

BUYING REFRIGERATORS

Consumers have many options available in selecting refrigerators. They range in price from \$80 to over \$3,000. Determine the price range you want to stay within as well as the size and features you need before you begin to comparison shop.

Size Of Refrigerator To Buy

How much space is available? How much clearance space is available to open the refrigerator doors?

As you comparison shop, look inside the refrigerators. Is there enough space for large containers and the amount of food you need to store?

If you buy a refrigerator that is larger than you need, you will spend a great deal more money than is necessary on your electric bill. Each additional cubic foot of refrigerator space will increase the amount of electricity consumed. On the other hand, it is more energy efficient to have one large refrigerator rather than two small ones.

Styles Available

Top-freezer: A separate freezer compartment is above the refrigerator and at eye level making it easy to reach frozen food. This style tends to be the lowest priced of all refrigerators and the least expensive to operate. It offers the largest variety of sizes, options, and features. Wide shelves permit easy access to food at the back of the refrigerator.

Bottomfreezer: This style is higher priced than top-freezers of the same size. It costs more to operate than top-freezers. One must bend over to get food from the freezer. Wide shelves provide easy access to food in the refrigerator. There are fewer sizes and features available than in other styles.

Side-by-side: This style is higher priced and about 35% more expensive to operate than top-freezers. Many sizes and features are available. The narrow doors require a smaller amount of space to open than other styles. It is convenient to have many foods at eye level in both the refrigerator and freezer. It may be difficult to reach food at the back.

Built-in The kitchen will have a custom look with this style. Larger sizes of up to 30 cubic feet are available. It is higher priced and costs more to operate than other models. It could be expensive to install.

Refrigerator Features

Defrosting: Which system do you prefer? **No-frost** is most popular. It automatically defrosts the refrigerator and freezer. **Manual defrost** is labor-intensive and is not widely available. With the **cycle-defrost**, you defrost the freezer manually but the rest of the refrigerator defrosts automatically.

Shelves and bins; check to see:

- ◆ Is it possible to rearrange the shelves in the refrigerator, on the door, and in the freezer?
- ◆ Are the shelves sturdy and easy to clean?
- ◆ Do they slide out to bring containers within easy reach?
- ◆ Do you need deep door shelves that can hold gallon-sized containers?
- ◆ Will there be enough space in the kitchen to open the door wide enough to remove the shelves and bins?
- ◆ Are there glass or plastic shelves to prevent spills from spreading?
- ◆ Are there separate drawers for fresh vegetables and meat? Do they have controls to allow you to adjust the temperature and humidity? Are the drawers the right size for the foods you want to place in them?

Automatic icemaker: This feature saves steps between the sink and refrigerator to fill ice cube trays. Connection of the refrigerator to a water supply is necessary to use this feature. About six pounds of ice are produced in a 24 hour period. The icemaker and storage bin take up about one cubic foot of freezing space. Check to see if the ice cube storage bin is removable.

Ice and water dispenser: These features quickly add to the cost of a refrigerator. They need to be used often to avoid unpleasant flavors and to avoid break-downs. The dispensers provide limited amounts of water and ice. Some models dispense ice inaccurately. A portion of the ice may land on the floor rather than in a glass. Some models dispense ice too forcefully for certain types of glassware.

The dispensers may require the dealer, a plumber, or a kit to install these features. Find out if there will be an extra charge for this installation service.

Other features: Many other features are available such as electronic touchpad controls to signal when the door is open, if the refrigerator is too warm, or that the coils need to be cleaned. You can also have a built-in

beverage container with its own faucet. These features usually add to the purchase price of the refrigerator.

Energy Guide Label These labels are on all new refrigerators being sold. Read the labels to compare refrigerators of similar size, features, and defrost systems. The label lists an estimate of yearly energy costs for the refrigerator. Consider the appliance with the lowest energy cost. The actual cost of operating the refrigerator will vary according to the local energy cost, how often the door is opened, the amount of food cooled, and the room temperature around the refrigerator.

Warranty: Often refrigerators will have a one-year warranty that covers parts and labor on defective materials and component breakdowns. You may also see a limited five-year warranty on the cabinet liner and refrigerating system. If you are offered an extended warranty, instead, consider putting that amount of money into a savings account to use in case repairs or service is needed.

Service Contracts

Service contracts, also known as ***extended warranties***, are sold by many appliance dealers. Do not confuse the service contract with the manufacturer's warranty, which is automatically provided when you purchase the product. You must pay an additional fee for the service contract. Check to see exactly what parts or services the contract covers, whether you will have to pay a deductible, where you must take the product to get service, and whether the service contract duplicates coverage already provided by the manufacturer's warranty.

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