



How we test

Equipment engineers and sports scientists check out the construction, accuracy and features of our 14 treadmills

Durability

Each model endures 12,000 impacts from a tyre to simulate foot falls.

Belt performance

Students run while experts measure how much the belt slows down when their feet hit the track.

User-friendliness

Testers consider the people each model suits, looking at its dimensions, speed and gradient settings, console features and potential boredom factor.



Assembly

We look for clear instructions and diagrams as well as noting how well parts fit together and what tools are provided.

Safety

We search for the necessary safety markings and warning labels. We test the emergency stop and check for access to any live electrical parts or other safety hazards. We use a 400kg load to see how much weight the track can withstand.

The right track

Want to get fit but don't want to face rain clouds by running outside or posers at the gym? Try a treadmill at home instead

Whether you're a keen runner or an exercise-shy beginner, there should be a treadmill out there to suit you.

If you've been told to get in shape for health reasons, a treadmill at home could be the answer. After all, who wants to run about in a downpour, heatwave or in the dark in winter, or bump into the neighbours red-faced and exhausted? Also, it can be kinder on your joints to run on a treadmill rather than the road and many have some shock absorption.

Working out in a gym can also be an embarrassing experience or it can be costly over several years and take up travelling time.

Reader Jennifer Ali says: 'After years of paying a local gym, I invested my hard-earned cash in a treadmill and 12 months on I am still using it.

'I had a brief spell jogging round the block, but despite the fresh air and scenery, I was concerned about the impact on my joints and I noticed the

difference after jogging on my machine.

'I have also gained time by not having to drive to the gym or pack a bag. And to get that professional feel in my garage, I bought a cross-trainer, a second-hand portable TV and put a CD player in there.

'I use my home gym at least four times a week, and no longer have to worry about all the fit people jogging at speeds I could never do. I walk a little, jog a little, but most of all I enjoy my workout.'

Whatever your motivation, you won't last the course if your treadmill hinders rather than helps you reach your goal. We found great variation in design quality in the models we tested. And they're not cheap, so it's important to learn what you need by asking the right questions and to seek out the features that will suit you. And if you're still worried that treadmills are as dull as hamsters' wheels, we've considered interest, from those with many programmes to one with a TV screen.

'12 months on I am still using my treadmill'

Bremshey Control-T 69% £899

This model is a good choice for runners of any age, size or fitness level. There's plenty to keep you interested, with a good range of programmes. The control buttons are responsive and the display is easy to use but a bit dull. Speed, distance and time readings are accurate, although the gradient reading isn't. The belt's a good size, making it comfortable to run on, and it's smooth, exceptionally quiet and durable. This model has good shock absorption and a strong frame. Folding is easy and it packs away to a reasonable size for storing.

It's available online from Fitness Options and Argos Sports.

WE LIKE its challenging programmes such as the hill climb and weight loss.

Available Online Size in use 137x85x196cm
Storage size 187x85x84cm Features
Wireless heart-rate monitor, reading ledge, drinks holder



WHICH? BEST BUY

What you should look for

RESPONSIVE PROGRAMMES

Keen runners will want options to set their own user profiles, in addition to preset programmes

RUNNING BELT

Check the belt length is right for you before buying. Even if you are of average height, a belt can be too narrow or too short

FOOT PLATFORMS

These platforms, on either side of the belt, should be wide enough to stand on, and not slope, so you can get your balance right before stepping on to the belt



A DISPLAY FOR YOU

You can choose from two main types of display. On some models all workout information is displayed at once, but on most there is too much to see. On these you see some information constantly and can alternate modes to check other data

USEFUL FEEDBACK

Information on your workout varies between machines, but often includes the programme you've selected, speed, incline, pulse- and heart-rate measurement, calorie-counter and exercise time and distance

A SMOOTH RIDE

The belt should have a good grip but not be so rough that it sandpapers your running shoes. A good machine won't slow down too much as your foot hits the belt



Horizon Fitness Elite 507 **67%** £1,234

Features offered with this Best Buy make it good for some older and less able people. There are plenty of options for changing speed and incline, including toggle wheels and handlebar buttons. It's also comfortable due to a soft, durable belt and large running area, which is stable, as is the frame. This model easily supports someone weighing up to 170kg, and getting on and off is made easier by large handrails. However, they're fixed by one bolt only, and watch out for the hole under the console, with access to the wiring. Available online from Argos Sports and Gym World.

WE LIKE How easy it is to change speed and gradient.

Available Online Size in use 134x85x197cm
Storage size 187x85x81cm
Features Reading ledge, drinks holder



Large handlebars on the Horizon make it easier to get on and off

Tunturi T20 67% £680

If you're looking for a cheaper option, pick this. The model looks bland, but the range of programmes is reasonable and it has useful heart-rate-controlled programmes. You can alter programme values and set your own targets, and the console is clear with responsive buttons. It has a decent-sized running area, with a tough belt surface, but the front handlebar is close to the console so you could hit your knees. Also, the side handlebars are short, so getting on is tricky for some. But this treadmill feels solid and secure, and the deck has some impact absorption so it's kinder on your joints. It's available online from Gym World.

WORTH KNOWING It's easily assembled by two people in just 15 minutes.

Available Online Size in use 137x83x184cm
Storage size 174x83x76cm Features Reading ledge, drinks holder



Life Fitness T3-0 65% £1,695

As this model's console could be scary for a novice to navigate and as it's our most expensive Best Buy, it's better for the serious runner. It features a broad range of programmes and functions. The help function is useful and you can create seven of your own workout profiles. We were impressed by the shock-absorbing, cushioned deck of this machine, which is quiet and smooth. The frame is well made and stable. The front handlebar and side handrails are easy to reach from various positions. But it's very heavy and the deck doesn't fold, so assemble it where you'll be using it. It's available at John Lewis.

WORTH KNOWING Some programmes have 20 intensity levels.

Cheapest store John Lewis
Size in use 141x82x186cm
Storage size 141x82x186cm Features Wireless heart-rate monitor, reading ledge, drinks holder, shock absorption



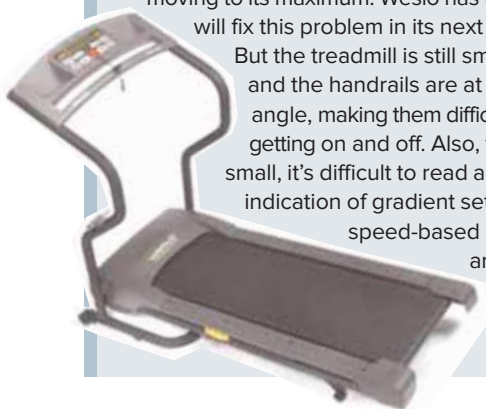
Don't Buy

Difficult model to manoeuvre on



WESLO CADENCE M6 £379 This model failed some safety checks and is difficult to use. We found it's unstable, so larger users could tip it quite easily. And while the emergency stop shuts down the controls, if the deck is rising or falling at the time it carries on moving to its maximum. Weslo has told us that it will fix this problem in its next production run.

But the treadmill is still small to run on and the handrails are at an awkward angle, making them difficult to use when getting on and off. Also, the display is so small, it's difficult to read and there's no indication of gradient setting. Four speed-based programmes aren't enough to keep you interested, either.



The way we were

In our last report on treadmills, in January 1999, we included machines powered just by running on the belt, alongside those with motors. We recommended a model priced at £799 for its design and durability and a cheaper option at £349 that reached only a brisk walking speed, so it wouldn't be a contender in 2007.

In 1999 we included treadmills powered just by running on the belt



Facts & Scores

Features to consider

Keep track

Only the Tunturi T60 can download information about your exercise regimen to a computer so you can monitor progress.

Keep keen

The Motive Fitness and Pro-Form simulate running tracks to help motivation.

Keep quiet

The Kettler is the noisiest treadmill, at 74dB – like a washing machine on spin.

MODEL		PRICE (£)	WEIGHT (kg)	MAXIMUM USER WEIGHT (kg)
1	BREMSHEY Control-T	899	113	150
2	HORIZON FITNESS Elite 507	1,234	113	ns
3	TUNTURI T20	680	96	135
4	LIFE FITNESS T3-0	1,695	112	180
5	TUNTURI T60	1,490	99	135
6	BOWFLEX 5 series Treadmill	995	119	136
7	MOTIVE FITNESS T3	999	101	115
8	PRO-FORM 585v Perspective	1,055	87	136
9	V-FIT T1	457	57	115
10	KETTLER Marathon TX2	949	105	140
11	VISION FITNESS T1450	1,000	83	ns
12	SCHWINN 815 Treadmill	799	93	125
13	REEBOK i-Run	494	52	100

USING THE TABLE

We tested mid-priced motorised models from leading brands. 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 to expect. If models are available online only, prices are in *italics*.

Weight When assembled.

Maximum user weight Claim of manufacturer. ns = not stated.

Speed Minimum and maximum.

Incline Minimum and maximum.

Feedback modes Number of options for seeing information about training session. **Training programmes** Number of options to vary training sessions.

Test performance

Performance Rating for display accuracy, consistency of belt speed, power consumption and noise. **Construction** The quality of all the parts. **Assembly** How easy it is to assemble, using the

makers' instructions.

Interest How likely it is that you won't get bored. **Suitability and user experience** How suitable it is for a range of users including larger and smaller people, advanced or beginners and older and less able users. **Convenience** How easy it is to use instructions and features as well as store

and maintain. **Safety**

Includes electrical and mechanical safety, warnings and markings.

Score

Ignores price, based on:
Performance **25%**
Suitability for use **25%**
Convenience **20%**
Construction **10%**
Safety **10%**
Assembly **5%**
Durability **5%**

Contacts

Argos Sports
0845 450 2080
www.argos-sports.co.uk
Bowflex
01908 267345
www.nautilus.com
Bremshey
0115 981 0205
www.bsfitness.co.uk
Fitness Options
0800 458 0081
www.fitnessoptions.co.uk
Gym World
0800 018 5294
www.gymworld.co.uk
Horizon Fitness
01782 749100
www.horizonfitness.co.uk
Kettler
01527 588995
www.kettler.co.uk

Life Fitness
01353 666017
www.lifefitness.com
Motive Fitness
01535 637711
www.benysports.co.uk
Pro-Form
0845 708 9009
www.iconeurope.com
Reebok
0871 474 2614
www.rbkdirect.co.uk
Schwinn
See Bowflex
Tunturi
See Bremshey
Vision Fitness
01782 749100
www.visionfitness.co.uk
V-Fit
See Motive Fitness
Weslo
See Pro-Form

SPECIFICATION				WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE								SCORE %
SPEED (mph)	INCLINE (%)	FEEDBACK MODES	TRAINING PROGRAMS	PERFORMANCE	CONSTRUCTION	ASSEMBLY	INTEREST	COMFORT	SUITABILITY AND USER EXPERIENCE	CONVENIENCE	SAFETY	
0.5-12	0-12	9	12	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69
0.5-12	0.5-12	7	14	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	67
0.5-10	0-12	7	9	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	67
0.5-12	0-15	8	19	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	65
0.3-11.2	0-10	8	16	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	60
0.5-11	0-12	14	13	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	56
0.5-11	0-15	17	6	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	56
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0.6-10	0-12	10	12	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	54
0.5-10	0-12	7	6	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	54
0.5-10	0-12	9	6	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	49
0.5-8.8	0 and 6	5	7	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★	★★	★★	★★★★★	48

Checklist

Before you invest your money in a treadmill, ask

■ Is it really a treadmill

I want? You get a good cardiovascular workout, but other machines will also work on your upper body strength. If you're not training to run a marathon, you might consider a rowing machine or a cross-trainer, for example.

■ How much space do I have?

Should it dominate your bedroom if you're only going to hop on and off a couple of times a week? A smaller model that folds up neatly may be all you need. Consider how much space you need around the treadmill so you can use it safely.

■ Am I really that keen or a bit reluctant?

If you suspect you'll need encouragement to keep you going, look for one with an interesting display – with a simulated running track or TV screen, perhaps.

■ How fit am I and how fit do I want to be?

Consider whether you must have accurate feedback to monitor progress on complicated programmes, or just need a rough idea of how you're doing on a fairly basic up-and-down-hill simulation, for example.

■ I want to run more seriously. What do I need?

You will need an accurate speed display and a comprehensive range of programmes, which may mean getting to grips with a complicated console. You're more likely to want heart-rate-controlled programmes and be able to create your own user profile. You'll also want a large, comfortable belt that doesn't slow down with foot contact. As a keen runner, you may be willing to put up with more noise and a bigger machine, though that depends on where and with whom you live.



■ What does the guarantee cover?

When you're forking out for a treadmill, you want to know that if something goes wrong, the guarantee will cover it. We checked what's covered and found major differences. For example, the Horizon Fitness comes with a lifetime frame, motor and electronics warranty and a two-year warranty for parts and labour, while the warranty for the Motive Fitness T3 is for two years – so check the small print.

■ I try to buy green. Are there options?

Treadmills don't use lots of electricity, but the V-Fit uses the lowest, at 15 watts when idle and 324 in use. The Horizon uses most, 65 watts when idle and 653 in use. Most treadmills had sensible packaging, but the Horizon was over the top with 18kg of it. The Life Fitness and Vision Fitness also overdid it. Note that most treadmills should be taken to a recycling facility at the end of their lives.

Which should you choose?

Best for a beginner

BREMSHEY CONTROL T,

£899 ONLINE This Best Buy (1) treadmill has a simple display and a help feature that guides you around the various programmes. This model has some shock absorption so it shouldn't give your knees or joints a hard time. You can also put this treadmill away easily when you're not using it.



Best for serious runners

LIFE FITNESS T3-0 TREAD, £1,695

Although at the top of our price bracket, you get a lot for your money with this machine (4). If you're a really keen trainer, you will probably appreciate running on its cushioned surface and using the heart-rate programmes. This model is also built to last and has long guarantees.



Best on a budget

TUNTURI T20, £680 ONLINE

The Tunturi (3) is our cheapest Best Buy and is streets ahead of several more expensive models. It's easy to use as the console directs you with sounds. It gives accurate readings and training statistics are displayed after each programme. A great choice to get you started and to get you fitter.



Best for fun

PRO-FORM 585V PERSPECTIVE, £1,055

ONLINE While interesting, this treadmill (8) is best considered if you simply must have the widest range of features. This has a television screen and a feature for downloading extra training programmes from the internet, if the 26 you get already aren't enough. The Pro-Form also has a fan, which is a nice touch but not particularly effective at cooling you down. This model reaches a steep incline of 15 per cent and can have you running up to a speedy 12.4mph.



Insider information

Our sports scientists tell you how to get started with exercise and avoid overdoing it

Ask an expert

If you're particularly unfit or have certain conditions, talk to your GP before buying any exercise machine. And bear in mind that without the expert instruction you get in a gym, you may not use a treadmill correctly. Take time to follow instructions or consider a personal trainer in the beginning.

Train safely

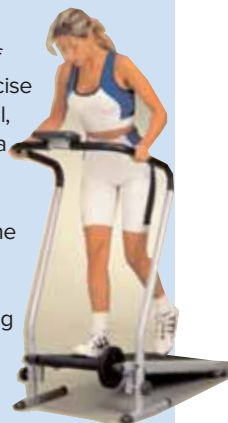
Always warm up for three to six minutes, by walking quickly and stretching gently, and cool down, again for three to six minutes, by reducing the intensity of exercise gradually and then stretching your muscles.

How much, how soon?

Health Education Authority guidelines suggest you should build up to at least 30 minutes of moderately intense activity five days a week. As a rule, don't increase intensity or time by more than 10 per cent a week.

How can I progress?

You progress by changing the intensity of training sessions, which also makes exercise interesting. Once you're used to a treadmill, experiment with its programmes. During a run, increase the speed and gradient or change the length of active rests and intensive intervals. For example, during the interval training programme on the Life Fitness, there's a series of increasingly steeper hills, alternating with valleys acting as active rest phases. More serious runners should always set a treadmill to a 1 per cent gradient to simulate the effects of wind resistance.



Running shoes



Just trying on a shoe isn't enough. Look for a dedicated running shop with staff to advise you and where you are likely to be asked to run around before you buy.

Try shoes on later in the day as feet tend to be tired and more swollen, as

after a workout. Shoes should have good grip, flexibility and cushioning and be able to absorb sweat. Replace them every 500 miles.

The right kit

Wear loose, comfortable clothing so you don't overheat and have water nearby to prevent dehydration. Stave off boredom with music – TV might distract you from your running.

