Bellingham Electric Appliances | 250 Pulaski Boulevard, Bellingham, MA 02019

Washing Machine Buyer's Guide

A comprehensive guide to buying the perfect washer

Overview

Laundry is a chore that no one misses in the modern age of washing machines and dryers! There are so many options available today that it can be overwhelming. This guide aims to simplify the process of buying a new washing machine from start to finish.

We'll cover everything you need to know, including…

- ⇒ The types of washing machines
- ⇒ How to choose the features and capacity you need
- ⇒ The importance of dimensions
- ⇒ Comparing brands, models, and pricing

Enjoy! We know you'll learn a lot.

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Top Load vs Front Load Washers

Maybe you've had a top load washer for as long as you can remember and want to try a front load model, or maybe you've tried front load and want to return to the top load style. These are the two main types of washing machines, and if your budget for a new washer is in the $600+ range, you can easily find a lot of great top load and front load models from a variety of brands.

To start with, we'll go over the differences between top load and front load washers.

Top Load vs Front Load Washers… cont'd

Top Loading Washers

This traditional washing machine design can range from basic models for just a few hundred dollars to more advanced (and more aesthetically appealing) options with large capacity wash tubs and a variety of wash cycles and options.

Agitator washers are less common, but are still sold by several brands. With the exception of Speed Queen's commercial-grade models, most agitator washers on the market today have basic designs and controls.

High-efficiency washers with impellers—low-profile, cone-shaped agitators—are gentler on clothes and use less water than agitator models.

Top Load vs Front Load Washers… cont'd

Top Load Washer Pros/Cons

Advantages	Disadvantages
No need for pedestals or crouching to load/unload	Can't be stacked under a dryer to save space like some front load
Often cheaper than a comparable front load model	May not have as much aesthetic appeal
Some models are very energy efficient	Even very efficient models use more water than front loaders
Agitator washers can be tougher on stains and soils	Bulky items like sheets and towels can get tangled around the agitator/
Some models let you choose the water fill level	Agitator models create more wear and tear on fabrics
Impeller washers can be gentler on clothes while still cleaning well, and have more room in the tub than agitator models	

Top Load vs Front Load Washers… cont'd

Front Loading Washers

The front load washer joined the home appliance market in the early 2000s. At first, they rapidly outpaced top load washers with significantly gentler wash action, lower water usage, and higher spin speeds. Front loaders are still outperforming them to some extent in several areas with their gentle yet effective wash!

This type of washer is ideal for extending the life of your fabrics. If your weekly laundry needs include heavy-duty cleaning with a lot of soaking and scrubbing, you'll probably prefer a top load washer. But front loaders are a great choice for many households! Front load models start at around $700 and go up from there.

Save space—stack a compatible dryer on top of your washer!

Pedestals make it easier to load and unload clothes.

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Top Load vs Front Load Washers… cont'd

Front Load Washer Pros/Cons

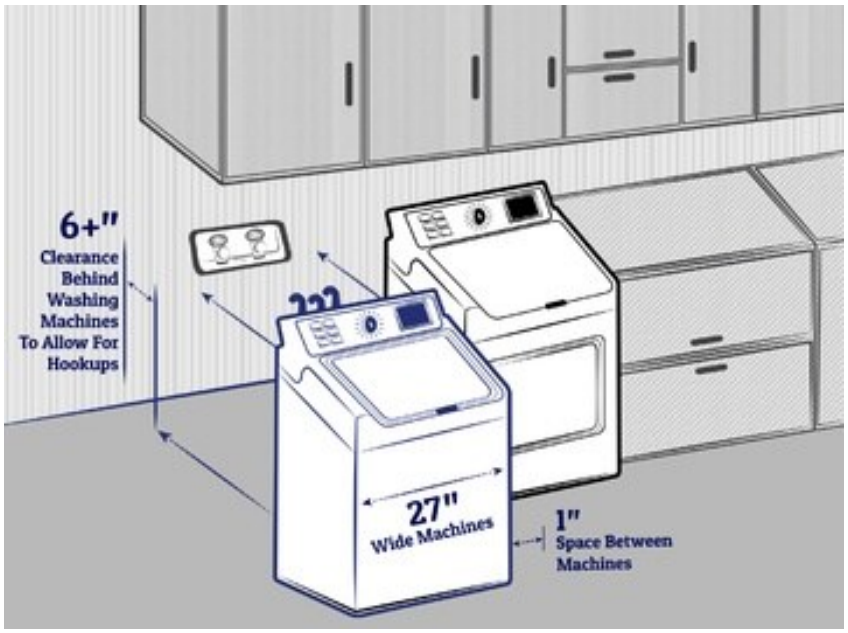
Advantages	Disadvantages
The vast majority of models are Energy Star rated, using <13 gallons per wash	May not perform as well for heavy-duty fabrics that are heavily soiled
Large items are less likely to get	Pedestals add to purchase price
Cleaning mechanism is gentle yet thorough	You may not be able to add forgotten clothes once water fills the tub
You can stack a washer and dryer to save floor space, or tuck them under a counter	More vibration due to higher spin speeds—proper installation is crucial
Generally quieter than top load models, although final spins can be noisy	Tub needs to be cleaned regularly to avoid mold and sour smells
High final spin speed wrings out clothes better for less time in the dryer	

Dimensions & Capacity

Be aware of the space you have to work with in your laundry area, especially if you're considering a large-capacity model. Most standard machines are around 27" wide, but double-check those dimensions if you're looking at a model with a 4.0+ cubic foot capacity. Compact models under 3.0 cubic feet are typically 24" wide.

If you're considering stacking your washer and dryer or buying a laundry center, the height available in your laundry space is another consideration. Generally you'll need at least 72" of clearance.

When installing a new washer, keep in mind that you'll also need…



* 1" between the washer and dryer (assuming they're side by side)
* 6" behind the machine for water hookups and drain hoses
* 1-3" on either side for air circulation

Dimensions & Capacity… cont'd

What Capacity Do You Need?

Comparing washer sizes can be confusing— "Big enough to wash a king-size comforter!" - "Big enough for 16 bath towels!" — But what does that actually mean?

Going too small can mean more loads per week and higher water usage as a result, while going too big might mean spending more money on a washer you won't fully utilize.

You can start by considering your current washer: Do you hate having to do so many loads each week? If you have the space for it, a larger model might make your life easier!

Dimensions & Capacity… cont'd

Explore different model sizes in the store—Is it easy to reach the bottom of the tub in a top load model? Is that big front loader too wide or deep for your laundry closet?

What does "XL" mean, anyway? There's no strict definition, but it generally means washers that are 4.3 cubic feet and up (some are even over 6.0 cubic feet).

What They're Called	Cubic Footage/ Load Size	Best For…
Compact	2.0-3.0 cu. ft. 9-13 lbs	1 person or perhaps 2 people with VERY light laundry needs
Standard-size	3.1-4.3 cu. ft. 12-16 lbs	2-5 people with light to medium laundry needs
Large and XL	4.5-5.5+ cu. ft. 18-20+ lbs	4+ people with medium to heavy laundry needs

PS: Buying a new dryer, too? Remember that a compatible dryer will have 1.5-2 times the capacity of your washing machine.)

Specialty Washer Types

Commercial Grade Washers

Many brands claim to have commercial-grade components, but there are few true commercial washing machines designed for home use. These washers are ideal for people concerned with reliability first and foremost. They tend to have longer warranties and are heavy-duty machines. The tradeoffs: A higher up-front cost, higher energy/water usage, and may be rougher on clothes. Speed Queen is one brand offering true commercial grade washers for the home.

Washer Dryer Combos

Common in Europe but rare in the US, these appliances can wash AND dry your clothes all in one machine. They are usually around 2.0-2.5 cubic feet of capacity and hook up to a standard 110 volt outlet. They work best for very small loads.

Terms & Features You Should Know… cont'd

Portable Washers

These compact washers are often used for studio apartments, RVs, and other settings where having a dedicated space for a washer isn't feasible. They usually move around on casters and hook up to a sink faucet.

Laundry Centers

A unified stacked unit with a top load washer and dryer built into a steel frame. They're an alternative to compact, stacked front load laundry in a top load format. They're available from brands like Whirlpool, Frigidaire, GE, and Speed Queen.

Major Features

Direct Drive Motor

The motor that spins the tub is connected directly to the tub, eliminating belts and pulleys. Wash cycles are shorter and the machine as a whole is more efficient. These motors tend to be more reliable than belt-driven motors.

Agitator

A pole with vanes in a top load washer tub. Generally rougher on fabrics than impeller or front load designs, and require more water. Originally, agitators turned back and forth independently from the tub, but some designs have an "agi-tub" where the agitator does not move independently from the tub.

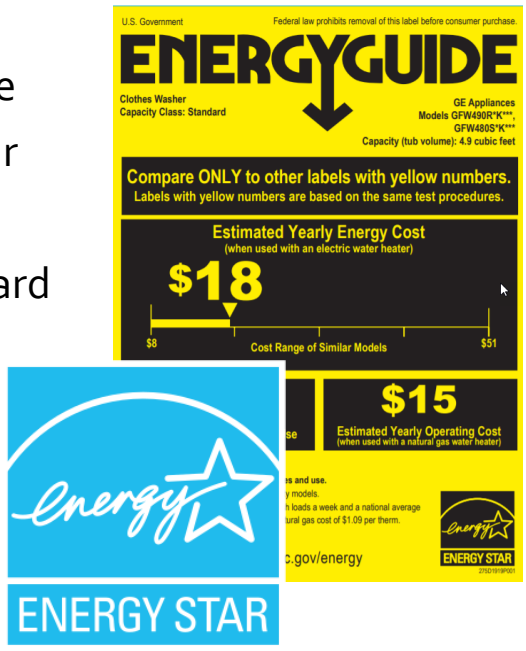
Terms & Features You Should Know… cont'd

Impeller

A low-profile cone in the base of a top load washer tub. Clothes are moved against the bottom of the tub and each other for a gentler cleaning action that's still effective. Quieter than agitators. Found on low-water washers.

Energy Star Rated

As well as being a rebate opportunity, Energy Star washers use 25% less energy and about 33% less water than standard models*.



**Energy Star Clothes Washers, Official Energy Star Website. (https://www.energystar.gov/products/appliances/clothes_washers)*

Terms & Features You Should Know… cont'd

Cycles, Options, & More

Steam Cycles

Steam cycles provide improved stain removal and can help eliminate odors, wrinkles, and allergens. The high heat boost relaxes fabric fibers to help release stains and dirt and flatten out wrinkles. Ask your local appliance store salesperson about the different steam options available!

Washer Cleaning Cycles

Common on front load washers, these cycles should be run regularly to prevent odors and detergent buildup. Some cleaning cycles require additives like Affresh, while others use extra-hot water and jets.

Vibration Control

A necessity on front load washers that is also found on some top load models. Different innovations like improved ball bearings and algorithms to sense and respond to an unbalanced load strive to keep the machine in-balance and reduce operation noise.

Terms & Features You Should Know… cont'd

Specialty Cycles

Some washers offer specialty cycles so that different fabrics can get the best clean, from undergarments to denim to activewear. What specialty cycles would be useful to you, if any? Do you want a dozen options, or just a few simple choices?

HE Detergent

Designed for the lower water usage and wash temperatures of today's washers, these concentrated detergents can be used in smaller quantities than old detergents. Use them properly to get the best performance out of your washer!

What Can You Get for Your Budget?

(Based on product MSRP, not including sales and promotions)

$500

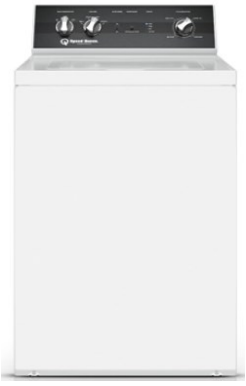
Basic top load agitator models—Value brands like Amana and Hotpoint

Around $600: High-efficiency impeller washers

$800

Nicely featured front load and top load washers

Around $900: Fully featured models; commercial grade top load pricing starts here.



$1,000+

High-end and XL machines— features like wifi connectivity and more

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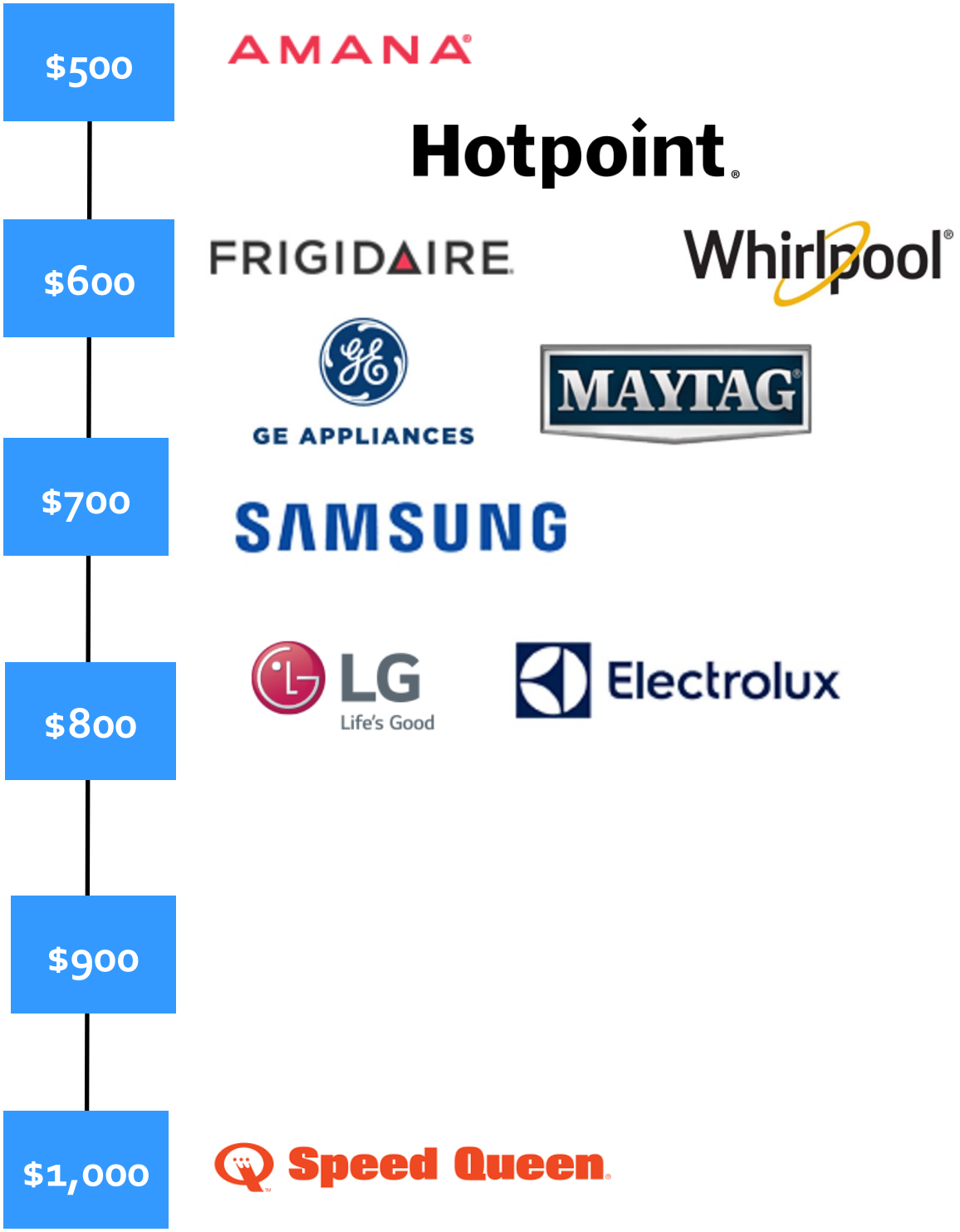
What Brands Can You Get for Your Budget?

Individual brand MSRP starts at… (approximate)



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Before You Go Shopping…

Bring the following information with you into the store:

1. Measurements of the area where the washer will go—the height, width, and depth—plus a few extra inches to spare on either side and in the back.
2. Measurements of the doorways the washer will have to fit through when it is delivered. On occasion, older homes may have narrower doors that won't allow an XL washer to pass!
3. Measurement of the drain pipe height.
4. How many loads you wash in a week.
5. Ideas of the specific features and cycles you think you'd like to have that you will use frequently.

How to Compare Different Models

Hopefully you now have an idea of what you want in your new washing machine, but how do you compare the different options available? Here are a few ideas:

Capacity

Overloading your washer can cause problems and shorten its lifespan. Decide on the size range you need (discuss it with your local appliance salesperson if you're not sure) and stick to it!

The Type of Washer You Want

If you've decided on the front load style, do you want to buy a pedestal or stacking kit as well? This can add a few hundred dollars to the purchase price. If you want a top loader, decide whether you want an agitator or impeller model.

How to Compare Different Models… cont'd

Know What to Expect

Many new washers have longer wash cycles and make different noises than older models. Ask your salesperson about the differences between various brands and models. If your washer is in/near a living area, the noise level and cycle length are important factors.

The Features You Want

Do you want steam cycles? Fancy LED controls? Bulk detergent dispensers? Or do you prefer basic cycles and options? Do you want to control the water level or does automatic water control appeal to you? It's up to you to decide, and your salesperson can help you find models that fit your preferences!

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In Conclusion...

Washing machines will usually last between 7-10 years depending on the model and the way you take care of it. Most major brands are reliable, have good wash performance, and have service available should you need it.

Consider brands like Electrolux, GE, LG, Whirlpool, Samsung, and Speed Queen on your search for a new washer.

A Little About Us

- **Bellingham Electric** has been in the same location for over 70 years and is family-owned and operated.
- Our average salesperson has been selling appliances for over 10 years and has a wealth of product knowledge.
- On top of that, we have an in-house service team.

Keep reading to find out why in-house warranty service is a huge benefit!

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Bellingham Electric Offers Easy Warranty Service

Forget about calling a 1-800 number and hoping a technician shows up in a week or two. Instead…

1. Give us a call
2. We'll come out and see you in the next 1-2 business days
3. We bill the manufacturer
4. That's it! You'll barely have to lift a finger!

On top of that, we can take care of multiple appliances with small nagging issues all in one call—No need to schedule individual appointments for each brand or type of appliance. Our in-house parts department makes repairs even easier.

Thanks for Reading!

For product recommendations, questions, or anything else, don't hesitate to get in touch!

Store Hours:	Contact Us
Mon, Wed, Fri: 8:30AM-5:30PM	250 Pulaski Blvd, Bellingham MA
Tues, Thurs: 8:30AM-8PM	(508) 883-7235
Sat: 8AM-4PM	sales@bellinghamelectric.com

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