

## Buyers Guide: Clothes Washers | Earth 911

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Home appliances like clothes washers are responsible for about 15% of your home's carbon footprint. While there are [human-powered appliances](#) that don't use electricity, for most people, living without a clothes washer is not an option. They are a major purchase, however, so deciding [when to upgrade](#) to a more efficient machine requires careful consideration.

The average washing machine made today is significantly more efficient than the average washer made a decade ago, and Energy Star recommends replacing washers over 10 years old. However, if your old machine was the most efficient available when it was new and still works without problems, there may be [better places](#) to spend your money to reduce your environmental footprint. If you are due for a new clothes washer, we've found the greenest options available today.

### Comparison Criteria

Where available, we have taken Consumer Reports' scores into consideration. In rankings that take reliability and washing performance as well as efficiency into consideration, Consumer Reports' highest-ranked clothes washer scored an 86.

Clothes washers that have earned the Energy Star rating *cut energy consumption by 25% and water consumption by 33%* compared to conventional washers. The performance metric for energy use is called the Integrated Modified Energy Factor. The higher the IMEF, the more energy-efficient the washer is. The metric for water use is the Integrated Water Factor. The lower the IWF, the more water-efficient the clothes washer. Since 2018, Energy Star has required an IMEF of 2.76 or higher, with the very best washers achieving 3.1. The standard for water is an IWF of 3.2 or lower; the most water-efficient washers achieve 2.7.

Rather than total energy and water use, these metrics consider efficiency per cubic foot of capacity, which allows consumers to find the most efficient washing machine at the size that works best for their household. As with [dishwashers](#), there is usually a trade-off between water efficiency and energy efficiency. The sources of your [electricity](#) and water will affect which of these you prioritize.

### Not a Criterion

The "he" label is intended to match certain washers with specially designed laundry detergent. It does not relate to any standard for energy efficiency. Beware of high-efficiency claims associated with this label.

### Comparison Chart

In the comparison chart, an asterisk in the model number means that models with different numbers in that position have essentially the same efficiency performance.

Although there are efficient top-loading washing machines, the highest-ranked washers are all front-loading.

Click the image below for a larger version of the clothes washer comparison chart.

Earth911 Clothes Washer Comparison Chart

Brand	Product	Model	IMEF (Highest Energy Efficiency)	IWF (Lowest Water Use)	Eco Features	CR Score
LG	Signature Smart	WM9500H*A	3.1	2.7	SenseClean ColdWash	84
Samsung	Washer w Steam Wash	WF56H91**A*	3.1	2.7	Eco Cold Wash Eco Warm	Not Rated
Samsung	Front Load w Vibration Reduction	WF45N53**A WF45M51**A* WF45M55**A*	3	2.9	none	73
Multiple	Energy Star Most Efficient Washers	multiple	2.92	2.9	varies	varies



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### Rankings

## LG Signature Smart

The LG Signature Smart line of clothes washers was one of only two lines on Energy Star's Most Efficient list that achieves the best efficiency ranking for both energy (3.1) and water (2.7). LG is considered the [top washing machine brand](#) on the market as rated by consumers, and Consumer Reports rated the Signature washers an 84 – one of the highest scores given to a washer in 2020.

Besides overall efficiency and performance, LG washers use a SenseClean system that detects the amount of laundry in the washer and adjusts the water level accordingly. This helps compensate for loads that don't fill the washer completely.

## Samsung Front Load Washer with Steam Wash

Samsung's steam wash front-load washers are the only other line of washers that achieve the highest efficiency ranking for both energy (3.1) and water (2.7). Although the product's selling point is steam washing, lower-energy cold and warm wash cycles are available. Despite identical efficiency ratings, the Samsung washer comes in second place because the company's reputation for reliability is lower than LG's. It can also be difficult in many communities to find someone to repair Samsung washers when they do break. Consumer Reports did not rate this line of washers.

## Samsung's Front Load VRT Washers

Samsung manufactures myriad front-load washers with model numbers beginning WF45. Most of these are sold under the "vibration reduction technology" (VRT) line and have a capacity of 4.2 or 4.5 cubic feet. These are basic washers without a lot of bells and whistles that run under \$1,000. Although it's good to check the specific model you're looking at, most of them have identical efficiency ratings, with IMEF of 3.0 and IWF of 2.9, placing them in third place. The AddWash door on some models allows you to easily add forgotten laundry items after a cycle has begun. Consumer Reports ratings for these washers ranged from 73 to 80.

## Energy Star Most Efficient

In November 2020, Energy Star released a list of the 50 [most efficient washers](#) out of the hundreds that meet minimum Energy Star standards. After those listed above, nearly all of the clothes washers on the list had the same efficiency ratings: IMEF 2.92 and IWF 2.9. All of them are front-load machines, with capacity ranging from 2.2 cubic feet to 5.8 cubic feet. LG and Samsung dominate the list, but Blomberg, Bosch, Electrolux, and Kenmore models are also included. Nearly every household should be able to find a washer with their desired dimensions and features on this list of the most efficient washers.

## Best Practices

No matter what kind of clothes washer you use, EPA's recommended [best practices](#) can save water and energy as well as extend the life of both your machine and your clothes. Use the correct type of detergent for your machine. Only run the machine with full loads, using cold water whenever possible and the extra-hot sanitary cycle only when absolutely necessary. Use the high-speed spin or the extended spin option to get more water out of clothes. This will reduce time in the dryer. Or skip the dryer entirely and hang clothes to dry. Leave the washer door open after use to prevent mold growth. If it's recommended for the washer you use, rinse the machine monthly with a bleach solution.

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