

Washing Machine Guide

When buying a washing machine there are a number of things to consider. This guide provides information to help you with your decision about what to buy.

What size machine?

A washing machine is measured by its capacity in kilograms. This refers to the weight of the dry wash load that it can hold. Capacity ranges from small (4-5.5 kg) to medium (6-7 kg) to large (7.5-10 kg).

The most common size for a family of four is 6-7 kgs. Think about what is the size of your typical load wash? Do you have the drying space to do fewer, larger loads? Do you anticipate any household changes coming?

What type of machine?

There are two main types of washing machine available - front load or top load. Front load machines are becoming more popular as they are generally considered to be more efficient and cost effective to run. The following outlines pros and cons for both.

Front Load

- Uses less water
- Uses less energy for warm/hot wash cycles
- Uses less detergent
- Gentler on clothes
- Higher spin speed saves on drying
- Can save space
- Quieter
- Can be more expensive but cheaper to run
- Longer washing cycles
- Cannot add clothes once wash cycle has started
- Heavy to move

Top Load

- Often cheaper to buy but costs more to run
- Shorter wash cycles
- Easy to add clothes once wash cycle has started
- Uses more water (up to 3 times that of front loaders)
- Less energy efficient for warm/hot wash cycles
- Often requires more detergent
- Generally harsher on clothes
- Can be noisy
- Lighter in weight

Efficiency

One of the most important factors to consider is the **water rating** of the machine. This is identified by a water rating sticker which indicates the water efficiency for the machine. It is known as a WELS (Water Efficient Labelling and Standards) label and all new washing machines have one. It contains two pieces of information:



- A star rating that gives a quick comparative assessment of the model's water efficiency - the more stars the more efficient
- A water consumption figure that provides an estimate of the water consumption of the product based on its tested water consumption

An efficient front load washing machine uses considerably less than a top load.

Washing machines also display an **energy rating** label. This label has a zero to six star rating, and shows the energy consumption for a normal warm and cold wash cycle in kilowatt hours (kWh) per year (based on an estimate of a particular usage pattern for the appliance e.g. clothes washer used seven days/week on a particular program as indicated on the label).



- The more stars the more efficient
- The kWh rating may or may not show the cold water energy consumption

Other Considerations

- Controls**
- Electronic buttons may not be as durable as a knob or dial
- Settings**
- Watch out for models that have lots of different pre-programmed settings. A few such as cold, short, bright colours, whites, delicates, are nice but you probably don't need more than six or seven.
 - A water save feature allows you to recycle some of the water
 - Would you like a selectable spin speed?
 - Would a timer/delay start option, allowing you to determine when the machine starts the program, be useful?
- Accessibility**
- Make sure the washer will fit into the available space and that you have enough room to open the door and get to the controls
- Costs**
- There are two costs - upfront expense and ongoing running cost. A machine that costs more initially may save you money in the long term because it is cheaper to run. Think about what the potential water, energy and time savings are worth to you.
 - Generally the more features the machine has the greater the cost

Summary

Buying a washing machine is a major investment so think of the following before buying:

- Check the size of the space you will be putting it in
- Consider the capacity of the machine to meet your needs
- Consider the type of display and controls that are easiest for you to work with. Touch pad models cost more and can sometimes be harder to use. Old fashioned knobs and dials can sometimes still be the way to go
- Consider the type of features you would like
- Look at the water and energy ratings - a water rating of four stars or more is good
- Consider a front load washer - they can save you money in water and energy bills down the line, are better on the environment, and cause less wear and tear on your clothes
- Do your research, compare prices and features (many models will come equipped with a lot of the same features, but cost substantially more), and talk with a number of retailers to find the best prices - most retailers will negotiate. Also check if professional installation is included in the price. You should be able to get a good medium size, functional washer in the \$500-\$900 price range.

Major brands include: Bosch, Electrolux, Fisher & Paykel, Hoover, LG, Miele, Samsung, Simpson, Whirlpool

Sustainability Usage Tips

- Wash in cold water - while some clothes need to be washed in hot water e.g. heavily soiled and stained clothes; most clothes can effectively be washed in cold. Washing clothes in cold water saves energy (up to 90% of the energy used by your machine could be for heating the wash water!)
- Always make sure you wash a full load of clothes - not only will you save water but the less you use the washing machine the more energy you save
- Buy biodegradable detergents as they are safer on the environment
- Don't use a clothes dryer and dry your clothes on a washing line when possible - they will smell fresh and airy