

# BUYERS GUIDE

Hobs

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## INTRODUCTION

Who'd have thought that there's so much to consider when buying a new hob for your kitchen? If you're struggling to make a decision, then this Hobs buyers guide will help you make the right choice.

Whether you're stuck between gas and electric, or wondering which type of splashback is the quickest to clean, you'll find all the answers you need on the following pages – plus much more. Just click one of the headings on the contents page to get started.

“Whether you're stuck between gas and electric, or wondering which type of splashback is the quickest to clean, you'll find all the answers here.



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## TYPES OF HOB



With so many different hobs available, it can be difficult to know where to start. We offer a simple explanation of the main types, plus their advantages and disadvantages, so you can focus your search on finding exactly what you need.



## SEPARATE HOB OR A COOKER

The first decision to make is whether you need a separate hob, or a cooker with a hob included.

Separate built-in hobs and ovens can create a neater appearance in your kitchen. They're integrated with your units and worktops for a high-quality finish.

If you have a standard-size gap left by your old cooker, a freestanding cooker is an easier option. They can also be cheaper than buying two separate, integrated appliances.

“ Separate built-in hobs and ovens can create a neater appearance in your kitchen.



## MAIN HOB TYPES

If you're looking for a built-in hob, it's crucial to know which type you need as soon as possible. It isn't as simple as deciding between gas and electric – with gas, you can find both regular and gas-on-glass, and with electric, there are ceramic, induction, and electric solid plate styles available.

### GAS

A gas hob uses burners with visible flames, characterised by metal pan supports on top. This is a traditional choice still popular today, and tends to be the first choice for chefs in professional kitchens.



### ADVANTAGES

- Instant, powerful heat – ideal for quick recipes like stir fries
- Complete flexibility and control – no set temperature intervals
- Easy to use
- Can be used with any type of cookware
- Lower running costs than most electric powered hobs
- Cooking area cools down quickly after using
- Often have a range of burner sizes
- Most now have mains or automatic ignition, rather than battery
- All gas hobs have a flame failure safety device – if the flame goes out, the gas supply is automatically cut off



## DISADVANTAGES

- Requires a gas supply, so isn't suitable for all homes
- Can be difficult to clean due to the burners and pan supports – try enamel options to make this easier, or cast-iron supports if you want to focus on having a good pan base
- Less efficient than induction models
- Some consider their designs less stylish

## GAS ON GLASS

Gas on glass hobs are essentially the same as regular gas models, but the burners are mounted on a sleek glass surface instead of metal. This makes them more stylish and easier to clean, while still having all the advantages of gas power.

“Technically, gas on glass and induction hobs are also ceramic hobs.





## CERAMIC

The phrase 'ceramic hob' refers to its sleek, ceramic glass finish. This means that technically, gas on glass and induction models are also ceramic hobs. However, most of the time, if a product is advertised as a 'ceramic hob', it will be electric, and there are a number of different ways it could work.

Standard radiant elements simply heat the cooking surface by transferring heat from under the glass, while high-tech halogen hobs use a special form of red light to warm your pans.

Halogen is the closest you'll get to a gas cooking experience while using electricity – it provides constant heat levels with maximum control.

“Technically, gas on glass and induction hobs are also ceramic hobs.





## ADVANTAGES

- Sleek finish for a premium feel
- Frameless designs provide fluidity between your hob and worktops
- Easy to clean – spillages wipe off the smooth surface easily, and you don't have to worry about scratches due to the lack of pan supports to clean around (with the exception of gas-powered ceramic)
- Works with all types of pans
- Different-sized cooking zones are available
- Simple to use, with rotary dials or touch control
- Modern models may have extra safety features like residual heat indicators or child locks

## DISADVANTAGES

- Often more expensive than electric solid plate or gas hobs
- With standard radiant elements, heat isn't evenly distributed and can be difficult to control
- The hot cooking surface can take a long time to heat up/cool down (with the exception of induction and gas)



“Technically, gas on glass and induction hobs are also ceramic hobs.



## INDUCTION

Induction hobs are unique in the way that they heat your pans. They create a magnetic field between the induction element and the base of your cookware, heating your pan directly, rather than wasting energy heating the cooking surface. Aside from a little residual heat, the surface stays relatively cool.

### ADVANTAGES

- Really quick to heat up and respond
- Efficient – no energy is wasted heating the cooking surface, and it reaches a lower peak temperature of around 40 degrees
- Stylish designs are available, including touch controls
- Safer cooking – they produce only a little residual heat, with the surface staying cool and the burners automatically turning off when cookware is removed, which also avoids burnt-on food
- Precise temperature control means you can take on advanced cooking techniques more easily
- The smooth surface makes them easy to clean

- Modern models come with a range of features like control panel locking and boost modes

### DISADVANTAGES

- Restrictions on which pans you can use – cast iron or steel cookware is ideal, but aluminium or copper pans won't work unless the base has an additional layer that attracts a magnet
- Can be more expensive than other types of hob
- May not be suitable for people with pacemakers, due to the electromagnets



## ELECTRIC SOLID PLATE

A traditional, electric solid plate hob uses sealed metal plates to heat your pans. You'll need to use cookware with a flat base for an even heat distribution. In the past, electric hobs used large heated coils, but now it's more common to find round metal plates.

### ADVANTAGES

- Tend to be cheaper than other hobs
- Simple, traditional design which is easy to use
- Difficult to scratch or damage
- Especially suited to cast iron cookware
- Provide good heat distribution across the saucepan base, so they're cost-effective to run

### DISADVANTAGES

- Heat can be difficult to control
- Not as stylish as other types of hob
- Awkward to clean, since food can get trapped around the edges of the plates
- Most expensive type to run, as the metal plates are slow to heat and cool



“Electric solid plate hobs tend to be cheaper than other hobs.”



## DOMINO

Domino hobs are so called due to their oblong, domino-like shape. They tend to have two cooking zones, although you can find some with a single zone. They're an ideal space-saving solution for kitchenettes, and can be combined with a standard hob for extra cooking space. Domino hobs are available in gas, ceramic, induction, and solid plate designs.



### ADVANTAGES

- A great space-saver for rooms with limited workspace
- Specialist designs can be used alongside a regular hob for extra cooking flexibility – a wok burner or barbeque grill, for example
- Two or three domino hobs can be combined to create a flexible cooking hub, without taking up too much room

### DISADVANTAGES

- Most households require more cooking space than a single domino hob can provide
- Relatively expensive considering their size – they can cost more than a standard four burner hob

“A domino hob is a great space-saver for rooms with limited workspace.”



## HOB SIZES

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Whether you're looking for a small domino hob, a luxurious six burner, or something in between, size is an important factor. There are many options to consider when it comes to the arrangement and dimensions of your new hob.



## HOW MANY BURNERS?

Most hobs have four burners (referred to as zones on ceramic hobs). These provide plenty of room for cooking with multiple pans at the same time. While this number is adequate for most households, some may need a five or six burner design. There tends to be a considerable difference in price between a four and five burner, so really consider whether you need the extra space.

On the other hand, domino hobs have just one or two burners. They have smaller dimensions, saving space in bedsits or student kitchens. And, some high-end induction hobs can combine zones if you place a pan over more than one, or even be zone-less. This technology means you can place pans anywhere on the cooking surface.

“Domino hobs have just one or two burners. They have smaller dimensions, saving space in bedsits or student kitchens.





## WHICH BURNERS?

It's not just the number of burners that counts, but their type. The most common arrangement is one large, two medium, and a less powerful simmer burner. This combination suits most families' needs, since it's unlikely you'll need to rapidly boil on four large rings at once. Small burners are just as important as large ones; if the flame or hot cooking surface is outside the pan, it wastes energy.

Five and six burner hobs often have a similar combination, with additional high-speed wok burners. These provide high, even heat over large surface areas. They're ideal for stir frying and boiling large pans of water quickly.

With a domino hob, you're likely to find a larger and a smaller burner. This ensures that even though the cooking area isn't as big, you can still save energy when using a small saucepan.



“Five and six burner hobs often have a similar combination, with additional high-speed wok burners.”



## HOB DIMENSIONS

Hobs come with two sets of measurements; the physical size of the product and the size of the gap into which it needs to fit. The gap is usually a couple of centimetres smaller than the hob, although the difference varies between models. A hob may sit in a 56 cm wide space in your worktop, but the top part will be wider, overlapping this surface.

### STANDARD SIZES

The majority of integrated hobs use the same design: four burners in a rectangular panel. With standard models, the dimensions of the visible part will be approximately 60 cm wide. These measurements are typical across many kitchen appliances, so if you have a built-in oven of this size, you'll easily be able to find a matching hob. Most fitted kitchen units also measure 60 cm, so you could install your new hob above one of these and place your oven elsewhere.

Because of the standardisation of kitchen units and worktops, the depth doesn't vary much between hobs – they're usually around 50 cm deep. And, considering the technology involved, the height is kept surprisingly low. Most are around five

centimetres high, for minimal encroachment on the room beneath your worktop.

### LARGER SIZES

Five and six burner hobs tend to begin at 70 cm wide, although some are as large as 100 cm or more. You might even come across seven burner designs as wide as 120 cm, but the measurements depend on the arrangement of the burners. These bigger models provide a real impact and a restaurant kitchen feel, so you might want to try one if you're an aspiring cook or have a large family.



## DOMINO HOBS

The main advantage of domino hobs is their size. Most measure in at around 30 cm wide – half of a regular hob, fitting into smaller kitchens with ease. Some people install two domino hobs, or a domino and a standard hob, side-by-side. If you're lucky enough to have flexible countertop space, you can combine different cooking styles, such as an induction hob and a gas wok burner.

## KEEPING SAFE

When considering hob size, you also need to think about protecting your appliances and fixtures. It's best to leave at least 75 cm between the hob and cooker hood above, and nine centimetres on either side of the hob – this ensures better ventilation. You should also keep things like sockets, shelves, and kitchen cupboards out of this zone.



“ Five and six burner hobs tend to begin at 70 cm wide, although some are as large as 100 cm or more.



## GAS HOB FEATURES

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When buying any appliance, a little research goes a long way. With gas hobs, there are a huge choice of features on offer. We'll explain everything from LPG conversion, to safety features and aesthetics.



## MAINS OR LPG GAS?

While mains gas makes choosing a gas hob simple, millions of UK households don't have a supply. Fortunately, many gas models can be converted to run on LPG gas. This means that with the help of a conversion kit from the manufacturer, you'll be able to install a gas hob in any home. By changing the nozzles to account for the higher pressure, the hob can run off cylinders of propane gas which you can keep outdoors. You should employ a Gas Safe Registered professional to install the model for you – but check it's LPG convertible first.

## BURNERS

Gas burners aren't all the same. Most hobs offer an assortment of types, so you can cook efficiently with large and small pans. The number of burners, and their arrangement, varies between models. Read more in our section about Hob Sizes.

### ECONOMY BURNER

You'll find at least one economy burner on most hobs. They're usually the smallest and least powerful. This makes them energy efficient and handy for tasks like maintaining a steady simmer, or gently warming a sauce.



“With the help of an LPG conversion kit from the manufacturer, you'll be able to install a gas hob in any home.



## SEMI RAPID/RAPID BURNERS

Semi rapid burners provide medium power, while rapid or high-speed ones offer high heat levels. If you want to boil a pan of pasta, this is where you'll do it. Their outputs will be measured in Kilowatts per hour, or kWh.

If you want to compare hobs to find the most powerful, look for higher numbers. Smaller burners might be around 1 kW, medium burners 1.5-2 kW and larger ones around 2.5-3 kW.

## WOK BURNER

Larger, top-of-the-range hobs may have a wok burner. These offer maximum power output – anything from 3 to 6 kW. The flames will spread widely, so wok burners are usually only suitable for woks and your biggest pans. They offer the ability to stir fry or sear meat at very high temperatures.

You'll need a mix of low to high power if you want your hob to handle a range of cooking tasks.



“ You'll need a mix of burners if you want to handle a range of cooking tasks.





## DESIGN

Keep an eye out for new technology that increases efficiency and power. Smeg's Blade Burner Technology improves the burners' design with flat, titanium-coated 'blades', which deliver a continuous ring of upward vertical flame for maximum heat transfer.

## SAFETY FEATURES

While some people are cautious of using gas as a cooking fuel, modern safety features mean that there's no need to be worried.

## FLAME FAILURE DEVICE

Almost all modern gas hobs are fitted with a flame failure device. This prevents the gas flowing into the burner if the flame is extinguished. If a pan of water boils over while you're not looking, the gas will be stopped so it doesn't fill the room.

“Most gas hobs now have automatic ignition, which means the burner ignites when you turn the knob.

## AUTOMATIC IGNITION

Most gas hobs now have automatic ignition, which means the burner ignites when you turn the knob.

Others have mains or battery powered ignition, where you click a button to light the flame. You very rarely need to light the hob yourself.



## LED LIGHTS/HEAT INDICATORS

LED lights on controls such as dials let you easily see which burners are activated. Heat indicators also tell you whether any pan supports are still hot.

## WARNING BUZZER

If you leave a control knob turned on for a long time, a buzzer will remind you to turn off the flame.

## COOKING FEATURES

You can find a whole range of features on gas hobs, so you can get the most out of your cooking.

## TIMERS AND MINUTE MINDERS

Keep an eye on the progress of your cooking and make multitasking easier with a timer or minute minder.

## RESTART FUNCTION

Some hobs will automatically reignite the flames if they go out due to something harmless like a draught, saving you time and effort.

## QUICK START

Enjoy faster ignition with a Quick Start feature.

## FLAMESELECT

Bosch lets you adjust the gas flame more precisely with nine designated power levels, thanks to FlameSelect technology.



“Keep an eye on the progress of your cooking and make multitasking easier with a timer or minute minder.”



## CONTROLS

Gas is a more manageable energy source than electricity, so you won't be restricted to specific heat intervals when you're cooking. You can choose between rotary dials or touch controls to use your hob how you wish.

### ROTARY CONTROLS

Simple to use and easy to grip, dials are a traditional choice. You may need to push them in and hold them down to ignite the burners, but then you can just turn the knobs to increase or decrease the flames. This design makes it difficult to accidentally knock them and switch on the gas.

### TOUCH CONTROLS

If you're a fan of gadgets, touch controls will be right up your street. They might be a little more complicated, but once you've got the hang of them, they offer several advantages. The surface looks sleek and is easy to clean, while child lock modes can secure the whole hob. Touch controls are more common on electric hobs, but they're available on a few gas-on-glass and ceramic hobs, where the controls are embedded into the surface.

## POSITION

Manufacturers position the controls in one of two areas; to the front or the side of the burners. If you have young children who can reach front controls, a side position can prevent them turning on the hob.



“The controls can be found either to the front or to the side of the burners.”



## PAN SUPPORTS

Unlike electric hobs, all gas hobs have pan supports to hold your cookware over the flames. They tend to be removable for easier cleaning, and are available in different types.

Premium cast iron pan supports can make hobs a little more expensive, but they're heavy duty and resilient to wear and tear. You may not be able to put them in the dishwasher, however, as this may cause some models to rust.

Alternatively, most enamelled pan supports (often with matching burner caps) can be cleaned in the dishwasher. They don't look particularly different to cast iron versions, but are often available on cheaper hobs. The enamel can chip and become brittle over time, since the enamel coating is exposed to so much heat during cooking.

Stainless steel pan supports are harder to find. Often used to match a stainless-steel hob surface, they can be prone to tarnishing from the heat. Black versions are a great solution to this problem. And, pan supports with rubber feet prevent the hob from getting scratched by the metal. These are particularly useful on cast iron supports, since they're so heavy.



“ Unlike electric hobs, all gas hobs have pan supports to hold your cookware over the flames.



## FINISH

Your new hob will be a prominent feature of your worktops. This means that it's important to find a finish which you really like the look of and which will complement your kitchen design.

### METAL

Stainless steel adds an industrial look, while brushed stainless steel creates a more muted, matte effect. Both are hardwearing, stylish and luxurious.

### GLASS

A ceramic glass surface is sleek and easy to clean. Spillages wipe away easily because it's harder for food to stick to glass. At the highest end of the market you'll find frameless designs, which lie flush alongside your worktop. This creates an uninterrupted look to present the finest quality.

### ENAMEL

Less modern, an enamel finish is available on low-end and retro models. If glass or exposed metal isn't to your taste, you can choose a white, cream, or black enamel design. These colours ensure that the hob blends into your décor.



If glass or exposed metal isn't to your taste, you can choose a white, cream, or black enamel design.







## ELECTRIC HOB FEATURES

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There are many special features and options available when choosing an electric hob. This guide will help you understand which ones are essential to consider.



## COOKING ZONES

While gas hobs have burners, the cooking elements on electric hobs are called cooking zones or rings. You can find a range of sizes to accommodate different types of pans. There are usually four on a standard electric hob, while domino hobs have just one or two, and some top-of-the-range models have up to six. Induction hobs may also feature flexible zones which let you merge multiple zones into a larger one, such as Samsung's Flex Zone Plus.



## POWER LEVELS

Most electric hobs have four cooking zones in two or three different sizes and power levels. A combination of high and low zones will help you manage multiple tasks with ease.

To tell how powerful a ceramic or induction hob is, take a look at the technical specification. They tend to range from 1.2 kWh for smaller or economy zones to around 2.4 kWh for a larger zone or rapid heat. Some induction zones can reach 3 kWh, or even higher. And, remember: boost functions will increase it further.

This kind of power isn't required by most families, but it may be worth the investment for passionate cooks. It's also worth noting that the figures on the product specification will be the maximum outputs for each zone. They will have adjustable temperatures which you can lower to save energy on lighter tasks.

“Usually there are four cooking zones in 2 or 3 sizes and power levels.



## DUAL ELEMENTS

Dual elements offer extra flexibility. They combine two sections in one zone – a smaller inner part and larger outer part. If you're only using a small saucepan, you'll be able to switch off the section which sits outside it to save energy.

A fish zone is a type of dual zone. It extends on one side to provide a longer, oval shaped heated space, so larger fish pans can be heated evenly.

## SPECIALIST COOKING

Hobs can now adapt to accommodate cuisines from across the globe. More expensive models – particularly those with five or six cooking zones – may have a wok burner. Many of these use the instant power of gas to provide quick, high heat for stir frying. They tend to be combined with induction cooking zones, for the best of both worlds in a mixed fuel hob.

Some hobs can be combined with a matching teppanyaki griddle. This is a flat metal surface where you can cook meat, fish, and vegetables in the speedy, versatile Japanese cooking style. They're often a standalone installation designed to sit next to a hob or domino hob, but you can

also find plates which you can place on an induction surface.

Barbecue griddles are similar to their teppanyaki counterparts. They have a cast iron grid which produces the distinctive chargrilled effect without the smoke. You can also find built-in hobs that simulate barbecue cooking. Some even come with removable lava stone trays for easy cleaning.

Or, if you want to make the perfect onion rings and fried chicken, try a deep fat fryer. They can be integrated into your kitchen's design with a discreet cover, and help you make a variety of dishes.



## POWER BOOST

Busy lifestyles sometimes make it impossible to cook at a leisurely pace. A boost function is there when you need to feed the family quickly. They can increase the power of a cooking zone by as much as 50%, so you can boil a large pan of rice or pasta in no time at all.

Hobs can now adapt to accommodate cuisines from across the globe.

## SAFETY FEATURES

Manufacturers incorporate a variety of safety features to make using your electric hob stress and injury-free.



## HEAT INDICATORS

A heat indicator provides a handy visual reminder that the hob is still hot. It warns you not to touch or place anything on it, and also lets you know when it's cool again. It might take the form of an eye-catching red LED light. Solid plate designs sometimes have heat sensitive centres which turn red when they're hot.

While induction hobs work by heating the pan rather than the cooking surface, they're still prone to a small amount of residual transfer. A heat indicator is a helpful feature to look out for on any electric hob, and can also help you save energy if you make use of the remaining heat.

Plus, features like Samsung's Virtual Flame Technology let you clearly see if the zone is on or off, with LEDs taking the appearance of a gas flame.

“ A boost function is there when you need to feed the family quickly.



## CHILD AND CONTROL LOCKS

Models with touch controls can often be locked and unlocked by using a sequence of buttons or holding one down, making it nearly impossible for little ones to activate the heat or change your settings. This helps you avoid accidents and wasting energy.

## OVERHEAT PROTECTION

Overheating protection will preserve your appliance's service life if there's a problem. This feature can sense when the temperature is too high or if liquid spills onto the cooking surface, before automatically switching off the zone or whole hob, protecting it from damage.

## OVERFLOW PROTECTION

This can adjust the power if a pan is about to boil over, to minimise accidents and mess in the kitchen.

## PAN DETECTION

An induction hob can sense when a compatible pan is placed on the surface. If it's removed, the zone will automatically switch off.



“Models with touch controls can often be locked and unlocked which helps avoid accidents.”



## AUTO STANDBY

If you leave the hob unattended for a long period of time, an auto standby or safety shutoff feature will switch it off.

## PAUSE FUNCTION

You may find a one-touch control to turn all your cooking zones down to the lowest setting, and return power when you need it. Examples are this are Miele's Stop & Go and Samsung's Pause functions. This keeps both the kids and your food safe if you need to leave the kitchen.

## COOKING FEATURES

Electric hobs generally offer more advanced cooking features than gas models, which help you produce impressive cooking results.

“The auto standby or safety shutoff feature will switch off the hob if it is not used for a while.

## INTELLIGENT HEAT CONTROLS

Technology like AEG's PowerSlide lets you slide your pan between different pre-set heats, so you don't have to adjust temperatures as you cook.

PerfectControl by Bosch uses sensor technology to give you more power when you're cooking, by measuring the temperature at your pans rather than the hob zones, then adjusting it accordingly. PerfectFry will make sure that you get your steak cooked just as you like it. And, pop the PerfectCook sensor on your pan to control your cooking by temperature and not power. It will prevent overboiling and provide you with amazing results.



## TIMERS AND MINUTE MINDERS

Different types of timer help you maintain control in the kitchen. Some will switch the hob off when the allocated time has run out, while a minute minder will sound an alarm to alert you. Count up timers start at zero and increase until you stop or reset them. Many modern designs allow you to use them independently of the hob functions, and set separate ones for each zone so you can multitask to perfection.

## PROGRAMMABLE OPTIONS

Some induction hobs can adapt to your individual needs, by letting you change settings such as your sensor response speed.



## QUICK START AND RESTART

A quick start, like AEG's Automax or Miele's Auto Heat-Up function, will start the cooking process at its most powerful. After a certain period of time, this will reduce to the pre-set level. This means that there's no need to worry about overcooking or burning your food, or forgetting to turn the hob down.

If overheat protection is triggered by a pan which has boiled over, restart will automatically restore your settings once the spillage is clean and you've turned the heat on again.

## INTELLIGENT TECHNOLOGY

Brands such as De Dietrich help you save energy with features like ICS – just place your pan on the hob, and it suggests which zone best suits it.

## SETTING TRANSFER

On some induction hobs, you can find technology that prevents you from adjusting settings when moving pots between cooking zones. They simply transfer to the new zone at the touch of a button.





## SPECIAL MODES

Some brands go one step further when it comes to taking the hard work out of cooking. You may find special modes tailored to different tasks – such as steaming vegetables, melting chocolate, poaching eggs, maintaining a steady boil, or keeping food warm. They offer precise results, and are usually found on the best induction hobs.

Electric hobs generally offer more advanced cooking features than gas models.

## CONTROLS

If you want to make use of all the cooking features on offer, you'll need to choose a hob which you can easily control.

## ROTARY CONTROLS

Traditional dials are simple and accessible. They're commonly found on cheaper electric hobs, and are sometimes removable for cleaning.

The control panel will be placed either at the front or side of the cooking zones.

## TOUCH CONTROLS

Touch controls can't be beaten if you want an uninterrupted, sleek look to your hob. They sit flush on the surface, making operation and cleaning effortless. They aren't available on cheaper electric hobs, and are virtually unheard of on solid plate models.

Slider controls are a type of touch control, providing complete freedom over temperature.

Some state-of-the-art dials are attached by magnets and may also act as touch controls, like NEFF's TwistPad. These are removable, and can be stored away from the hob as a form of child lock.

Plus, an LCD display is handy when it comes to monitoring timers, temperatures, and modes.

## POSITION

The control panel will be placed at either the front or side of the cooking zones. This means that you don't have to lean over pans and hot steam to tweak your settings.



## FINISH

A key advantage of electric hobs is their appearance. They don't need pan supports, so the cooking surface is much neater and easier to clean than that of a gas model.

## CERAMIC GLASS

Ceramic and induction hobs use a special type of heat-proof ceramic glass. The result is a stylish, smooth surface which wipes clean without fuss. They're usually black and are available in frameless designs, where the edges lay flat against your worktops for an extra, high-quality touch.

## ENAMEL

Solid plate hobs have sealed metal cooking zones, which are raised above the hob's main surface. The surface may have an enamel finish, often in white or cream.

“Electric hobs don't need pan supports, so the cooking surface is much neater and easier to clean.

## STAINLESS STEEL

Typically only available for solid plate models, stainless steel gives a traditional hob a more modern twist, while making for easy cleaning.

Electric hobs don't need pan supports, so the cooking surface is much neater and easier to clean than that of a gas model.



## SPLASHBACKS AND COOKER HOODS



Once you've chosen the perfect hob, you should think about buying a splashback and cooker hood to complete your kitchen setup. We'll explain why you need them and how to pick the right model for you here.



## DO I NEED A HOB SPLASHBACK?

Splashbacks are essential for maintaining a clean cooking area and seamless kitchen decor. They're screens fitted to the wall behind your hob which capture splatters caused by things like boiling sauces and frying bacon. They can also prevent damage to your wallpaper or paint from heat and condensation. Some people choose to install an additional splashback behind their sink, as this is another messy area.

If you're changing your hob, it's also worth changing your splashback or investing in one for the first time. Perhaps you want to place your hob in a new location, and you'd like a splashback which matches it in size or style. They're the perfect finishing touch, and can really tie a kitchen's look together.

“The auto standby or safety shutoff feature will switch off the hob if it is not used for a while.



## TYPES OF SPLASHBACK

It's important to find a splashback in the right material for you. From stainless steel to glass, each has its advantages, but they're all designed to protect your wall and make cleaning easier.

### TILES

This is a more traditional type of splashback. Many kitchens already have wall tile upstands behind the worktops, so adding tiles above the hob is a natural progression.

#### ADVANTAGES

- Types available to suit all budgets
- Consistent look, since they can match the tiles in your room
- Flexible in size – you can decide how far across and high up the wall you want your splashback to reach, even right up to the cooker hood
- Choose from many different styles and colour combinations, for a great way to get creative or add a focal point to your kitchen

#### DISADVANTAGES

- You may need a professional to fit your tiles
- Food can get trapped in the edges, making cleaning more difficult
- The grout will need maintenance to keep it looking its best

Tile splashbacks have a consistent look, since they can match the tiles in the room.





## GLASS

Usually made from a single sheet of glass, these splashbacks are available in transparent and coloured variations. To avoid cracking from the heat of your hob, it's essential to choose a toughened or tempered design. You can often find thicker glass for additional strength at the highest quality.

### ADVANTAGES

- Contemporary designs can match any colour scheme – choose from transparent, textured, coloured, and coloured behind the glass
- They reflect light beautifully, making a kitchen look bigger and brighter
- Hygienic – easy to wipe clean and stain resistant
- Require no maintenance once fitted
- Usually come with a fixing kit and self adhesive backing, preventing further cost
- Toughened versions are extremely heat resistant – some manufacturers promise to protect against temperatures as high as 250°C

### DISADVANTAGES

- Fitting can be fiddly and requires a lot of care
- Hardwearing tempered and made-to-measure designs can be expensive
- Can scratch, crack, or break if knocked
- Keeping them shiny and smear-free can be difficult

Glass splashbacks are available in transparent and coloured variations.



## STAINLESS STEEL

With stainless steel appliances becoming increasingly popular, it's no surprise that many people want a splashback to match. Stainless steel adds a modern, professional feel to a kitchen.

### ADVANTAGES

- Creates a bold style statement which can match your hob or cooker hood
- Practical and easy to wipe food away
- A wide choice on offer from many retailers
- Designs are available to fit most budgets
- Reflects light around small kitchens
- No sealing required

### DISADVANTAGES

- The industrial look might not suit all kitchens
- While they're durable against serious damage, stainless steel can scratch and mark easily
- Can be prone to showing fingerprints and water marks



“Stainless steel adds a modern, professional feel to a kitchen.”



## ACRYLIC

Acrylic splashbacks are often cut to size, and many people choose to continue the splashback over a larger area so it also acts as an upstand. Look for a fire rated acrylic, since normal plastic shouldn't be used in close proximity to your hob. Alternatively, you can cover acrylic with a transparent piece of glass.

### ADVANTAGES

- A cheap alternative to glass, with a similar visual effect
- Available in many different colours
- Usually cut to measure, so you can choose the exact size and shape you want
- Repels dust better than glass or stainless steel
- Light and easy to install
- Easy to clean, and not prone to smudges or marks
- Tough and impact-resistant



Acrylic is a cheap alternative to glass,

### DISADVANTAGES

- Can be difficult to find a heat proof, fire rated version
- Scratches easily
- Has a cheaper feel than glass



## OTHER TYPES OF SPLASHBACK

MDF can be used as a budget option. It can be coated in a range of laminate effects to give the impression of exotic woods, marble, or granite.

Solid timber looks impressive and can match a wooden worktop. This can be expensive as it will be made to measure, and you'll need to check it has been properly sealed to protect it from water damage. It will also need to be regularly oiled and cleaned – unless it's wood-veneer, which just needs to have splashes wiped off quickly to avoid staining.

Acrylic blends like Minerva are durable and non-porous, making them easy to clean and heat-resistant. Laminate can be used in both hot and wet areas, and offers a great range of colours. They're on the cheaper side of splashback models and some can be fitted over existing ones, but the entire panel must be replaced if it's damaged.

Both acrylic and laminate come in a variety of designs such as granite and stone. You may find the real thing, or even marble, but stone needs to be treated with sealant to make it impermeable. It's hard-wearing and needs professional installation.

Creative designs like mirrors, sheets of mosaic tiles, and even LED lit glass are also available.

MDF can be used as a budget option, while solid timber looks impressive and can match a wooden worktop.



## COLOUR AND CLEANING

If you choose acrylic, glass or tiles, there is a range of bright colours available to liven up your kitchen. Or, if you want a more classic look, try black, white, grey, or stainless steel. It's easy to find a colour that matches your worktops.

Splashbacks with an easy clean finish prevent food splatters sticking, to reduce the time you'll spend getting rid of them. A completely smooth surface like stainless steel or glass may be preferable to something like tiles, if you really want to minimise cleaning and maintenance.

## ADHESIVES

Most models come with an adhesive to make fixing it to your wall simple. Depending on the material, it will be a clear silicone adhesive or tile adhesive. Make sure that you choose a model with the right one, so you can safely and easily make it part of your kitchen.

## MEASUREMENTS

If you have a cooker hood or nearby wall units, it's important to measure the space you have available. Your splashback should be at least the same width as your hob. This lets it provide a more cohesive appearance, as well as adequate protection for your wall. If you have a standard size hob with four burners, you'll want one about 60 or 70 cm wide. Wider rectangular designs can be as big as 110 cm, which are great for larger hobs and range cookers. You'll find that square splashbacks start at about 65 cm tall, while others stretch as high as 75 cm.

“Your splashback should be at least the same width as your hob.”





## DO I NEED A COOKER HOOD?

Cooker hoods minimise the airborne grease which can stick to your units. They remove cooking smells, steam, and condensation, keeping everything fresh and more hygienic. This makes them a must-have in any kitchen.

Choosing a new hob creates the perfect opportunity to buy a cooker hood to go with it. Maybe you've upgraded to a six burner design and want a wider hood, or you've switched to a more powerful gas model and are looking for an efficient extractor.

## HOW THEY WORK

Cooker hoods can be divided into two groups: those which extract the air, and those which recirculate it. Extractors vent the air through ducts, while recirculation hoods use filters to clean the air before releasing it back into the kitchen.



Cooker hoods can either extract the air or recirculate it depending on which one you choose.

## EXTRACTION HOODS

Extractors are generally considered the most efficient hoods, because the grease, cooking smells, and smoke are sent outside through a ventilation hose. They don't have a filter restricting the air's movement, so the airflow rate is often higher. They're also cheaper than recirculation models long term, as you don't need to replace any charcoal filters.

Their design makes installation more difficult, and if you have limited space or your kitchen doesn't have an external wall, it might not be possible. The ducting system will need to be fitted by a professional, and you'll have to buy the kit separately. Plus, extractors can be louder than recirculation hoods.



## RECIRCULATION HOODS

Recirculation hoods use grease filters made of metal, paper, or cloth to recycle and clean the air before releasing it back into your kitchen. Most also have carbon or charcoal filters to neutralise odours. Recirculation hoods do their job well, but their design means that they can release some heat and moisture back into the room.

A key advantage of recirculation models is how easy they are to fit. They're a standalone unit, so you don't need to worry about finding an outside wall to vent through.

They're usually cheaper upfront as they don't require ducting. However, the grease and charcoal filters must be replaced or washed regularly, depending on their material. As the charcoal filter is in front of the motor, the airflow is reduced, and you may need a recirculation kit to make sure odour-free air is returned to your kitchen. They're also not always as fast-acting as extraction hoods.

Cooker hoods remove cooking smells, steam, and condensation.

You may find some cooker hoods which operate as either a recirculation or extraction model, and you can decide which method is best for you on installation.



## TYPES OF COOKER HOODS

### CHIMNEY HOODS

This is the most common type of cooker hood, with a long chimney which stretches down from the ceiling. Chimney hoods are wall-mounted, so not suitable for hobs on a kitchen island. They're stylish and perform well, but need a fair amount of space.

### VISOR HOODS

Also known as freestanding, conventional and traditional hoods, visor models tend to be less powerful and are best suited to smaller kitchens. They're compact and fix to your wall independently, usually beneath a kitchen unit. A visor helps guide smoke into the filters. These are the most basic and affordable models.

### TELESCOPIC HOODS

Telescopic designs are similar to visors. However, they extend outwards when needed for maximum area coverage, and slide neatly away when not in use.

### INTEGRATED HOODS

These are integrated into a kitchen unit, kept out of sight behind a door. This makes them the most inconspicuous type and lets them easily blend into your kitchen layout.



“Chimney hoods are wall-mounted, so not suitable for hobs on a kitchen island.



## CANOPY HOODS

A canopy design is fixed to the underside of your cupboard, above your hob. They're discreet and don't take up much room. However, unlike integrated hoods, they're still visible.

## ISLAND HOODS

If your hob doesn't back onto a wall, you'll need an island hob which is mounted to the ceiling. They can be more expensive and take up quite a lot of space, but designer models let you really make a statement.

## DOWNDRAFT HOODS

These designs automatically rise from your worktop at a single touch. This makes them a great space-saver, as well as ideal for low ceilings and small, modern kitchens. However, they can be costly due to their new technology.

## SIZE

Your cooker hood needs to be at least as wide as your hob to work effectively. The most common sizes are 60 cm, 70 cm, and 90 cm wide, suiting most four to six burner hobs. Compact versions are available if wall units have left you with limited space, but they may be quieter with lower airflow rates. You can also find larger hoods if you

have a range cooker or bigger hob, but keep in mind that these might require more powerful – and noisier – motors to recycle the higher volume of air. However, you can find some models with twin motors for higher efficiency.

Height-wise, you'll need to leave a gap of at least 50 cm above an electric hob, or 65 cm above a gas one. Check the manufacturer's guidelines, however, as this does vary. Extendable chimneys can help you achieve the perfect height for your setup.



## DUCTING

For extraction hoods, it's important to get the right ducting. Sometimes you can choose between 12 or 15 cm ducting, as the former comes with an adaptor collar. Wider and rigid ducting generally offers better airflow.

## EXTRACTION RATES

The extraction rate of your cooker hood is also worth considering. This is how quickly it can remove odours, grease, and hot air from your kitchen. It's measured in cubic metres per hour, and the larger your kitchen, the more powerful hood you'll need. This can also make it noisier, so don't just choose a model based on a high extraction rate.

## NOISE

A lower decibel (dB) rating will give you a quieter kitchen. Duct design affects the noise level in extractor hoods, so minimise bends and cross-sections, and choose sound-reducing materials.

## FEATURES

Built-in lights are a common feature of budget cooker hoods. They give you a better view of what you're cooking and are simple to activate.

Most models have two or three speed settings, so you can save energy and run your hood more quietly if you're only cooking a small meal.

Both of these features are usually controlled by buttons or sliders on the front, inside, or underside of the hood.

You can also find cooker hoods that connect with their matching hob. AEG's Hob2Hood technology and Miele's Con@ctivity wirelessly adjust extraction based on your hob's activity, for stress-free cooking and an ideal room climate.

## VENTED HOBS

Some brands have started to combine induction hobs and cooker hoods in just one appliance. PerfectAir models from Bosch automatically remove odours at the source with their integrated vents, to provide higher efficiency and a better smelling kitchen.





## ENERGY EFFICIENCY



We all want to do our bit for the environment and save money on our energy bills, but which hobs let you achieve this?

This guide will help you choose between gas, induction, and electric cooking.



## THE MOST ENERGY EFFICIENT HOBS

If your current hob is an older model, it's safe to say that a new one will be more energy efficient. But, hobs aren't given EU energy ratings like other appliances, so it can be difficult to know where to start.

A number of factors matter when you're considering efficiency. The gas or electricity usage in kW and how long it takes to heat up show how efficient a hob is – that is, how much energy it uses compared to how much it wastes (on heat loss through the zone, pan supports and air, for example). You may also want to look at running costs, which are how expensive the fuel is in relation to the energy usage. Manufacturers don't always list this information for their products, but if you can find it, you can ensure that you buy an efficient model.

“So, if you're looking to minimise energy wastage, induction is the way forward.”

## GAS VS ELECTRIC

Induction hobs are by far the most efficient at transferring energy. A magnetic field induces heat directly from your pan, rather than passing it through the cooking surface. This means that more of the energy is used to heat your food, and the average energy consumption per use is extremely low compared to other hobs.

Other electric models, such as solid plate and ceramic, tend to have the next lowest energy consumption rate, while gas has the highest. But, when you take into account that gas hobs can provide instant heat, things get complicated. This is why most people refer to gas as the second most efficient type of hob.

Induction hobs are by far the most efficient.

The cost per kWh is significantly higher for electricity, so gas hobs nearly always offer the lowest annual running costs of all three types. Induction is the second cheapest to run, followed by other electric hobs.

So, if you're looking to minimise energy wastage, induction is the way forward. If you're looking for low running costs and you have a mains supply, a gas hob is a great option for your kitchen.



## PRICES AND INSTALLATION



Hopefully, you now have a good idea about what kind of hob you're going to buy. The final things to consider are the price and how it's going to be installed.

We explain what you can get for your money below, and what you need to think about when fitting your hob.



## TIPS AND TRICKS

Whichever type of hob you choose, there are a few tricks which can save even more energy when you're cooking:

- Always put lids on your pans to keep the heat inside
- When boiling, only use just enough water to cover the contents of your pan
- Choose the right size pan for the burner or zone – for electric hobs, flat bottomed pans maximise the surface in contact with the heat
- Choose the right size pan for the amount of food you're cooking
- Turn the heat down to a simmer as soon as the pan starts boiling
- Use a multi-level steamer to cook multiple types of vegetable on just one ring

“ Use a multi-level steamer to cook multiple types of vegetable on just one ring

- Consider which pan materials you're using based on what you're cooking – while copper heats quickly, thick bottomed cast iron pans will retain heat for longer
- Keep solid plates clean, or energy will be wasted on heating burnt bits of food
- Use built-in timers and minute minders to prevent overcooking

When boiling, only use just enough water to cover the contents of your pan.



## HOB PRICES

Different hob types have different price ranges. If you're looking at a basic four burner or four zone design, gas and ceramic models range from £90 to about £400, and solid plate models from a budget-friendly £80 to £180. Induction and gas-on-glass designs are more expensive, starting at around £180. The sky's the limit with induction hob prices – zoneless models and those with the latest technology can cost upwards of £3000.

Gas hobs with five burners can be as cheap as £150, while you might find a six-burner model for around £350. Five-zone induction hobs are more expensive, from about £500, and for six zones, you'll have to pay at least £600. If you want a larger electric hob without spending too much, you can buy a five-zone ceramic hob for as little as £250.

Most of the time, you pay for what you get. Upwards of £900 you'll find designer induction hobs with five or six cooking zones, and a whole heap of special features. Gas hobs offer a similar level of luxury for around £700.

Considering that they're half the size of standard hobs, domino models aren't actually cheaper.

Considering that they're half the size of standard hobs, domino models aren't actually cheaper. They start at around £100 for gas or ceramic designs, and £200 for induction. The most expensive tend to be for specialist cooking, such as Teppanyaki hobs – these are harder to find and an investment made only by the keenest cooks.





## HOB INSTALLATION

Hobs are harder to install than cookers, so you'll likely need help from a professional. Take a look at our guide to hob sizes for details on measuring your hob and the cut-out section which it will sit inside.

Many retailers offer an installation service for an additional charge, saving you the hassle of finding an experienced and trustworthy tradesperson. Remember to ask if they will disconnect and dispose of your old one. It's also worth noting that some companies will only cut the hole in your worktop if it's made from a certain material, such as wood, while others have restrictions on how much new pipework they will fit. This means that the closer the hob is to your gas supply, the better.

“Hobs are harder to install than cookers, so you'll likely need help from a professional.”

## GAS HOB INSTALLATION

Your hob will need to be connected to your gas supply by a Gas Safe registered engineer. A qualified electrician will hardwire it into your electricity supply to power the ignition and timers. If you're planning on running your hob on LPG bottled gas, speak to your engineer about the conversion and purchasing the kit.

## ELECTRIC HOB INSTALLATION

It's easier to install an electric hob, but you'll still need help from an electrician. They will connect it to your supply for you and ensure that it's safe. Check your hob has the right amp rating for your power supply – you should see either 13 amp standard plug sockets or 32 amp hardwired switches next to your current hob or cooker.

## POSITIONING

You should always try and place your hob and cooker on an outside wall to aid ventilation, and not under a window or behind an inwardly opening door.

Many retailers offer an installation service for an additional charge.



## SPLASHBACK AND COOKER HOOD PRICES

If you're adding a splashback and cooker hood to your hob setup, you should consider how they will fit into your budget.

The cheapest cooker hoods tend to be canopy, chimney, and visor models, which start at around £70. Telescopic and integrated hoods can cost as little as £100, while island hoods are pricier at £500 or more. Downdraft models are the most expensive, at anything from £700 upwards. If you want the most up-to-date technology and modern designs, you can pay as much as £2,500 for a cooker hood.

Splashbacks come in a wide range of sizes and materials, and can be bought ready-made or cut to size, so prices vary widely. The most commonly found, cheaper types are stainless steel and glass, which some retailers sell from £40. You may have to pay more for tempered glass, while laminate models with effects like wood or stone start at £60. You can get standard size acrylic splashbacks cut for as little as £35, while retailers sell them at £60 upwards. Depending on where you buy and what design you're after, you could fork out up to £200 for a standard size splashback.

Prices increase based on size, so expect a budget of at least £100 for most larger splashbacks. If you're considering specialist materials, including high-quality acrylics and acrylic blends like Minerva, prices range from £200-£600 for most models. If you want to use tiles instead, you can make some good savings and spend as little as £10 or £20, but it will cost more to tile a bigger area of your kitchen.



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