

## Best electric toothbrush

### Oral-B Professional Care 1000

**Pro:** Access harder-to-reach areas in your mouth  
**Con:** Cost of replacement brushes can add up  
**Best for:** Those who wish to avoid extra time in the dentist's chair  
**Retail price:** \$40

It has been 52 years since the first electric toothbrush debuted, and there's still no conclusive evidence that they're significantly better than a properly used manual brush. That said, some newer electric toothbrushes do offer distinct advantages over your standard bristle stick that can justify the higher price. Studies have indicated that people tend to brush longer when they use an electric toothbrush, as the experience is generally easier and more enjoyable. And because of their smaller heads, many electric toothbrushes can access harder-to-reach areas in your mouth.

The trick these days is figuring out which features are actually useful. If you're looking for a solid electric brush but don't care about things like LCD screens and built-in UV sanitizers (which don't add much benefit, according to the ADA), the Oral-B Professional Care 1000, at around \$40 from Amazon.com, is a fantastic choice.

The 1000 has all the features our tests found to be legitimately useful, like a vibrating pulse every 30 seconds to help you reach the optimal two-minute brush time goal and a pressure indicator that stops the motor if you're brushing too hard.

Going up in the Oral-B lineup gets you largely needless bells and whistles, like multiple cleaning modes, a separate wireless smart guide that communicates with your toothbrush and tells you how to brush, or a bulky head-storage unit built into the charger base, which is inconvenient for traveling. Going down takes away legitimately useful features like the vibrating brush-head timer.

And although Oral-B's replacement brushes tend to be cheaper than competitors, a fresh set of bristles every few months can add to the cost of going electric. But if it helps prevent a couple of cavities and a few extra trips to the dentist's chair, many will find the extra expense to be entirely worthwhile.

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## Best juicer

### Omega 8003

**Pro:** Easy to clean, versatile  
**Con:** Takes up counter space; not ideal for hard-root veggies  
**Best for:** High-quality green juice from leafy greens; capable with all other things  
**Retail price:** \$230

While opinions can differ on exactly how good vegetable juice is for your health, most nutritionists agree that it's a fast and convenient way to consume and digest the vitamins and nutrients in fresh leafy greens and vegetables without all the fiber in the pulp. Having a juicer on your counter can make getting your daily equivalent of vegetables as quick and simple as downing a beer. It's not as much fun, but perhaps it's preferable to eating three giant salads every day.

In a home juicer, you have lots of options. We recommend the \$230 Omega 8003 for anyone looking to add more green vegetable juice to their daily routine.

There are two main types of juicers intended for home use, and each has its strengths and weaknesses. One kind uses an augur — essentially a screw that forces produce tightly into a small chamber — to extract juice. The

other employs a high-speed blender-like mechanism to squeeze juice from produce with the help of centrifugal force. While augur-based juicers like the Omega 8003 are a little slower and not as good at juicing hard fruits and vegetables like carrots and apples, the experts we consulted praised them for introducing less spoilage-quenching oxygen into the juice. Many also said augur-based models produce better-tasting juice, and extract the most usable liquid from healthy leafy greens like kale. The Omega is also quiet, easy to clean and versatile: It can process wheat grass as well as extrude pasta, nut butters and baby food — features most other juicers in this price range can't offer. Add to that a 10-year warranty, and the Omega 8003 becomes a great value for daily home juicing.

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## Best water bottle

### Klean Kanteen Classic

**Pro:** Good for you and the environment  
**Con:** Slightly narrow mouth makes it less ideal for mixing protein shakes  
**Best for:** Staying hydrated  
**Retail price:** \$18

We set out to find a water bottle that would satisfy most people's day-to-day drinking needs, and could also be brought along on a day trip or a weekend adventure outdoors. That calls for a bottle that's durable, easy to use and affordable, and the \$18 Klean Kanteen fits the bill on all counts.

The Classic comes in 12-, 18-, 27- and 42-ounce sizes and in an assortment of colors. We recommend the 27-ounce size, a good compromise between portability and capacity. It's tall, but not so tall that it won't fit comfortably in a backpack, and it's slender enough to sit in a standard cup holder. All sizes are made of durable, dishwasher-safe stainless steel, which is less likely to develop and retain odors than plastic bottles. And the Klean Kanteen eliminates any worry of plastic contamination.

If you're planning on using the bottle with a water purification system or mixing protein shakes, a Nalgene bottle with a wider 2.25-inch mouth may be worth considering. But for everyday water-drinking, we like the Klean Kanteen's 1.75-inch mouth for ensuring a spill-free sip.

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## Best hand-held vacuum

### Black & Decker 18V Pivot

**Pro:** High powered; great suction  
**Con:** A bit heavy  
**Best for:** Spot cleaning and pet hair  
**Retail price:** \$50

When shopping for a high-quality hand-held vacuum, you should enter the store with a long checklist of deal-breaker features. If a hand-held is too heavy (over five pounds), requires a cord or has a battery life of less than 10 minutes, your frustration when it dies mid-cleanup will outweigh its convenience. A bagless model with at least 10 ounces of dirt storage is also must, and the chamber should be easily emptied over a garbage can when finished. You'll want a fast recharge time — less than 10 hours is ideal.

Dyson's popular line of hand-holds satisfies all of these requirements, but at a great cost: Their cheapest current model is \$200. That's why we recommend the Black & Decker 18V Pivot, a vacuum with a great feature set that's a tremendous value at \$50.

The Pivot's power is its biggest asset. It runs at 35 air watts. For comparison, the \$400 Dyson DC44 runs at just 28 air watts (but goes up to 65 in "power" mode). All that suction means the Pivot will work not only for light jobs like crumbs or dust on flat surfaces, but on tougher messes embedded in carpets, furniture fabric and car floorboards.

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## Best cheap camera

### Panasonic Lumix DMC-S27

**Pro:** Slim body, long zoom, fast autofocus  
**Con:** Not much in the way of manual settings  
**Best for:** Low-light environments  
**Retail price:** \$139

Buying a camera for less than \$150 is a tricky proposition. At this price, the market is flooded with low-quality options lacking defining features. Your ultimate pick needs to retain some of the key features of a more expensive camera (considering most of us have a solid camera in our smartphone already) while still keeping costs low and image quality high.

Since even the cheapest cameras are capable of decent photos on a bright day, the true test of an inexpensive camera's image quality (and where it will best even the nicest cellphone camera) is its low-light performance. Can it take acceptable photos at parties, outdoors in the evening or in generally less-than-perfect conditions, ideally without flash? In order to take a fast-enough shot so that subjects aren't blurry, these cameras ramp up the ISO sensitivity, which often leads to smeared, speckled photos. In low light, cameras also have trouble focusing.

The \$139 Panasonic Lumix DMC-S27 wormed its way into our hearts by tackling — and more or less mastering — these challenges. Among its selling points, the camera offers a slim body, long zoom, good image stabilization, fast autofocus, 1080p HD video and a CMOS image sensor that produced surprisingly solid photos, even in low light.

The S27 deserves a lot of credit for packing a 10x optical zoom lens into a truly tiny body; most cameras at this price have a 4x or 5x lens. It's not the fastest lens on the block, meaning it takes in less light when zoomed in tight, but it's an impressive feat for a package almost as small as a deck of cards. The S27 also offers some handy extras, including a maximum picture-taking speed of 10fps that's great for capturing the best shot out of the bunch. Although it only takes four images at this speed, it's a feature you're unlikely to find on a smartphone today.

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Panasonic Lumix DMC-S27

## Best SD card

### SanDisk Extreme 16GB

**Pro:** Balance of performance, price and capacity  
**Con:** Bigger card better for video  
**Best for:** Stable data transfer  
**Retail price:** \$18

All SD cards may seem the same. But if you've ever looked closely, you'll notice they're rated for different data transfer speeds. Faster cards are more expensive, but are they worth it? After spending more than 15 hours poring over read and write speeds for dozens of cards, we found the \$18 SanDisk Extreme 16GB card delivers the best balance of performance, price, capacity and reliability.

The SanDisk Extreme reads and writes data at speeds up to 45 megabytes per second, using an SD specification called Ultra High Speed I.



## Best point-and-shoot camera

### Sony RX100

**Pro:** Excellent lens and image sensor  
**Con:** No viewfinder  
**Best for:** Anyone who wants sharp images but doesn't want to lug a big rig around  
**Retail price:** \$650

When you go out hunting for a high-end point-and-shoot camera, there are generally three specs to look for: image sensor size, lens speed and body portability. The Sony RX100 has major points in all three areas, which makes it our clear pick in the category, even though its \$650 price tag bumps up against the cheapest DSLRs. By far the most impressive feature of the RX100 is its extremely sharp Carl Zeiss lens. It has a fast maximum aperture of f/1.8 (the lower the f-number, the more light the lens lets in), which means high-quality night shots can often be taken by hand without blur. No camera in its class can match this lens.

Another first for the class is the RX100's incredibly large 20.2-megapixel CMOS image sensor. What's important is not the sensor's megapixel rating but its physical size, with bigger sensors capable of capturing finer detail with less noise in low light and creating that appealing blurred-background effect known as bokeh. And at 13.2-by-8.8-millimeters, the RX100's sensor is nearly three times as large as that of the Canon S100, another great performer in this category. Almost all reviewers of the RX100 marvel at the fact that Sony managed to squeeze a sensor this large and a lens this fast into a body that still fits in your pants pocket.

Traditionally, what you trade for a point-and-shoot's portability is the swappable lenses and better image quality of an SLR or mirrorless interchangeable-lens compact. In the RX100, Sony has come close to eliminating the image quality trade-off, and its fast, versatile zoom lens will likely serve the needs of most photographers. The only compromise for many, then, is the high price. For those looking to spend less, the Canon S100, at half the price, is a great second choice.

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## Best standing desk

### Kangaroo Pro Junior

**Pro:** Sleek and functional; doesn't need to clamp to the desk  
**Con:** None to speak of  
**Best for:** Those who want to alternate between standing and sitting at their desk  
**Retail price:** \$350

The standing desk fad that's sweeping hip workplaces around the country is actually based on a substantial amount of health research. Dr. James Levine of the Mayo Clinic has a scary statistic to share: Here in the United States, we spend more than half of our waking hours sitting down, split between watching television, driving a car and working at a desk. Other studies have linked excessive sitting to health problems, including an increased risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and several types of cancers.

Spending the workday at an elevated standing desk is not the only solution to these potential problems, of course. Even taking a five-minute standing break every hour is better than sitting all day. But if you want to give a stand-up work day a try without replacing your current desk, consider the \$350 Kangaroo Pro Junior, an adjustable platform that

sits on any desktop and quickly converts it from standing to sitting and back again.

The Kangaroo Junior consists of an adjustable 24-by-18-inch platform that serves as the base for a keyboard and mouse (or laptop). A second, smaller platform mounted on an adjustable arm supports a monitor at eye level. Once the two platforms are adjusted to the proper height, a stabilization leg wedges in between them for added support. The Junior requires no clamps to anchor itself to the desk, making it easy to clear work space for a sit-down.

The Kangaroo comes in a few variations with different sizes of work space platforms, but we like the nicely priced Junior model, which should provide plenty of space for most users without adding too much bulk.

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