

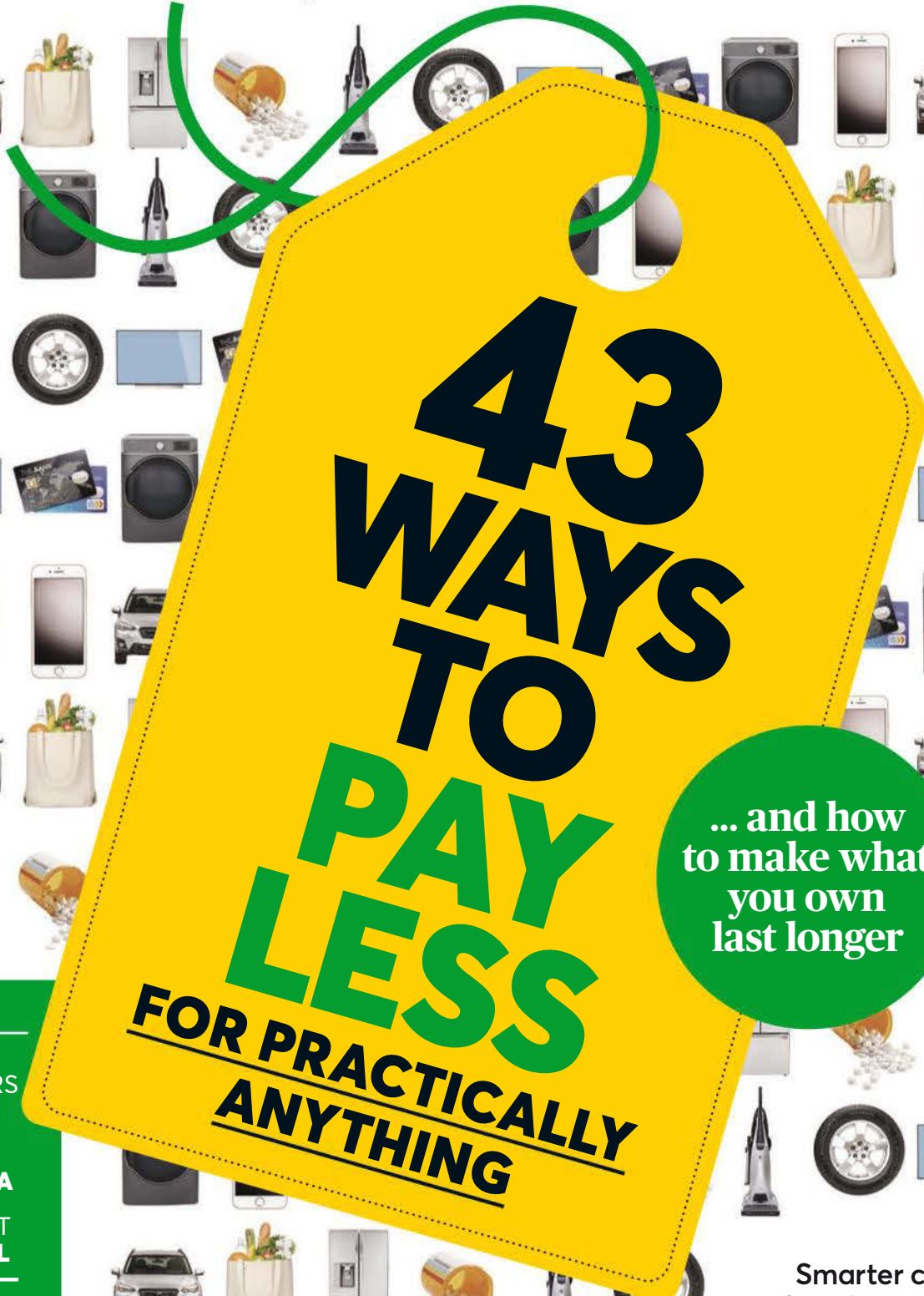


# Consumer Reports™

FEBRUARY 2018

## REVIEWS & RATINGS

- Microwaves
- Child Car Seats
- Toilets
- Honda Accord
- Blenders



# 43 WAYS TO PAY LESS

## FOR PRACTICALLY ANYTHING

... and how to make what you own last longer

**PLUS**

**NEW & USED CARS OWNERS LOVE & HATE**

**TOP PICKS IN FROZEN PIZZA**

**5 WAYS TO GET A GREAT DEAL ON A NEW TV—NOW!**

Smarter choices for a better world

# What's on your mind?



## We want to know.

Our goal is a fairer, safer, and healthier marketplace for everyone.

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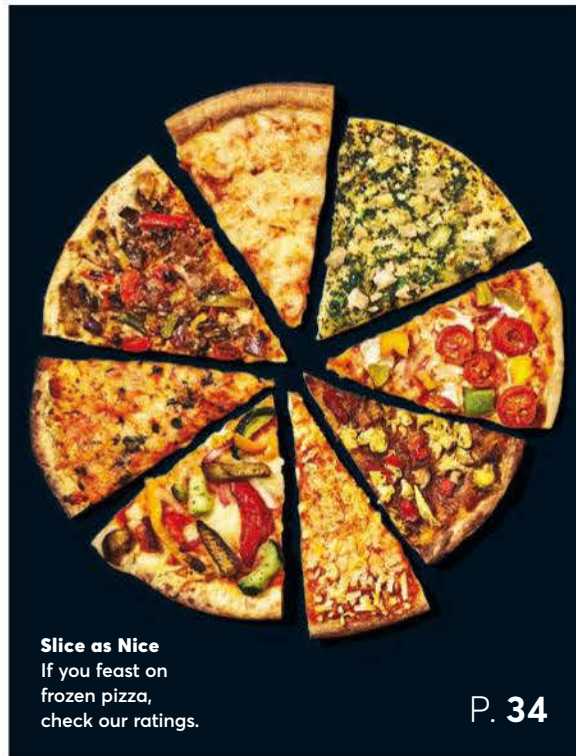
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**RATINGS** Overall scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. We rate products using these symbols:

⊖ POOR   
 ⊕ FAIR   
 ⊕ GOOD  
⊕ VERY GOOD   
 ⊕ EXCELLENT

# Your Saving Grace



WHETHER YOU BELIEVE that it talks, is the root of all evil, or is what makes the world go round, we can all agree on one thing when it comes to money: Having a little bit more of it can make a big difference for our families. Finding some extra dollars in your bank account doesn't always require cutting corners or asking for a raise, though. There are countless everyday ways you can start saving money now that you may not be aware of. This

month, we're cluing you in to the savviest strategies from our in-house experts and researchers, so you can pay less and get better value wherever and whenever you enter the marketplace.

From shedding dollars off your car insurance premium to identifying hidden discounts at the drugstore, our complete guide will have you keeping more and spending less on a host of common necessities. Inside, you'll find simple tips to reduce common strains on your appliances so that they work effectively for longer before they need to be repaired or replaced. We'll introduce you to the world of online haggling, walk you through methods to bring down your property tax assessment, and help you sort out which products are ripe for savings—and which you should never skimp on. There are more important things in life than money, of course, but at CR we also know that a penny saved is a penny you can use to plan for your future or feel more secure. That's the peace of mind we strive to deliver, so that you and your family can enjoy many happy returns.

*Marta Tellado*

**Marta L. Tellado,**  
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## Taking Equifax to Task

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

Armed with a petition signed by more than 180,000 consumers, CR advocates pressed executives of credit reporting agency Equifax to do more for the 145 million people whose personal data may have been stolen in last year's massive data breach.

When Equifax announced in September that hackers had potentially gained access to millions of Social Security and credit card numbers as well as other sensitive data, many people wanted to know whether they were among those who were affected—and, if so, how to protect themselves from fraud and identity theft. But the company's initial response was chaotic: Its website crashed, its phone lines were jammed, and when people did get through, Equifax offered only weak solutions.

### HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

That's when CR called on Equifax to step up, and invited consumers to sign on to our demand for seven specific actions to make consumers whole. These include offering longer-lasting free credit freezes and credit monitoring, hiring and training more staff to process complaints promptly, and setting aside funds to compensate affected consumers.

Equifax finally agreed to meet with CR advocates at its Atlanta headquarters in November, and we used the opportunity to deliver the petition signatures. After discussing our recommendations for more than an hour, company executives pledged to continue the conversation with CR as they develop new remedies.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Our latest petition to Equifax is online at [ConsumersUnion.org/equifaxpetition](http://ConsumersUnion.org/equifaxpetition). We are also pushing Congress to



raise standards and hold companies accountable. Contact your representatives at [congress.gov](http://congress.gov) and demand stronger data privacy and security laws.

## Seeking Sunroof Safety

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

Spontaneously shattering vehicle sunroofs—a growing problem that we highlighted in our December 2017 issue—are getting some much-needed attention from policymakers.

In recent years, such incidents have spiked along with the increasing popularity of panoramic sunroofs. But our investigation found that many automakers and dealerships have refused to acknowledge the problem or pay for repairs.

In response, Sens. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., and Edward Markey, D-Mass., sent letters to automakers

asking for detailed information on sunroof materials, defects, and design. “While, thankfully, severe injuries have not been officially linked to this hazard, the increasing trend of this risk requires immediate response and action,” they wrote.

### HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

The senators asked a lot of the same questions we did, and we'll follow the responses closely. In addition, we called on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to expand its ongoing investigation into Kia Sorento sunroof problems to other makes and models, and to urge automakers with shattering incidents to order recalls.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

If your sunroof exploded or shattered, go to NHTSA's [safercar.gov](http://safercar.gov) or call 888-327-4236 to report it. We're also collecting stories about the problem. Please go to [CR.org/explodingsunroofs](http://CR.org/explodingsunroofs) to tell us what happened.

## Digging Out of Student Debt

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

A new rule was supposed to help defrauded students move on with their lives. Instead, many remain in educational limbo.

The “borrower defense” rule was approved by the Department of Education in 2016 after the shutdown of for-profit Corinthian Colleges, which a federal investigation determined had misled students about job placement rates and engaged in false advertising. It established a clear process for these and other defrauded students to discharge their educational debts.

More than 65,000 claims, mostly from Corinthian students, were filed in anticipation of the rule going into effect in July 2017. Less than a month before it did, however, newly confirmed Education Secretary Betsy DeVos postponed the rule and convened a committee of higher education officials, financial industry representatives, consumer and student advocates, and other stakeholders to reconsider it.

### HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

Suzanne Martindale, a CR staff attorney who helped shape the original borrower defense rule, is serving as a consumer negotiator on the committee, which will develop a new regulation and vote on the draft proposal in mid-February. “The abrupt halt to the borrower defense rule has left defrauded students stranded with debt for worthless programs,” says Martindale. “Borrowers with legitimate claims deserve relief now, and we need sensible rules going forward to ensure better oversight of federal financial aid dollars.”

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you or a family member is struggling to repay a student loan, go to [CR.org/studentloans0218](http://CR.org/studentloans0218) for strategies and advice on your rights and options.



In our December 2017 article, “**Shop Online With Confidence**,” we offered strategies to help readers avoid scams and save money when making purchases online—especially for holiday gifts. To cash in on our information or to join the conversation, go to [CR.org/shoptips0218](https://www.consumerreports.org/shoptips0218).

IN REPLY TO “Shopping for a Worthy Cause” (December 2017), I have used the iGive.com shopping portal for many years. The percentage each merchant agrees to give to your chosen charity is clearly listed—and at the end of the year you get a report on the amount you gave to your chosen cause for the year.  
—Dennis Faulkner, via CR.org

I SAW THAT Sam’s Club’s One Day Sale featured an LG refrigerator at a secret price, revealed to be \$799 at 12:01 a.m. EST. The item listed for \$1,899.99 on LG’s website.

It was instant pandemonium. The site was crashing. A family member had to get through to them using the telephone!  
—Jay Lewis, via CR.org

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Although online shopping can yield great prices without requiring you to collide with crowds of shoppers, there’s still plenty of virtual competition (especially if software bots are also buying up the item). So if you know a sale is coming, set up an account with the site ahead of time to make checkout faster. But if you’re having site trouble, yes, a good old-fashioned phone call might help you secure the discount.

### Caring Conversation

THE DECEMBER 2017 Consumer Reports article “Getting Help at Home” includes information about Meals on Wheels in the section “Help With Home-Care Bills.” The article states, “Get

free meals” and then tells about the Meals on Wheels program. There is usually no set fee, but recipients are asked to make a donation toward the cost of the meal. Meals on Wheels programs rely on these donations to help them cover their costs and to be able to serve more people.  
—Carol Mattson, Siren, WI

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Meals on Wheels told us that, depending on your financial situation, recipients might be asked to make a contribution. But that’s not always so. “The approach to asking for recipient donations varies by community,” a spokesperson says. To find out more about the organization, you can go to [mealsonwheelsamerica.org](https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org).

AT AGE 50, my wife and I opened mutual fund Roth IRAs, with the objective of

self-funding our long-term care. This approach has three advantages over the expensive insurance offered for long-term care. 1) Unlike long-term insurance plans, which cover less and less of the actual cost of long-term care over time, the Roth IRA can be expected to increase in value, as long-term-care costs increase. 2) Statistically, only one of us will need long-term care, and that person is unlikely to need it before 85, giving us time to build (and share) our accounts. 3) If neither of us needs to use the funds for long-term care, the money goes to our children, not to an insurance company.  
—Eric Johnson, Princeton, NJ

**EDITOR’S NOTE** We’re glad that you’re saving for long-term care. But keep in mind that the contribution limit for Roth IRAs is \$5,500 per year, plus \$1,000 for those 50 and older. If you put the max each year into a Roth IRA for, say, 10 years, you might have about \$80,000, assuming 4 percent average annual returns. But inflation rates for healthcare and assisted-living costs are rising about 6 percent or more annually. You could definitely make a dent in your long-term-care costs, but you can’t expect to fully cover them if you have years of disability. Funding your own care can be very difficult, so it’s a good idea to look at all your options, including insurance.

### Sunroof Scares

IN REPLY TO “Shattered” (December 2017): The sunroof in our SUV shattered last summer. At that time the car was two years into a three-year/36,000-mile warranty. Unfortunately, it was 137 miles over the 36,000 miles. The car manufacturer offered no assistance. Our next vehicle will not have a sunroof.  
—Charlie Howard, via CR.org

THIS HAPPENED TO ME in my brand-new luxury vehicle. On a trip with my wife, there was a loud exploding sound. I looked



WRITE

Go to [CR.org/lettertoeditor](https://www.consumerreports.org/lettertoeditor) to share your comments for publication.

up to see that my sunroof had exploded. The dealer was difficult to deal with to get this resolved. It has been eight weeks, and I still don't have my car fixed. The paint job on the back of the car was damaged as well. Luckily we were not injured. The issue here is not that things happen but rather that manufacturers should take ownership of the incident and repair the car without a fight.  
 –Bryan Mours, via Facebook

THANKS FOR YOUR well-researched report on exploding sunroofs. Although you alluded to the increasing prevalence of sunroofs on new cars, you didn't mention a simple remedy: Many car buyers, ourselves included, have elected to buy a lower trim level because it was available without a sunroof. They are noisy, especially combined with a roof rack. If a luggage box is above the sunroof, it is of no purpose whatsoever.  
 –Ken Eden, Green Valley, AZ

### Drilling Discussion

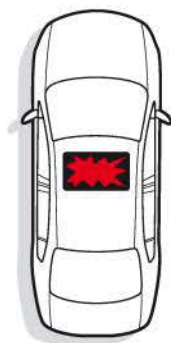
GREAT DECEMBER ARTICLE on cordless drills (“Know the Drill” 2017). I would advise homeowners buying a cordless drill to look at the company's product line before buying a drill. For instance, I went with Black+Decker, with a 20-volt drill, impact driver, hand vacuum, leaf blower, and flashlight all sharing the batteries, and with a 40-volt lawn mower, hedge trimmer, and leaf blower. So I have only two batteries to worry about and always have enough that are charged up. This brings up the big question: Why haven't tool batteries been standardized? It doesn't take long to realize that manufacturers lure you in with low prices on tools knowing you will have to buy their batteries later.  
 –Daniel Stadtherr, Porterville, CA

**EDITOR'S NOTE** We agree that it's smart to consider a brand's platform of tools when

shopping for a drill, because you can use the same batteries—a considerable savings. In fact, we advise applying this idea to outdoor power equipment as well. Consumers should zero in on the tool that's most important to them, then make sure the brand's other offerings are solid performers, too.

**‘ON A TRIP**  
 with my wife  
 in my brand-new  
 car, there was  
 a loud sound.  
 I looked up to see  
 that my sunroof  
 had exploded.’

–Bryan Mours



### Snap Chat

IN YOUR ARTICLE “Picture Perfect” (December 2017), rating photo print services, you use the phrase “print quality,” but I'd also want to know the quality of the paper on which the image is printed, for example, the finish (glossy, matte).  
 –Roger Kohn, Manhattan Beach, CA

**EDITOR'S NOTE** The panelists who judged the image-quality attributes reviewed prints only on glossy photo paper because

it allows us to see the inherent capabilities of the printer, unimpeded. We don't use matte paper because it introduces artifacts—slightly softening the details and making it more difficult to compare photos. Evaluating the surface light reflectance qualities of each service's papers was beyond the scope of this testing project.

REGARDING PHOTO PRINTING services, you failed to mention one factor that may make the technical evaluations of photos moot. Prints ordered and picked up from local businesses (CVS, Walgreens, Target, etc.) are printed in those particular local stores. Therefore, the photo quality is dependent on the printer used, the skill level and attentiveness of the printer operator, and the photo paper used. These can vary greatly from place to place and even from day to day in the same place. My advice is to stick with one place once (if you find a good one).  
 –James DeLozier, Silver Spring, MD

**EDITOR'S NOTE** We ordered all our prints via the internet and had them shipped to a residential address by the national chains (CVS, Walgreens, etc.). The prints appear to have originated from their corporate processing centers, not individual retail stores. So you're correct that our testing results, which were designed to evaluate a purely online experience, don't apply to retail in-store printing. But we agree with your advice: If you find a local retailer that consistently delivers quality prints, it makes sense to stick with that store.

### A Helping Hand

CONCERNING YOUR ARTICLE about a lack of CPR training (Ask Our Experts, December 2017), as a recently retired 911 operator, I can tell you that when you call 911, the operator you reach is trained to help you perform CPR even as they

are simultaneously sending a medic response to your home. I would encourage anyone to make the call.  
 –Richard Dennis, Blacklick, OH

### Toilet Talk

I GOT A CHUCKLE out of the “Santa's Other Throne?” ad in the Selling It section of the December 2017 issue. While a toilet seems to be an odd gift, it might also be a very thoughtful one. A few years ago, this was my Christmas gift to my parents. I gave them a new modern comfort-height toilet. Being older, they welcomed the easier-to-access increased height. Also, as a new model, they appreciate its lower water usage and resistance to clogs. Not every gift needs to be electronics, food, or clothing to be thoughtful. Something used every day might be the perfect gift, even if it does get a laugh.  
 –Rodney Grill, Helena, AL

**EDITOR'S NOTE** We agree. For anyone else in the market, turn to page 18 for our latest toilet ratings.

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# What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 60 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

## Chromebooks

**WE TESTED:** 24 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Display, overall performance, ergonomics, battery life, versatility, and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
 Median: 63  
 Range: 50-76

**Best Overall & Touch Screen**  
 Asus Chromebook Flip C302CA-DHM4, 12.5" display  
 \$500



**76** OVERALL SCORE

**Portable & Nicely Priced**  
 HP Chromebook 11-V012NR, 11.6" display  
 \$200



**69** OVERALL SCORE

**Best Battery Life**  
 Acer Chromebook CB3-532-C47C, 15.6" display  
 \$200



**64** OVERALL SCORE

## Immersion Blenders

**WE TESTED:** 9 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** How well it purées vegetables in water for soup, how well it blends frozen fruit and yogurt for smoothies.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
 Median: 64  
 Range: 34-92

**Best Overall**  
 Breville Control Grip BSB510XL  
 \$100



**92** OVERALL SCORE

**Super at Soup for a Lot Less**  
 Cuisinart Smart Stick CSB-75  
 \$35



**76** OVERALL SCORE

**Longest Warranty (5 years)**  
 Electrolux Masterpiece ELHB10B9PS  
 \$230



**69** OVERALL SCORE

## Ask Our Experts

**I got an immersion blender as a holiday gift this year. What can it do that my regular blender can't?**



“FOR ONE THING, with its super-compact design, an immersion blender can easily be tucked away into a cabinet,” says CR home appliance tester Cindy Fisher. It can also save you time on meal prep because, rather than filling up a blender pitcher, you can submerge this slim device directly into the food or drink you’re preparing, such as simmering vegetables in a pot with tall sides. “But,” says Fisher, “these devices can’t truly replace a countertop blender,” which can handle heavy-duty jobs like ice cubes that immersion blenders can’t. So think of your immersion blender as a complementary tool to minimize the effort and mess of smaller culinary tasks. For our immersion blender picks, see above.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH



For even more ratings of these and other product categories, online subscribers can go to [CR.org](http://CR.org).

## Convertible Car Seats

**WE TESTED:** 23 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Crash protection; ease of use including buckle and clip adjustment, secure installation with LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children) and seat belts.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 63  
Range: 44-82

**Best Overall**  
Chicco NextFit  
\$300



**82** OVERALL SCORE

**Easiest Installation**  
Britax Marathon ClickTight  
\$265



**81** OVERALL SCORE

**Great Value**  
Evenflo SureRide  
\$100



**74** OVERALL SCORE

## Instant Digital Meat Thermometers

**WE TESTED:** 18 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Accuracy of temperature readings, accuracy with thin meats, quickness of response time, convenience, and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 71.5  
Range: 50-83

**Best Overall**  
CDNProAccurate TCT572  
\$80



**83** OVERALL SCORE

**Excellent for Extra-Thin Meat**  
ThermoWorks ThermoPen  
\$80



**81** OVERALL SCORE

**Accurate & Affordable**  
ThermoWorks ThermoWorks Pocket RT600C2  
\$20



**80** OVERALL SCORE

## Large Countertop Microwaves

**WE TESTED:** 40 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Heating and defrosting evenness, speed of heating, usable capacity in cubic feet, microwaving noise, and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 65  
Range: 46-75

**Best Overall**  
Panasonic NN-SD945S  
(14x24x20 in.; 1.4 cu. ft.)  
\$215



**75** OVERALL SCORE

**Great Zap for Your Buck**  
Oster OGG61403  
(13x22x20 in.; 0.8 cu. ft.)  
\$120



**74** OVERALL SCORE

**Longest Warranty (10 years)**  
GE Profile JES2251SJ[SS]  
(14x24x19 in.; 1.5 cu. ft.)  
\$280



**72** OVERALL SCORE

## Ellipticals

**WE TESTED:** 38 models  
**WE TEST FOR:** Construction; ease of use of controls, display, and exercise programs; ergonomics; and more.

**ABOUT THE SCORES:**  
Median: 59  
Range: 45-80

**Best Overall**  
Diamondback 1260Ef  
\$2,300



**80** OVERALL SCORE

**Intuitive Controls & Display**  
Sole E95S  
\$2,300



**75** OVERALL SCORE

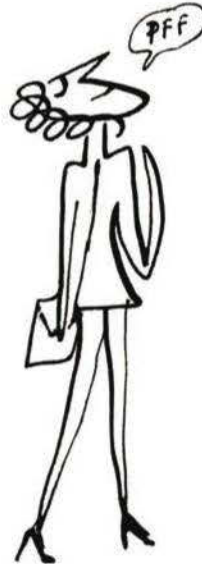
**Bargain Buy**  
Sole Schwinn 470  
\$800



**73** OVERALL SCORE

**Note:** We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with another.

**COMING NEXT MONTH:** Tablets, Frying Pans & More



## Is green tea or the supplement healthy or dangerous? I keep hearing conflicting things.

Green tea, the drink, and green tea extract (GTE), the supplement, both contain compounds called catechins, which have been found to have antioxidant properties that may prevent cellular damage that can lead to cancer and other ills. However, an excess of catechins appears to harm the liver.

GTE, sold on its own and in multi-ingredient blends, and often marketed as a fat-burner and weight-loss aid, can contain dangerously high amounts of those catechins. A study of postmenopausal women published in August 2017 in the journal *Cancer Prevention Research* found that participants

who took green tea extract supplements twice a day for 12 months (containing a total of about 1,315 mg of catechins) were seven times more likely to have abnormally elevated liver enzymes than those who took a placebo. “Those levels are markers for liver injury, much as you might see with alcohol abuse,” says Marvin M. Lipman, M.D., CR’s chief medical adviser.

Consumer Reports believes GTE is so potentially harmful that we include it on our list of 15 supplements to always avoid. Also, dietary supplements are only loosely regulated, so you can’t be sure that what you’re taking contains what’s listed on the label, or in what amounts. Consumer Reports has long advocated for measures to give the Food and Drug Administration more authority to remove potentially harmful dietary supplements from the marketplace.

Drinking green tea is also said to have a number of health

benefits, from lowering blood pressure to managing diabetes. But little evidence conclusively backs up many claims. And we couldn’t find any conclusive research showing how much is safe to drink each day, in part because it’s so difficult to know the exact amount of catechins you’re getting in each brewed cup. Drinking a few cups of green tea each day is probably safe, Lipman says. But limiting your intake even more may be safer.

### A friend told me I can make my sports shows look better by adjusting the settings on my TV. What should I do?

Sports fans, we’re glad you asked. All TVs have a picture settings menu, but not enough people take advantage of the settings to tailor their screens, says Claudio Ciacci, the program leader who oversees CR’s TV testing. If your TV allows you to adjust the features independently, we recommend that you shut off the motion smoothing feature—technically known as motion interpolation or motion estimation/motion compensation, and which goes by brand names such as Auto Motion Plus (Samsung)

or TruMotion (LG). But leave the anti-blurring processing on. This will reduce blurring during sports programming without overly smoothing the look of movies and prime-time TV shows, which typically have a slightly jerky camera style.

### My car salesman was pushing me to buy an extended warranty because I put a lot of miles on my car per year. Is it worth it?

“You might be tempted to roll the cost of an extended warranty into your new car purchase, but that means you’re paying up front—including interest—for a service you won’t use for years,” says CR auto analyst Mel Yu.

Yu recommends waiting until your car is near the end of its original warranty and then shopping around for a factory-backed extended warranty if you still want one. By then, you’ll know how reliable the car is and how much repairs cost. (Check our new-car reliability ratings online at [CR.org/reliability](http://CR.org/reliability) or on newsstands in our *New Cars* magazine.) In our 2013 survey, many car owners told us that they wound up spending more on the extended warranty than they would have to fix it during the coverage period. Get quotes from several dealers, not just the one you bought your car from, and don’t be afraid to haggle.



LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare! Submit your questions at [CR.org/askourexperts](http://CR.org/askourexperts) ... and watch for the answers.

# CR Insights

*In the Know*

## How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

IF YOU HAVE a fire extinguisher in the house but you aren't sure where it is or it's coated in dust, it's as good as useless. "Owning the right fire extinguisher is crucial," says Don Huber, director of product safety at Consumer Reports. But so is having one in the right place and knowing how to use it.

Our tests show that heavier extinguishers contain more flame retardant and are able to deliver it quicker, so we recommend that you buy the largest ones you can comfortably handle. Also, Huber says, make sure your fire extinguisher can handle the three fire types that are indicated by the letters A, B and C on the label at right. This ensures that the retardant inside can put out multiple types of fires.

Have one multipurpose fire extinguisher on each level of your home. Also keep one in your garage, plus smaller supplemental units in the kitchen and car.



Don Huber, CR's director of product safety



### All the Right Moves

"You shouldn't be reading the owner's manual during a fire, so learn how to use your extinguisher before an emergency," Huber says. No matter the fire's origin, the four steps for extinguishing a blaze are largely the same; remembering the acronym "PASS" will help you perform the steps in order. But your safety is paramount, so leave the house immediately if the fire is growing or the room is filling with smoke. Once safely outside, call 911.



**Pull the pin.** Hold the extinguisher away from you, and release the locking mechanism.



**Aim low,** pointing the extinguisher at the base of the fire.



**Squeeze** the lever evenly.




**Sweep the nozzle** from side to side. Go to [CR.org/pass0218](https://www.consumerreports.org/pass0218) to watch our video of this technique.

Food Sleuth


# Which Egg Labels Matter?

 **Pasture-Raised & Certified Humane**


“Pasture-Raised” is one of the best labels for chicken welfare when it appears with the Certified Humane seal or the American Humane Certified label, which has similar standards for pasture-raised hens. Chickens must have access to a pasture with space to perform natural behaviors, such as pecking for seeds and bugs.

 **Organic**

This seal means eggs were laid by hens fed grains grown without synthetic pesticides and not given antibiotics. The birds cannot be raised in cages and must have outdoor access, though in some cases this can still mean confined conditions in a building with just a small concrete porch.

 **Free Range & American Humane Certified**

“Free Range” means the birds aren’t kept in cages and have outdoor access, but they may still live in crowded conditions and the outdoor area can be tiny. Look for it with a third-party American Humane Certified label to ensure that the birds can access a spacious outdoor run.

 **No Hormones**

By law, chickens that produce eggs and those that are sold for meat can’t be given hormones, so eggs with this claim on the package label are no different from eggs sold without it.

 **Farm Fresh**

All eggs come from “farms,” even if the farm is a big building where chickens are packed into cages, so this labeling claim has no value. The term “fresh” generally means the product hasn’t been frozen, but eggs in the shell should never be frozen.

 **Natural**

People often mistake “natural” for “organic,” but the two terms are very different. By definition, an egg is a natural food product, so slapping “natural” on it has no clearly defined additional meaning.



PHOTOS: PREVIOUS PAGE: JOHN WALSH; ILLUSTRATION: THIS PAGE AND PREVIOUS PAGE: CHRIS PHILPOT

## CR Time Traveler TVs



**1950** Our staff evaluates demonstrations of **CBS** and **RCA**'s color TV systems, and urges the **FCC** to adopt color TV without delay.



**1977** Our top-rated color TV is a 25-inch **RCA GA725H** for \$750—the largest possible screen size at the time.

**1948** Some of our first TV ratings are published, but scheduled TV service is in only 11 U.S. cities—most with just one channel. We also educate consumers about how to adjust the picture using **Philco**'s test pattern (right).



**1963** 19-inch portable TVs, such as this CR-recommended **Sylvania 19PO8BN** for \$150, are all the rage, outselling larger 23-inch models.



**Face-Off**

# iPhone X vs. iPhone 8

READY FOR A NEW PHONE? We pitted two new iPhone models against each other—and found their overall performance to be strikingly similar. So your decision will come down to budget and user preference: The X has a larger display that can present more vibrant, lifelike images, and it employs facial recognition. But it's a bit more delicate if you drop it (this gets factored into our ergonomics score). The iPhone 8 has the familiar home button—gone from the X—along with a much lower price. Note: The Samsung Galaxy S8 still tops our smartphone ratings charts with an Overall Score of 82. To read more about our smartphone testing, go to [CR.org/iphonex](http://CR.org/iphonex).



## HOW WE TEST Toilets

It's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it. As CR's top toilet tester, John Banta often has to plunge his hands into our test toilets to dislodge waste. Happily, it's our custom-created simulated waste (see photo, above)—comprising 160 solid polyethylene balls, and seven sponges spiked with #10 screws for realistic weight—used in our most difficult toilet flush test. We also add two non-lubricated latex balloons filled with water. "People giggle when they watch our test," Banta says, but solid-waste removal is serious business—and critical to CR's Overall Score for a toilet. In our labs each sample is connected to a plumbing system that measures the volume of water into and out of the toilet. Once the load is in the bowl, it's flushed with a quick press of the handle, noting how many attempts are required to finish the job. The test is engineered to set a high bar, in that no toilet yet tested can repeatedly clear a bowl in one flush. But that's what gives us the data to separate the good from the great.

For ratings and more info about what makes a top toilet, turn to page 18.

**iPhone X**  
\$1,000

**80**  
OVERALL SCORE



**iPhone 8**  
\$700

**81**  
OVERALL SCORE



5.8	Display Size (inches)	4.7
1125x2436	Display Resolution (pixels)	750x1334
● 19.5	Battery Life (hours)	19.0 ●
●	Camera: Rear Image Quality	●
●	Ergonomics	●
●	Texting	●
●	Calling	●
●	Navigation	●
●	Browsing	●
●	Music	●

PHOTO, TOP LEFT: JOHN WALSH



**1987 Toshiba, MGA, and Sony** top our charts for the most reliable TV brands.

**1986** With digital TV just around the corner, we test a new **Panasonic's** picture-in-picture feature but deem it "an amusing gimmick"—even if it does let you watch "I Dream of Jeannie" at the same time as sports.

**1999** We test high-definition sets and find that they live up to their promise of better visuals—praising an \$8,000 **Sony KW-34HD1** (below), as "certainly the best TV picture we've ever tested."



**2017** Today **LG** OLED TVs, such as the 55-inch Ultra HD set at right, top our ratings charts.



**2008 Samsung** introduces one of its first internet-connected smart TVs. The next year, **Netflix** starts streaming content directly to TVs, helping popularize the term "binge-watch."

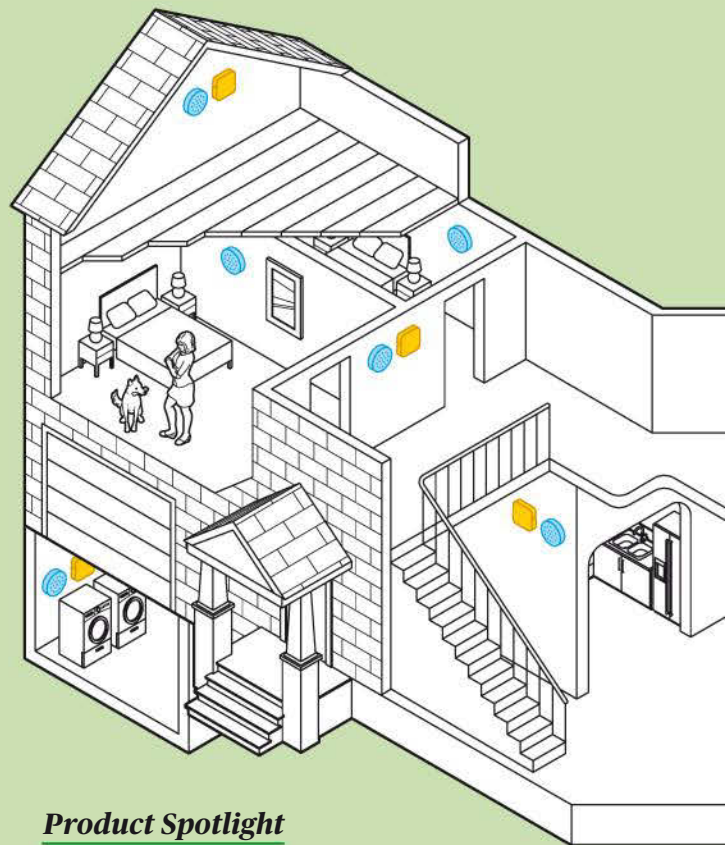
**LG OLED55C7P**  
\$1,700  
**88**  
OVERALL SCORE

Cool Product Feature of the Month

# Flexi-Fridges

SOMETIMES YOU JUST need more space in your refrigerator—whether to make room for party platters or to squeeze a kid’s ice cream cake into the freezer. If so, you might enjoy a new type of kitchen appliance: the flexi-fridge. It’s a refrigerator (or freezer) with adjustable temperature compartments that can be switched back and forth between fridge and freezer mode.

For example, the bottom-right chamber on this four-door French-door Samsung (below) can be converted from a freezer to a refrigerator—perfect if you want to prioritize produce over Popsicles every now and then. For more refrigerator ratings, online subscribers can go to [CR.org/flexifridge0218](http://CR.org/flexifridge0218).



Product Spotlight

## How to Save a Life

SMOKE ALARMS ARE a must in all homes, and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms are essential for any home with fuel-burning appliances such as a furnace, water heater, range, and grill. Even those living in homes with all-electric appliances need to install CO alarms because the gas can seep into a house from an attached garage or from a backup generator placed too close to living quarters. Almost 150 people in the U.S. died each year from 2012 through 2014 because of accidental exposure to carbon monoxide produced by consumer products (mostly generators), according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The required types of

alarms and their placement can vary by community, so before you buy, check with your local building or fire department. Some insurance companies may offer a small, perhaps 5 percent, discount on your premium if you install smoke alarms. If you already have alarms, check the date of manufacture on the label; replace CO alarms after five years and smoke alarms after 10 to ensure accuracy, or sooner if the alarm doesn’t sound when tested. Smoke alarm prices start at \$5, with CO alarms costing \$20 and up. Newer, interconnected smoke alarms communicate among devices for whole-house protection. Hardwired or wireless, if one alarm in the

✓ **Samsung**  
RF22K9381SR  
\$3,000



The bottom-right freezer quadrant flexes into extra fridge storage when you need it.

82

✓ **Frigidaire**  
FFVU21F4QW  
\$950



Flick a switch and this single-compartment appliance can become a freezer or a fridge.

82



✓ **Samsung**  
RT18M6215SG  
\$860

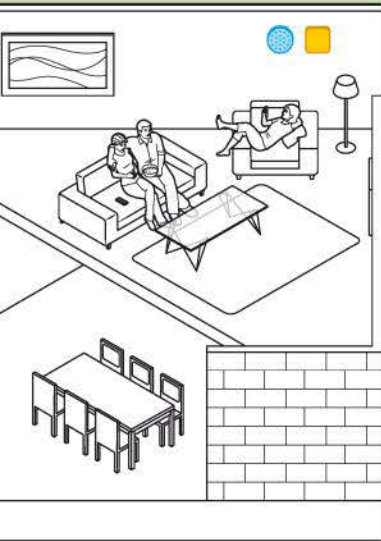


The top freezer on this Samsung converts to a fresh-food compartment with the push of a button.

68

**WHERE TO PLACE ALARMS TO GET THE BEST COVERAGE OF YOUR HOME**

-  Interconnected dual-sensor smoke alarm
-  Interconnected CO alarm



system senses a problem, all of them will sound.

The most effective smoke alarms, called dual-sensor, detect two types of fire—flaming and smoldering—using two technologies, ionization and photoelectric. Install at least one smoke alarm on each floor, including in a finished attic and the basement, in all bedrooms, and near any other sleeping areas. You should also have a CO alarm on each floor, in a finished attic, in the basement, and on an interior wall near the door to an attached garage. We are currently testing combination CO/dual-sensor smoke alarms new to the market; watch for ratings soon.

**✓ First Alert SCO501CN\***

**Type:** CO and photoelectric smoke detector  
\$70



93

This battery-powered model detected both high and low CO levels accurately. And it detected smoldering (but not flaming) fires well.

**✓ First Alert 3120B**

**Type:** Dual-sensor  
\$30



91

Excellent at detecting both flaming and smoldering fires, this model must be hardwired to a power source. It comes with a battery backup for power outages.

**✓ Kidde PI2010**

**Type:** Dual-sensor  
\$30



91

Tied for first place in our smoke detector ratings, this hardwired model was as adept as the First Alert at sensing both types of fires.

\*When scored just as a smoke detector it received an Overall Score of 53.

*Do More With ...*  
**Your Stroller**

**4moms Moxi**  
\$700

74  
OVERALL SCORE

**Baby Jogger City Tour**  
\$200

70  
OVERALL SCORE



Joan Muratore, CR stroller tester

THIS STURDY and responsive Moxi stroller is suitable for infants from birth, converts to a bassinet or carry-cot easily, and has a few extra features for busy parents: an electronic dashboard that, among other things, tracks the distance you stroll, as well as a USB charger port to keep your cell phone juiced on the go. It also has pathway lights on the bottom front that act like headlights. **CR'S TAKE:** With the 4moms app on your phone, you can track your trip statistics, says Joan Muratore, a CR tester for baby and kids products. If you stroll with your baby at dusk or early in the morning, you may also find the pathway lights useful. "But without the gadgets, it's basically a middle-of-the-road, solid—if expensive—stroller," Muratore says. Also worth noting: It's large and heavier than most, at 29 pounds.

THE CITY TOUR stroller is suitable for ages 6 months and up, lightweight at 14 pounds, and compact when folded. It's so compact, in fact, that the stroller can fit into an included bag that has straps like those on a backpack, making it possible to carry it over your shoulders. It's also easy to steer, even if you have only one free hand to push with. **CR'S TAKE:** "It's great for traveling parents and easy to fold in just two steps—even with only one hand," Muratore says. But our testers often had to manually push down on the folded unit to get it to lock into place, and unfolding it is not as easy. While moving, we found the stroller to be very responsive around turns and in tight spaces. Though the stroller was easy to push one-handed, the handle's grooves were a bit uncomfortable, and there's little onboard storage.

PHOTO: TOP RIGHT: JOHN WALSH. ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS PHILPOT

Still Confused By ...

# How to Pick a Lightbulb

NOT THAT LONG AGO, when your 60-watt incandescents burned out, you simply bought another box of the same. But incandescents were phased out beginning in 2012. Now the bulbs du jour are energy-saving LEDs, which produce light color that ranges from warm yellow to cool blue-white. LEDs trim your electric bill, and many manufacturers claim their bulbs last 10,000 to 50,000 hours. If the bulb is used for 3 hours a day, that's about nine to 46 years! But choosing the right bulb for your room is a little more complicated. Here, a primer to light your path to an easy decision.



**How Bright It Is**

Lumens tell you how much light the bulb emits; the more lumens, the brighter the bulb. You'll want around 800 lumens for light as bright as a 60-watt incandescent.

Lighting Facts Per Bulb	
Brightness	800 lumens
Estimated Yearly Energy Cost	\$1.02
<small>Based on 3 hrs/day, 11¢/kWh Cost depends on rates and use</small>	
Life	10 years
<small>Based on 3 hrs/day</small>	
Light Appearance	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <span>Warm</span> <span>Cool</span> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;"> </div>	
Energy Used	8.5 watts



**Actual Energy Usage**

This number will be quite low: An LED bulb that offers the same brightness as a 60-watt incandescent uses only about 9 watts. To make things easy, most LED brands note on the front of the package which incandescent the bulb is designed to replace. The package might say "60-Watt Replacement," for example.



**Warm or Cool?**

This is called "light appearance" on the label and is shown on a sliding scale from warm (or yellow) to cool (blue). The Kelvin (K) number ranges from 2200 to 6500. Lower K numbers tell you the light is more yellow. Higher numbers mean the light is whiter or blue.

## February Is

### THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...



**Humidifiers**

Toward the end of the month, you'll start to see good discounts on these and other winter items.



**Mattresses**

Presidents Day sales are a great time to get deals. See our ratings in the next issue.



**Snow Blowers**

If winter has been mild in your area, retailers will cut snow-blower prices to make room for lawn mowers.

## WHAT 100 CALORIES LOOKS LIKE Super Bowl Snacks

Right on the heels of holiday indulgence comes the No. 1 foodie festival of the football season. It's hard to hold back when faced with a tempting array of hot wings, cheesy chips, and brews. To help, courtesy of Maxine Siegel, R.D., and the Consumer Reports food lab, is our portion guide to game-day noshes. Go to [CR.org/supersnacks0218](http://CR.org/supersnacks0218) for more 100-calorie comparisons.



**1 1/2 Tbsp.**  
Wish-Bone  
Chunky Blue  
Cheese Salad  
Dressing



**1 2/3**  
TGI Fridays  
Chicken Wings  
Buffalo Style\*



**1 3/4**  
Hebrew  
National Beef  
Franks in a  
Blanket



**9**  
Lay's  
Classic Potato  
Chips



**1 1/2 inches**  
Subway Cold  
Cut Combo  
Sandwich



**1/24**  
of a Domino's  
Large Hand  
Tossed Cheese  
Pizza



**8 fl. oz.**  
Budweiser



**8 1/2 fl. oz.**  
Coca-Cola





## RECALLS



### HONDA ODYSSEY

Honda is recalling approximately 800,000 model-year 2011-2017 Odyssey minivans in the U.S. because the second-row seats may tip forward during braking if they're not properly latched after being adjusted or reinstalled after removal, which could lead to passenger injuries.

**What to do:** As we went to press, Honda was still investigating the appropriate repair to help ensure proper latching and will notify owners when that free repair is available. Until then, go to owners.honda.com for proper latching instructions for the second-row seat. CR's Auto Test Center director, Jennifer Stockburger, also advises, "Owners can double-check that the seats are secured by hitting the brakes hard—without anyone occupying the second row—to be sure they're latched." CR.org members can also use our Car Recall Tracker to stay informed about recalls on your vehicle.

### ALLURA DECKING



Plycem is recalling 37,500 boards of Allura fiber-cement decking and fascia because they can deteriorate and crack. The boards can then break, resulting in a risk of injury from falling through. The recalled decking was sold in 12-foot lengths and came in two styles: a hidden fastener application and a direct

screw application. The recalled cement decking and fascia were sold in a natural wood color with a wood-grain texture at Home Depot as a special-order item, and at Trademark Exteriors and Kelseyville Lumber as stock items, from February 2014 through June 2017 for between \$25 and \$30 per board for the decking and about \$25 to \$40 per board for the fascia.

**What to do:** Stop using decks with the recalled boards and contact Plycem at 844-452-6787 to schedule a free repair or go to allurausa.com and click on Deck Recall.



### HOVERBOARDS

A total of 13,900 hoverboards (also known as self-balancing scooters) from seven brands are being recalled because the lithium-ion battery pack can overheat and pose a risk of smoking, catching fire, and/or exploding. The brands are Drone Nerds, Go Wheels, iHoverspeed, iLive, Smart Balance Wheel, Sonic Smart Wheels, and Tech Drift. The products were sold in stores or online between August 2015 and March 2017. Prices ranged from \$150 to \$500.

**What to do:** Stop using the hoverboard. For details contact the company/importer: Drone Nerds at 888-785-7543; Go Wheels/Four Star Imports, 800-780-5231; iHoverspeed/Simplified Wireless, 833-220-1212; iLive/Digital Products

International, 800-311-9263; Smart Balance Wheel/Salvage World, 888-726-9603; Sonic Smart Wheels/Dollar Mania, 844-333-4457; or Tech Drift, 800-491-0264.



### INFANT MOTION SEATS

Fisher-Price is recalling about 63,000 Soothing Motions infant seats because the motor housing can overheat and pose a fire hazard. The seats were sold at stores nationwide and online from November 2015 through October 2017 for between \$160 and \$175.

**What to do:** Stop using the seat and contact Fisher-Price at 800-432-5437 or go to service.mattel.com and click Product Recalls & Safety Alerts to get a full refund.

### CAKE KNIFE SETS



Macy's is recalling about 18,900 Martha Stewart Collection Whiteware cake knife and server sets because the handles can break during use and pose a laceration hazard. The sets were sold at stores nationwide and online, and at military exchange stores, between January 2014 and July 2017. The price was about \$25 at Macy's and \$15 at military exchange stores.

**What to do:** Stop using the set and return it to the place you purchased it for a full refund.



### BABY JACKETS

OshKosh is recalling about 38,000 Baby B'gosh quilted jackets because the snaps can detach and pose a choking hazard. The jackets were sold at stores nationwide and online between August 2017 and September 2017 for between \$35 and \$40.

**What to do:** Do not use the jacket on children. Call OshKosh at 800-692-4674, go to an OshKosh store, or go to oshkosh.com for a refund in the form of a gift card.



### WIGGLE BALLS

Toys "R" Us is recalling about 29,700 Bruin Infant Wiggle Balls because the toy's rubber knobs and plastic back can detach and pose a choking hazard. The toys were sold at Babies "R" Us and Toys "R" Us stores nationwide from June 2016 through January 2017 for about \$13.

**What to do:** Stop using the balls and return them to the store for a full refund. For more details call Toys "R" Us at 800-869-7787 or go to toysrus.com.

### SLEEP NUMBER BEDS



Sleep Number is recalling about 11,900 Sleep Number 360 smart beds because the foot warmer under the mattress cover can short-circuit and overheat, posing a risk of burns. The beds were sold in Sleep Number stores and online from April 2017 to August 2017 for between \$5,400 and \$11,000.

**What to do:** Stop using the foot warmer and follow the owner's manual instructions for disabling it. Call Sleep Number at 800-318-4432 or go to sleepnumber.com/recall to arrange the installation of a free replacement foot warmer.

# Product Updates

The latest ratings from our labs

Amount of water the U.S. would save annually if inefficient toilets were replaced with water-saving models.



**520**  
billion  
gallons

Source: Environmental Protection Agency.

## The Best Seat in the House

Our expert buying advice and ratings will help you find the right toilet at the right price so that you can avoid flushing money down the drain.

**Give It a Whirl**  
A dual-flush toilet allows you to flush with a reduced amount of water, typically 1.1 gallons.

**TOILETS. WHERE WOULD** we be without them? Yet as many times as we rely on them throughout the day, we mostly take them for granted.

“Toilets are not at the top of most people’s minds,” says CR test engineer John Banta, who oversees toilet testing. “At least until they need to buy one during the course of a remodeling project or repair or replace one that’s stopped working.”

Banta says that two of the biggest mistakes people make when selecting a new toilet are shopping by brand and assuming that there’s a correlation between a toilet’s price and its performance. “The same brand can make models that are excellent and models that are only fair, and some of the least expensive models in our tests outperform some of the priciest. That’s why it’s important to refer to our ratings before you buy,” he says.

Here are some of the key things to consider when it’s time to replace your current commode.

## 1. Focus on the Flush

You’ll have two main decisions to make regarding flushing when choosing a toilet: gravity or pressure assist, and dual flush or single flush.

Conventional toilets operate with gravity flush (to learn how we evaluate flush effectiveness, see “How We Test Toilets,” on page 13). Toilets with pressure-assist flushing use water pressure to compress air in the tank that forces water into the bowl at high velocity, making a loud, telltale “whoosh” sound. “Toilets with pressure-assist flushing can be loud,” Banta says. “They clean the bowl well and can be less likely to clog than gravity-flush toilets, although there are some gravity-flush toilets that perform just as well.”



Brondell  
LumaWarm  
Heated  
Nightlight  
Toilet Seat

## When Comfort Counts

A 3 a.m. trip to the toilet isn’t something most people look forward to, especially during winter, when the seat can feel as cold as the ice on the local skating pond. But a number of toilet seats on the market can make your middle-of-the-night trips less of a rude awakening.

**The Toto Washlet C200**, \$700, is a heated toilet seat that also acts as a bidet—spraying a warm aerated flow of water (front or back)—and reduces or eliminates the need for toilet paper. After cleansing you, it dries you with warm air. Toto Washlet models can cost more than \$1,500, depending on their features.

A more affordable alternative is the **Brondell LumaWarm Heated Nightlight Toilet Seat**, from \$160 (pictured above). It has a built-in LED night light that illuminates the bowl with a blue glow and a seat with four temperature settings. Keep in mind that you’ll need a properly grounded outlet for seats that require electricity.

Still, Banta says, if you have kids in the house who throw a lot of toilet paper into the bowl, these can be a good choice.

Because they announce that they’re being used, you may not want one if your bathroom is near the kitchen, dining room, or bedroom. You’ll also need to be sure you have adequate water pressure (at least 25 pounds per square inch) in your home.

Dual-flush toilets are outfitted with two buttons: One allows you to flush with a reduced amount of water (typically 1.1 gallons) to eliminate liquid waste; the other flushes with more water (usually 1.6 gallons) for bigger jobs.

“If you live in a place where water is expensive or you want to reduce the demand on your septic system, you might consider one of these,” Banta says. “You could also just pick a highly rated single-flush model that uses 1.28 gallons per flush or less.” (The Niagara Stealth, \$149, an ultra-high-efficiency model that uses 0.8 gallon per flush, is currently being tested in our labs. Preliminary results are promising, but we need to complete testing before we make any determination.)

Some dual-flush models performed well in our tests; others lacked power and needed to be flushed twice to get the job done.

## 2. Select the Shape

Toilet bowls come in two basic shapes: round and elongated. In general, round bowls, which measure just under 17 inches front to back, are best suited for tighter quarters because they require less space. Measuring roughly 19 inches front to back, elongated bowls make for a more commodious commode. “These are popular with people who don’t want to feel squeezed on the seat,” Banta says. Compact

elongated models offer the extra room of elongated bowls and fit into the same space as a round bowl.

### 3. Consider Cleaning

Look closely at a standard toilet and you'll see plenty of crevices and crannies where grime can collect. The trapway, for instance, is the bendy path that waste travels through to reach the piping in your house. Dust and dirt can collect along its contours, making it a chore to clean. Toilets with concealed or "skirted" trapways

eliminate these contours, creating a smooth surface that's easier to clean.

Most toilets come in two pieces: a tank and a bowl that are bolted together, creating a seam between the two that can trap grime. One-piece toilets eliminate that seam but typically cost significantly more.

### 4. Get the Right Height

The rims of most standard toilets are about 14 or 15 inches above the floor. "Comfort height" toilets add a few inches of altitude with bowls that are closer to

17 to 19 inches high. The extra elevation can make sitting down and standing up easier, especially for people with limited mobility. Those added inches could also make it more difficult for small children (and less comfortable for diminutive adults) to use the toilet. Keep in mind who will be using a comfort-height model before you install it.

"You could also just provide a little stool for the kids or for adults who have trouble getting up onto a higher seat," Banta says. "It's not like climbing up into a bunk bed."

## Royal Flushes

*These top toilets have features you need and that CR recommends.*

### Water Miser

**St. Thomas by Icera**  
 Richmond ECO  
 \$350

78

This toilet's Overall Score is the highest of all the single-flush models we've tested. Though it uses just 1.28 gallons per flush, it was excellent at solid-waste removal and bowl cleaning in our tests and resists drainline clogs.

### Low Maintenance

**Kohler**  
 Highline Classic K-3493-0  
 \$425

76

The Kohler is pricey but does an excellent job at cleaning the sides and front of the bowl, saving you from spending a lot of time on brush duty. It's the second-highest-rated model of all toilets we've tested, but its pressure-assist flush is noisy, so you may not want to install it near a dining area.

### No-Clog Champ

**Zurn**  
 Z5551-K  
 \$250

75

This 1.6-gallons-per-flush model does a very good job removing waste and sending it farther along the drainline than many other models do, reducing the likelihood of clogs. It's also quiet and has an elongated bowl and a height of almost 17 inches, meaning that most adults should find it comfortable.

### Clean Machine

**American Standard**  
 Acticlean  
 \$400

71

No need for a plumber to install the Acticlean: Everything you need to do the job yourself comes in the box. It's quiet, uses just 1.28 gallons per flush, and has a compartment for cleaning-solution cartridges that the company says will last up to 9 weeks. (We did not test the performance of the cleaning solution.)

### Nice Price

**Delta**  
 Prelude C43901-WH  
 \$150

70

Though it's one of the least expensive toilets we've tested, the Prelude rated Very Good for saving water and removing solid waste and Excellent for noise and bowl-cleaning capability. It packs in a lot of performance at a very pleasing price.

### Strong, Silent Type

**Delta**  
 Turner C43908-WH  
 \$170

70

The 1.28-gallons-per-flush Turner saves on water (it's WaterSense certified, indicating that it meets Environmental Protection Agency standards for water efficiency) and has one of the quietest flushes we've tested. It comes with a nonslam lid to ensure quiet operation from beginning to end.

## Going in Style

*Wall-mounted toilets can solve space challenges, plus add a bit of sleekness.*



A new alternative to traditional toilets, wall-mounted models appear to hover above the floor, floating untethered to any bulky tank. The tank and mechanics are hidden behind the wall, cradled in a cast-iron or steel carrier installed between two studs to provide support. Apart from the aesthetic appeal, wall-mounted toilets offer practical solutions to a number of problems. For instance, you can mop right under them, and they can be installed at any rim height between 15 and 26 inches, depending on the model you choose.

But perhaps their biggest selling point is that they save space. "These toilets can meet building-code clearances where floor-mounted toilets might not," says John Banta, the test engineer who oversees Consumer Reports' toilet tests. In some municipalities, building codes require at least 21 inches in front of the toilet. Wall-mounted models can save as much as 10 inches by moving the tank into the wall.

All of this convenience comes at a price: Expect to pay several hundred dollars more for this type of fixture, not counting the cost of professional installation.

"It could easily cost three times more to buy and install a wall-mounted toilet than a conventional model," Banta says, adding that this is not a DIY project. "If there's a leak, it's going to be in the wall and it could take a while before

you notice anything's wrong. You definitely want a professional to install the toilet to make sure everything is done correctly," Banta says.

At a minimum, installing a wall-mounted toilet requires opening a wall, rerouting the waste pipe, and—if you plan to keep the same flooring—patching the tile under your old toilet. Because the installation requires intensive reconstruction, it makes sense to have the work done during a renovation, Banta says.

What happens if the flushing mechanism gets stuck or there's some other problem in the tank? The panel that houses the flush button pops off the wall to reveal an access to the tank that allows you or a plumber to reach inside to fix whatever's not working.



**Kohler**  
Veil  
K-6299,  
\$900

**73**

OVERALL  
SCORE

**Ratings** > **Game of Thrones** Full ratings for single-flush, dual-flush, and wall-mounted toilets.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features				
					Solid-waste removal	Noise	Bowl cleaning	Type	Resists soil and odor	Resists drainline clogs	Comfort height	Gallons per flush
SINGLE-FLUSH TOILETS												
✓	1	<b>St. Thomas by Icera</b> Richmond ECO (6123.218, 6125.028)	78	\$350	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	2	<b>Kohler</b> Highline Classic K-3493-0	76	\$425	↑	↓	↑	Pressure	•	•	•	1.4
✓	3	<b>American Standard</b> Champion 4 Max 2586.128ST.020	75	\$240	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	4	<b>Zurn</b> Z5551-K	75	\$250	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.6
✓	5	<b>Kohler</b> Kelston K-3754	74	\$275	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.6
✓	6	<b>Toto</b> Drake CST744S	74	\$250	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.6
✓	7	<b>Toto</b> Drake II CST454CEFG	72	\$320	↑	↓	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	8	<b>American Standard</b> Acticlean 714AA151.020	71	\$400	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	9	<b>Delta</b> Turner C43908-WH	70	\$170	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
Ⓢ	10	<b>Delta</b> Prelude C43901-WH	70	\$150	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	11	<b>Gerber</b> Avalanche WS-21-818	70	\$400	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	12	<b>Kohler</b> Santa Rosa K-3810	69	\$300	↑	↓	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	13	<b>American Standard</b> Clean 2514.101 (Lowe's)	69	\$240	↓	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	14	<b>Toto</b> Eco Drake CST744E	68	\$380	↓	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	15	<b>Kohler</b> Cimarron The Complete Solution K-11451	67	\$250	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	16	<b>Kohler</b> Wellworth K-3575	67	\$280	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
✓	17	<b>American Standard</b> Optum VorMax 707AA.101.020	67	\$290	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
	18	<b>Sterling</b> Stinson 404704-0	66	\$160	↓	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
	19	<b>American Standard</b> Compact Cadet 3 2403.128.020	66	\$325	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
	20	<b>Aquasource</b> Henshaw 98923 (Lowe's)	66	\$100	↑	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
	21	<b>American Standard</b> Esteem Vormax 717AA101.020	66	\$290	↓	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
	22	<b>Kohler</b> Cimarron K-3589	65	\$270	↑	↑	↓	Gravity	•	•	•	1.6
	23	<b>Gerber</b> Avalanche Ultra Flush 1.1 EF-21-318	63	\$335	↑	↓	↑	Pressure	•	•	•	1.28
	24	<b>Glacier Bay</b> N2428E (Home Depot)	62	\$100	↓	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
	25	<b>Gerber</b> Viper HE-21-519	61	\$240	↑	↓	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
	26	<b>Gerber</b> Ultra Flush 21-318	58	\$320	↓	↓	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.6
	27	<b>Gerber</b> Avalanche 21-014	58	\$370	↓	↑	↑	Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
	28	<b>American Standard</b> Cadet FloWise Pressure 2462.100	52	\$500	↓	↓	↑	Pressure	•	•	•	1.1

Recommended	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features				
					Solid-waste removal	Noise	Bowl cleaning	Type	Resists soil and odor	Resists drainline clogs	Comfort height	Gallons per flush

SINGLE-FLUSH TOILETS *Continued*

	29	<b>Kohler</b> Cimarron Touchless K-6418	48	\$350				Gravity	•		•	1.28
	30	<b>Gerber</b> Viper WS-21-512	44	\$240				Gravity		•		1.28
	31	<b>Gerber</b> Avalanche AV-21-818	43	\$370				Gravity	•	•	•	1.28
	32	<b>Toto</b> Drake II CST454CUFG	40	\$400				Gravity	•	•	•	1.0
	33	<b>Mansfield</b> Alto 137-160	38	\$150				Gravity	•		•	1.6

DUAL-FLUSH TOILETS

	1	<b>American Standard</b> Cadet 3 3380.216ST.020	58	\$190				Gravity	•	•	•	1.6/ 1.1
	2	<b>Glacier Bay</b> Dual Flush N2316 (Home Depot)	53	\$100				Gravity	•	•	•	1.6/ 1.1
	3	<b>Kohler</b> Persuade Curv K-3723	51	\$305				Gravity		•	•	1.6/ 1.0
	4	<b>Toto</b> Aquia II CST416M01	43	\$300				Gravity		•		1.6/ 0.9

WALL-MOUNTED TOILETS

	1	<b>Toto</b> Aquia CT418FG#01 with <b>Toto</b> DuoFit In-Wall Tank System WT151M/WT152M	79	\$700				Gravity	•	•	•	1.6/ 0.9
	2	<b>Duravit</b> Starck 3 2226090092 with <b>Geberit</b> 111.335.5 UP3 20 tank	75	\$700				Gravity		•	•	1.6/ 0.8
	3	<b>Kohler</b> Veil K-6299 with <b>Kohler</b> K-6284-NA In-Wall Tank and Carrier System	73	\$900				Gravity		•	•	1.6/ 0.8

**HOW WE TEST:** The **Overall Score** is based on solid-waste removal, bowl cleaning at 35 pounds per square inch of water pressure, and noise.

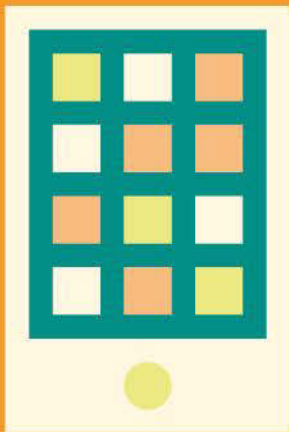
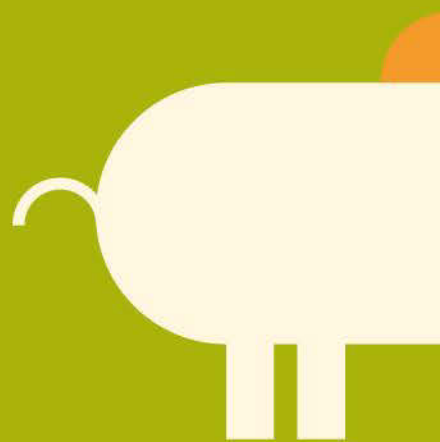
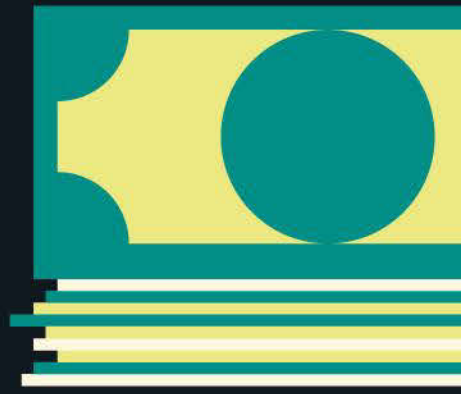
**Solid-waste removal** is the ability to move simulated waste through the bowl and trap. **Noise** is flush quietness without the seat.

**Bowl cleaning** is how well flushing cleaned the bowl's front and sides. **Type** is gravity-feed or pressure-assist. **Resists soil and odor** indicates

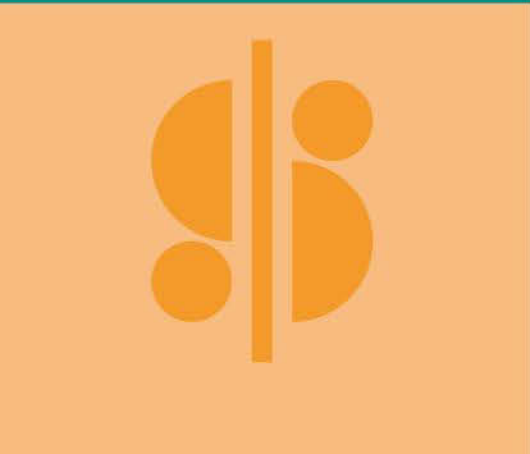
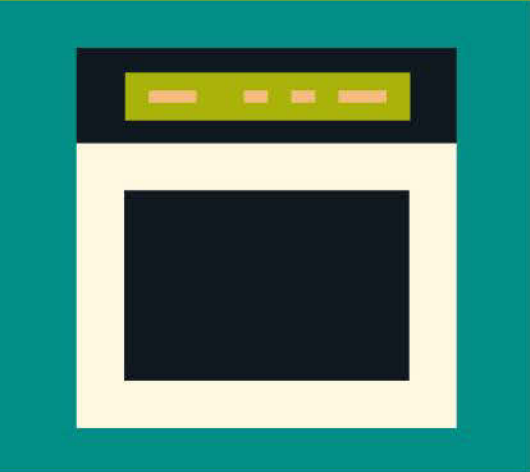
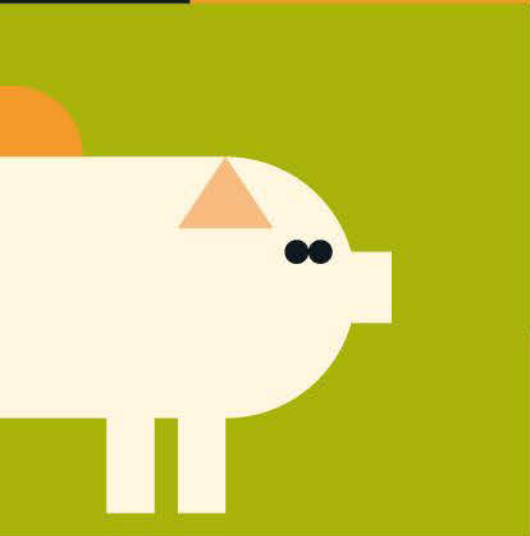
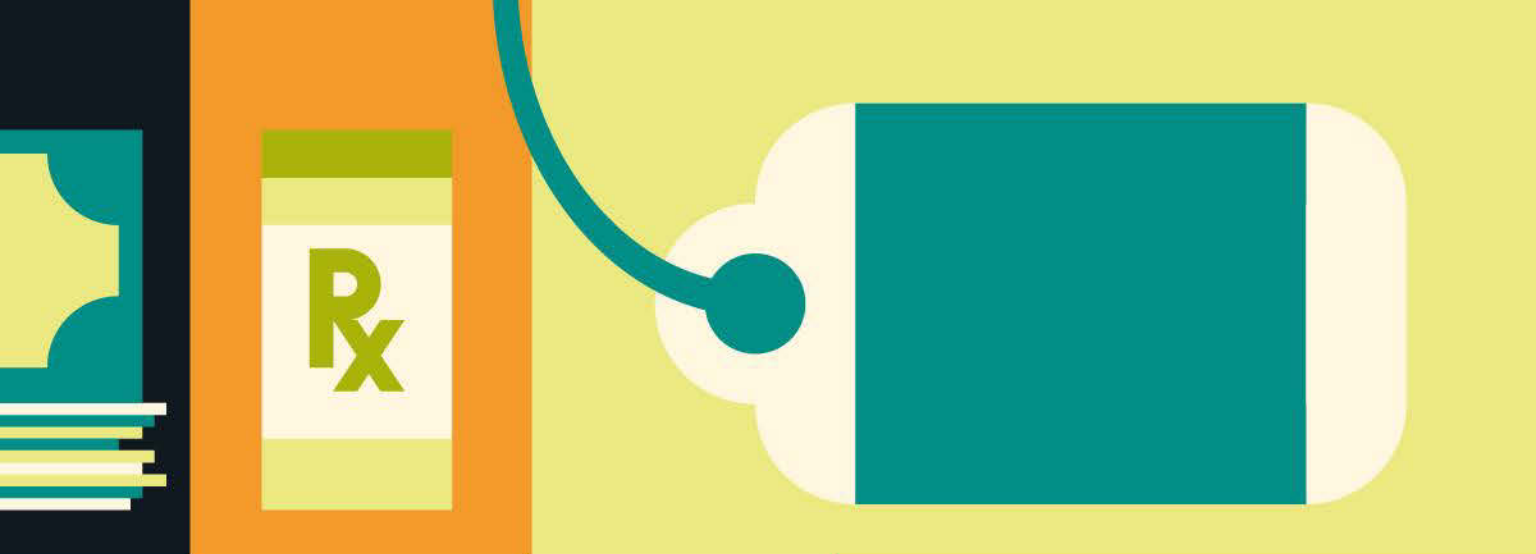
a large water surface, which helps minimize soil and odor. **Gallons per flush** is the amount of water used per flush.

# How to **Pay Less** for Practically Anything

From car insurance to utility bills, from organic food to prescription drugs, our expert insights and advice will help you shell out less money for a huge variety of products and services. And while you're at it, learn how to make the things you already own last longer.







# Your **Auto** Dollars

## 3 Ways to Pay Less for Car Insurance

### 1. Break up with your insurer.

Many consumers stay wedded to their car insurance company for decades. But comparison shopping among multiple insurers every three years or so can result in lower premiums. Cover lots of ground fast at [thezebra.com](http://thezebra.com), which offers estimates from 18 to 35 insurers, depending on your state.

### 2. Raise your collision/comprehensive deductible.

A two-car family could chop \$500 off its annual premium by raising its collision deductible to \$500, up from zero, according to our recent analysis of billions of premiums nationwide. Slice off an additional \$141 with a \$1,000 deductible.

### 3. Make your teens crack the books.

Adding a new teen driver to your policy can almost double your premium. But students under age 25 who show proof of good academic performance can earn significant discounts, especially in California, Louisiana, and Minnesota.

## Steer Clear of In-Car Navigation Systems

You could save a good deal of money—hundreds, even thousands of dollars—on your next new car or truck by saying no thanks to the built-in navigation option. That's because one of the best tools for finding your way around—your phone—is already in your pocket, and more automakers are integrating Android Auto and Apple CarPlay software into their vehicles. You connect your phone with a USB cord to your car's infotainment system, and driving-appropriate apps appear

on the car's infotainment screen. In addition to navigation, you can receive phone calls, see texts, and select music playlists. (For safety's sake, potentially distracting apps such as Facebook and Instagram won't work.)

## Needless New-Car Upsells

When you're finalizing a new-car purchase, the dealer is likely to suggest add-ons that may seem smart but are a waste of money, based on our experience and testing, including:

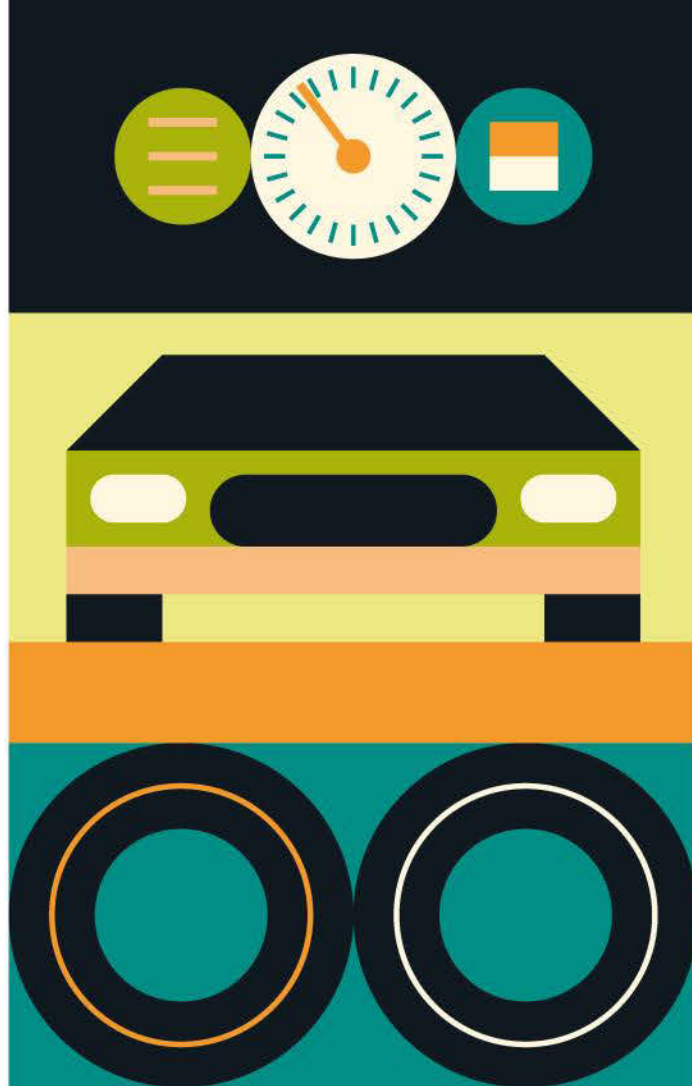
**VIN etching.** Dealers in some states have to tell you that you qualify for an insurance discount if you etch the vehicle identification number (VIN) into your car's windshield as an anti-theft measure, and many charge about \$200 for this. Say no. Etching can usually be done less expensively by an independent mechanic, or you can do it yourself for about \$20 using an auto engraving kit.

**Fabric protection.** At around \$400, this is the most expensive Scotchgard treatment your seats will ever see. For the same protection, spend a few bucks on a can of fabric protector and spray it on yourself.

**Paint sealant.** This roughly \$600 add-on is little more than an overpriced liquid wax—the same kind you can buy from an auto-supply store for around \$10 and apply yourself.

**Rustproofing/undercoating.** Today's vehicles are manufactured with corrosion protection, making this additional treatment, which can cost about \$800, superfluous.

**Extended warranty.** We've found that, on average, those who purchased an extended warranty spent hundreds more for the coverage than they saved in repair costs.



## Negotiate Tire Prices

If you assume you have to pay sticker price on tires, you're probably paying too much. A CR survey in 2016 found that shoppers who negotiated tire prices were successful almost three-quarters of the time and saved a median of \$22 per tire. In particular, consumers who shopped at Discount Tire, Firestone Complete Auto Care, and Tires Plus reported success rates of 80 percent or greater when negotiating. Successful hagglers at car dealerships saved even more, about \$28 per tire. Negotiators were much less successful at Costco, where only 33 percent of customers who negotiated were successful.

# Haggling Works

*Want a lower price? Just go online and ask for one.*

When you're shopping online for a good deal on an espresso maker, a TV, or just about anything else, don't forget this money-saving move: Ask for a better price.

In fact, price haggling can work even better online than in a physical store. In a recent CR survey of more than 56,000 subscribers reporting on 88,021 online and in-store electronic shopping transactions, we found an impressive success rate among shoppers who tried to talk down the price. Online hagglers outperformed those who negotiated face-to-face, getting a sweeter deal 69 vs. 59 percent of the time.

To strike your own bargain, first poke around online to make sure you know what kinds of deals are out there. Then use the live chat feature or call a customer-service rep. "You want to be able to say something like, 'I'm looking for a good deal. If you can take 10 percent off the price, I'll buy it right now,'" says Michael Wheeler, who teaches at Harvard Business School and is the author of "The Art of Negotiation: How to Improvise Agreement in a Chaotic World" (Simon & Schuster, 2013).

Even if the customer-service rep can't or won't offer a better price, you may be able to get an extended warranty, free shipping, or other incentives.

# Your **Food** Dollars

## 5 Ways to Save on Organic

Organic food is generally more expensive than conventional, because of differences in production and handling, according to the Department of Agriculture. Still, it is possible to buy organic more cheaply.

**1. Buy organic when it matters.** Choosing organic reduces your exposure to potentially harmful pesticides, and protects farmers as well as the environment. Consumer Reports recommends opting for organic for fruits and veggies that have the highest pesticide residues. That includes carrots, cranberries, green beans, hot peppers, nectarines, peaches, tangerines, strawberries, sweet bell peppers, and sweet potatoes. An advantage to buying organic

meat and poultry is that the animals were raised without antibiotics.

**2. Compare prices.** It's possible to find organic products for the same price as conventional ones—and occasionally for less. For example, at Costco, 2-pound containers of conventional Sabra Hummus and organic Hannah Hommus are each \$5.99. In the coffee aisle, you can get 2 pounds of Peet's Coffee Major Dickason's Blend—not organic—for \$14.69. But 2½ pounds of Highland Reserve Organic Peru Coffee costs \$10.99.

**3. Seek out store brands.** According to the market research firm Nielsen, a market basket of selected organic store-label products costs 18 percent less than the comparable brand-name versions. For example, at Whole Foods recently, Santa Cruz Organic

Applesauce cost \$5.39 for 23 ounces, and Whole Foods' store brand, 365 Organic Applesauce, was \$2.79 for 24 ounces, or 50 percent less.

**4. Look in the freezer case.** Frozen organic vegetables may actually be cheaper than fresh, and the nutritional quality is similar. For example, at a local store a 10-ounce package of Nature's Promise Organic fresh green beans is \$3.99 and a 16-ounce package of the same brand's organic frozen green beans is \$1.99.

**5. Check the weight.** When organic produce is sold pre-packaged at a set price rather than by the pound, it's worth taking the time to weigh a few packages. We've found that the amount in the package may exceed the weight listed.

*(Note: Prices are based on items purchased at grocery stores near our Yonkers, N.Y., offices.)*



# Your **Health** Dollars

## 5 Ways to Save on Your Medications

### 1. *Take advantage of drugstore discounts.*

Stores such as Kmart, Sam's Club, and Walmart offer hundreds of common generic drugs at very low prices—sometimes as low as \$4 to \$10—which could be less than your insurance co-pay. Ask the pharmacist whether the store has a discount program. Note: Money spent on meds purchased using these discount programs doesn't go toward your insurance deductible.

### 2. *Beware pricey combo drugs.*

When the patent on a drug nears its end, some manufacturers reformulate the medication into something "new" they can price higher than the generic equivalent. For example, the expensive migraine drug Treximet is actually a combination of two older, low-cost generic drugs: sumatriptan and naproxen. Nine tablets of 85-500 mg Treximet cost \$695 at [healthwarehouse.com](http://healthwarehouse.com). But the same website offers nine 100 mg tablets of sumatriptan for less than \$16 and nine 500 mg naproxen tablets for about \$5. That's a savings of \$674.

### 3. *Ask your doctor: "How much does this drug cost?"*

A CR poll of 200 doctors in 2016 found that they generally don't discuss the cost of a drug with their patients. But if price is an object for you and you let your doctor know that, he or she can look up the drug's cost and, if necessary, help you find a more affordable alternative, such as the medication's generic equivalent.

### 4. *Don't assume using your insurance at the pharmacy is the cheapest.*

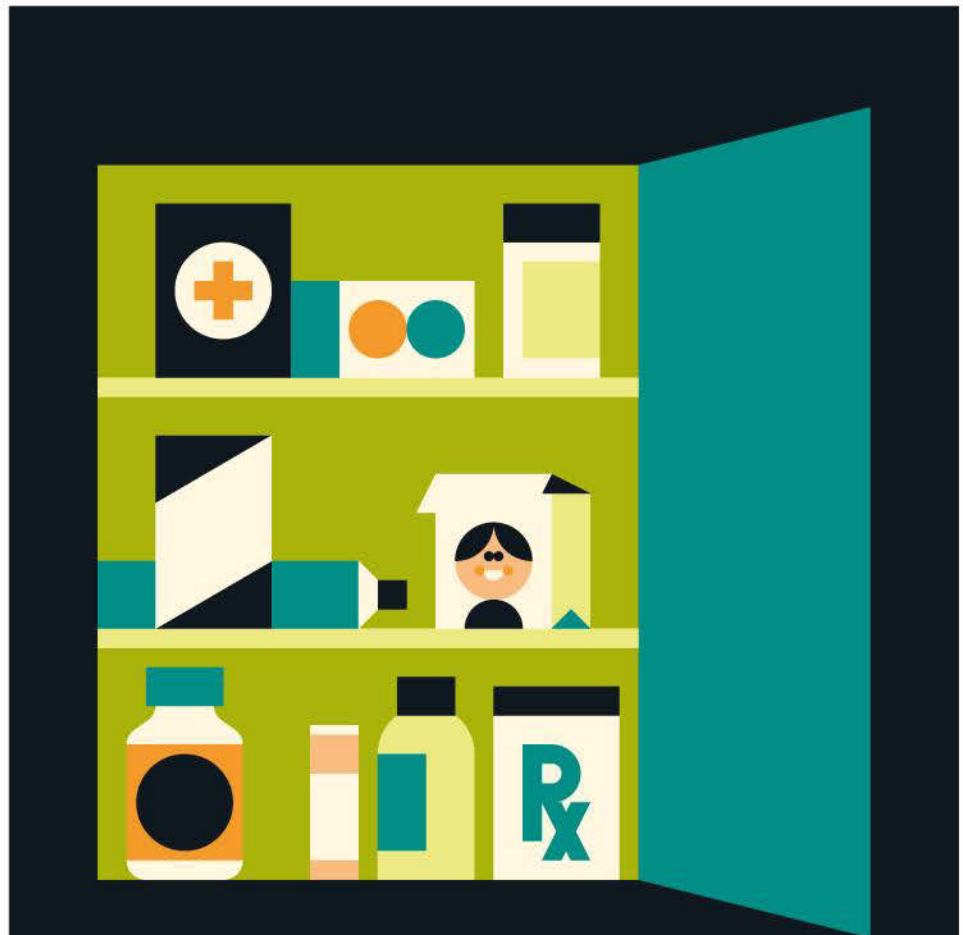
A survey of pharmacists by the National Community Pharmacists

Association found that many knew of instances of "clawbacks"—when the price your insurer makes the pharmacy charge you is more than the pharmacy's normal retail price. Think your pharmacist will flag that when it happens? Not necessarily. Some pharmacists can tell you about lower prices only if you ask first.

**5. Ask your doctor whether you can stop taking any of your meds.** A 2017 CR national survey shows that when patients asked their healthcare providers whether they can stop taking one or more of their prescription medications, in 71 percent of the cases the doctor eliminated at least one drug.

## Shop Your Doctors and Treatments

Because healthcare costs have risen, most of us are paying higher premiums, deductibles, and co-pays. But only 3 percent of us have tried to trim what we contribute out of pocket by comparison shopping our healthcare—i.e., finding out in advance what different doctors charge for, say, an MRI or knee replacement surgery. One reason: Consumers don't know that doctors' fee information is easy to find using the "cost-estimator" tools on most health insurance websites. You can also use third-party sites, such as [HealthcareBluebook.com](http://HealthcareBluebook.com), [FAIRHealthConsumer.org](http://FAIRHealthConsumer.org), [Guroo.com](http://Guroo.com), and [Amino.com](http://Amino.com).



## Know What's Free

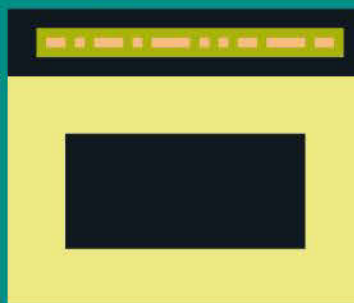
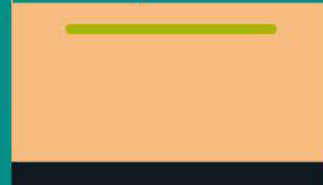
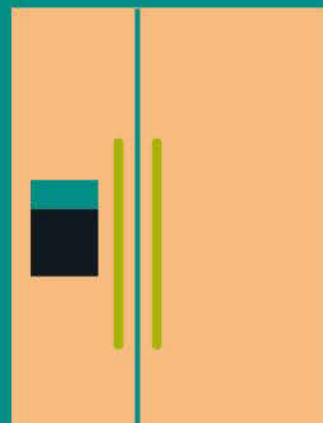
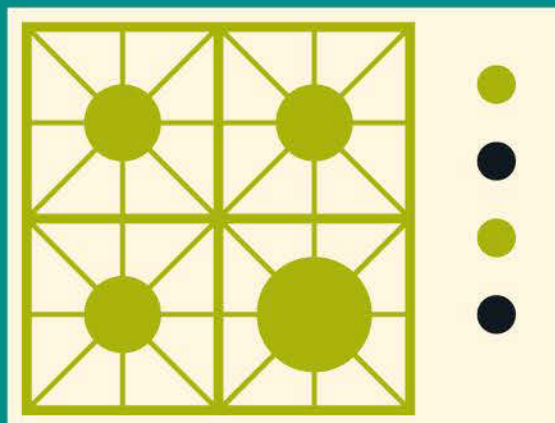
Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, nearly all of us who have insurance are entitled to certain preventive services free of charge, as long as we stay in our insurance network. What you can get for no cost may surprise you: blood pressure testing, breast-feeding support, colonoscopies, depression screening, nutrition counseling, and vaccinations. Check out the full list of eligible services at [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov).

## Leverage Tax Breaks

Another way to ease the pain of high out-of-pocket medical costs is to put money into a flexible spending account (FSA) or a health savings account (HSA). Both allow you to set aside tax-free dollars to cover costs that your insurance doesn't. Note that FSAs are offered only if you have employer-based insurance, and HSAs are available only to those in a high-deductible plan. It's smart to contribute the maximum if you can afford it: for FSAs, up to \$2,650 a year; for HSAs, up to \$3,450 annually for individuals and \$6,900 for families.

## Get Care on the Calendar

Keep track of your spending against your annual deductible, which resets every year. If you expect you'll need an expensive procedure that will get you close to or over your deductible, schedule it early in the year if you can. That way, if you need more care later in the year, your insurance will kick in. And don't put off making doctor appointments. Make sure your physician has room in his or her schedule before Jan. 1, when your deductible resets.



# Your **Appliance** Dollars

## 3 Ways to Get a Good Deal on Appliances

Smart shoppers know to look for big discounts on large appliances on holiday weekends. But if that timing doesn't work for you, here are other ways to find deals:

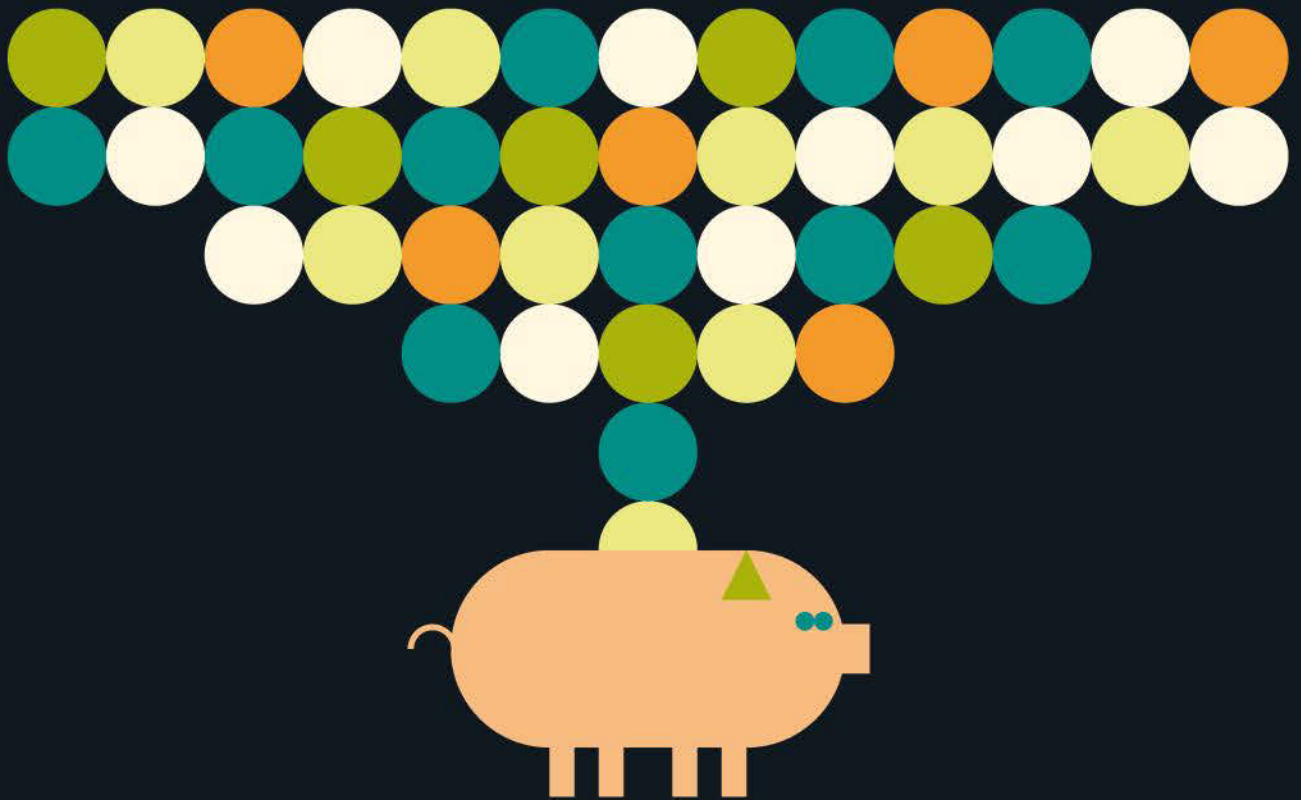
**1. Manufacturer offers and rebates.** Check the websites of manufacturers and retailers for special offers and rebates, then check our ratings on those appliances. The offers typically apply to specific models purchased within certain time frames, and if there's a rebate, you'll need to mail it in or submit

it online by the deadline that's spelled out. Recently, GE offered up to \$1,000 in savings on paired appliances. One offer even included a free dishwasher if you bought three other qualifying appliances.

**2. Price matches.** Compare price-match policies of your favorite retailers. Although only about 3 in 10 Americans say they have requested a discount to match the price of another store (based on a 2017 CR survey of 1,033 respondents), this is a great way to get a better deal. Best Buy, for example, matches the prices of local competition and major online retailers,

such as Amazon. Home Depot matches the competitor's price for online purchases. For in-store buys, Home Depot will beat the competitor's price by 10 percent.

**3. Utility rebates.** Search for rebates on Energy Star appliances at [energystar.gov/rebate-finder](http://energystar.gov/rebate-finder), and on the website of your utility company. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, most utility appliance programs rebate the purchase of Energy Star certified products. Clothes washers and dryers, refrigerators, and water heaters are among the eligible appliances.



## Your **Personal Finance** Dollars

### **Do Your Own Taxes**

You'll pay about \$180 on average to have a professional prepare a federal Form 1040 with a standard deduction and a state return, says the National Society of Accountants. Itemizers pay an average of almost \$275 for a federal return and a state filing. So if you have a few hours and a bit of patience, consider doing your own taxes.

All the major do-it-yourself tax-prep brands—H&R Block, TaxAct, TaxSlayer, and TurboTax—have free versions for people filing simple, 1040-EZ federal forms; all but TaxSlayer have free prep and filing of 1040-A forms, too. Simple state forms are also free. For people with somewhat more complex tax situations, prices range from about \$22 to \$150 to prepare a federal form. State forms start at around \$27.

Our comparisons of the online and app versions of H&R Block, TaxAct, and TurboTax found that each can ably handle itemized returns that aren't too complex. Each brand has its benefits and limitations. TaxAct Plus Online provides step-by-step guidance for investors, for example; H&R Block Deluxe and TurboTax Deluxe require you to upgrade for that feature. If you're self-employed and need to fill out Schedule C, all three require you to upgrade.

### **Save on Investing Costs**

For anyone who wants investing help, it's easier than ever to get advice at low cost—that is, if you're willing to trust a computer to manage your portfolio.

Traditionally, investors have had to pay high fees for financial planning and asset management. Typically, the median annual fee is 1 percent of your investing portfolio, according to the 2017 Inside Information Advisory Fees Survey. So if you have a \$500,000 portfolio, you would give up \$5,000 to your financial adviser.

But in recent years a new option has emerged: robo-advisers, which use computer algorithms to manage your portfolio, with results that can be as good as or better than what a human adviser delivers. Plus, their fees are lower, typically

ranging from 0.15 percent to 0.5 percent annually.

Betterment, for one, charges annual fees of just 0.25 percent to 0.4 percent. At Wealthfront, accounts pay no fees for the first \$10,000; larger accounts pay 0.25 percent. Increasingly, traditional investment firms, including Schwab and Vanguard, are offering their own robo services, or hybrid versions that include phone access to financial advisers.

Robo-advisers typically invest your money in low-cost index funds or exchange-traded funds (ETFs). A typical stock index ETF might cost you just 0.04 percent yearly. By contrast, the average annual cost of an actively managed stock fund is 1.17 percent, according to Morningstar Direct. That cost advantage can help you hang on to more of your savings.

## Never Pay Another ATM Fee

You can avoid ATMs altogether by taking the cash-back option when you pay for purchases using your debit card at many supermarkets, drugstores, and other retailers. Even better: Slash the amount of cash you need in the first place. You can do this electronically using the Zelle person-to-person (P2P) network, which lets you send cash from your bank account to another person's. This free feature is handy if you need to reimburse a friend for your half of the tab for lunch, say, or want to spot the babysitter a few bucks to pick up some groceries. Zelle is already built into the mobile banking apps of major financial institutions, including Bank of America, Chase, and Wells Fargo, and the money typically transfers in minutes, once the sender and recipient have enrolled.

# Your **Technology** Dollars

## Fire Your Cable Company

Cutting the cord has been a holy grail for consumers for years. That's when you keep your internet service but cancel the TV package, perhaps subbing in online streaming services, such as Amazon Prime and Netflix, for entertainment.

But in the past, doing that could have meant giving up on familiar channels, such as NBC, FOX, and HGTV. No longer. Newer internet TV services, such as DirecTV Now, Hulu with Live TV, and Sling, include conventional channels in their mix.

For instance, streaming service DirecTV Now charges \$35 per month for a bucket of more than 60 channels. There are also higher-priced options that offer more, or you can add some premium channels, such as HBO, for just \$5 to \$8 per month.

Keep in mind: All services offer different mixes of channels and pricing.

And these services don't have all of their channels available in all markets. (We track the offers at [CR.org/streamingguide0218](http://CR.org/streamingguide0218).)

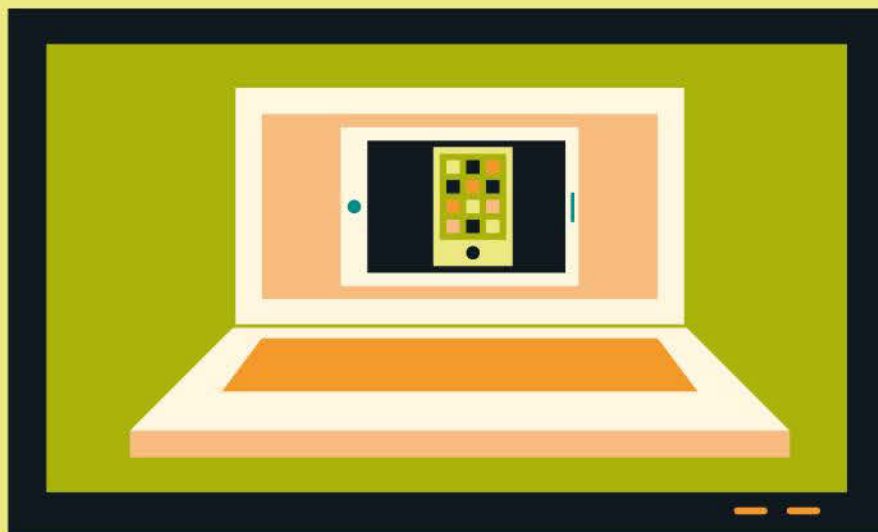
## Don't Overpay for Cellular Data

Unlimited data plans can cost just \$60 to \$85 for a single line, depending on the carrier and such factors as whether you want HD-quality video. But the takeaway is this: An unlimited data plan may be cheaper than whatever older plan you're still using, and may be cheaper than paying for each line's data individually. For instance, last fall a 10GB plan from AT&T was \$100 for a single line, \$5 more than the company's Unlimited Plus option for one line. On the other hand, if you don't use much data, don't pay for it. You can get unlimited voice time and 1GB of data for just \$30 at Consumer Cellular (less if you're an

AARP member). And this carrier, along with Ting, just happens to be CR's highest-rated traditional cell-service provider, based on our summer 2016 subscriber survey.

## Buy, Don't Rent Your Router

If you're still paying rental fees for your modem or router, you could be losing money. Leasing a cable-company router or modem generally sets consumers back \$5 to \$10 per month—or about \$60 to \$120 a year on top of the fees you pay for your internet service. Buy the equipment, and you'll be ahead within a year or two. Just make sure any modem/router combination you buy is compatible with your service: Most traditional modems work with cable networks but not with fiber-optic networks, such as Verizon Fios.



# Found Money

How to discover funds owed to you.

## Appeal Your Property Tax Assessment

If you think your home and land have been over-assessed—and you turn out to be right—appealing your property tax can result in savings of hundreds or even thousands of dollars a year. But it's a complicated, time-consuming process:

**1. Take note of the appeal-filing deadline, and the local process.** Some locations may let you file an appeal only during certain

times of year, and the local appeals board may meet only for limited time periods within the year.

### 2. Look for errors in the assessor's description of your home.

An overstated square footage, for instance, can inflate the assessed value. Or get a pro to independently verify your home's value; the cost typically is a few hundred dollars. Find one at the National Association of Independent Fee Appraisers (naifa.com).

**3. Examine the assessor's valuation of comparable local properties.** You can find "comps" through a real estate agent or on real estate websites.

Then research the up-to-date assessments on those properties at your municipality's assessor's office or on its website. If comparable homes have either

sold at or are assessed above your home's assessed value, it may not be worth continuing.

**4. If you proceed, set up a file with photographs, records of recent sales, or your independent appraisal.** An organized presentation will make your argument stronger. In some cases, the local assessor might examine your appeal and make a decision. Or you might need to present before a local appeals board. If you can't convince either, consider appealing to your state property tax appeal board.

## Search for Unclaimed Funds

This is as easy as typing your name—and its variants—into the search box at [missingmoney.com](http://missingmoney.com). The site looks for that name among the unclaimed funds

programs in some U.S. states, territories, and Canadian provinces.

All manner of personal accounts show up on unclaimed funds sites, including unclaimed escrow, forgotten safe deposit box contents and utility deposits, and uncashed checks and wages. You could be owed a dividend check worth a few dollars or a life insurance policy worth thousands. How does this money land there? When a former vendor can't find you, it's required to eventually hand over funds or property to the state's unclaimed property program.

At [usa.gov/unclaimed-money](http://usa.gov/unclaimed-money), you'll find more help to locate Department of Veterans Affairs life insurance funds, foreign claims, pensions from now-defunct companies or plans, and tax refunds, among other items.

# How to Make 6 Major Appliances Last Longer

Appliances suffer from misuse and lack of maintenance. Here's what to do to get the most out of your machines.

## Dishwashers

When loading, make sure the silverware and dishes are placed so that they don't catch the spray arms and damage them. If your dishwasher has a manual-clean filter, clean it regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions to avoid food buildup. Wipe down the door gasket from time to time to avoid food buildup and odors.

## Ranges

On a smoothtop, place heavy pots and pans gently and never drag them from one element to another. For gas cooktop burners, clean food particles from between the slots in the burner head to ensure an even flame, and use a needle or straight pin to carefully clean a clogged burner ignition port. Keep the oven free of food buildup by periodically using the self-cleaning feature or cleaning manually, per the manufacturer's instructions.

## Refrigerators

Don't pack it too full—so that air can circulate freely and the compressor doesn't have to work overtime. Clean the compressor coils every few months. Check your owner's manual for the coils' location, then vacuum them with a soft-bristle brush attachment. Wipe door gaskets with mild detergent and water, not bleach. Maintain a stainless finish by using dish detergent, water, and a sponge, or use a stainless cleaner recommended by the manufacturer.

## Washers

At least once a year, remove grit from the screens where the hoses attach to the washer. Don't stuff the washer beyond its manufacturer-recommended capacity. Make sure the machine sits on a level and well-supported subfloor to prevent excessive vibration. And to keep the washer from working harder than it has to, heed the manufacturer's instructions about how much detergent to use.

## Dryers

Clean the lint filter after each use to keep air flowing freely. Check the exhaust duct periodically, especially if you find that the dryer isn't sufficiently heating up or takes longer than usual to dry a load. Clean the duct once a year to keep it from clogging with lint, which is a fire hazard. And if you use dryer sheets, clean the moisture sensor strips inside the dryer with a little rubbing alcohol to remove film buildup, which hurts performance.

## Vacuums

Change the vacuum bag and clean the filters as needed. Avoid vacuuming up sharp or large objects, which can clog or damage a vac's components, and running over the cord, which can fray and pose an electric-shock hazard. Whether you have a bagged or bagless vacuum, don't let the bag or bin get filled to the brim, which makes the motor work harder. A motorized brush tangled with hair also adds stress to the motor, so keep it clean.



# 8 Things to Never Skimp On



## 1. CAR SAFETY FEATURES.

The systems that can help you prevent a car crash—or survive one—are worth every penny. Buy as many car safety features as you can afford, especially forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking, even if it means forgoing the sunroof or leather seats you have your heart set on. Better yet, choose a model that has safety features as standard. (Online subscribers can find complete car ratings at [CR.org/cars](http://CR.org/cars).)



**2. SUNSCREEN.** Though you can use CR's ratings to find a high-performing inexpensive product (at [CR.org/cro/sunscreens](http://CR.org/cro/sunscreens)), you shouldn't try to save money by using only a tiny amount. To properly cover your body, you need to use a shot-glassful every 2 hours that you're in the sun.



**3. VACCINES.** Last year's flu vaccine won't necessarily protect you from this year's flu. And when it comes to vaccines that call for multiple doses, such as the MMR for kids, optimal protection requires all doses be given. Don't skimp on the boosters that are recommended for adults during outbreaks, either—the protection from some vaccines wears off over time. Also, adults should get a tetanus booster every 10 years. Good news: All of these are covered by most insurance plans or are available for very little cost at your local drugstore.



**8. HOME INSURANCE.** Don't buy less costly, "actual cash value" homeowners insurance to cover your home's contents. Always get replacement-cost coverage. In the event you were to make a claim, an actual-cash-value policy would reimburse you only for your belongings' depreciated value, which probably wouldn't be enough to cover the costs of replacing everything. (By default, most homeowners policies cover the replacement value of your home's structure.)

## 4. CAR INSURANCE.

Never buy a policy that just meets the minimum liability limits required by your state, because these may be insufficient to cover the cost of a major accident and typically are far below the standard 100/300/100 (which pays for bodily injury up to \$100,000 per person and \$300,000 per accident, and property damage up to \$100,000). Don't skip uninsured/underinsured motorist protection, either. You'll need this if you're in an accident caused by an uninsured driver.



## 5. INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR PAINT.

CR's proprietary paint tests (go to [CR.org/cro/paints](http://CR.org/cro/paints)) continue to find that economy grades of interior paint don't perform well overall, and you may need to apply three or four coats to cover dark colors. You also don't have to buy ultra-premium paints—just avoid the bottom of the barrel, so to speak. Economy exterior paints don't weather as well as top-of-the-line products from the same brand, so you'll be back on that ladder sooner than you imagined.

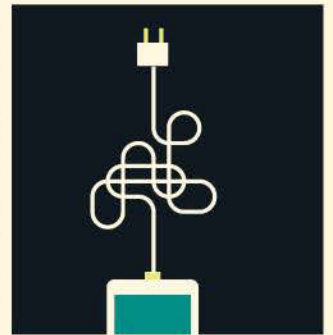


## 6. DIY IDENTITY PROTECTION.

Pay the fee (up to \$10 per credit bureau, depending on your state) to freeze your credit report at each of the big three credit bureaus—Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. This is one of the best ways to lock out identity thieves who want to open new credit in your name.



**7. CHARGING CORDS.** It's worth protecting your expensive phone by using a decent power cord. Cheap cords may not have undergone stringent testing by Underwriters Laboratories (UL), a leading safety testing organization whose logo you see on many electronic devices. Those cheap cords could damage your device (while voiding the warranty) and even, on rare occasions, cause a fire.



# Pie in the Sky

Can a frozen pizza taste good and still be reasonably healthy? Just in time for the big game, we rate 26 to see whether you can pick one that scores.

by **Sally Wadyka**

**NEXT TO THANKSGIVING**, Super Bowl Sunday is the biggest eating day of the year. And what finds its way onto many party menus? Pizza. Of course, it's pretty popular every other day, too. One in 8 Americans has a slice (or two or three) on any given day. And according to the market research firm Mintel, much of that is frozen: 37 percent of us eat frozen pizza two to three times per month. Our recent tests of 26 cheese and vegetable pies show that opting for a frozen one is actually a pretty good plan.

.....  
*Continued on page 36* ➤

43

**Against the Grain**  
Three Cheese  
Gluten Free  
Pizza

58

**Newman's Own**  
Thin & Crispy  
Pizza Roasted  
Vegetable

59

**American Flatbread**  
Tomato  
Sauce & Three  
Cheese Pizza



64

**California  
Pizza Kitchen**  
Spinach and  
Artichoke  
Crispy Thin Crust  
Pizza



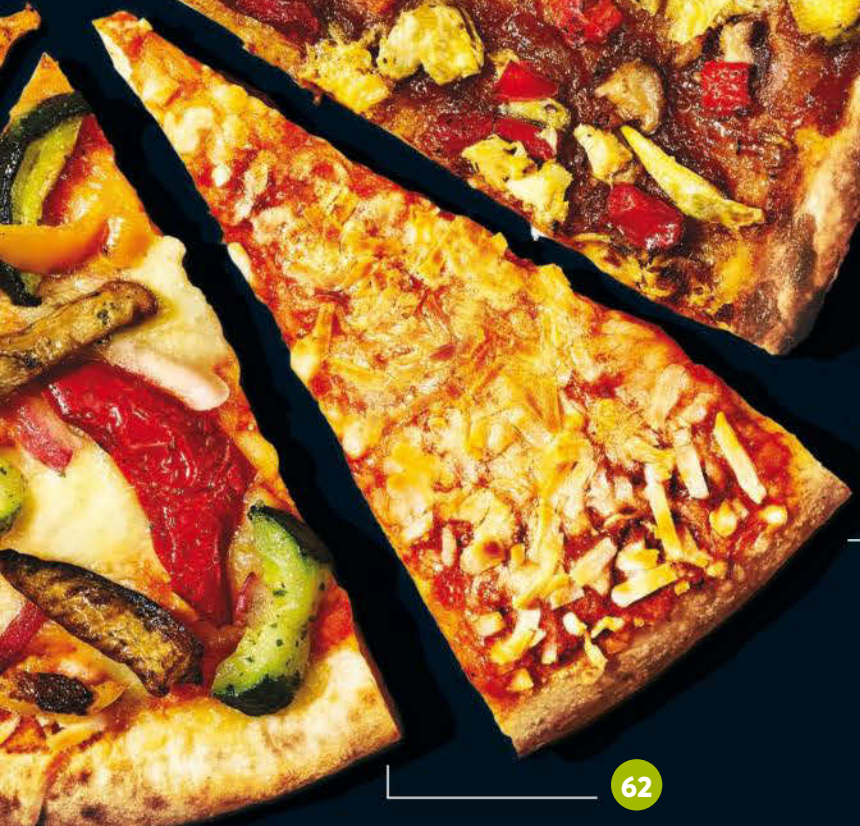
61

**Dr. Oetker**  
Virtuoso Thin  
+ Crispy Crust  
Pizza Vegetable  
Medley



54

**Amy's**  
Roasted  
Vegetable  
Pizza No  
Cheese



62

**Trader Giotto's  
(Trader Joe's)**  
Organic Roasted  
Vegetable Pizza

59

**Amy's**  
Cheese Pizza

## HOW TO MAKE A MORE PERFECT PIE

*You'll get the best results from a frozen pizza if you follow these tips:*

- 1. Preheat the oven.** It's key to good browning and crisping. Don't shortcut this step.
- 2. Don't thaw the pie.** Unless the directions on the box specifically tell you to do so, put the frozen pie directly into the preheated oven.
- 3. Slide it on an oven rack.** This makes for a crispier crust. The rack should be positioned in the center of the oven.
- 4. Add your own veggies or fresh herbs.** Baby spinach, mushrooms, onions, peppers, and sliced tomatoes are good choices, but you can use whatever you like. Sauté or roast the veggies lightly to remove some of the water so your pie won't get soggy during baking. Finish with fresh herbs such as basil or oregano. These additions not only improve the nutritional content but also will help give a frozen pie a fresher taste.

**Note:** Check the charts on pages 38 and 39 for the actual serving size for each of the pizzas.

Continued from page 34

### Frozen Gets a Makeover

Frozen pies have always been dogged by a reputation for being highly processed and not so tasty. Mintel's research shows that more than half of frozen-pizza buyers said they'd buy a pie more often if it weren't so processed, and 59 percent said they'd buy more if they had more premium ingredients. That's led frozen-pizza manufacturers to try to improve their product by cutting out preservatives and artificial flavors, lowering the sodium content, and making crusts with whole grains. "There are a lot more options now in frozen pizzas, with 'clean' ingredient lists that look more like what I would make at home if I started from scratch," says Rachel Cheatham, Ph.D., an adjunct assistant professor of nutrition and food marketing at Tufts University.

Our test results show that these efforts are making a difference. About half of the pizzas earned a Very Good rating for taste. Nutrition was a bit trickier. Although we found several pies that—in the realm of pizza—are reasonably nutritious choices, you'd still be hard-pressed to call any of them health food. We didn't find any that we could give our highest marks to, mostly because the fiber, saturated fat, and sodium counts dragged down the nutrition scores.

"Many of the cheese pizzas and all of the veggie ones received a Good rating for nutrition, with the veggie pizzas tending to have more fiber, less saturated fat, and a little less sodium than the cheese pizzas," says Ellen Kloss, a Consumer Reports nutritionist. Three of the veggie pies we tested—California Pizza Kitchen Spinach and Artichoke Crispy Thin Crust, Trader Giotto's Organic Roasted Vegetable, and Dr. Oetker Virtuoso Thin + Crispy Crust Pizza Vegetable Medley—scored the only Very Good overall ratings of the bunch.

## Easy Bake Ovens

*You don't have to turn on your oven to heat up a frozen pizza. These countertop toaster ovens will do a dandy job.*

The smaller interior of a toaster oven means it will take less time to reach the desired baking temperature than if you used a regular oven, so you can go from freezer to plate faster.

To fit a typical frozen pie, you'll need a toaster oven with a depth of at least 12 inches, such as the two below. The Breville was tops in our testing, but the Krups scored well for less than half the price.



**Breville** Smart Oven Pro BOV845BSS, \$270

76

*Fits a 13-inch pizza.*



**Krups** DeLuxe Convection Toaster OK710D51, \$120

72

*Fits a 12-inch pizza.*

### The Role of Toppings and Crust

Whether you opt for frozen or takeout, chowing down on a couple of slices can mean taking in nearly 750 calories and an alarming 1,600 mg of sodium. (U.S. dietary guidelines call for less than 2,300 mg per day.) And depending on your choice of toppings, pizza can also pack a significant amount of saturated fat. We picked plain cheese and vegetable pizzas to test, knowing that those with meat toppings would have rated worse on the nutrition front. "Losing the meat and adding veggies is a good way to make pizza into a healthier meal," says Lauri Wright, R.D., Ph.D., an assistant professor of nutrition and dietetics at the University of North Florida. "You'll get more fiber, more vitamins and nutrients, and less sodium and fat."

When trying to pick a healthier pizza, consider a vegetable pie. "The veggie pies we tested were for the most part lower in saturated fat than the cheese pizzas," Kloss says.

Thin crust can sometimes save you some calories, but don't automatically assume that a thin-crust pie is a better choice. For example, Red Baron Thin & Crispy Crust Five Cheese Pizza is similar in calories and fat to the Tombstone Original 5 Cheese Pizza, and has considerably more sodium.

Whole-grain crusts aren't easy to find but they're worth seeking out. "If you go for one made with whole grains, you can double the fiber," Wright says. In our testing, for example, Freschetta Artisan Crust Four Cheese Pizza had a multigrain crust and 4 grams of fiber per serving. Most of the other cheese pizzas had 1 to 2 grams.

### Why Size Matters

"We found that serving sizes for these frozen pizzas varied quite a bit," Kloss says. "Sometimes it's one-third of a pie, sometimes a quarter. And for one of the thin-crust pies we tested (American Flatbread Tomato Sauce &

# Takeout Pizza That Packs a Punch

Curious to know which are some of the unhealthiest pies that money can buy? Here are some heavyweights from the chain restaurants Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, Papa John's, and Little Caesars.

WHILE NONE OF the frozen pizzas we tested are nutritional superstars, many are better choices compared with what's on the menu at popular takeout chains. Thick

crusts (made only with refined white flour), crusts stuffed with cheese, and toppings that include several types of processed meat add up to pizzas that

are nutritionally on a par with a double cheeseburger. In some cases, a single slice can deliver nearly half of the recommended daily allowance for sodium.



**PIZZA HUT**  
**Meat Lover's Stuffed Crust**

480 calories  
26 g fat  
11 g saturated fat  
2 g fiber  
6 g sugars  
1,380 mg sodium



**DOMINO'S PIZZA**  
**Cali Chicken Bacon Ranch**

400 calories  
20 g fat  
7 g saturated fat  
2 g fiber  
2 g sugars  
880 mg sodium



**PAPA JOHN'S**  
**John's Favorite**

390 calories  
20 g fat  
9 g saturated fat  
1 g fiber  
3 g sugars  
920 mg sodium



**LITTLE CAESARS**  
**3 Meat Treat**

330 calories  
16 g fat  
7 g saturated fat  
2 g fiber  
3 g sugars  
690 mg sodium

**Note:** Nutrition information is for one slice of a large pizza.

Three Cheese Pizza), a single serving was half the pizza.” So even though calories per serving averaged about 300, you could easily consume two to three times that if you don't pay attention to serving size. If your favorite frozen pizza is higher in calories, fat, or sodium than you'd like, consider having just a slice and rounding out your meal with a big salad.



## FOOD FLASHBACK







A thorough examination of a product's ingredients has long been part of CR's food-testing rigor. In this photo from our June 1972 issue, a technician uses tweezers and a magnifying glass to remove the toppings from frozen pizzas for weighing.

**Ratings** > **Pizza Party** A frozen pizza that can compete with takeout is crispy on the bottom but moist and chewy on the top. The sauce should taste fresh and the cheese should be flavorful plus have stretch and a little chewiness.






















Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information										Price	Flavor & Texture Description
			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Package size (oz.)		
CHEESE																
	<b>American Flatbread</b> Tomato Sauce & Three Cheese Pizza	59	↓	↑	½ pizza	300	10	5	15	37	2	1	700	9.10	8.00	Very thin whole-grain crust and a blend of flavorful cheeses. Sauce has a slight fresh-tomato taste and olive oil and wine flavors, but it's sparse. Edges are slightly tough and crunchy.
	<b>Amy's</b> Cheese Pizza	59	↓	↑	½ pizza	290	12	5	12	33	2	4	590	13.00	8.00	Tender crust topped with mozzarella and a fresh-tasting tomato sauce with flavors of olive oil, garlic, and Italian spices.
	<b>DiGiorno</b> Original Rising Crust Four Cheese Pizza	57	↓	↑	½ pizza	290	10	4.5	14	36	1	5	670	28.20	7.00	Thick, breadlike crust with cornmeal crunch and a yeasty flavor. Flavorful blend of Italian cheeses. Plentiful sauce with big tomato and slight fennel flavors.
	<b>California Pizza Kitchen</b> Four Cheese Crispy Thin Crust Pizza	56	↓	↑	½ pizza	300	14	8	15	29	1	4	520	13.50	8.00	Thin crust topped with smoked Gouda and other cheeses. Fresh-tasting tomato sauce flavored with garlic and Italian spices, but a little light on the amount.
	<b>Simply Balanced</b> (Target) Organic Three Cheese Pizza	55	↓	↓	½ pizza	290	10	6	14	35	2	2	580	13.40	6.00	Thin, crispy, somewhat bland crust with charred edges and a smoky note reminiscent of a brick-oven pie. Topped with a unique blend of sharp cheeses.
	<b>Trader Giotto's</b> (Trader Joe's) Pizza 4 Formaggi	55	↓	↑	½ pizza	310	9	5	14	42	2	3	870	13.40	4.00	Thin, crispy, brick-oven-style crust. Topped with lots of stretchy Edam and Italian cheeses (no mozzarella) that add sharp flavors. Sauce is seasoned with oregano.
	<b>Freschetta</b> Artisan Crust Four Cheese Pizza	55	↓	↑	½ pizza	320	12	6	15	38	4	9	670	22.30	7.00	Soft, breadlike whole-grain crust. The slightly sweet sauce with slight fennel flavor somewhat overpowers the blend of Italian cheeses. Moderate heat.
	<b>Amy's</b> Gluten Free Cheese Pizza	49	↓	↓	½ pizza	320	16	4	10	34	2	5	590	12.00	10.00	Crust has a soft, slightly crumbly texture, like cornbread. Topped with sparse, mild mozzarella cheese and fresh-tasting sauce.
	<b>Newman's Own</b> Thin & Crispy Pizza Four Cheese	48	↓	↓	½ pizza	340	16	9	19	34	2	2	680	14.40	6.00	Thin, crispy crust with lots of flavorful cheese and sparse, mild tomato sauce. Garlicky and a bit salty, with slight heat.
	<b>Freschetta</b> Naturally Rising Crust 4 Cheese Medley Pizza	47	↓	↑	½ pizza	380	14	7	16	48	2	9	900	26.11	5.00	Thick, breadlike crust topped with a blend of Italian cheeses. Plentiful sauce heavily seasoned with Italian spices, garlic, and slight fennel. Has some heat.
	<b>365 Everyday Value</b> (Whole Foods) Thin Crust Pizza Four Cheese	47	↓	↓	½ pizza	320	14	7	16	31	2	9	700	12.50	4.00	Has a soft white-bread crust. Plentiful cheese and Italian spices. Slight heat and big dehydrated-garlic flavor.
	<b>Tombstone</b> Original 5 Cheese Pizza	46	↓	↓	¼ pizza	340	15	7	17	33	2	3	570	19.80	5.00	Somewhat bland, white-bread-style crust topped with plentiful cheese. Has a slightly sour tomato sauce with slight heat.
	<b>Freschetta</b> Gluten Free 4 Cheese Medley Pizza	44	↓	↓	¼ pizza	330	15	8	12	36	1	7	670	17.50	10.00	Crust is crispy and thinner than most and topped with lots of Italian cheeses with a "browned" flavor. But the crust has a very chewy texture that detracts overall.
	<b>Against the Grain</b> Three Cheese Gluten Free Pizza	43	↓	↓	½ pizza	400	23	8	15	32	0	1	420	24.00	12.00	Cheddar-cheese crust is crispy on the outside and somewhat doughy on the inside. Lots of mozzarella and other Italian cheeses. Sauce tastes fresh.

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information									Price	Flavor & Texture Description
			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)		

CHEESE *Continued*

	<b>Udi's</b> Gluten Free Three Cheese Pizza	41			½ pizza	360	15	9	12	45	2	6	570	10.00	8.50	Crispy thin crust topped with a blend of Italian cheeses and a slightly sweet sauce. A bit heavy on the dehydrated spices, which add a slight bitterness.
	<b>Red Baron</b> Thin & Crispy Crust Five Cheese Pizza	37			½ pizza	360	16	9	13	40	2	9	840	14.76	5.00	Thin crust. Thicker sauce, like tomato paste. Heavy seasonings somewhat overwhelm the mild cheeses. Slight heat.
	<b>Daiya</b> Cheese Lover's Gluten-Free Pizza	37			½ pizza	390	17	4.5	4	54	5	4	670	15.70	10.00	Multigrain crust, slightly doughy center. Faux "cheese" is crunchy and didn't melt. Thicker sauce, like tomato paste.

VEGETABLE

	<b>California Kitchen</b> Spinach and Artichoke Crispy Thin Crust Pizza	64			½ pizza	260	9	4.5	13	34	2	2	510	14.30	6.00	Crust is thin, crispy, and flaky. Topped with Italian cheeses, cream sauce, and spinach and artichoke pieces. Garlicky.
	<b>Trader Giotto's</b> (Trader Joe's) Organic Roasted Vegetable Pizza	62			½ pizza	300	11	4.5	12	36	5	4	550	16.08	4.50	Crispy crust. Plentiful roasted pepper, eggplant, zucchini, onion, mozzarella, and soft mild cheese, with tomato sauce.
	<b>Dr. Oetker</b> Virtuoso Thin + Crispy Crust Pizza Vegetable Medley	61			½ pizza	260	12	4.5	8	30	2	4	530	13.60	4.00	Lots of fresh-tasting cherry tomatoes, peppers, and red onion, with mozzarella and other cheeses. Sparse, mild tomato sauce with garlic. Pepperoncini adds heat.
	<b>American Flatbread</b> Revolution Thin & Crispy Pizza	60			½ pizza	360	12	6	17	45	3	4	820	16.80	10.00	Thin crust with crispy edges and a whole-grain flavor. Topped with thinly sliced mushrooms, onions with a caramelized flavor, and lots of cheese. Fresh-tasting.
	<b>Newman's Own</b> Thin & Crispy Pizza Roasted Vegetable	58			½ pizza	240	9	3.5	11	33	3	3	550	14.30	7.50	Thin, crispy, white-bread-style crust. Mushrooms, onions, and lots of red pepper. Mild cheese flavor overall.
	<b>Amy's</b> Roasted Vegetable Pizza No Cheese	54			½ pizza	280	9	1.5	7	42	3	5	540	12.00	9.00	Slightly doughy crust. Lots of caramelized onions, red pepper, artichoke, and mushrooms. No cheese. Balsamic vinegar and garlic flavors.
	<b>DiGiorno</b> Thin & Crispy Pizza Garden Vegetable	54			½ pizza	210	10	4.5	9	24	2	2	420	12.50	4.00	Thin, crispy crust. Has zucchini, red and yellow peppers, onion, mozzarella, dollops of creamy white sauce, and spices.
	<b>Whole Foods Market</b> Wood-Fired Pizza Marinated Grilled Vegetables	52			½ pizza	260	10	4	10	33	4	4	720	13.40	6.00	Whole-grain crust with mozzarella and large grilled pieces of red and yellow peppers, zucchini, eggplant, broccoli, and asparagus. Smoky note. Crust is crisp on the edges, but waterlogged vegetables result in a slightly soggy center.
	<b>Freschetta</b> Brick Oven Crust Roasted Mushroom & Spinach Pizza	49			½ pizza	260	10	4	10	34	2	8	590	22.52	6.00	Crust has crispy edges. Topped with lots of slightly soggy spinach, mushroom slices, and garlic pieces. The flavor of the mediocre Alfredo-style sauce dominates.

**HOW WE TEST:** CR's nutrition and food-testing team rated frozen pizzas for nutrition and taste.

The **Overall Score** is a combination of the two. The **Nutrition score** is based on energy density (calories per gram), total fat, saturated

fat, fiber, sugars, sodium, and other nutrients. Extra weighting is given for influential nutrients, either positive

or negative, respective to the pizza. **Sensory scores** are based on the results of a blind tasting by a trained sensory panel.



# Get More TV for Less

Holiday sales are over, but the deals aren't gone for good. The lead-up to the Super Bowl is another great time to get a low price on a high-performing TV. Here are five expert tips for finding a set you'll love.

by James K. Willcox





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## 1. Buy a Leftover 2017 Model

You'll save money, and you won't be missing out on any hot new features. That's because 2018 sets aren't likely to offer important technologies that weren't already built into 2017 models, especially larger TVs from major brands.

The reason to buy a 2017 TV is, of course, the discounts. An analysis we did with retail market research firm Gap Intelligence shows that after TVs are introduced early in the year, the prices tend to drop steadily as the months tick by before nose-diving in advance of Black Friday.

After the holidays, prices tick up but then plunge again in the two weeks leading up to the Super Bowl (that's Feb. 4 this year) as retailers try to make room for the next year's models.

"Last year we saw a 55-inch Samsung TV—the UN55KU6300—selling as low as \$699 in late January," says Deirdre Kennedy, senior analyst at Gap Intelligence. "It had started out at \$899 the previous spring."

## 2. Go Big and Go Home

It used to require some math to figure out which size TV to buy for a particular room. With older high-definition sets, for instance, it was best to sit around 8 feet back from a 60-inch set to really enjoy the quality of the picture.

No longer. Today's 4K (also called Ultra High Definition, or UHD) TVs have very fine picture detail, and you can go as big, and sit as close, as you like without the image beginning to look coarse, as it could in previous-generation 1080p sets.

But that doesn't mean a bigger set is always better. If your sofa is too close to a huge set, it might be difficult to take in the whole picture at once, or the set might just seem to overpower

the room. Screen size is a matter of personal preference. It's a good idea to go to a store, stand back from the TVs about as far as you'd sit at home, and see which screen size feels comfortable.

## 3. Embrace the World of 4K

The benefit of 4K televisions is that they can show sharper, more detailed images than 1080p TVs—as long as you're watching a 4K video, that is.

And that's one problem with 4K: Cable TV providers aren't transmitting shows at this resolution yet. Satellite TV companies do have some 4K content. But to take full advantage of your new set, you'll need to turn to the many 4K shows available on streaming services such as Amazon and Netflix, and on 4K Blu-ray discs. (You'll need a 4K Ultra HD Blu-ray player to watch these.)

The other thing to keep in mind is that 4K resolution is really a benefit only on big TVs. "As screens get smaller than 40 inches, it gets harder to appreciate the finer 4K picture detail," says Consumer Reports TV program leader Claudio Ciacci.

## 4. Be Wary of 'HDR' Labels

High dynamic range, or HDR, technology is now built into almost every larger 4K TV, especially from the major brands.

When done right, HDR can deliver a greater range of brightness levels from black to peak white. You'll see more detail in both the darker and near-white parts of the image, and the display will deliver more realistic lighting, including "specular highlights"—glints of light, such as the sun's reflection off a car's chrome bumper—that make images really pop off the screen.

"But our tests show that lots of sets that have some HDR capability fail to create the rich, lifelike images

the technology is known for," Ciacci cautions. "And there's no way to judge this for yourself in the TV aisle of an electronics store."

To get really good HDR performance, check the HDR score in our TV ratings, which can be found starting on page 44. The sets that deliver the goods on this technology tend to be more expensive, but if it fits your budget, the added cost is worthwhile: HDR can really enhance your TV-watching experience.

## 5. Don't Sweat Smart-TV Choices

Most TVs being shipped these days are smart models, meaning they can connect to the internet to let you access streaming services such as Netflix.

Different TV brands use different smart-TV platforms. But we don't think this should be a big part of a decision on which set to buy.

That's the lesson from a recent CR survey of more than 1,000 smart-TV owners. Most respondents said they were highly satisfied with the streaming experience, regardless of their TV's brand.

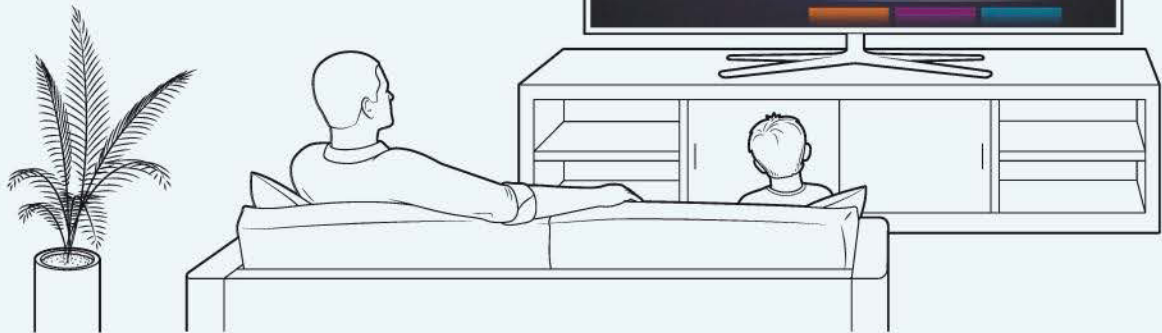
If you decide you don't like the smart-TV platform in the set you purchase, you can always add a separate streaming device, such as a Roku stick or an Apple TV. These devices can cost as little as \$30, though to get a model that handles 4K content you'll need to pay around \$70 or more.

Sixty percent of the respondents in our survey wound up adding a separate streaming device, though many liked the built-in functionality of their sets. Many told us they wanted better performance or a wider selection of streaming services to choose from.

We've recently tested 4K streaming players; see how they stack up against each other on the facing page.

# Super Streaming

Even if you have a smart TV, a separate streaming device could give you more viewing options or just be easier to use. Here are some of the best and newest 4K-compatible players. Prices range from \$70 to \$200.



**✓ Roku Ultra**  
\$100

82

Roku's flagship streaming device—our top-rated model—offers the best performance of any Roku player plus the wide assortment of channels that helps make Roku devices so popular. Roku will search for a movie or TV title across various services, listing the cheapest options first. Two reasons to spring for this model instead of the cheaper Roku Streaming Stick+, also reviewed here: A button on the unit makes the remote beep if you misplace it, and a headphone jack in the remote allows for private listening.

**⌘ Google**  
Chromecast Ultra  
\$70

80

Underneath the Chromecast's cool-looking, circular exterior is a solid-performing streamer that works a bit differently from other devices. There's no remote control. Instead, you use a smartphone or tablet with the Google Home app to find content, then "cast" it wirelessly to your TV. There's an Ethernet port in the power adapter for a more reliable connection, and a Google Home smart speaker can be used to control the Chromecast. But note: Right now there's no direct app for Amazon Video.

**✓ Apple**  
TV 4K (32GB)  
\$180

78

Apple TV has always made the most sense for people who live in Apple's world, renting and buying content from iTunes. The new, 4K version has a sleek interface, a faster processor than its predecessor, and the Siri voice assistant. Additionally, 4K HDR titles cost less on iTunes than on other services. Apple sweetens the deal by upgrading your previous iTunes purchases to 4K free of charge. And the company recently added support for Amazon Prime Video. There's also a 64GB version for \$200.

**⌘ Roku**  
Streaming Stick+  
\$70

77

Want a 4K Roku but not a set-top box? Just pop this stick-style player into a TV's HDMI port and it will essentially disappear behind or alongside your TV. The power cord has a unique inline wireless receiver that can, the company claims, improve the device's wireless range. Like all Rokus, this model has a category-leading assortment of channels. The Stick+ and Ultra have some voice controls, but these are limited compared with those in other players.

**⌘ Amazon Fire TV**  
with 4K Ultra HD and Alexa Voice Remote,  
\$70

76

The latest Fire TV replaces a pricier, boxy predecessor with a diamond-shaped dongle that has a slightly faster processor, HDR capability, and support for a smoother-looking 60 frames-per-second video. A big selling point is that the Fire TV comes with an Alexa-powered voice remote, which you can also use to operate Alexa-compatible lights, thermostats, and security cameras. Or you can control the Fire TV using an Amazon Echo smart speaker. The Fire TV prioritizes Amazon content, so it's probably best for Amazon Prime subscribers.

**Ratings** > **Futureproof TVs** Most of the televisions in our ratings are smart TVs with 4K resolution—but they're not all created equal.

		Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Specs					Test Results				
Rec.	Rank				TV resolution type	Display type (backlight)	Screen size (in.)	Smart TV (internet-enabled)	HD picture quality	Ultra HD performance	HDR effectiveness	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality
60-INCH AND LARGER														
✓	1	LG OLED65W7P	89	\$7,000	Ultra HD	OLED	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Very effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	2	LG OLED65C7P	88	\$2,700	Ultra HD	OLED	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Very effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	3	Sony Bravia XBR-65A1E	88	\$4,000	Ultra HD	OLED	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	4	LG OLED65B7P	87	\$2,650	Ultra HD	OLED	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Very effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	5	LG OLED65G7P	87	\$5,000	Ultra HD	OLED	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Very effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	6	LG OLED65B7A	87	\$2,600	Ultra HD	OLED	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	7	LG OLED65E7P	86	\$3,500	Ultra HD	OLED	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Very effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	8	Sony XBR-65X930E	82	\$3,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Very effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	9	LG 65SJ9500	80	\$1,800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	10	Samsung QN65Q7C	80	\$2,600	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	11	Samsung QN65Q8C	80	\$3,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	12	Samsung UN75MU800D	79	\$2,780	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	75	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	13	Samsung QN65Q7F	79	\$2,500	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	14	Samsung UN65MU850D	79	\$1,680	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	15	LG 65SJ8000	79	\$1,400	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	16	Samsung QN65Q9F	79	\$3,300	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Very effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	17	Samsung UN65MU8500	79	\$1,500	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	18	Samsung UN65LS003	78	\$2,800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	19	Samsung UN65MU800D	78	\$1,600	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	20	Samsung UN65MU8000	77	\$1,600	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	21	LG 65SJ8500	77	\$1,300	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	22	Sony XBR-65X900E	76	\$1,500	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	23	LG 75SJ8570	76	\$2,300	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	75	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	24	Samsung UN65MU9000	74	\$1,800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	25	Samsung UN65MU6300	74	\$1,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Limited	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	26	Samsung UN65MU630D	73	\$980	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Limited	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	27	LG 60UJ7700	72	\$850	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	60	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	28	LG 65UJ7700	72	\$1,200	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	29	Samsung UN65MU700D	72	\$1,100	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	30	Samsung UN65MU650D	72	\$1,300	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Limited	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	31	Sony XBR-65X850E	71	\$1,200	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	32	Samsung UN65MU6500	71	\$1,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Limited	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	33	Sony XBR-75X850E	71	\$2,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	75	•	⬆️	⬆️	Limited	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	34	Samsung UN65MU7000	71	\$1,300	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	35	Samsung UN65MU7500	71	\$1,200	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	36	Vizio P65-E1	67	\$1,700	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	Option*	⬆️	⬆️	Effective	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
💰	37	LG 60UJ6300	66	\$700	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	60	•	⬆️	⬆️	Limited	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
✓	38	Vizio D65-E0	65	\$900	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	•	⬆️	⬆️	Not supported	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️

Rec.	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Specs				Test Results				
					TV resolution type	Display type (backlight)	Screen size (in.)	Smart TV (internet-enabled)	HD picture quality	Ultra HD performance	HDR effectiveness	Viewing angle	Motion blur

60-INCH AND LARGER *Continued*

	39	<b>Sony</b> KD60X690E	64	\$1,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	60	●			Limited			
	40	<b>LG</b> 65UJ6300	64	\$1,100	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	●			Effective			
	41	<b>Hisense</b> 65H6D	63	\$800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	●			Limited			
	42	<b>Vizio</b> E80-E3	62	\$3,100	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	80	Option*			Ineffective			
	43	<b>Vizio</b> E75-E3	62	\$1,900	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	Option*			Ineffective			
	44	<b>Sharp</b> LC-65P8000U	61	\$1,300	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	●			Effective			
	45	<b>Vizio</b> E65-E1	59	\$900	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	Option*			Ineffective			
	46	<b>Sharp</b> LC-65LBU591U	59	\$900	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	●			Limited			
	47	<b>Vizio</b> E65-E0	59	\$790	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	Option*			Ineffective			
	48	<b>Philips</b> 65PFL5602	56	\$850	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	●			Ineffective			
	49	<b>TCL</b> 65S405	51	\$800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	65	●			Ineffective			

55- TO 59-INCH

	1	<b>LG</b> OLED55C7P	88	\$1,700	Ultra HD	OLED	55	●			Very effective			
	2	<b>Sony</b> Bravia XBR-55A1E	88	\$2,500	Ultra HD	OLED	55	●			Effective			
	3	<b>LG</b> OLED55B7P	88	\$2,000	Ultra HD	OLED	55	●			Very effective			
	4	<b>LG</b> OLED55E7P	86	\$2,500	Ultra HD	OLED	55	●			Effective			
	5	<b>LG</b> OLED55B7A	86	\$1,600	Ultra HD	OLED	55	●			Effective			
	6	<b>Sony</b> XBR-55X930E	81	\$2,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Very effective			
	7	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU9000	78	\$1,500	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	8	<b>Samsung</b> QN55Q7F	78	\$1,600	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	9	<b>Samsung</b> QN55Q7C	78	\$1,800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Very effective			
	10	<b>Samsung</b> QN55Q8C	78	\$2,200	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	11	<b>Samsung</b> UN55LS003	78	\$2,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Limited			
	12	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU800D	78	\$1,480	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	13	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU8500	77	\$1,200	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	14	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU8000	77	\$1,100	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	15	<b>LG</b> 55SJ8500	76	\$900	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	16	<b>Sony</b> XBR-55X900E	76	\$1,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	17	<b>LG</b> 55UJ7700	75	\$800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	18	<b>LG</b> 55UJ6540	74	\$800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Effective			
	19	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU6300	74	\$750	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Limited			
	20	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU6500	73	\$800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Limited			
	21	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU630D	73	\$600	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Limited			
	22	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU7000	73	\$900	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Limited			
	23	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU700D	73	\$1,100	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Limited			
	24	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU7500	73	\$800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Limited			
	25	<b>Samsung</b> UN55MU6490	72	\$600	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●			Limited			

Ratings > Futureproof TVs (continued)

Rec.	Rank	Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price	Specs				Test Results					
					TV resolution type	Display type (backlight)	Screen size (in.)	Smart TV (internet-enabled)	HD picture quality	Ultra HD performance	HDR effectiveness	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality
55- TO 59-INCH <i>Continued</i>														
👉	26	<b>Samsung UN55MU6290</b>	71	\$700	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👍
👍	27	<b>Samsung UN58MU6100</b>	71	\$800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	58	●	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👍
👍	28	<b>Samsung UN55MU650D</b>	70	\$780	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👎
👍	29	<b>Sony XBR-55X800E</b>	68	\$900	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Limited	👍	👍	👎
👍	30	<b>Vizio P55-E1</b>	67	\$1,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	Option*	👍	👍	Limited	👍	👍	👎
👍	31	<b>LG 55LJ550M</b>	66	\$500	HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	NA	Not supported	👍	👎	👎
👍	32	<b>LG 55LJ5500</b>	66	\$500	HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	NA	Not supported	👍	👎	👎
	33	<b>Sony KD55X720E</b>	64	\$800	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👎
	34	<b>LG 55UJ6300</b>	62	\$650	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👎	👍	Limited	👍	👎	👎
	35	<b>Vizio M55-E0</b>	62	\$700	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	Option*	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👎
	36	<b>Hisense 55H9D</b>	62	\$900	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Effective	👎	👎	👎
	37	<b>Hisense 55DU6070</b>	62	\$500	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Effective	👎	👎	👎
	38	<b>Sharp LC-55P8000U</b>	61	\$850	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👎
	39	<b>Sharp LC-55P7000U</b>	61	\$650	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Effective	👎	👎	👎
	40	<b>Sharp LC-55P620U</b>	59	\$530	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Effective	👎	👎	👎
	41	<b>Hisense 55H6D</b>	58	\$470	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👎
	42	<b>Toshiba 55L510U18</b>	58	\$430	HD	LCD (LED)	55		👍	NA	Not supported	👎	👎	👎
	43	<b>TCL 55P605</b>	58	\$600	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Effective	👎	👎	👎
	44	<b>Vizio E55-E2</b>	58	\$500	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	Option*	👍	👎	Ineffective	👎	👎	👎
	45	<b>TCL 55P607</b>	57	\$650	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👎
	46	<b>Sharp LC-55LBU591U</b>	56	\$500	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👎	Limited	👎	👎	👎
	47	<b>Toshiba 55L711U18</b>	55	\$450	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	Option*	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👎
	48	<b>TCL 55S405</b>	53	\$450	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👎	👍	Ineffective	👎	👎	👎
	49	<b>Philips 55PFL5602</b>	53	\$400	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👍	👎	Not supported	👍	👎	👎
	50	<b>Hitachi 55R80</b>	52	\$450	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👎	👍	Ineffective	👎	👎	👎
	51	<b>TCL 55S403</b>	52	\$450	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👎	👍	Ineffective	👎	👎	👎
	52	<b>Element EL4KAMZ517</b>	52	\$630	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👎	👍	Not supported	👎	👎	👎
	53	<b>TCL 55C807</b>	51	\$700	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👎	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👎
	54	<b>Sharp LC-55P5000U</b>	47	\$480	HD	LCD (LED)	55	●	👎	NA	Not supported	👎	👎	👎
	55	<b>RCA RTU5540</b>	47	\$330	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	55		👍	👎	Not supported	👎	👎	👎
	56	<b>Insignia NS-55D420NA18</b>	46	\$380	HD	LCD (LED)	55		👎	NA	Not supported	👎	👎	👎
46- TO 52-INCH														
👍	1	<b>Samsung UN49MU800D</b>	77	\$880	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●	👍	👍	Effective	👎	👎	👍
👍	2	<b>Samsung UN49MU8000</b>	75	\$900	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●	👍	👍	Effective	👎	👎	👍
👍	3	<b>Sony XBR-49X900E</b>	73	\$1,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●	👍	👍	Effective	👎	👍	👎
👍	4	<b>LG 49UJ7700</b>	73	\$700	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●	👍	👍	Limited	👍	👎	👎
👍	5	<b>Samsung UN49MU6500</b>	72	\$750	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👎
👍	6	<b>Samsung UN50MU6300</b>	72	\$480	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●	👍	👍	Limited	👎	👎	👍

Brand & Model		Overall Score	Price	Specs				Test Results						
Rec.	Rank			TV resolution type	Display type (backlight)	Screen size (in.)	Smart TV (internet-enabled)	HD picture quality	Ultra HD performance	HDR effectiveness	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	
46- TO 52-INCH <i>Continued</i>														
	7	<b>Samsung UN49MU650D</b>	72	\$730	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Limited			
	8	<b>Samsung UN49MU7500</b>	70	\$1,000	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Effective			
	9	<b>Samsung UN49MU7000</b>	69	\$700	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Limited			
	10	<b>Samsung UN50MU630D</b>	68	\$720	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●			Limited			
	11	<b>LG 49UJ6500</b>	68	\$450	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Limited			
	12	<b>Sony XBR-49X800E</b>	67	\$700	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Limited			
	13	<b>Samsung UN50M5300</b>	65	\$500	HD	LCD (LED)	50	●		NA	Not supported			
	14	<b>LG 49UJ6300</b>	65	\$500	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Limited			
	15	<b>LG 49LJ5500</b>	64	\$450	HD	LCD (LED)	49	●		NA	Not supported			
	16	<b>LG 49LJ550M</b>	62	\$450	HD	LCD (LED)	49	●		NA	Not supported			
	17	<b>Sony KD49X720E</b>	61	\$650	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Effective			
	18	<b>Insignia NS-50DR620NA18</b>	61	\$380	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●			Limited			
	19	<b>Sharp LC-50P8000U</b>	61	\$600	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●			Effective			
	20	<b>Sharp LC-50P5000U</b>	60	\$380	HD	LCD (LED)	50	●		NA	Not supported			
	21	<b>Hisense 50H6D</b>	60	\$400	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●			Limited			
	22	<b>Vizio D48f-E0</b>	59	\$370	HD	LCD (LED)	48	●		NA	Not supported			
	23	<b>Vizio D50f-E1</b>	58	\$420	HD	LCD (LED)	50	●		NA	Not supported			
	24	<b>Toshiba 50L711U18</b>	58	\$400	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	Option*			Limited			
	25	<b>Vizio E50x-E1</b>	57	\$450	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	Option*			Not supported			
	26	<b>Samsung UN49J5000A</b>	57	\$450	HD	LCD (LED)	49			NA	Not supported			
	27	<b>Hisense 50R6D</b>	57	\$400	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●			Limited			
	28	<b>Sharp LC-50P7000U</b>	56	\$450	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●			Limited			
	29	<b>Sharp LC-50LBU591U</b>	56	\$400	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●			Limited			
	30	<b>RCA RTR5060</b>	56	\$330	HD	LCD (LED)	50	●		NA	Not supported			
	31	<b>Vizio D50-E1</b>	55	\$500	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●			Not supported			
	32	<b>Hitachi 49E30</b>	55	\$330	HD	LCD (LED)	49			NA	Not supported			
	33	<b>Element ELFW5017</b>	54	\$300	HD	LCD (LED)	50			NA	Not supported			
	34	<b>LG 49LJ5100</b>	53	\$350	HD	LCD (LED)	49			NA	Not supported			
	35	<b>TCL 49S403</b>	53	\$370	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Ineffective			
	36	<b>TCL 49S405</b>	53	\$360	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Ineffective			
	37	<b>Element E4SFC5017</b>	51	\$400	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	50	●			Not supported			
	38	<b>Hitachi 49R80</b>	49	\$380	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49	●			Ineffective			
	39	<b>RCA RTU4921</b>	45	\$330	Ultra HD	LCD (LED)	49				Not supported			
	40	<b>Westinghouse WD48FAB100</b>	37	\$280	HD	LCD (LED)	48			NA	Not supported			

Online subscribers can go to [CR.org/tvs](http://CR.org/tvs) for complete, up-to-date ratings.

**HOW WE TEST:** The Overall Score is out of a total of 100 points. **HD picture quality** is evaluated after a TV is adjusted to produce the highest-fidelity image possible, encompassing detail, color accuracy, and contrast. **Ultra HD performance** is an evaluation of how well a TV reproduces full UHD image detail, including HDR where applicable, using 4K content. **HDR effectiveness** is a measure of the TV's ability to show high dynamic range, or the difference between the darkest blacks and brightest whites in an image. **Viewing angle** reflects clarity and color accuracy from various horizontal and vertical angles. **Motion blur** shows how well the TV presents blur-free images during motion scenes. If the blur-reduction feature also invokes a "smooth motion" effect, it is turned off for the test. **Sound quality** reflects overall clarity of sound, depth of bass, effective volume level, and distortion for dialogue and music.

# Satisfaction Guarantee

Before you buy a brand-new car, consult our exclusive Owner Satisfaction ratings to see if the right used car is a smarter choice.

by Mike Monticello



**NOTHING BEATS** the feeling of driving a brand-new car off the lot. But if you want great value and more features than your budget allows, consider buying used. In fact, if you choose wisely, the only thing you'll give up when you buy a used car is that new-car smell. (Buying advice for new-car purists can be found starting on page 52.)

The average new car loses about half its value in the first three years of ownership, says Mel Yu, CR's automotive analyst. Buying a used car means that the previous owner took that financial hit.

CR's survey results show that cars in general are very reliable today, easily clocking in 100,000 miles or more

before needing any major repairs. If you take the necessary precautions when buying a used car from a recent model year, chances are good you'll end up with one you can drive for years to come without needing to do much more than change the oil.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to buy used is that it can put premium features and luxury within reach of those who otherwise couldn't afford them.

"Going the used-car route can let you step up to a model that's more luxurious, better equipped, and more enjoyable to drive," says Jake Fisher, director of CR's auto testing.

To show you how much more car you

can get by buying used, we selected eight new models—all well-rated by CR—and came up with two 3-year-old used alternatives, one in the same category and the other a step up in luxury. (See "New vs. Used: What You Get for the Money," on page 50.)

The best way to start any search for a great used car is to consult our ratings and choose models that have high owner satisfaction and reliability ratings as well as a strong road-test score when tested new. Then, as you narrow your search, be sure to do the following:

**Take a test-drive.** There's no substitute for getting behind the wheel. Note any unusual vibrations, squeaks, and rattles,



# nited



USED

BMW X5

\$37,100-\$53,825

and search and sniff for mildew or mold. (See “How to Avoid Buying a Once-Flooded Car,” on page 52.)

**Check the title.** Make sure the seller has the actual title. Many states will note on the title whether the vehicle has ever been seriously damaged, been repurchased under a state lemon-law program, or had another problem. But a title may not have this information for a variety of reasons, so get a vehicle history report for any car you’re considering. If the seller doesn’t have the title or won’t show it to you, consider a different car.

**Check the vehicle history report.** These reports—from companies like AutoCheck and Carfax—may indicate

whether a vehicle has ever been in a crash, and show maintenance records and the number of owners a vehicle has had. Even if the seller provides a report, obtain one from another company; the sources of information they rely on can vary. An incident might not appear on a vehicle history report if, say, an owner hasn’t reported it to an insurer or the police. It can also take months for an incident to show up on a report, if at all.

**Hire a mechanic.** “Have a mechanic experienced in auto bodywork and accident repair give the vehicle a detailed inspection,” says John Ibbotson, CR’s chief mechanic. If the seller won’t let you have the car inspected, walk away.

**Check for recalls.** Make sure the car you’re considering doesn’t have a known, unfixed safety defect. Go to [nhtsa.gov/recalls](http://nhtsa.gov/recalls) and enter the car’s vehicle identification number (VIN) to see whether any recalls are pending. Recall-related repairs are free but must be done by a dealer that sells the brand of vehicle being recalled.

**Contact the previous owner.** Check the title or ask the dealer for the contact information. Previous owners can tell you how the car was used—commuting? Uber?—and about any mechanical or other problems they experienced.

For more tips on how to buy a used car, go to [CR.org/usedcars](http://CR.org/usedcars).

# New vs. Used: What You Get for the Money

If you're shopping for a 2018 car that's well-rated by CR but you want a thriftier option or even a luxury upgrade for the same money, we offer these smart alternatives from the 2015 model year. Automatic emergency braking (AEB) and forward-collision warning (FCW) are available on all the new cars listed and on used models as indicated.

NEW	SMART USED ALTERNATIVES	
<b>Hyundai Elantra</b> \$20,090 OVERALL SCORE 70	<b>Toyota Corolla</b> \$13,375-\$17,225	<b>Honda Accord</b> \$17,225-\$25,575

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Relatively roomy, easy-to-use controls, fuel economy  
**Cons:** Engine noise, ride, front-seat comfort  
 AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Ride, fuel economy, interior space  
**Cons:** Lackluster handling, interior quality  
 AEB/FCW NOT AVAILABLE


SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Roomy interior, driving position, handling, fuel economy  
**Cons:** Distracting LaneWatch side camera  
 FCW OPTIONAL

NEW	SMART USED ALTERNATIVES	
<b>Lincoln MKZ</b> \$41,990 OVERALL SCORE 79	<b>Audi A6</b> \$28,475-\$41,625	<b>BMW 5 Series</b> \$28,675-\$42,500

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

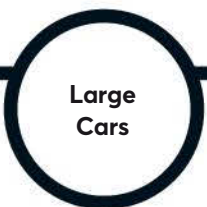
**Pros:** Handling, ride, quietness  
**Cons:** Visibility, snug interior  
 AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Powertrain, handling, ride, quietness  
**Cons:** Controls take getting used to  
 AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 



**Pros:** Quick and fuel efficient; handling, ride, quietness  
**Cons:** Controls take getting used to, tight rear seat  
 AEB/FCW OPTIONAL





NEW	SMART USED ALTERNATIVES	
<b>Nissan Altima (V6)</b> \$31,610 OVERALL SCORE 77	<b>Kia Optima</b> \$14,550-\$22,725	<b>Lexus ES</b> \$28,725-\$30,500

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Relatively roomy, easy-to-use controls, acceleration  
**Cons:** Handling agility, ride  
 AEB/FCW STANDARD

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Simple controls, smooth transmission  
**Cons:** Fuel economy, rear visibility  
 AEB/FCW NOT AVAILABLE

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Fuel economy, quiet interior, comfortable seats  
**Cons:** Distracting infotainment interface  
 AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

NEW	SMART USED ALTERNATIVES	
<b>Ford Taurus</b> \$37,885 OVERALL SCORE 67	<b>Chevrolet Impala</b> \$13,525-\$22,375	<b>Buick LaCrosse</b> \$15,550-\$24,600

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Quiet, comfortable ride  
**Cons:** Cramped interior, fussy climate controls, unresponsive steering  
 FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Handling, ride, braking, quietness, spacious cabin and trunk  
**Cons:** Limited rear visibility  
 AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION   
 RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Ride, quietness, fit and finish  
**Cons:** Visibility, tight driving position  
 AEB/FCW OPTIONAL


**NEW**


 **Nissan Rogue**  
\$29,920  
OVERALL SCORE 73

**SMART USED ALTERNATIVES**

**Mazda CX-5**  
\$17,200-\$24,100

**Kia Sorento**  
\$17,050-\$29,275

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Roomy interior, nice ride  
**Cons:** Noisy engine, bland driving experience  
AEB/FCW STANDARD

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Agile handling, fun to drive, generous features for the money  
**Cons:** Somewhat noisy cabin  
AEB OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Roomy, easy to park, intuitive controls, third-row seat  
**Cons:** Mediocre handling  
AEB/FCW NOT AVAILABLE

**NEW**

 **Acura RDX**  
\$38,990  
OVERALL SCORE 73

**SMART USED ALTERNATIVES**

**Audi Q5**  
\$31,425-\$46,600

**BMW X5**  
\$37,100-\$53,825

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Smooth and powerful drivetrain, seat comfort  
**Cons:** Ride, rear visibility, annoying controls  
AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION 

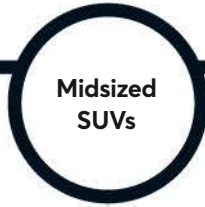
RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Comfortable ride, agility, quiet interior  
**Cons:** Tight rear seat and cargo area, rear visibility  
AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Luxurious and quiet, confident handling  
**Cons:** Some annoying controls, notably the shifter  
AEB/FCW OPTIONAL



**NEW**

 **Honda Pilot**  
\$39,585  
OVERALL SCORE 74

**SMART USED ALTERNATIVES**


**Toyota Highlander**  
\$25,775-\$39,525


**Acura MDX**  
\$32,850-\$39,300

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Roomy interior, visibility, smooth powertrain  
**Cons:** Clumsy handling, touch-screen radio  
AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Strong reliability, roomy interior, pleasing drivetrain  
**Cons:** Interior trim can look cheap  
AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Well-rounded upscale SUV, fuel economy  
**Cons:** Lacks agility, frustrating controls  
AEB/FCW OPTIONAL


**NEW**


**Infiniti QX60**  
\$51,920  
OVERALL SCORE 64

**SMART USED ALTERNATIVES**

**Buick Enclave**  
\$24,600-\$33,450

**Audi Q7**  
\$39,050-\$50,575

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Plush, roomy, quiet, easy-to-use controls  
**Cons:** Lacks agility, poor rear visibility  
AEB/FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Lots of interior space and flexibility, good third-row access, quiet and comfortable ride  
**Cons:** Fuel economy  
FCW OPTIONAL

SATISFACTION 

RELIABILITY 

**Pros:** Comfortable front seats, roomy, fit and finish  
**Cons:** Engine drone, complicated controls  
AEB/FCW NOT AVAILABLE

# Car Satisfaction, According to Owners

*Our Owner Satisfaction Survey reveals the real-world experiences of drivers like you.*

**AT OUR 327-ACRE** test track in Connecticut, we evaluate dozens and dozens of cars each year, which we buy at dealerships the same way you do. In addition to testing them rigorously at our track, we drive them on roadways for months and for thousands of miles.

For even more information, we seek the opinions of about 400,000 car owners with our Annual Owner Satisfaction Survey. The Owner Satisfaction Score, based on whether an owner says he or she would buy the same car again, measures

whether a car lives up to expectations. Respondents also rate their cars in six categories: driving experience, comfort, value, styling, audio, and climate systems. Combined with CR's ratings, our Owner Satisfaction Survey gives car buyers valuable guidance when they're shopping for a vehicle. (See our charts, starting on page 55.)

A familiar theme is that cars that meet owner expectations consistently score well. Sports cars like the Porsche 911, the Chevrolet Corvette, and the Mazda MX-5 Miata are hits because

they deliver the driving fun that their owners were looking for.

In a surprise showing, the revamped Honda Ridgeline outscored the compact pickup field by a wide margin. The Ridgeline and the Ford F-350 are also among the top 10 vehicles ranked by owner satisfaction scores. That's the first time in at least five years that any pickup truck has made it into the top 10.

The charts on the following pages show which models and brands satisfy drivers after living with their vehicles for three years.

## How to Avoid Buying a Once-Flooded Car

**HURRICANES HARVEY** and Irma battered the U.S. last year, but the water-damaged vehicles they left behind are just starting to show up on used-car lots. As many as 650,000 cars were flooded in last fall's storms, according to some estimates, and there's no telling how many have been cleaned up and camouflaged to hide water damage so that they can be offered for sale.

The potential harm isn't only musty upholstery and rust. Water can ruin vital electronics (including airbag sensors) and compromise

lubricants and mechanical systems. But because the damage may not be noticeable for months or even years, CR's chief mechanic, John Ibbotson, says shoppers should steer clear of vehicles with signs of deep water exposure "even if a vehicle looks acceptable and may be working when you inspect it."

And don't think you're safe just because you're buying in an area far from the storms. Flood-damaged cars are often shipped to distant places where consumers may not think to look for warning signs.

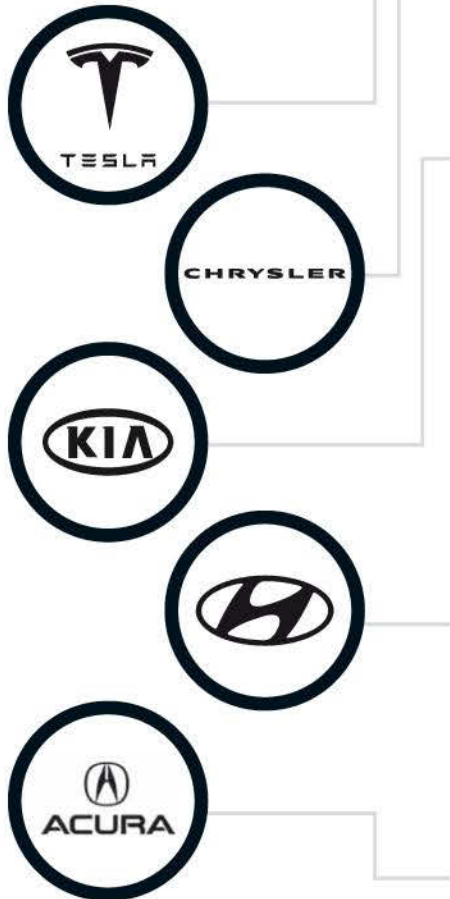
The National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (vehiclehistory.gov), Carfax (carfax.com), and the National Insurance Crime Bureau (nicb.org) offer free or paid services to help buyers screen cars for flood damage. But getting a detailed inspection by a trusted mechanic is the best protection. Still, there are a number of signs that a car has been flooded that you can look for on your own:

- Carpets with a musty smell and possibly even mud. Brand-new carpets in an older vehicle may also be a red flag.

- Scratches or marks on the seat-mounting screws. Because seats have to be removed to dry out or to install new carpet, these marks are telltale signs.
- Waterlines or fogging on headlight lenses or reflectors.
- Waterlines and debris in hard-to-clean places, such as behind the engine.
- Mud and other debris in difficult-to-clean places, such as gaps between trunk panels and on the bottom edges of brackets or panels.
- Rust on any unpainted exposed screws under the dashboard or on seat mounts.

# Brands Owners Love—and the Ones They Don't

Tesla and Porsche hold the top two spots on the list of brands ranked by the average of their models' Owner Satisfaction Scores. For a fuller picture, we also indicate how many places each brand has climbed or dropped since last year, and provide ratings for four of the six categories owners evaluate. Genesis, Hyundai's luxury spinoff, was the only brand to score a top rating in all of them.

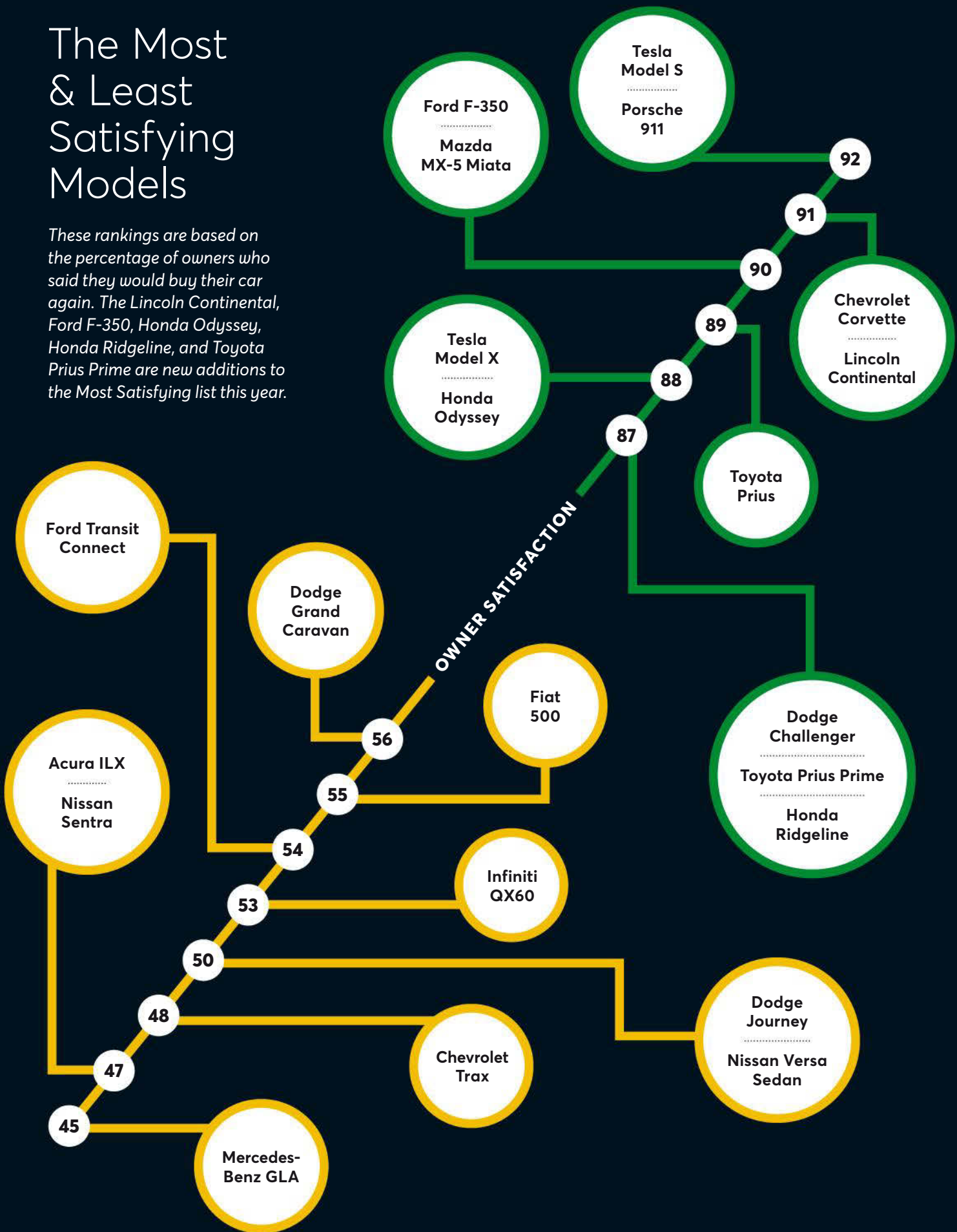


Rank		Brand	Owner Satisfaction (average of all models)	Ratings			
2018	Change from 2017			Driving	Comfort	Value	Audio
1	-	Tesla	90	↑	↑	↓	↑
2	-	Porsche	85	↑	↑	↓	↑
3	NA	Genesis	81	↑	↑	↑	↑
4	▲4	Chrysler	78	↑	↑	↓	↑
5	▼2	Audi	76	↑	↑	↓	↑
6	▲1	Mazda	76	↑	↓	↑	↓
7	▼3	Subaru	76	↑	↓	↑	↓
8	▼3	Toyota	76	↑	↓	↓	↓
9	▼3	Honda	75	↑	↓	↓	↓
10	▲2	Lincoln	75	↑	↑	↓	↑
11	▲5	Mini	73	↑	↓	↓	↓
12	▲5	Ram	73	↑	↑	↓	↑
13	▲5	Kia	72	↓	↓	↓	↓
14	▼5	Chevrolet	72	↑	↓	↓	↓
15	▼1	BMW	72	↑	↑	↓	↓
16	▼5	GMC	72	↑	↑	↓	↑
17	▼2	Ford	70	↑	↓	↓	↓
18	▼8	Lexus	70	↑	↑	↓	↓
19	▲1	Volvo	69	↑	↑	↓	↓
20	▲3	Dodge	68	↑	↑	↓	↓
21	▲4	Jeep	68	↓	↓	↓	↓
22	▼3	Mercedes-Benz	67	↑	↑	↓	↓
23	▲1	Volkswagen	67	↑	↓	↓	↓
24	▼11	Hyundai	67	↓	↓	↑	↓
25	▼4	Buick	66	↑	↑	↓	↓
26	▼4	Cadillac	64	↑	↑	↓	↓
27	-	Infiniti	60	↑	↑	↓	↑
28	NA	Mitsubishi	58	↓	↓	↓	↓
29	▼1	Nissan	58	↓	↓	↓	↓
30	▼4	Acura	58	↓	↓	↓	↓

Note: Alfa Romeo, Fiat, Jaguar, Land Rover, Maserati, and Smart are not included due to a lack of sufficient data.

# The Most & Least Satisfying Models

These rankings are based on the percentage of owners who said they would buy their car again. The Lincoln Continental, Ford F-350, Honda Odyssey, Honda Ridgeline, and Toyota Prius Prime are new additions to the Most Satisfying list this year.



**Ratings** > **Owner Satisfaction** These ratings, based on owner feedback, can help you find the new cars that will meet your expectations and avoid the ones that won't.



Make & Model	Owner Satisfaction Score	Ratings					
		Driving	Comfort	Value	Styling	Audio	Climate
<b>SUBCOMPACT CARS</b>							
Toyota Prius C	75	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑
Honda Fit	69	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Chevrolet Spark	68	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Nissan Versa Note	59	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Chevrolet Sonic	58	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Ford Fiesta	56	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
Fiat 500	55	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
Nissan Versa Sedan	50	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
<b>COMPACT CARS</b>							
Toyota Prius	89	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑
Kia Niro	80	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Volkswagen Golf	73	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑
Ford C-Max	73	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
Mini Cooper Clubman	72	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
Kia Soul	72	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Subaru Impreza	72	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Mazda3	72	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Toyota Corolla	71	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Honda Civic	70	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Hyundai Elantra	67	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Volkswagen Beetle	66	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Chevrolet Cruze	62	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
Volkswagen Jetta	61	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Kia Forte	57	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Ford Focus	56	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Nissan Sentra	47	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
<b>MIDSIZED CARS</b>							
Kia Optima	77	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑
Subaru Legacy	74	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Mazda6	72	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Chevrolet Malibu	70	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Hyundai Sonata	68	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Ford Fusion	68	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Volkswagen Passat	64	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Nissan Altima	61	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑

Make & Model	Owner Satisfaction Score	Ratings					
		Driving	Comfort	Value	Styling	Audio	Climate
<b>LARGE CARS</b>							
Dodge Charger	76	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Toyota Avalon	76	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑
Chrysler 300	75	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Chevrolet Impala	74	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Nissan Maxima	65	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Ford Taurus	63	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
<b>COMPACT ELECTRIC CARS/PLUG-IN HYBRIDS</b>							
Toyota Prius Prime	87	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑
Chevrolet Bolt	84	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
Chevrolet Volt	84	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
BMW i3	69	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
<b>LUXURY ENTRY-LEVEL CARS</b>							
Audi A3	64	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Acura ILX	47	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
<b>LUXURY COMPACT CARS</b>							
Audi A4	78	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
BMW 3 Series	69	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓
Lexus IS	69	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Mercedes-Benz C-Class	64	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Volvo S60	62	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Cadillac ATS	60	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Acura TLX	60	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Infiniti Q50	56	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
<b>LUXURY MIDSIZED CARS</b>							
Lincoln Continental	91	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
BMW 5 Series	83	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Genesis G90	82	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Genesis G80	81	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Audi A7	77	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Volvo S90	75	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Lexus ES	74	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Cadillac CT6	74	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓
Lexus GS	74	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Audi A6	74	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Lincoln MKZ	72	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Mercedes-Benz E-Class	70	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Infiniti Q70	69	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑

Ratings > Owner Satisfaction (continued)

Make & Model	Owner Satisfaction Score	Ratings					
		Driving	Comfort	Value	Styling	Audio	Climate
LUXURY MIDSIZED CARS <i>Continued</i>							
Buick LaCrosse	69	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Cadillac XTS	59	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Cadillac CTS	59	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
ULTRA-LUXURY CARS							
Tesla Model S	92	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Mercedes-Benz S-Class	76	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
BMW 7 Series	70	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓
COUPES & CONVERTIBLES							
Buick Cascada	71	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
BMW 4 Series	71	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
SPORTS/SPORTY CARS							
Porsche 911	92	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Chevrolet Corvette	91	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Mazda MX-5 Miata	90	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Dodge Challenger	87	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Volkswagen GTI	81	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Chevrolet Camaro	78	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Ford Mustang	78	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
BMW 2 Series	77	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Subaru WRX/STi	76	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
Subaru BRZ	74	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Mini Cooper	73	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Lexus RC	67	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
WAGONS							
Subaru Outback	79	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Audi Allroad	78	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Volvo V60	68	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Volkswagen Golf Alltrack	67	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
Volkswagen Golf SportWagen	66	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
MINIVANS							
Honda Odyssey	88	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Chrysler Pacifica	81	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Toyota Sienna	72	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
Kia Sedona	70	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Dodge Grand Caravan	56	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Ford Transit Connect	54	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

Make & Model	Owner Satisfaction Score	Ratings					
		Driving	Comfort	Value	Styling	Audio	Climate
SUBCOMPACT SUVs							
Jeep Renegade	64	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Honda HR-V	63	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
Mazda CX-3	60	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
Mitsubishi Outlander Sport	58	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Nissan Juke	56	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
Chevrolet Trax	48	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
COMPACT SUVs							
Mazda CX-5	82	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑
Honda CR-V	81	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑
Subaru Forester	78	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑
Toyota RAV4	74	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Kia Sportage	71	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Chevrolet Equinox	69	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Ford Escape	63	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Hyundai Tucson	61	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Volkswagen Tiguan Limited	60	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Jeep Cherokee	59	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑
Mitsubishi Outlander	58	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Nissan Rogue	57	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
MIDSIZED SUVs							
Mazda CX-9	79	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓
Toyota Highlander	78	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Toyota 4Runner	77	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Kia Sorento	76	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑
Jeep Wrangler	75	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Jeep Grand Cherokee	73	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Honda Pilot	72	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Hyundai Santa Fe Sport	70	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Nissan Murano	69	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Ford Edge	69	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Hyundai Santa Fe	67	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Ford Explorer	67	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑
Nissan Pathfinder	59	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑
Dodge Journey	50	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑



Make & Model	Owner Satisfaction Score	Ratings					
		Driving	Comfort	Value	Styling	Audio	Climate
<b>LARGE SUVs</b>							
Ford Flex	83	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Chevrolet Suburban	80	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
GMC Yukon XL	80	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Chevrolet Tahoe	72	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
GMC Yukon	72	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Dodge Durango	71	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Toyota Sequoia	68	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑
<b>LUXURY ENTRY-LEVEL SUVs</b>							
Audi Q3	71	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Buick Encore	64	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
BMW X1	59	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Mercedes-Benz GLA	45	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
<b>LUXURY COMPACT SUVs</b>							
Porsche Macan	86	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Audi Q5	81	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Jaguar F-Pace	77	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Mercedes-Benz GLC	74	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
BMW X4	72	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑
Lincoln MKC	64	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Cadillac XT5	64	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Lexus NX	61	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Buick Envision	60	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Acura RDX	60	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Infiniti QX50	60	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
<b>LUXURY MIDSIZED &amp; LARGE SUVs</b>							
Tesla Model X	88	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Audi Q7	85	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Lexus RX	77	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Porsche Cayenne	77	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
BMW X5	76	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Lexus GX	75	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑

Make & Model	Owner Satisfaction Score	Ratings					
		Driving	Comfort	Value	Styling	Audio	Climate
<b>LUXURY MIDSIZED &amp; LARGE SUVs Continued</b>							
Land Rover Range Rover Sport	74	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Mercedes-Benz GLS	72	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Lincoln MKX	72	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Volvo XC90	71	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Cadillac Escalade	70	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Mercedes-Benz GLE	70	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Acura MDX	66	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
GMC Acadia	66	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Lexus LX	61	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑
Infiniti QX60	53	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
<b>COMPACT PICKUPS</b>							
Honda Ridgeline	87	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Chevrolet Colorado	64	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
GMC Canyon	64	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Toyota Tacoma	62	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑
Nissan Frontier	59	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
<b>FULL-SIZED PICKUPS</b>							
Ford F-350	90	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Ford F-250	84	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Toyota Tundra	78	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Ford F-150	78	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Chevrolet Silverado 3500HD	77	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
GMC Sierra 3500HD	77	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Ram 3500	74	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑
Ram 1500	73	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Chevrolet Silverado 2500HD	72	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
GMC Sierra 2500HD	72	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Ram 2500	71	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Chevrolet Silverado 1500	70	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
GMC Sierra 1500	70	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑

**HOW WE SURVEY:** Results are from CR's 2017 Owner Satisfaction Survey of 400,000 subscribers. Data from the 2015-2017 model years (plus a few 2018 models) were used, provided a vehicle wasn't significantly changed over that time. Some ratings might be

based on a single model year. The **Owner Satisfaction Score** is based on the percentage of owners who responded "definitely yes" to the question of whether they would buy the same vehicle if they had it to do all over again (considering price, performance, reliability,

comfort, enjoyment, etc.). Factor ratings were determined based on the percentage of owners who said they were "very satisfied" in six categories: **Driving** reflects acceleration and handling; **Comfort** includes seats, noise, and ride; **Value** determines whether they got

what they wanted relative to price; **Styling** relates to how the car looks inside and out; **Audio** is changing radio stations and sound quality; and **Climate** is A/C and heating performance. For more, go to [CR.org/reliability](http://CR.org/reliability).

# Road Test

We conduct more than 50 tests on each vehicle at our 327-acre Auto Test Center. For complete road tests, go to [CR.org/cars](http://CR.org/cars).



## A Major Makeover

The **Honda Accord** has been radically revised with turbo engines, a new infotainment system, curvy styling, and standard advanced safety features.

HONDA TOOK A big gamble this year with its wholesale overhaul of the popular Accord. The result? It's among Consumer Reports' top-rated midsize sedans.

Some of its goodness stems from the 1.5-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine, which delivers on-demand power. The continuously variable transmission works well but exacerbates engine noise at full throttle. The new Accord is one of the quickest in its class and averages an excellent 31 mpg overall.

Unlike many competitors,

the Accord's handling strikes a happy compromise between sporty driving and a family-friendly ride.

The controls, including the new infotainment system, are easier to use than the previous version. On the downside, models with the 2.0-liter turbo engine and 10-speed automatic transmission get an unintuitive push-button gear selector.

The Accord's low stance requires more ducking to get in and out than last year's car, but it's far from a back (or deal) breaker. We found the front seats comfortable, helped by four-way adjustable lumbar support, which comes standard on all but the base trim. The rear seat has plenty of legroom, though headroom can be tight for taller folk. It may not look like it from the outside, but the trunk is more spacious than before.

All Accords come with automatic emergency braking, forward-collision warning, and lane-keeping assist.

### MIDSIZE CARS

#### Honda Accord

OVERALL SCORE **84**

ROAD-TEST SCORE **89**

#### HIGHS

Ride, handling, fuel economy, controls, standard advanced safety features

#### LOWS

Low stance hurts access, unintuitive gear selector with 2.0L engine

#### POWERTRAIN

192-hp, 1.5-liter four-cylinder turbo engine; continuously variable transmission; front-wheel drive

#### FUEL

31 mpg on regular fuel

#### PRICE AS TESTED

\$28,345



## Room With a Vroom

Sporting a freshened exterior and revised suspension, the **Hyundai Sonata** is a compelling alternative to other mainstream choices.

THE SPRUCED-UP SONATA keeps much of what makes it a strong competitor each year in a crowded midsize sedan category. Wrapped inside its updated skin is a refined powertrain plus a roomy cabin and clear, easy-to-use controls. But this version falls short on fuel efficiency and ride comfort.

Its four-cylinder engine delivers sufficient pep without sounding like it's being flogged, and the six-speed automatic transmission knocks out well-timed shifts with nary a hiccup. But its 28 mpg is nothing special when many competitors get 30 mpg or better.

Some of the biggest changes this year were made to the Sonata's suspension. This revamped car now feels like it's cooperating better with the driver through corners. Braking performance also has improved.

Unfortunately, the Sonata's ride has grown considerably firmer, transmitting too many bumps into the cabin and reducing passenger comfort.

While the Sonata lacks any "wow" factor inside, occupants should still be satisfied. The seats are wide and comfortable, and the well-appointed interior is spacious, particularly the rear seat. It's one of the most generous in a class where cabin room is often sacrificed at the altar of styling.

The main controls and touch-screen infotainment system are easy to use.

Hyundai makes forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking optional on just two trims. We'd prefer they were standard for all versions.

### MIDSIZE CARS

#### Hyundai Sonata

OVERALL SCORE **78**

ROAD-TEST SCORE **85**

#### HIGHS

Roomy rear seat, visibility, access, controls, braking

#### LOWS

Ride is a touch firm, fuel economy isn't a standout

#### POWERTRAIN

185-hp, 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine; 6-speed automatic transmission; front-wheel drive

#### FUEL

28 mpg on regular fuel

#### PRICE AS TESTED

\$25,845



## Civilized Traveler

The **Chevrolet Traverse** is a large, all-occasion family hauler that stands tall among tough competition.

THE REDESIGNED CHEVROLET Traverse delivers room, comfort, and connectivity, providing a civilized alternative to full-sized SUVs and a credible challenge to established three-row competitors.

It shows grace and composure on the road that belies its length and overall size, handling curvy pavement with agility. The ride is comfortable; the suspension quietly smooths bumps in the road.

Aided by a nine-speed automatic transmission, the easygoing V6 engine has

plenty of power at the ready for merging and passing. The Traverse is one of the quicker three-row SUVs we've tested, covering the 0-to-60 mph sprint in 7.3 seconds.

It's easy to get into the cavernous interior, which features wide, accommodating seats front and rear. The third-row seat is low and tight but tolerable if you slide the second-row chairs forward a notch.

The controls are easy to operate with large, legible buttons. The MyLink infotainment system takes center stage with its colorful, intuitive screen and lots of cool features.

Despite its modern cabin appointments, the Traverse's interior ambience feels low-rent for its price, reinforced by the clunky manual roof sunshade.

A rear-seat reminder designed to prevent drivers from leaving a child behind is standard, but only the top trims have automatic emergency braking.

### LARGE SUVs

#### Chevrolet Traverse

OVERALL SCORE **67**

ROAD-TEST SCORE **95**

#### HIGHS

Ride, room, braking, quietness, controls, access

#### LOWS

Advanced safety features only on pricier trims, manual sunroof shade feels cheap, only two-way lumbar support

#### POWERTRAIN

310-hp, 3.6-liter V6 engine; 9-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

#### FUEL

20 mpg on regular fuel

#### PRICE AS TESTED

\$49,945



## Huge Bang for Your Buck

The **Toyota Camry Hybrid** delivers stunning fuel economy with hardly any compromises.

THE NEW CAMRY Hybrid gives back to drivers what they sacrificed for years in the name of social consciousness—mainly trunk space eaten up by a battery and powertrain smoothness in exchange for high mpg.

That changes with the new version. The LE Hybrid returned a stellar 47 mpg overall, not that far from the impressive Toyota Prius' 52 mpg overall. Despite those gains, the trunk is now the same size as the regular Camry thanks to a smaller battery that's better packaged.

The Hybrid is also quicker

off the line—when red lights turn to green—than the regular four-cylinder version. And it delivers power more quietly than the conventional Camry we recently tested. That's partly due to its smoother-shifting continuously variable transmission as opposed to the regular Camry's eight-speed automatic.

The ride remains a mainstay Camry attraction, smoothly muting bumps and other road imperfections. It does, however, have longer stopping distances, and drivers might find that the brakes grab sooner than expected at lower speeds.

Five adults can fit in the Camry Hybrid nicely. And it comes with some nice upscale features such as standard automatic climate control, heated front seats, and an electronic parking brake.

All Camrys come with standard forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking, but blind-spot warning is optional.

### MID-SIZED CARS

#### Toyota Camry Hybrid

OVERALL SCORE **89**

ROAD-TEST SCORE **89**

#### HIGHS

Fuel economy, ride, controls, standard automatic emergency braking

#### LOWS

Low stance hurts access, too easy to cancel daytime running lights

#### POWERTRAIN

208-hp, 2.5-liter four-cylinder hybrid; continuously variable transmission; front-wheel drive

#### FUEL

47 mpg on regular fuel

#### PRICE AS TESTED

\$28,949

**Ratings** > **Modern Family Transportation** Mid-sized sedans are market mainstays, but if you regularly carry five or more passengers, a three-row SUV might be what you need.



Recommended	Make & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Safety	Road-Test Results										
				Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction		Road-test score	Overall mpg	Acceleration 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking 60-0 mph, ft.	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Routine handling	Ride	Noise	Seat comfort front/rear	Controls	Luggage, suitcases+duffels/ Cargo volume, cu. ft.
✓	Toyota Camry Hybrid LE	89	\$28,949	↑	↑	Std./↑	89	47	7.8	138	54.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	3+1
✓	Toyota Camry LE (4-cyl.)	87	\$26,364	↑	↑	Std./↑	86	32	8.0	126	53.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	3+1
✓	Honda Accord EX (1.5T)	84	\$28,345	↑	↑	Std./↑	89	31	7.7	135	54.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	4+1
✓	Subaru Legacy 2.5i Premium	81	\$24,837	↑	↑	Opt.	89	26	10.2	128	55.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	3+1
✓	Kia Optima EX (2.4L)	81	\$25,860	↑	↑	Opt.	86	28	8.0	130	51.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	3+2
✓	Mazda6 Sport	79	\$23,590	↑	↑	Std./↑	79	32	7.5	132	53.0	↑	↓	↓	↑/↑	↑	3+2
✓	Hyundai Sonata SEL (2.4L)	78	\$25,845	↑	↓	Opt.	85	28	8.3	129	51.5	↑	↓	↑	↑/↑	↑	3+2
✓	Ford Fusion SE (1.5T)	78	\$27,720	↑	↓	Opt.	81	24	9.2	125	52.5	↑	↑	↑	↓/↑	↑	3+2
✓	Volkswagen Passat SE (4-cyl.)	78	\$27,485	↑	↓	Opt.	82	28	8.6	129	52.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	3+1
✓	Ford Fusion SE Hybrid	77	\$28,290	↑	↓	Opt.	80	39	8.3	140	52.0	↑	↑	↑	↓/↑	↑	2+3
✓	Nissan Altima 2.5 SV	72	\$26,890	↑	↓	Std./↑	71	29	8.4	135	52.0	↓	↓	↑	↑/↑	↑	3+2
	Chevrolet Malibu 1LT (1.5T)	68	\$26,790	↓	↓	Opt.	80	29	8.4	130	53.0	↑	↑	↑	↓/↑	↑	3+2
	Chevrolet Malibu Hybrid	68	\$30,735	↓	↓	Opt.	79	41	8.0	135	55.0	↑	↑	↑	↓/↑	↑	1+2

MIDSIZED CARS

3-ROW LARGE & MIDSIZED SUVs

✓	Toyota Highlander XLE (V6)	85	\$41,169	↑	↑	Std./↑	82	22	7.4	134	48.5	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	40.5
✓	Honda Pilot EX-L	74	\$39,585	↓	↑	Opt.	80	20	7.5	136	49.5	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	48.0
✓	Toyota Sequoia Limited	69	\$54,005	↑	↓	Std./↑	60	15	7.1	146	47.0	↓	↓	↑	↑/↑	↑	61.0
	Chevrolet Traverse Premier	67	\$49,945	↓	↑	Opt.	95	20	7.3	130	50.5	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	54.5
	Volkswagen Atlas SEL (V6)	65	\$44,165	↓	↑	Opt.	84	20	8.7	135	51.0	↑	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	50.5
	Dodge Durango GT (V6)	65	\$43,525	↓	↑	Opt.	83	18	8.3	134	48.0	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	44.0
	Ford Flex SEL	65	\$42,155	↓	↑	Opt.	73	18	8.5	141	48.0	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↓	47.5
	Nissan Armada Platinum	55	\$63,020	↓	↑	Opt.	69	14	6.7	133	51.0	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	46.5
	Chevrolet Suburban Premier	53	\$69,790	↓	↑	Opt.	74	16	7.9	139	47.0	↓	↑	↑	↑/↑	↑	62.5
	Chevrolet Tahoe LT	53	\$60,100	↓	↑	Opt.	67	16	7.7	136	45.0	↓	↓	↑	↑/↑	↑	47.5
	GMC Yukon SLT	53	\$62,125	↓	↑	Opt.	67	16	7.7	136	45.0	↓	↓	↑	↑/↑	↑	47.5
	GMC Yukon XL SLT	49	\$67,370	↓	↑	Opt.	67	16	7.9	139	45.0	↓	↓	↑	↑/↑	↑	62.5

**HOW WE TEST:** Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score**, which factors in **Road-Test Results**, **Predicted reliability**, **Owner satisfaction**, and **Safety**, which includes crash-test results and the

availability of front-crash prevention features, such as forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking at city or highway speeds. For these systems, NA means no such system is offered; Opt. means

it's available on some versions but not necessarily on the one we tested; and models with standard systems are rated from ↓ to ↑ based on how many of these features are standard. We now

deduct points from the Overall Score if a vehicle's shifter is confusing, lacks fail-safes, or is difficult to operate. Online subscribers can go to [CR.org/cars](http://CR.org/cars) for complete, up-to-date ratings.

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**Consumer Reports** (ISSN 0010-7174) is published monthly,  
except twice in December, by Consumer Reports, Inc.,  
101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703. Periodicals  
postage paid at Yonkers, N.Y., and at other mailing offices;  
Canadian postage, at Mississauga, Ontario (Canadian  
publications registration number 2665247, agreement  
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# Potty Mouths

These ads and products made us think that maybe bathroom humor gets a bum rap



### A Straight Flush

No joke: This company believes in telling it like it is.  
Submitted by Kathleen Eagan of Beacon, N.Y.

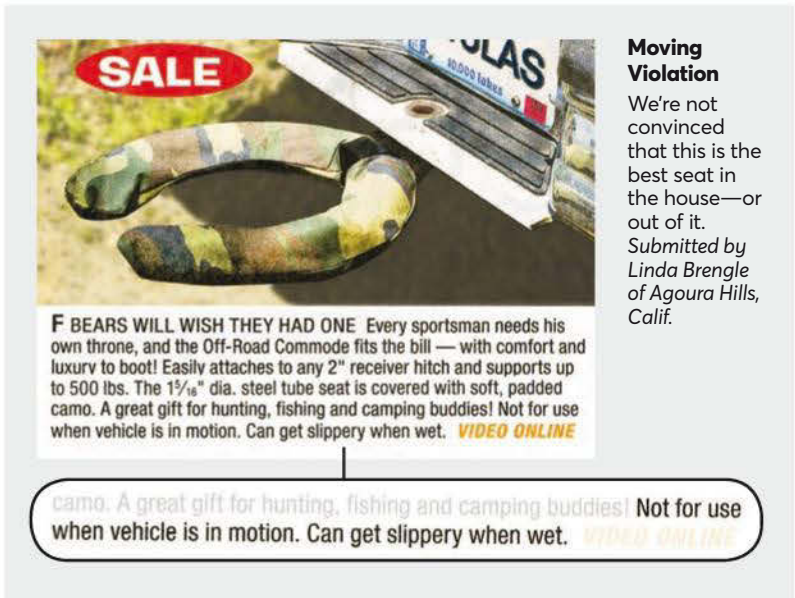


Used - Very Good



### You Light Up My Life

We're surprised that the Minions' movie careers didn't stop them from moonlighting "down under."  
Submitted by Laura Ostrem of Montezuma, Iowa



### Moving Violation

We're not convinced that this is the best seat in the house—or out of it.  
Submitted by Linda Brengle of Agoura Hills, Calif.

camo. A great gift for hunting, fishing and camping buddies! Not for use when vehicle is in motion. Can get slippery when wet. VIDEO ONLINE



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