



BUYERS GUIDE

Built-in vs. Freestanding

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INTRODUCTION

When looking for a new appliance, one of the first things to consider is whether to buy a built-in or freestanding model. Both types have a range of great features but can suit certain kitchens better.

In this buyers guide, we'll explain the main differences between the two types as well as their advantages and disadvantages to help you decide which is best for your home.

It's important that you buy an appliance that suits your kitchen's needs. For more information about built-in and freestanding models, click on one of the sections below.

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WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



As the name suggests, built-in appliances are installed within your kitchen units or cupboards, whereas freestanding models stand on their own.

Freestanding appliances offer better flexibility and are often less expensive. Built-in models can be a little pricier but are great for achieving a seamless finish.

There are several factors you should take into account when you're choosing between a freestanding and built-in appliance. This section of the guide will help you decide which type is best for you.

WHICH IS BEST FOR YOU?

When you're deciding which appliance to buy, there are some factors which you should consider:

- What size kitchen do you have? Would you spend a bit more to get compact, built-in appliances that give the illusion of space?
- What look do you want your kitchen to have? Do you want a sleek and uniform feel, or do you not mind if your appliances are visible?
- What's your budget? Are you aware that built-in appliances are often more expensive, plus you may have higher installation costs?
- Are you likely to move house a lot? If so, do you want to take your appliances with you easily?
- Do you want a wide choice of models, features, colours, and sizes to pick from?

WHICH APPLIANCES CAN YOU BUY?

Most appliances are available in freestanding models, but not as many can be bought as built-in versions. The main appliances that are available as both types are dishwashers, washing machines, washer dryers, cookers, microwaves, fridges, and fridge freezers.

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BUILT-IN APPLIANCES



Built-in appliances give a sleek and sophisticated look to your kitchen. If you are designing a space from scratch, you can incorporate them for a seamless finish.

To help you decide whether these models are best for you, this part of our buyers guide explains the main advantages and disadvantages of built-in appliances.



WHAT IS A BUILT-IN APPLIANCE?

Built-in appliances are designed to keep the uniformity of a fitted kitchen as they are hidden, either completely or partially, inside units or cupboards.

The doors of most built-in appliances are fixed to the cupboard door, so they're fully hidden from view and match the rest of the kitchen.

Other appliances, such as ovens and microwaves, can be built into the wall at eye level. These models are often slimmer and shorter than freestanding units. This allows them to fit under standard sized kitchen cabinets or into your wall.

“ Built-in appliances are designed to keep the uniformity of a fitted kitchen, as they are hidden inside units or cupboards.

You can use a height reduction kit with some appliances, like washing machines and dishwashers, to allow them to fit into your kitchen units. These kits normally include replacement feet or a lid to lower the height of the model.

Most built-in appliances require a plinth to cover the base of the machine, as well as a cupboard door to keep it concealed. If you are replacing a built-in item, you'll just need to adjust these to suit the new appliance's dimensions.



ADVANTAGES OF BUILT-IN APPLIANCES

The main advantage of built-in appliances is that they're concealed and won't disrupt the overall design of your kitchen or utility space. Unlike bulky, mismatching appliances, they create a seamless aesthetic while giving you instant access.

Because they're held in place by the surrounding units, the amount they can wobble is limited, and the cupboard door helps to minimise noise too.

You'll also get more fuel options to choose from with built-in appliances. For example, it's easier to mix and match built-in electric and gas cookers, ovens, and hobs than it is with the freestanding equivalents.

“ Built-in appliances create a seamless aesthetic while giving you instant access.

DISADVANTAGES OF BUILT-IN APPLIANCES

Fewer brands make built-in appliances as they have to make the models fit specific dimensions. This means you'll have less choice and higher prices in comparison to freestanding models. They can also be harder and more expensive to install, often requiring an electrician to carry out the work.

As well as being harder to install, built-in appliances can be harder to repair. This means that engineers may charge more to fix or service your appliance.

Because built-in appliances are harder to remove, it isn't as easy to take them with you if you move house.





FREESTANDING APPLIANCES



All household appliances can be bought as freestanding models including dishwashers, washing machines, cookers, and fridge freezers. Freestanding appliances have many benefits and can be placed in a space that suits your home.

This section of our buyers guide will help you decide if they're suitable for you.

WHAT IS A FREESTANDING APPLIANCE?

A freestanding appliance can stand on its own and isn't attached to any of your kitchen units. These appliances are fully visible and can be placed in any suitable space.



ADVANTAGES OF FREESTANDING APPLIANCES

There are a variety of freestanding appliances available across a range of brands, prices, and colours, so there's something to suit all tastes and preferences.

Freestanding models are often available in a wide range of sizes, so it's easier to find an appliance suitable for your capacity and space needs.

You'll have more flexibility over where you can place a freestanding appliance, whether it's in your kitchen or a utility room. As long as they're near the required power outlet, ventilation pipe, or water outlet, you can choose the best place. This flexibility also means they're easier to remove and take with you if you move house.

Freestanding appliances are usually cheaper than built-in models and can often be fitted without the help of a professional.

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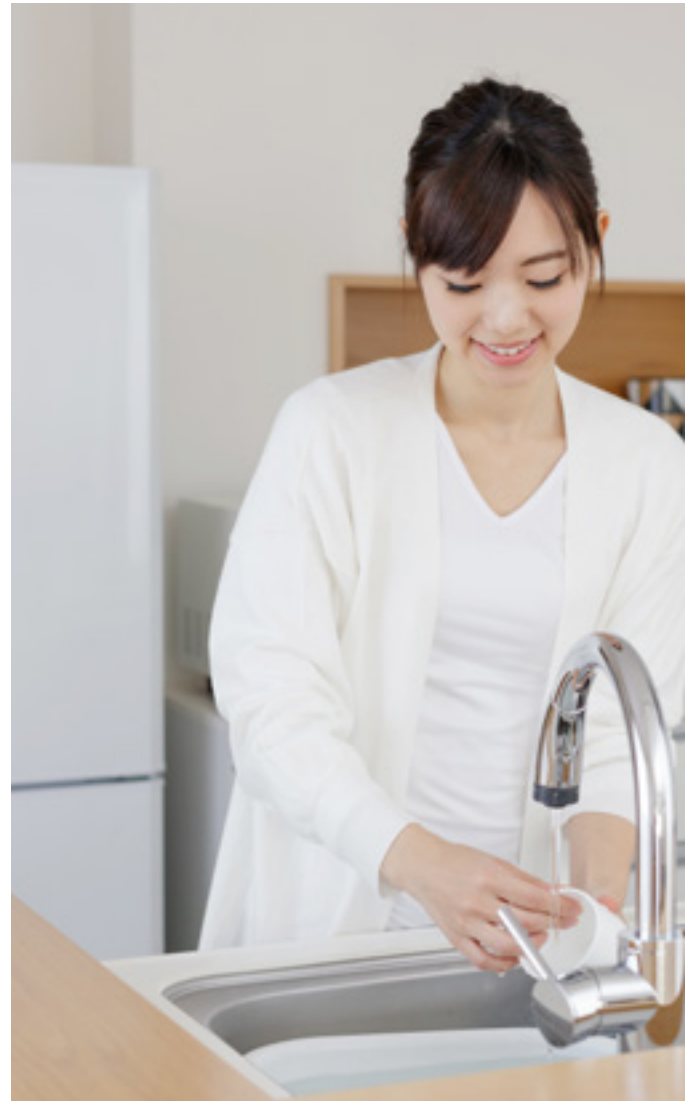


DISADVANTAGES OF FREESTANDING APPLIANCES

If you want a sleek, uniform finish to your kitchen, then a freestanding model might not be suitable. As it won't match your existing kitchen units, you won't be able to achieve the same effect as you could with a built-in model. Due to its bigger dimensions, it might not sit flush with the rest of the units too.

Different coloured machines can also clash with each other and your units. As the models aren't fitted into your units and hidden behind doors, they can also be noisier.

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BUILT-UNDER AND SEMI- INTEGRATED



Some appliances do not fit into the standard categories of built-in or freestanding. You can combine the two or choose a built-under or semi-integrated appliance. There are also models which are built in but have some visible features.

This part of our buyers guide explains the alternative ways to fit appliances into your home.



BUILT-UNDER APPLIANCES

Built-under appliances, also known as undercounter models, can fit under standard sized kitchen worktops. They generally have smaller dimensions so they can sit flush with the work surface.

You can typically find freezers, fridges, and fridge freezers in this category. It's also worth noting that all single ovens can either be built-under or built-in, but not all double ovens have this flexibility.

INTEGRATED AND SEMI-INTEGRATED DISHWASHERS

Integrated appliances are usually the same as built-in models, apart from dishwashers.

Built-in dishwashers are available as integrated or semi-integrated. Integrated styles are completely hidden by a cabinet door, while semi-integrated models have a control panel visible at the top of the door. This means you can control the dishwasher even when the door is closed.

Generally, fully integrated models are more common, so you're more likely to find an appliance within your budget.



EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULES

Some brands offer appliances that are available as either freestanding or built in, but have a combination of features.

For example, Lec wine fridges can be built in or freestanding, but they have glass doors for viewing the bottles, so they don't need a cupboard door.



COMBINING FREESTANDING AND BUILT-IN APPLIANCES

There are ways of combining freestanding and built-in features, such as housing a freestanding appliance in a cupboard that's part of your kitchen units. You'll need to have cupboards with plenty of space for the appliance, but it can be done effectively.

This method is potentially cheaper than buying and installing a built-in model. Bear in mind that you'll need a large enough space to fit the appliance, with plenty of clearance on all sides, to help manoeuvring and ventilation.

Some appliances, such as fridges or fridge freezers, need extra ventilation, so this method may not be suitable for them. Models which move around when in use, such as washing machines, may create a lot of noise as they're more likely to hit the cupboard door and sides. You'll also need easy access to plumbing, electrical sockets, ventilation, or a water source depending on the appliance, so consider removing the back of the cupboard or creating holes.



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