

Refrigerator Guide

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

What size fridge?

Fridge capacity is measured in litres. You should choose one that matches your shopping habits and lifestyle. Everyone's requirements will differ, but as a general guide for a family of four, a 450 litre fridge would be a starting point, but you could decide on anything from 300 to 600 litres, depending on your usage. You will also need to decide how much freezer space you need. Again this will depend on how you use your freezer and your specific requirements - if you have a large family and freeze a lot of food you may want a larger freezer section.

Make sure you buy a fridge that has sufficient room so cool air can flow around the food and drinks. A fridge that is too small may take a lot of energy to keep the contents cool, and if it is fully packed all the time, it won't cool as efficiently. On the other hand, don't buy a fridge that is too big or you will be paying to cool the empty space inside and also increase greenhouse emissions unnecessarily.

Measure the available space in which you will put your fridge - measure width, depth and height of the fridge cavity. Fridge doors can be right or left hand opening - consider which would be best in your kitchen. Don't forget to include the hinge space required to open the door. Also check that you can get the fridge into a lift (if you live in a multi-storey building), around any corners and through any doorways. A fridge with cabinet rollers fitted makes it easier to move.

What type of fridge?

Fridges come in different configurations: freezer on top, freezer on bottom, and side by side where one side is a fridge and the other a freezer. If you use your freezer a lot, you may not want it down low if you have trouble bending. Or if you're short, you may not want it too high.

The following outlines some of the pros and cons.

Freezer on Top

- Greatest range of products
- Cheaper
- Most economical and energy efficient to run
- Have to bend down to use fridge

Freezer on Bottom

- What you use most is at eye level
- Freezer design often with handy slide out baskets
- More expensive
- Crispers may be too cold (close to the freezer)
- Can be slower to chill
- Less energy efficient and more expensive to run

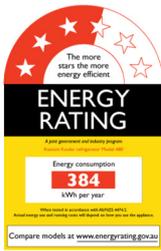
Side by Side

- Wide range of features available
- Better for spaces where you cannot have a large swinging door
- Generally the greatest capacity
- Good access for people in wheelchairs
- More expensive
- Less energy efficient and more expensive to run
- Each side much narrower (will frozen pizza or large food platter fit?)
- Additional features (ice cube maker, water chiller) can take up a lot of freezer space

Also check for adjustable shelving and door shelves for storing taller items and for ease of cleaning.

Efficiency

All fridges will display an energy rating label. This label has a zero to six star rating, and shows the energy consumption in kilowatt hours (kWh) per year.



- The more stars the more efficient
- The less kWh the less it will cost to run and the better for the environment

Other Considerations

- Frost free**
 - **Frost free** means that frost doesn't build up in the freezer, so no de-frosting is required
 - **Automatic defrost** means it defrosts itself automatically, so frost does form. You also need to keep an eye on any tray that collects melted water so that it doesn't overflow
- Controls**
 - See if you can get a fridge where you can adjust the freezer and the fridge temperatures separately. Also check the location of the controls - some are located at the front, others are less conveniently located at the back behind all your refrigerated foods and drinks
- Alarm**
 - Some fridges have an open door warning where the fridge beeps if the door is open too long
- Noise level**
 - Noise levels of fridges can vary considerably and could be a consideration if near a bedroom or television

Summary

Buying a fridge 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 size of fridge to meet your needs
- Consider the type of fridge that would suit you best - top freezer, bottom freezer or side by side
- Look at the energy rating - the higher the star rating and the lower the kWh, the cheaper to run and top freezers are generally more efficient
- Do your research, compare prices and features, and talk with a number of retailers to find the best prices. Top freezers are generally the most economical and have the largest range.

Major brands include: Bosch, Electrolux, Fisher & Paykel, Kelvinator, LG, Midea, Samsung, Westinghouse, Whirlpool. Fridges vary greatly in price, so determine your requirements and shop around.

Sustainability Tips

- Make sure the fridge is the right capacity. It will work most efficiently if it's not too full or too empty. Running a fridge that is bigger than you need wastes power and money whilst overloading your fridge means it has to work harder to keep cool.
- Where possible, locate the fridge out of direct sun and away from the oven, as this will just cause it to work harder to keep things cool, and make sure there is plenty of airflow around the fridge.
- Set the temperature of your fridge to around 3°C to 4°C and freezers at around -15°C - -18°C for the best energy use and appliance efficiency.
- Make sure the door seals on fridges and freezers are tight. Check seals by placing a piece of paper in between the seal and the door and close it. If the paper slides out easily, the door could be leaking cool air - and costing you more to run.
- Make sure the fridge is level. A fridge that is not level may cause the door gasket to not seal properly letting cold air leak out.
- Think about what you need before you open the fridge door and keep it closed until you need it. That way you'll minimise the power needed to re-cool your fridge or freezer after it has been opened.
- Defrost non frost free models regularly.