



HOW TO SHOP FOR A MAJOR APPLIANCE

If a new refrigerator, dishwasher or wine cooler is in your future, follow this guide to avoid buyer's remorse.

It's an exciting day when we get to upgrade old kitchen appliances (adios 1970s avocado green refrigerator!) for shiny new ones. But with all the options available, how do you know which is right for you? Here's what to consider before making the big purchase.

REFRIGERATORS

What to Ask Yourself:

- What style do I want? There are top freezer, bottom freezer and side-by-side models. For units with a bottom freezer, the refrigerator doors can either be single or double (called a French door).
- How big does it need to be? For most people, a standard refrigerator offers plenty of room. But if you have a large family or an addiction to warehouse stores like Costco, you may want to get something larger than the usual 18 to 22 cubic feet.

What to Look for When Shopping:

- The refrigerator you select is going to need a few inches of clearance from cabinets or walls to allow for proper airflow. These distances vary, so measure the space before you go and ask your salesperson for help narrowing it down.



Tip: Before you buy, research common repairs needed (and their costs) for the appliances you're looking at. Your current repair person may be able to help with this.

- Spills are unavoidable. Look for a unit with solid glass or plastic shelves with a raised lip at the edge as they will contain spills better than wire ones.
- The freezer-on-top model is often the most affordable and offers the most storage space. The freezer-below model puts your refrigerated food (which is accessed the most often) at eye level. Side-by-side models are ideal for skinny spaces, but many people complain that the shelves are too narrow (think: pizza box).
- A cabinet-depth fridge is designed to fit flush with your cabinets, but it will be considerably shallower than a regular model.





- A water dispenser on the outside of the refrigerator will be more convenient but also use more energy. Newer dispensers have space for large bottles and may also dispense hot water or even seltzer.
- Look for interior space-saving solutions such as adjustable shelves and racks to hold wine bottles or soda cans.
- Check the door to be sure it's mounted on the correct side for your space. Most can be reversed, though you may need additional hardware.

DISHWASHERS

What to Ask Yourself:

- What size do I need? Typically they're 24 inches wide; compact models are 18 inches wide. Oversize models are also available.
- What's my budget? Pricier models tend to have additional features like more cycle options and fancier touch-screen controls but don't necessarily clean dishes better.

What to Look for When Shopping:

- A stainless steel tub will resist discoloration better than a plastic one.
- Whether you're washing a stockpot or a party's worth of glasses, fold-down tines and adjustable or removable racks will give you more flexibility when filling the dishwasher.
- Some control panels are hidden in the door so they're not visible when the unit is closed, which attracts less attention from curious kids and also gives a sleeker look. On some models, you may be able to still see the time display, which is convenient.
- You'll pay more for a quieter model, but it may be worth it if your kitchen is close to bedrooms or your TV room. A self-cleaning filter (for food and debris) will be noisier, but you'll have to maintain a quieter manual filter yourself.



Tip: *Think you might sell your home in a few years? You'll never go wrong in the real estate market with a set of coordinating stainless-steel appliances.*

- Look for specialized cycles that might be right for your family. These include sanitizing (great for baby bottles), short wash (this is helpful if you tend to run your dishwasher several times a day) and gentle (best for wine glasses and other delicate items).