**Dishwasher Buying Guide**

A dishwasher is a kitchen appliance that is considered a luxury item since handwashing obtains the same result, clean dishes. A dishwasher is usually built in underneath the bottom kitchen cabinets and requires connections to a power outlet, a hot water pipe, and a drain. A standard dishwasher operates effectively; however, some models optimize the dishwashing experience with additional washing, drying, and styling options. A majority of American homeowners enjoy the convenience of a dishwasher.

Dozens of American and foreign manufacturers produce many dishwasher models to suit customer segments. Manufacturers cater to consumers by providing varying options in energy savings, sanitizing, noise reduction, style, and convenience. This guide offers consumers a comprehensive view of manufacturers, the features they offer, some government agency information, and how to make an informed purchase decision

**How Does a Dishwasher Work?**

In its simplest form, the dishwasher operates as follows. It is a rectangular or square shape with a base, top, a rear wall, and two sidewalls. The front wall, or the door, opens from the top in a downward motion towards the floor. Inside the dishwasher, two plastic or metal racks pull out in a horizontal fashion. The racks hold dishes, silverware, pots, and pans. The homeowner loads the racks with dishes, pushes the racks back in, closes the door, and directs the control mechanisms to begin the wash cycle.

**A Mechanical Device**

A dishwasher is mainly mechanical in nature. It also uses electricity, heating, and plumbing. Above each rack, a water spray arm rotates above the dishes. The spray arms move by way of an electric motor. The spray arms disburse hot water (130 to 170 degrees fahrenheit) and detergent over and into the dishes. Gravity pulls down the water and the food particulates into a drain with a filter. The wastewater drains out of the machine into the plumbing system in the house while the filter catches the food particulates. In the second phase, hot water sprays the dishes to rinse them clean and the water drains out again. In the third and last phase, hot air blasts the dishes in order to dry and sanitize them.

**Prominent Dishwasher Brands**

A dishwasher works in a standard and predictable way, but over the years manufacturers have improved water distribution, filtering, and electrical systems. Manufacturers have patents and proprietary systems particular to their brand. Certain brands appeal to different customer segments and price points. Generally, a brand is known for either an economy, mid-level, or high-end dishwasher. In some cases though, a company may produce dishwashers with wide appeal to all customers at all price points. Consumers with a fixed budget in mind may do well to target the company that produces dishwashers in their price range.

**Whirlpool**

Founded in 1911, the Whirlpool Corporation, headquartered in Michigan, lists in the Fortune 500 as a premier American company according to gross revenue. [Whirlpool](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_from=R40&_trksid=p5197.m570.l1311&_nkw=whirlpool+dishwasher&_sacat=See-All-Categories) markets its own brand of dishwashers along with Maytag and KitchenAid brand dishwashers. Whirlpool's own dishwasher brand offers affordable and reliable models.

**Miele**

This German company, founded in 1899, is still a family owned company. The [Miele](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=miele+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=whirlpool+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40)brand of dishwashers has won many awards and competes in the high-end dishwasher market.

**Maytag**

Founded in 1893, the Maytag washing machine company now belongs to the Whirlpool company. [Maytag](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=maytag+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=miele+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40)dishwashers are economy and mid-level machines.

**KitchenAid**

Whirlpool now owns this brand founded in 1919. [Kitchen Aid](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=kitchenaid+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=maytag+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40) began manufacturing and marketing dishwashers in 1949. Their brand targets upscale homeowners and kitchen aficionados.

**Kenmore**

The Sears Holding Company owns the Kenmore brand and distributes their low-cost, mid-cost, and high-end dishwashing appliances through Sears and associated stores.

**GE**

Thomas Edison founded [GE](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=GE+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=kenmore+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40) in 1890 by condensing several companies into one. The same multi-company structure still exists today, and the company is one of the largest in the world. GE makes several models at all price points.

**Frigidaire**

This brand, now owned by the Electrolux company, came into being early in the 20th century. [Frigidaire](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=frigidaire+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=GE+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40)produces economy and mid-level dishwashers; however, the brand is better known for its economy models.

**Bosch**

A privately owned German Company founded in 1886, [Bosch](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=bosch+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=frigidaire+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40) dishwashers enjoy a reputation of fine engineering and energy efficiency.

**Form Factors**

Most dishwashers are the built-in variety and install underneath the kitchen cabinets. However, other varieties, such as drawer dishwashers and portable and countertop models, may appeal to consumers.

**Built-in Dishwasher**

Dishwashers built in to bottom cabinets are the most common type. This conventional design tucks the dishwasher into a convenient space.

**Drawer Dishwasher**

Dishwashers designed as drawers are a newer design pioneered by [The Fisher and Paykel Company .](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_sacat=0&_from=R40&_nkw=fisher+and+paykel+dishwasher&_nkwusc=fischer+and+paykel+dishwasher&_rdc=1)The appliance comes in a one- or two-drawer design. The drawers pull out and may operate independently. [Drawer dishwashers](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=drawer+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=tall+tub+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40)offer more convenient loading. However, they tend to be less energy efficient and do not clean the dishes as well as conventional models.

**Countertop Dishwasher**

The most space-saving option, the [countertop dishwasher](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=countertop+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=fisher+and+paykel+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40) sits on top of a surface like a cabinet or table.

**Portable Dishwasher**

Homes or apartments without built-in space for a conventional dishwasher may be ideal candidates for [portable dishwashers](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=portable+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=countertop+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40). This appliance often comes with wheels on the bottom to facilitate movement to the sink for hot water dispensing. Portable dishwashers are most often 18 inches wide.

**Tall Tub Dishwasher**

This design may be more suitable for homeowners with large or uncommon size dishes, as the [tall tub dishwasher](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=tall+tub+dishwasher&_sacat=0&_odkw=portable+dishwasher&_osacat=0&_from=R40) has 20% more capacity than a standard dishwasher.

**Dishwasher Capacity/Size**

The capacity refers to the amount of standard size dishes that can fit inside the dishwasher. The size of the dishwasher refers to the physical dimensions of the device. Size is important for fitting the dishwasher into cabinet space. Standard dishwasher size in the U.S. is 24 inches wide and 34 inches tall. Inside the machine, the size may vary to accommodate bigger dishes than standard.

**Cycles**

Dishwashers operate according to cycles, or the number of phases the dishwasher takes to clean and dry the dishes. Most dishwashers have three phases: wash, rinse, and dry; however, higher-end models may have extra cycles including extra rinsing, extra dirty cycles, or a pre-wash rinsing cycle. The pre-wash rinse allows the owner to rinse the dishes and avoid odors while waiting to accumulate a full dishwashing load.

**Cycle Times**

Longer cycle times translate to higher efficiency in most cases. For instance, heating the water less results in energy efficiency, as the same water circulates for a longer time. Shorter cycle times add to energy usage. For instance, some dishwashers utilize a fan to circulate hot air during the drying cycle. Using an additional fan adds to energy usage. However, many homeowners forego energy efficiency in order to clean their dishes faster.

**Wash Cycles**

Most dishwashers have three wash cycles: heavy for pots and pans, normal, and a light cycle for small loads. Advanced models offer options such as china or crystal wash cycles.

**Dishwasher Features**

After defining the three main criteria for picking a dishwasher, the form factor, capacity/size, and cycles, the consumer can move on to evaluate optional dishwasher features. Different models offer options in energy savings, sanitizing, noise, style, convenience, and components. For instance, better components in some models offer noise reduction benefits, and styling options like hidden controls offer a more eye-pleasing design.

**Energy Savings**

The yellow EnergyGuide labels are a good starting point to evaluate energy efficiency. However, these values are only suggestions from the manufacturer and actual energy usage may be more or less than the stated value. Consumer organizations may have more accurate evaluations, as they test dishwashers with dirtier loads than manufacturers. In addition, the federal energy standards change over time, and yellow labels do not update to include the new standards. Consumers can consult government websites or consumer reports websites for the new standards.

**Energy Saving Tips**

* Do not use the drying cycle. Instead, open the door and let the dishes air dry.
* Scrape the dishes before loading.
* Only run the dishwasher with a full load.

**Sanitizing**

Some dishwashers offer extra sanitizing options, but they may not be worth the extra money, as 140 degrees fahrenheit offers effective sanitization. The NSF International Testing Protocol certifies dishwasher sanitation.

**Noise**

Older dishwashers tend to be noisier than newer models. As technology evolved, manufacturers found ways to improve processes and components that reduce sound. In addition, new dishwashers include sound dampening materials to lessen the impact of noise. Economy dishwashers include less expensive components so they often produce more sound.

**Style**

Some consumers prefer a certain aesthetic look or style that pleases the eye or fits in with the decor in their kitchen. Options can include different colors, stainless steel exteriors, or kits to cover the appliance and match the cabinets. Other styling options include digital readouts and time remaining displays. One popular styling option hides the controls when the door is closed.

**Convenience**

Manufacturers cater to a homeowner’s desire for convenience. They often design the dish racks flexibly so that the owner can place the silverware rack on the top or bottom, for instance. Racks are often adjustable and can accommodate taller items and odd-sized silverware, and are otherwise configurable according to taste.

**Components**

Different manufacturers offer component options like stainless steel inner tubs that resist staining. Soil sensor components automatically adjust water usage and cycle times. Machines vary in their filtering components. Some machines include self-cleaning filters while others allow for manual cleaning of filters. Most dishwashers feature self-cleaning filters, but that adds to the noise. Some higher-end German models with a low-noise reputation offer manual filter cleaning.

**Conclusion**

A dishwasher is a very simple mechanical device, and economy models often wash dishes as effectively as upscale models. Sometimes, the extra features and options are not worth the price. Consumers may want to check out consumer organizations and read their reviews of different brands and models. Government agencies are also a good source of information, as they regulate energy saving and sanitizing claims. If the dishwasher comes with a warranty, it might be a good idea to consult the manufacturer or the original retailer about the specific conditions of the warranty.

Having found a suitable dishwasher at a good price, the next step would be to read the seller’s reviews on eBay. If the seller has good reviews and has favorable policies, the consumer can feel confident and complete the purchase. Conducting preliminary research and reading all of the terms and conditions will pay off with a handy and stylish addition to the kitchen that will save time and give many years of pleasure and convenience.