



the **BEST** brands

Don't buy another thing without first checking our list!

Who makes the best appliances, cars, and electronics? It's not an easy question for us to answer because, among other things, we test thousands of products each year, and it's not uncommon for the same company to make models that land at the top and near the bottom of our ratings. But we narrowed the field, using three years of test data (to see which brands have historically done better than others and tend to have higher overall scores) and owner-reliability surveys involving hundreds of thousands of subscribers. We then consulted with dozens of experts in our labs. Just keep in mind that past performance doesn't guarantee future results, of course. Also, brands that aren't called out may still make some great models. So always check product ratings and reviews before you buy anything. But our list is a good starting point, and it should help you avoid the duds!

Washers



(front-loaders)

BEST BRANDS



Kenmore, Maytag, and Samsung are the top-rated brands for performance; LG is among the best brands for reliability. Samsung and LG washers also stand out for style and offer optional red finishes (we love the “merlot” model on our cover)—but you’ll pay up for these features. Maytag and Kenmore washers also do OK in our performance tests.

Check out this model

SAMSUNG

WF56H9100AG, \$1,600

Why we like it Yes, it’s crazy expensive, but you can’t beat it for cleaning power and capacity—it can handle bigger loads than almost any other model we’ve tested. It’s also very energy- and water-efficient and quieter than many washers.

Other Smart Picks

■ **LG WM8500HVA, \$1,450**

■ **KENMORE ELITE 41073, \$1,450**

■ **MAYTAG MAXIMA XL**

MHW8100DC, \$1,300



GET A LOAD OF THIS!
This Samsung washer (left) is stylish and saves time with its giant capacity.



(HE top-loaders)

BEST BRANDS



Samsung makes more top-rated HE top-loaders than any other brand in our tests. They clean well, and their giant capacities can save time if you have lots of laundry. Maytag offers solid performance and proven reliability, often at a lower cost. (Note: Regular top-loaders don’t get clothes as clean as the best HE models. Those machines also use less water and have a faster spin cycle to wring more water from clothes, so you save drying time—and electricity—too.)



The Maytag has a window on the lid, so you can keep an eye on your laundry!

Check out this model

MAYTAG BRAVOS XL

MVWB725BW, \$800

Why we like it This top-loader is energy-efficient and does a very good job of getting clothes clean. And although it’s a bit smaller and slower than the Samsung below, it’s just more than half the price!

Another Smart Pick

■ **SAMSUNG WA56H9000AP, \$1,500**

Dryers (electric)

BEST BRAND



When it comes to performance and reliability, LG dryers can't be beat. The TrueSteam feature found on many models can be used to refresh and remove odors from clothing. Samsung is the only brand that comes close to LG in terms of performance, but it lags its rival in reliability.



Check out this model LG DLEX8500V, \$1,400

Why we like it If you do a lot of laundry, this dryer is for you. Few other models we've tested have a bigger capacity (9 cubic feet). It's quieter than many dryers and does an excellent job of getting clothes dry, whether they're delicate lingerie or heavyweight towels and jeans. But it's available only in one color, graphite, shown above.

Another Smart Pick

■ **SAMSUNG**
DV50F9A8EVP, \$1,100



TVs

BEST BRANDS



Panasonic
SONY



All of these brands make great TVs. But Samsung sets come out on top in our lab tests, with LG close behind. TVs have become very reliable over the years, and no brand stands out as being more reliable than others.

Check out this model

SAMSUNG
UN60HU8550, \$2,300

Why we like it This ultra-HD 60-inch TV has a vivid, crystal-clear picture and very good sound. Plus it's a smart TV, so you can stream your favorite shows from Netflix, Amazon, and more.

Other Smart Picks

■ **LG 65UB9500**, \$2,700

■ **SONY BRAVIA XBR-65X900B**, \$3,800

■ **PANASONIC VIERA TC-65AX800U**, \$2,500

This TV can recommend what to watch based on your viewing habits.



Laptops

BEST BRAND



In addition to being one of the most reliable brands, Apple really shines in tech support, according to owner surveys. (Low-rated brands for tech support: Toshiba, Gateway, and Acer.) To be sure, the best models we test aren't all Apples—but none of them are dogs, either. All Apple laptops are solid performers. The trade-off: They're not cheap!

Check out this model APPLE MACBOOK

AIR 13-INCH
MD760LL/B, \$1,000

Why we like it With blazing-fast performance and a battery that lasts for more than 16 hours (longer than any Windows laptop we've tested), the MacBook Air has unparalleled computing power and stamina.



Vacuums

BEST BRAND



Kenmore is king because of its high combined scores for performance and reliability. The brand's upright and canister vacs excel at cleaning bare floors and do a very good job on carpets. They're also good at preventing dirt they suck up from spewing back into the air. And many models are very reasonably priced. Panasonic is also a performance standout for canister vacs, and Miele canisters and Shark uprights have good reliability track records in our owner surveys.

With a telescoping hose, pet-hair brush, and crevice tool, dirt can't hide from the Kenmore Elite!



Check out this upright model KENMORE ELITE 31150, \$350

Why we like it No other upright vacuum did as well in our tests as this Kenmore. The bagged upright does a very good job on floors of all kinds, especially hardwood and tile. It sucks up pet hair and has a 35-foot cord that will let you clean large rooms with ease. Just one bummer: You have to bend over to adjust the pile height.

Another Smart Pick

■ SHARK ROTATOR PROFESSIONAL LIFT-AWAY NV501, \$260



Check out this canister model KENMORE PROGRESSIVE 21614, \$300

Why we like it The Kenmore does a very good job of removing dirt and pet hair on carpets and an even better job on bare floors, and its onboard tools make it super-versatile. It's also great at controlling dust and dander, a plus if you have allergies or respiratory issues.

Other Smart Picks

■ PANASONIC MC-CG937, \$330
■ MIELE S 8590 MARIN, \$1,000



Refrigerators

(bottom-freezer*)

BEST BRANDS



SAMSUNG

In the popular category of bottom-freezer refrigerators, Kenmore and Samsung are performance stars that also have decent reliability track records. Three brands that didn't make the cut but perform well are Electrolux, Frigidaire, and Whirlpool; our reliability surveys show that they're more likely to break down than other brands. In the top-freezer category, Kenmore is among the more reliable brands. If you're buying a side-by-side, skip KitchenAid. It's the least reliable brand in that category.



This family-friendly Kenmore has spill-proof shelves and an alarm that sounds if doors are left open.

Check out this model

■ **KENMORE 7160[3], \$1,700**

Why we like it When it comes to maintaining an even temperature to keep food fresh, nothing can match this Kenmore three-door model. It's also super-energy-efficient and one of the quietest fridges we've tested. We also love features such as pull-out shelves and bins, digital controls, a temperature-controlled meat/deli compartment, and LED lights in the freezer.

Another Smart Pick

■ **SAMSUNG RF30HDEDTSR, \$3,000**



Ranges

BEST BRAND



Whether gas or electric, GE ranges are very reliable and perform consistently better than average overall in our tests. Plus, the ovens are spacious, so big family meals are no problem. One bummer: The highest-rated GE models are on the expensive side. Other brands to consider include LG and Samsung, which perform well in our tests. Kenmore and Frigidaire (gas), and Whirlpool (electric) are reliability champs.

This GE Café model aced our simmering, baking, and broiling tests.



Check out this gas model GE PGS920SEFSS, \$2,800

Why we like it Pro-style gas ranges with large cooking surfaces, thick grates, and chunky knobs look impressive, but few perform as well as this GE slide-in. With five burners—one high-, three medium-, and one low-power—it does an excellent job of simmering, and its convection oven is great for baking.

Other Smart Picks

- FRIGIDAIRE GALLERY FGGF3032MW, \$700
- KENMORE 74132, \$700

Check out this electric model GE CAFE CS980STSS, \$2,800

Why we like it With five burners, including one that's high-powered, cooking a feast is a cinch. The radiant smoothtop even has a bridge element, so you can griddle pancakes or cook steaks. The high-capacity convection oven has a temperature probe to help ensure that food comes out perfectly done. Plus, there's a baking drawer for cooking pizza, biscuits, or other smaller foods.

Other Smart Picks

- KENMORE 94142, \$430
- LG LRE3083SW, \$800
- SAMSUNG NE58H9970WS, \$3,600

Dishwashers

BEST BRAND



BOSCH

Bosch is the only dishwasher brand that is a standout for performance and reliability. It makes some of the quietest and most energy-efficient models you can buy, and cleaning performance is first-rate. Other brands our testers recommend include Whirlpool, which gets high marks for reliability.

SPARKLING CLEAN
Hidden controls give this Bosch a sleek look.



Check out this model BOSCH ASCENTA SHX3AR7[5]UC, \$700

Why we like it This stainless-steel model is really good at washing and drying (even plastics!). There's plenty of room for utensils, plus an adjustable upper rack that can make room for tall items. And it's a great value—the Ascenta outperformed dishwashers that cost hundreds of dollars more! Just one bummer: You'll have to clean the food filter manually (a yucky job).

Another Smart Pick

- WHIRLPOOL WDT720PADM, \$500



Automobiles

Best splurge brand

BEST BRAND



Lexus sets the standard for quiet, plush, and very reliable vehicles. In addition to being luxurious, Lexus vehicles have plenty of oomph on the road. Almost all of its models score highly for owner satisfaction. Other standouts include Audi, Porsche, and BMW.

Check out this model LEXUS LS 460L, \$82,504

Why we like it No other luxury car will swaddle you in such refined comfort. Owners say the Lexus is super-reliable; our testers say it rides like a dream and has plenty of room, so you and your family can travel in comfort.

Another Smart Pick ■ LEXUS RX 450H, \$53,576

Best family/economy brand

BEST BRAND



Mazda cars are super-reliable, stylish, fuel-efficient, and fun to drive. Other top brands in this category: Toyota, Subaru, Buick, Honda, and Kia.

Check out this model

MAZDA6, \$23,590

Why we like it With stellar reliability, sporty handling, and a comfortable ride, you'll look forward to your daily drive. Plus, you get an outstanding 32 mpg overall. (See page 71 for more details.)

FLASHY BUT NOT FLAKY Unlike Mercedes, Lexus gives you luxury and reliability.



BRANDS TO AVOID

Reliability is key when it comes to stuff like washers, fridges, and cars. They're high-ticket items that you rely on daily. So every year we survey consumers about the appliances, electronics, and autos they own to see which brands have the fewest and most repairs or other serious problems. These brands got worse scores than others.

Ranges (electric)

- ELECTROLUX
- JENN-AIR
- KITCHENAID

Ranges (gas)

- KITCHENAID
- MAYTAG

Washers

- (front-loader)
- FRIGIDAIRE
 - GE

Vacuums (canister)

- ELECTROLUX
- HOOVER

Vacuums

- (upright)
- ELECTROLUX
 - MIELE
 - RICCAR
 - SIMPLICITY

Dishwashers

- SAMSUNG

Refrigerators

- (bottom-freezer)
- ELECTROLUX
 - FRIGIDAIRE

Automobiles

- CHRYSLER
- DODGE
- FIAT
- JEEP
- MERCEDES-BENZ
- MINI
- SCION