boiling

The Prestige Symmetry 50523 continued to boil for 12 seconds on average before it turned off – the longest time of all kettles on test. The Russell Hobbs Classic Range 11521 boiled for 10 seconds.

USING THE TABLE

We tested the latest kettles from the main manufacturers, including some models that are part of matching ranges. The more stars the better.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price. Prices for other models are a guide. Online prices are in *italics*.

Capacity The maximum volume of water you can boil. This figure is the one that is claimed by the manufacturer.

Weight This is the weight of the kettle empty and without the power base.

Matching set indicates that the kettle is part of a matching range with other goods such as toasters and coffee machines. See also our toasters report on p62.

Worth tracking down

These Best Buys from our test in January 2006 are still available and can hold their own against this month's models. They're certainly worth a look

■ KENWOOD JK770

£19.99 This takes just two minutes and 27 seconds to boil a litre of water, and it's easy to lift and pour. The 360-degree base and water-level windows on both sides make it good for right- and left-handers. You fill it through the spout or the open lid, and the fine mesh filter slides into place leaving no gaps round the edges for water to pass through, unfiltered. There's no minimum fill line, but the two-cup marker (0.5 litres) is about that level. It's available from John Lewis and Currys. **SCORE 82%**



■ MORPHY RICHARDS OPERA

£24.99 A whistle signifies the water has boiled, which may be why this is called the Opera. The whistle can be switched off. The kettle has a 360-degree base and takes two minutes and 26 seconds to boil a litre of water. Like the Kenwood JK770, it's light, which makes it easy to lift and pour. The filter mesh is fine but fiddly to refit. There are water-level windows on both sides with a marked minimum level at 0.5 litres. It's available from Argos. **SCORE 76%**



Worth knowing

How to clean kettles, make the perfect cuppa, plus can you make tea in a TV ad break?

Making a cuppa

- 1 Use freshly drawn cold water. Ensure your kettle is descaled regularly and your teapot is clean.
- 2 Warm the teapot with hot water which you then pour away.
- 3 Add tea. One teaspoon of tea or one teabag per person is usually enough. Brew for about three minutes.
- 4 The great debate is over whether to put the milk in first. The Royal Society of Chemists and the British Standards Institute say it's milk first, but opinions vary.

Cleaning a kettle

All manufacturers recommend cleaning and descaling your kettle to keep it working efficiently. You could use vinegar but previous *Which?* tests found it can be difficult to get rid of the smell. Thompson & Capper Kettle Klear was a Best Buy

descaler in January 2006 and is still available online. How often you need to descale your kettle depends on how hard your water supply is, but check the spout filter regularly for build-up that can be easily cleaned off.

Time for tea?

Can you make a good cup of tea in an ad break? All our Best Buys boiled a litre of water (enough for four cups of tea) in less than two and a half minutes. But with around three and a half minutes of ads on terrestrial commercial channels, you'll be hard pressed to fill, boil and brew in time. On the BBC there's a minute and a half between shows – enough for one instant coffee.



MODEL	SPECIFICATION				WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE					SCORE %
	PRICE (£)	CAPACITY (litres)	WEIGHT (kg)	MATCHING SET	TIME TO BOIL	ENERGY TO BOIL	EASE OF USE	SURFACE CLEANING	NOISE	
1 MORPHY RICHARDS Complements 43596	20	1.5	0.75	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	80
2 BREVILLE JK40	25	1.7	0.95		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	79
3 BREVILLE KT17	25	1.8	0.95		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	79
4 MORPHY RICHARDS 2Perfections 43673	30	1.6	0.80	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	79
5 KENWOOD SJ580 Series	35	1.7	0.95		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	73
6 RUSSELL HOBBS Stylo Satin 12911	20	1.7	1.00		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	72
7 PHILIPS Cucina HD4682	20	1.7	0.85	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	70
8 BREVILLE Spectra JK115	35	1.7	1.15		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	69
9 DE'LONGHI Metropolis KBM3011-1	55	1.7	0.90	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	69
10 BOSCH TWK6831	40	1.7	1.25	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	68
11 DUALIT JKT2 Jug Kettle	55	1.5	0.90	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	65
12 ECOKETTLE MAW893	40	2.0	1.10		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	65
13 RUSSELL HOBBS Classic Range 11521	25	1.7	1.00		★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	63
14 COOKWORKS WEK04 Traditional	15	1.7	1.00		★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	62
15 BUSH KJ050	25	1.8	1.05		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	60
16 KENWOOD JK740 Series	15	1.7	0.55	✓	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	59
17 RUSSELL HOBBS Fenestra Glow 11522	30	1.7	0.85		★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	58
18 PRESTIGE Symmetry 50523	35	1.6	1.30	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	54

Test performance

Time to boil The average boiling time for a litre of water. Times range from 2min 3sec to 3min 13sec.

Energy to boil How much energy the kettle will use to boil a litre of water.

Ease of use This includes general ease of use, the comfort of the handle for lifting and pouring, the balance of the kettle when filled to its maximum and minimum, and the visibility of controls and graduations.

Surface cleaning How easy it is to remove fingermarks from the outside of the kettle. **Noise** How noisy the kettle is when boiling a litre of water.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Ease of use and cleaning	45%
Boiling performance	40%
Energy consumption	5%
Filter quality	5%
Noise	5%

Contacts

Breville
0800 525089
www.breville.co.uk

Bush 0800 525089
www.breville.co.uk

Bosch
0870 240 0060
www.boschappliances.co.uk

Cookworks
0870 600 8784
www.argos.co.uk

De'Longhi
0845 600 6845
www.delonghi.co.uk

Dualit 01293 652500
www.dualit.com

Ecokettle
01273 495888
www.ecokettle.com

Kenwood 023 9239 2333
www.kenwood.co.uk

Morphy Richards
01709 582402
www.morphyrichards.co.uk

Philips 0845 601 0354
www.philips.co.uk

Prestige
0151 482 8282
www.prestige.co.uk

Russell Hobbs
0161 947 3000
www.saltoneurope.com

MEMBER BENEFIT

FREE website access

More on kettles

Which? members have free access to our website where you can find out more about choosing and using a kettle, and further details on what features you should look out for.

See www.which.co.uk

Looking back

A cup of tea is part of our way of life, so no wonder we've always tested kettles

On the front cover of the first edition of *Which?*, in 1957, two women were pictured admiring kettles. Back then, we tested the first kettle that switched itself off automatically. Our testers liked the Russell Hobbs' model which 'automatically

cuts off current when boiling point is reached and ensures utmost economy'. We found it slightly unstable when nearly empty, but good enough to be one of our Best Buys. It cost £6.0s. 5d (equivalent to about £86.76 today).

