

must-have features

On the hunt for a new vacuum cleaner? Look out for these innovative specs

Telescopic handles (also known as telescopic wands) can be adjusted to suit your height, helping to avoid any back pain from too much stretching.

Variable power control lets you vary the suction for delicate jobs, such as cleaning curtains.

Adjustable head height makes it easy to clean carpets of different pile heights, as well as swapping from carpet to timber flooring.

A retractable power cord allows you to move from room to room without switching power points. Upright vacuums (see opposite page for details), however, don't have this feature - just wind the cord around the two hooks on the back to keep it tidy. "Think about how you'll use the vacuum cleaner," says Steve Ramsey of Godfreys. "If you have thick pile carpet,

the vacuum needs a motorised powerhead. But if you mainly clean timber floors, make sure the hard-floor brush will not scratch your flooring."

High-tech features include separate wet and dry settings, an upholstery brush, a dust brush for blinds and lampshades, and a crevice nozzle for narrow corners. Up-to-the-minute models offer these options, but see what works best for your interior.

Steve also recommends selecting a vacuum with a rotating powerhead to ensure you get the deeply embedded dust out of your carpets. "This can be especially good for pet owners," he says.

buyer's guide: vacuum cleaners

come clean

Keeping your floors spotless now takes minimal time and effort, thanks to smart vacuum cleaners that are light, quiet and easy to move. This advice will help you choose a model to suit your lifestyle and budget WORDS KERRYN RAMSEY

upright

This type of vacuum works a dream on cleaning carpet. "It includes features such as dirt sensors, a brush roll that agitates the carpet and a detachable hose, making it just as effective as a canister vac," says Brendan Gray of Masters Home Improvement. Uprights are quite compact, easy to store and available in bagged and bagless models.

Bissell 'Powerwash Select BS44L6F' upright vacuum cleaner. \$379, Masters Home Improvement, masters.com.au.

'Ergorapido 2n1 ZB3012' cordless upright vacuum cleaner. \$329.95, Electrolux, electrolux.com.au

sensitive issues

A vacuum with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter is ideal if you have asthma or an allergy triggered by dust allergens. "Better-quality vacuums are likely to retain more particulate matter," says Adam Trumble, spokesperson for the National Asthma Council Australia. And it's important to note that 'HEPA-like' or 'HEPA-type' filters are not HEPA filters - check for the National Asthma Council Australia's Sensitive Choice seal.

The HEPA filter, however, is not the complete answer for those who are sensitive to dust. As Adam says, "Even the best vacuum can cause allergens to be distributed around a room. Many of these particles will settle, so if vacuuming causes respiratory issues, you should avoid the area for 20 minutes."

canister

Versatility is key for a canister vacuum (also known as a drum or barrel vacuum), which utilises a flexible hose as well as a dust collector in the canister. This model of cleaner is highly manoeuvrable and usually equipped with a power nozzle - a cleaning brush with a built-in motor. While it's more expensive than an upright, it's quieter and is effective on both carpet and hard surfaces.

'MotionSync VC700' canister vacuum cleaner. \$749, Samsung, samsung.com.au.

'DC54 Animal Pro' barrel vacuum cleaner. \$1099, Dyson, dyson.com.au.



'CaptivG4Blitz KBV500' barrel vacuum cleaner. \$179.95, Kambrook, kambrook.com.au.



'UltraCaptive Deluxe ZUC4103DEL' canister vacuum cleaner. \$899, Electrolux, electrolux.com.au.



'S 8590 Premium S8 UniQ' upright vacuum cleaner. \$1199, Miele, miele.com.au.



'MotionSync VC700' canister vacuum cleaner. \$749, Samsung, samsung.com.au.



'Ergorapido 2n1 ZB3012' cordless upright vacuum cleaner. \$329.95, Electrolux, electrolux.com.au



'DC59 Animal cordless upright vacuum cleaner. \$649, Dyson, dyson.com.au.



'DC54 Animal Pro' barrel vacuum cleaner. \$1099, Dyson, dyson.com.au.

handheld

It's 30 years since Black+Decker launched the inimitable Dustbuster, and this handheld vac is still ideal for quick clean-ups. Spills, dirt, pet hair and crumbs are easy to remove, and many models have an extendable hose to tackle hard-to-reach areas. These days, it's hard to live without a portable vac when cleaning the car, and the handy crevice and brush tools make life even easier. When shopping around, look at the unit's charging and running times plus life span of the battery.

robot

These low-profile, futuristic machines use navigation software to clean independently while you kick back and relax – it can even return to its charging station when the power starts to get low. Thanks to its sleek design, a robotic vac can slip under furniture and be programmed to automatically start at a specific time. There are, however, a few drawbacks. “They don't work as effectively as a traditional vacuum,” says Tom Godfrey of Choice, “and are more of a quick fix until you have time for the upright.”

'Navibot S SR8980' robot vacuum cleaner. \$1299. Samsung, samsung.com.au.



'Captiv12V Turbo KHV400' handheld vacuum cleaner. \$79.95, Kambrook, 1300 139 798.



'PD1820L Dustbuster Flexi' handheld vacuum cleaner. \$199.99, Black+Decker, blackanddecker.com.au.

'Roboking Square VR6270LVMB' robot vacuum cleaner. \$1239, LG, lg.com.au.



Hoover 'Wet & Dry HH5011WD' handheld vacuum cleaner. \$64.78, Masters Home Improvement, masters.com.au.



'RM-770' robot vacuum cleaner. \$599, Robomaid, robomaid.com.au.

in the bag

A vacuum cleaner can be bagless, use a disposable paper dust collector or reusable cloth bags. Overall, bagless models are the easiest to empty, as the contents can be simply tipped into the bin. Disposable bags are thrown away when full but, if biodegradable, they can be added to the compost bin to give worms a tasty snack. The reusable options can be messy to empty, and the filters and dust containers must be kept clean.

Steve Ramsey of Godfreys says that while many models include a nifty dustbag-full indicator, it's still worth checking the bag before each use. “On most models, the bag needs to be changed when it's about three-quarters full to ensure stronger suction,” he says. **10**