

TVs and videos

If too much television rots the brain, then the advent of digital TV may mean the end of intelligent conversation. Never mind, though, as there will be plenty of makeover and reality shows to fill the silence. Some new televisions contain integrated digital facilities to remove the need for a separate set-top box, which will save energy in the long term – just don't leave it on standby when there's finally nothing left to watch.

DON'T DUMP THAT SET

Around 2.5 million TV sets are dumped every year in the UK. Landfilled or incinerated sets mean a loss of resources and are a potential pollution hazard, as plastics and cathode ray tubes can contain toxic substances. Old sets can be given to second-hand or charity shops or, if they are broken and of no use to a new owner, can be taken to a civic amenity site where they will be used for scrap or recycled. When looking for a new set, aim for a higher quality and more durable model, and preferably one that will be suitable for upgrading in future.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Producing the energy necessary to power our televisions creates approximately 7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide and 10,000 tonnes of sulphur dioxide per year. Manufacturers seem to have picked up on this and, as a rule, newer TVs and video recorders are more energy-efficient than earlier ones.

Friends of the Earth has estimated that by leaving our televisions in standby mode we waste around £12 million worth of electricity

each year. Studies by *Which?* magazine have shown that some sets use more energy when left on standby than others. Sony, Ferguson, Matsui, Samsung and Sharp came out best, using under five watts in standby mode, compared with more than ten watts used by Mitsubishi, Hitachi, Toshiba and Sanyo models. Either way, the message is to get up from the sofa and switch it off!

MATERIALS

The average television set is 50 per cent glass, and a surprising quantity of raw materials goes into its manufacture. Making the glass screen needs sand and electricity, while the glass for the cathode ray tube contains lead oxide and is coated in graphite to absorb X-rays. These impurities make the tube the hardest component to recycle, and is partly why liquid crystal displays (LCDs) are a less environmentally damaging alternative to conventional screens.

The production of circuit boards uses chemicals, water and energy and generates more hazardous waste than any other part of the TV, including airborne particulate

pollution and chemical waste. TVs and video casings often use brominated flame retardants (BFRs), the making of which can have an effect on human and animal health. Friends of the Earth has been campaigning for BFRs to be outlawed – see their website, www.foe.co.uk, for more information.

DAMAGE TO VIEWERS

TVs and videos emit non-ionising radiation over a range of frequencies. Although no proven health risks have been associated with non-ionising radiation, the issue continues to stimulate contentious debate. It is best to be cautious, so sit at least six feet away from the screen and switch off devices, particularly those in bedrooms, after use.

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- Always try to buy second-hand televisions and videos where possible
- Switch off the TV when you're not watching instead of leaving it on standby
- Don't sit too near the television
- Favour smaller sets and/or check out LCD screens
- If the TV or video breaks, see if it can be repaired, and if not make sure it is recycled
- If you are buying new then do it at www.gooshing.co.uk. This website compares the ethics and prices of over 250,000 products



- Akai
- Bang & Olufsen
- Beko
- Matsui
- Sharp



- Bush
- Casio
- Ferguson
- Goodmans
- Grundig
- Hinari
- LG
- Thomson



- Aiwa
- Hitachi
- JVC
- Mitsubishi
- Panasonic
- Philips
- Samsung
- Sanyo
- Sony
- Toshiba

(www.medivac.co.uk), a high scorer in the Ethical Company Organisation's research, whose products are specially designed to offer health benefits to people with dust allergies and asthma. Many high efficiency cleaners have been approved by the British Allergy Foundation (BAF), who operate a system of inspection that includes double-blind testing, ensuring the testers have no idea which product belongs to which manufacturer.

there are always old-style carpet sweepers, which are manual, non-electric and work a treat.

Check the ratings on the opposite page for the most ethical types of vacuum cleaner available, then search www.gooshing.co.uk for the best prices. It monitors 350 shops to find the cheapest place to buy your chosen brand.

ALTERNATIVES

It is often possible to buy a reconditioned machine second-hand, or to repair a broken one, rather than investing in a brand new cleaner. Hand-held brushes are more efficient than they might appear, and simply require a little elbow grease, although they may not be suitable for households whose occupants suffer from dust allergies. Finally,

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- When buying a machine, look for the one with the most efficient suction
- Choose a machine that has replaceable dust filters
- Do not allow dust bags to overfill as this can reduce efficiency
- Manual carpet sweepers or hand-held brushes are fine for a quick sweep-up

VACUUM CLEANERS BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT		ANIMALS		PEOPLE		OTHER		Company group		
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	ECO SCHEMES	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	HUMAN WELFARE	ARMAMENTS	POLITICAL DONATIONS	OTHER CRITICISMS			
AEG	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	71	AB Electrolux
DYSON	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	67	Dyson
ELECTROLUX	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	71	AB Electrolux
HITACHI	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	52	Hitachi Ltd
HOOVER	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	71	Candy Group
MEDIVAC	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	86	Medivac Healthcare Ltd
MIELE	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	86	Miele
MORPHY RICHARDS	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	81	Glen Dimplex
NILFISK	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	71	NKT Holding A/S
PANASONIC	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	70	Matsushita Electric
PHILIPS	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	○	62	Royal Philips Electronics N.V.
ROWENTA	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	86	Groupe SEB
VAX	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	76	Techtronic Industries Co

Key

- Top rating
- Middle rating
- Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation



- Medivac
- Miele
- Morphy Richards
- Rowenta



- AEG
- Dyson
- Electrolux
- Hoover
- Nilfisk
- Vax



- Hitachi
- Panasonic
- Philips

Washing machines

Washing machines consume a large amount of water and electricity. Fortunately, a wide range of energy-efficient machines are now on the market. Look for the right label, and choose a machine which uses less electricity and will have a reduced impact on the environment. Select the economical modes, wash at lower temperatures and, finally, think carefully about the best way to dispose of the machine when you've finished with it.

ENERGY LABELS

The European Energy Label is required by law to be displayed on many domestic appliances, including all new washing machines. Each product receives an energy efficiency rating, from A (the top rating) down to G (the lowest rating). Also rated on an A to G scale are 'washing performance' (with A giving the cleanest wash) and 'spin drying performance' (with A producing the driest clothes). A figure is also given for energy consumption per cycle (kWh) and water consumption (litres). The main rating here is the one for

efficiency. Many 'AA' rated machines are now available, demonstrating that good performance and eco-efficiency can go together.

Sample water consumption for 62 different washing machines ranged from 35 to 78 litres, but averaged at around 53.5. The washing machines in the table all consume less than 50 litres of water and have A-class energy efficiency.

More information about the European Energy label is available at www.defra.gov.uk/environment, or call the Energy Advice Centre on 0800 512012.

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BUYING

- Choose the smallest washing machine for your needs
- Look for energy efficient 'A'-rated machines
- Choose one with a fast spin
- Look for an 'eco' button that reduces temperatures
- Choose one with a hot-fill option

USING

- Use a full load if possible
- Avoid the pre-wash cycle, and pre-soak dirty clothes instead
- Try to wash at 40°C or below
- Don't forget to switch to a 100 per cent renewable energy company. This will mean you are really making a difference.

INTERNET INFORMATION

It's worth checking the details of machines before going shopping for one. The main internet retailers provide the label ranges of their different models. Currys provides particularly detailed information on the technical specifications of each model, including energy and water consumption.

RELIABILITY

A reliable machine not only saves money on repairs, but is also a better environmental choice. The Consumers' Association measured the reliability of each brand and gave good marks to Miele, Candy, Bosch, AEG, Tricity Bendix, Siemens and Zanussi.

DISPOSAL

Every year, nearly one million tonnes of used electrical and electronic goods are discarded in Britain. This includes about eight million large pieces of equipment such as washing machines, cookers and fridges.

EU legislation requires local authorities to put in place 'convenient facilities' for the free take-back of waste goods by final owners, including public collection points where private households should be able to return waste 'at least free of charge'. All equipment designated for collection under this scheme should be marked by a crossed-out wheeled bin symbol.

Next time you buy a washing machine find an ethical brand at www.goosbing.co.uk.



- Ariston
- Asko
- Beko
- Candy
- Hoover
- Hotpoint
- Indesit
- Miele
- Servis



- Admiral
- AEG
- Bauknecht
- Brandt
- Dyson
- Hinari
- LG
- Maytag
- Tricity Bendix
- Whirlpool
- Zanussi



- Bosch
- Neff
- Samsung
- Siemens

products, and be sure to wash our hands thoroughly before cooking, some argue that a little less cleanliness could actually do us good.

In the case of washing-up liquids, a good kitchen hygiene routine (cleaning items carefully and rinsing the dishcloth thoroughly after use) should offer adequate protection against germs – without the need for extra antibacterial products.

PACKAGING

Most washing-up liquid bottles are made from high density polyethylene (labelled PE or HDPE). This is one of the few plastics that can be recycled in the UK, although provision of local collection schemes is patchy. Look out for the numbers 1 and 2 inside a triangular recycling symbol on the bottom of plastic bottles, as these indicate that they are suitable for recycling.

Bio-D's bottles contain 55 per cent recycled material which, according to a

company spokesperson, is the maximum amount possible without the plastic becoming too brittle. Ecover and Bio-D are the only companies providing natural products suppliers with large drums that allow customers to refill their bottles rather than throwing them away.

ALTERNATIVES

In a hard water area it is a good idea to use a water softener to reduce the number of suds generated. Ordinary household soap can be recycled to produce a perfectly good washing-up liquid. Save the scraps from old bars then mix them up in a jar with some boiling water to produce a jelly-like substance.

Make an effort to buy *The Good Shopping Guide's* ethical brands when you can, and look out for Caurnie, who are one of the Ethical Company Organisation's accredited companies.

WASHING-UP LIQUID BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT		ANIMALS		PEOPLE		OTHER		Company group		
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	ECO SCHEMES	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	HUMAN WELFARE	ARMAMENTS	POLITICAL DONATIONS	OTHER CRITICISMS	BOYCOTT	ETHICAL ACCREDITATION	ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX
BIO-D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	90	Bio-D Company
CAURNIE	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	95	Caurnie Soap Co
CLEAR SPRING	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	90	Faith Products
ECOVER	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	90	Ecover
FAIRY	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	33	Procter & Gamble
MORNING FRESH	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	81	PZ Cussons
PERSIL	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	43	Unilever
SURCARE	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	86	McBride

Key

- Top rating
- Middle rating
- Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation

GOOD SHOPPING GUIDE ETHICAL COMPANY

- Bio-D
- Caurnie
- Clear Spring
- Ecover

?

- Morning Fresh
- Surcare

X

- Fairy
- Persil