The Ultimate Guide To Buying a Hob
Contents:

3  Who are Euronics?
4  Introduction
5  Types of Hob
12  Hob Sizes
15  Gas Hob Features
22  Electric Hob Features
30  Hob Splashbacks and Cooker Hoods
40  Energy Efficiency
44  Hob Prices and Installation
Who are Euronics?

We are a community of independent electrical stores, working together to provide better prices and service for customers.

The Euronics brand operates in 30 countries across Europe, with 11,000 shops and branches. In the UK, stores can be found on high streets the length and breadth of the land. Many of these are family businesses that have been around for generations.

With local shops delivering goods, instead of a central warehouse, you can expect a more personal service than you might get from other electrical or home stores.

Delivery is free when you order online from www.euronics.co.uk, no matter how much you spend.

Hobs are just one of the electrical appliances our experts can help you with. Read the guide and let us know what you think on Facebook or Twitter.
Introduction

Who would have thought that there would be so much to consider when buying a new hob for your kitchen? If you’re struggling to make a decision then this Buyers Guide is going to help you make the perfect choice.

Whether it’s choosing between gas and electric, or wondering which type of splashback is the quickest to clean, you will find all the answers you need on the following pages, plus much more.

Everything is explained in a clear and simple way to make the decision as easy as possible for you.

Read on to find out more.
With so many different hobs available, it can be difficult to know where to start. This guide offers a simple explanation of the main types of hob, and the advantages and disadvantages of each. That way, you’ll be able to focus your search on exactly what you need.

Types of Hob

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Separate Hob or a Cooker

The first decision to make is whether you need a separate hob, or whether you want a cooker with a hob too.

Separate built-in hobs and ovens can create a neater appearance in your kitchen. They’re integrated alongside your units and worktops, for a high spec finishing touch.

If you have a standard sized gap left by your old cooker, a freestanding cooker is an easier option. They can also be cheaper than buying two separate integrated appliances.

Separate built-in hobs and ovens can create a neater appearance in your kitchen.
Main Hob Types

If you’re definitely looking for a built-in hob, it’s crucial to know which type you need. It’s not as easy as just deciding between gas and electric - with gas, you have both regular and gas-on-glass, and with electric, there are ceramic, induction, and electric plate styles available.

The different models use different heating elements and offer a range of pros and cons. Some are only suitable for certain types of pots and pans.

Gas

A gas hob uses burners with visible flames, characterised by metal pan supports on top. They’re a traditional choice which is still popular today, and tend to be the first choice for chefs in professional kitchens.

Advantages

- Instant, powerful heat
- Complete flexibility - no set temperature intervals
- Easy to use
- Can be used with any type of cookware
- Lower running costs than most electric powered hobs
- Cooking area cools down quickly after using

Disadvantages

- Requires a gas supply, so not suitable for all homes
- Can be difficult to clean due to their burners and pan supports
- Less efficient than induction models
- Some consider their designs less stylish

Gas hobs give instant heat, are easy to use and can be used with any type of cookware.
Gas on Glass

Gas on glass hobs are the same as regular gas models, but the burners are mounted onto a sleek glass surface instead of a metal one. This makes them a more stylish and easier-to-clean alternative, while still having all the advantages of gas power.

Ceramic

The phrase ‘ceramic hob’ simply refers to its sleek ceramic glass finish. That means technically, gas on glass and induction hobs are also ceramic hobs. However, most of the time, if a product is advertised as a ‘ceramic hob’, it will be electric, and there are a number of different ways it could work.

Standard radiant elements simply heat the cooking surface by transferring heat from under the glass, while high-tech halogen hobs use a special form of red light to warm your pan. Halogen is the closest you’ll get to a gas cooking experience while using electricity - it provides constant heat levels with maximum control.

Advantages

- Sleek finish for a premium feel
- Frameless designs are available for an impression of fluidity between your worktops and hob
- Easy to clean - spillages wipe off the smooth surface easily, since there aren’t any pan supports to clean around (with the exception of gas powered ceramic)

Disadvantages

- Often more expensive than electric plate or gas hobs
- With standard radiant elements heat isn’t very evenly distributed across the base of a pan and can be difficult to control
- The hot cooking surface can take a long time to heat up/cool down (with the exception of induction/gas)

That means technically, gas on glass and induction hobs are also ceramic hobs.
**Induction**

Induction hobs are unique in the way they heat your pans. They create a magnetic field between the induction element and the base of your cookware, heating your pan directly, rather than wasting energy heating the cooking surface. Aside from a little residual heat, the surface stays relatively cool.

**Advantages**

- Really quick to heat up
- Efficient since no energy is wasted heating the cooking surface
- Stylish designs available
- Only produce a little residual heat, for a safer kitchen

**Disadvantages**

- Restricted to which pans you can use - cast iron or steel cookware is ideal, but aluminium or copper pans won’t work unless the base has an additional layer which a magnet will stick to
- Can be more expensive than other types of hob

*Induction hobs are efficient, since no energy is wasted heating the cooking surface.*
Electric Plate

An electric plate hob uses sealed metal plates to heat your pans. You’ll need to use cookware with a flat base to gain an even heat distribution. In the past, electric hobs used a big heated coil on each cooking zone, but now it’s much more common to find round metal plates.

Advantages

• Tend to be cheaper than other hobs - models available at entry-level prices
• Simple design which is easy to use
• Resilient - difficult to scratch or damage

Disadvantages

• Heat can be difficult to control since the solid metal plate can take a while to cool
• Not as stylish as a sleek glass surface
• They can be awkward to clean, since food can get trapped around the edges of the plates
Domino

Domino hobs are given their name due to their domino-like appearance. They tend to have just two cooking zones in an oblong shape, although you can find some with a single cooking zone. They are an ideal space-saving solution in kitchenettes, and can be combined with a standard hob for a little extra cooking space. Domino hobs are available in gas, ceramic, induction, or hot plate designs.

Advantages

• A great space-saver in rooms with limited workspace
• Specialist designs can be used alongside a regular hob for extra cooking flexibility - a wok burner, for example
• Two or three domino hobs can be combined for a variety of cooking methods without taking up too much room

Disadvantages

• Most households require more cooking space than a single domino hob can provide
• Relatively expensive considering their size - they can be the same price as a regular four burner hob

A great space-saver in rooms with limited workspace.
Hob Sizes

Whether you’re looking for a small domino hob, a luxurious six burner, or something in between, size is an important factor. We’ll explain your options when it comes to the arrangement and dimensions of your new hob.
How Many Burners?

Most hobs have four burners (referred to as zones on ceramic hobs). This provides plenty of room for juggling different pans at the same time. While that’s adequate for most households, others are better off with a five or six burner design. There tends to be quite a big difference in price between a four and five burner, so consider whether you really need the extra room. At the other end of the spectrum, domino hobs have just one or two burners. They’re smaller in dimensions, saving space in bedsits or student kitchens.

The most expensive induction hobs can be zoneless. This amazing technology means you can place pans anywhere on the cooking surface.

Which Burners?

It’s not only the number of burners which counts, but the type too. The most common arrangement is one large, two medium, and a less powerful simmer one. This combination suits most families’ needs well, since it’s unlikely you’ll need to rapidly boil on four big and powerful rings at once. If the flame or hot cooking surface is outside the pan, it’s wasting energy, so believe it or not, small burners are just as important as large ones.

Five and six burner hobs often have a similar combination, with additional high-speed wok burners. These provide really high and even heat over large surface areas. They’re ideal for stir frying, but also for boiling large pans of water quickly.

With a domino hob, you’re likely to find a large and a small burner. This ensures that even though the cooking area isn’t as big, you’ll still have the opportunity to save energy when using a small saucepan.
Hob Dimensions

A hob will come with two sets of measurements; the physical size of the product and the size of the gap which it needs to sit into. The size of the gap is usually a couple of centimetres smaller than the size of the hob, although the difference varies between models. A hob may sit within a 56 cm wide aperture in your worktop, but the top part will be wider, overlapping this surface.

Standard Sizes

The majority of integrated hobs use the same design: four burners sitting within a rectangular panel. With these models, the dimensions of the visible part will be approximately 60 cm wide. These measurements are very standard across many kitchen appliances, so if you have a built-in oven which measures 60 cm in width, you’ll easily be able to find a matching hob to place above it. Most fitted kitchen units also measure 60 cm, so you could install your new hob above one of those and place your oven elsewhere.

Because of the standardisation of kitchen units and worktops, the depth doesn’t vary much between large and small hobs - they’re all around 50cm deep. And considering the technology involved, the height is kept surprisingly low. Most are around 5cm high, for minimal encroachment on the space under your worktop.

Larger Sizes

Five and six burner hobs tend to begin at 70cm wide, although some are as large as 90cm. The measurements depend on the arrangement of the cooking space. These bigger designs give a real impact and a restaurant kitchen feel.

Domino Hobs

The main advantage of a domino hob is its size. They measure in at around 30cm wide - half of a regular hob, fitting into a snug spot with ease. Some people install two domino hobs, or a domino and a standard hob, side-by-side. If you’re lucky enough to have flexible countertop space, you can combine different cooking styles, such as an induction hob with a powerful gas wok burner.
Gas Hob Features

When buying any appliance, a little research goes a long way. With gas hobs there are a huge choice of features on offer, not least how you’re actually going to run them. We’ll explain everything from the vitals like LPG conversion, to safety features and aesthetics. Read on to learn more.
Gas Hob Features

Mains or LPG Gas?

While mains gas makes easy buying for a gas hob, four million households in the UK don’t have a supply. Fortunately, many models can be converted to run on LPG gas. That means with the help of a conversion kit (available from the manufacturer) you’ll be able to install a gas hob in any home. By changing the nozzles to account for the higher pressure, the hob can run off those red cylinders of propane gas which you can keep outdoors. An installer who is Gas Safe registered will be able to sort this out for you - simply check your hob is LPG convertible first.

With the help of a conversion kit, you’ll be able to install a gas hob in any home.
Burners

Gas burners aren’t all the same. Most hobs offer an assortment of types, so you can cook efficiently with large and small pans. The number of each burner, and their arrangement, varies between different models. Read more in our Hob Sizes section.

Economy Burner

You’ll find at least one economy burner on most hobs. They’ll be less powerful than the other burners, and will probably be smaller too. That makes them energy efficient and handy for tasks like maintaining a steady simmer or gently warming a sauce without accidentally boiling it.

Semi Rapid/Rapid Burners

Semi rapid burners provide medium power, while rapid ones offer high heat levels. If you want to boil a pan of pasta, this is where you’ll do it. Their outputs will be measured in British thermal units per hour, or BTU/h.

If you want to compare hobs to find the most powerful, look for higher numbers in the hob’s technical details. While an economy burner might be 3000 or 5000 BTU/h, the most powerful burners can be as high as 10,000 BTU/h. You’ll need a mix of low to high if you want your hob to handle a range of cooking tasks.

Wok Burner

Larger, top-of-the-range hobs may have a wok burner or two. They offer maximum power output, perhaps as high as 12,000 BTU/h. The flames will spread widely, so wok burners are only really suitable for woks and your biggest pans. They offer the ability to stir fry or sear meat at very high temperatures.

You’ll need a mix of low to high power if you want your hob to handle a range of cooking tasks.
Safety Features

While some people are cautious of using gas as a cooking fuel, modern safety features mean there’s no need to be worried.

Flame Failure Device

Most gas hobs these days are fitted with a flame failure device. This stops the gas going into the burner if the flame is extinguished. Pan of water boiled over while you’re not looking? Not a problem - the gas will stop flowing to the burner, so it definitely won’t fill the room.

Automatic Ignition

Some gas hobs have automatic ignition, which means the burner ignites when you turn the knob. Others have mains or battery powered ignition, where you click a button to light the flame. You very rarely need to light the hob with a match or kitchen lighter these days.
Controls

Gas is a much more controllable heat source, so you won’t be restricted to specific heat intervals. Choose either traditional rotary dials or touch controls.

Rotary Controls

Simple to use and easy to grip, a control dial is a traditional choice. You may need to push it in and hold it down for a second to ignite the burner, but then you can simply turn the knob to increase or decrease the size of the flame. This design makes it difficult to accidentally knock it and switch the gas on.

Touch Controls

If you’re a fan of gadgets, touch controls will be right up your street. They might be a little more complicated, but once you’ve got the hang of them, they offer a few advantages. The sleek surface looks great and is easy to clean, while child lock modes can secure the whole hob. Touch controls are much more common on electric hobs, but they are available on a few gas-on-glass hobs, where the controls are embedded into the glass.

Position

Manufacturers position the controls in one of two areas; to the front or the side of the burners. If you have young children who can just about stretch to reach front controls, a side position can be a sensible option as they’re set slightly further back. If not, it’s just a matter of what you feel most comfortable with.
Pan Supports

Unlike electric hobs, all gas hobs have pan supports to hold your cookware over the flame. They tend to be removable for cleaning, and are available in different types. Premium cast iron pan supports make the hob a little more expensive, but they’re heavy duty and really resilient to wear and tear. It’s important you don’t put them in the dishwasher, however, as it can cause them to rust.

Alternatively, enamelled pan supports (often with matching burner caps) can withstand a cycle in the dishwasher. They don’t look too different to cast iron versions, but they’re often available on cheaper hobs. The enamel can become brittle and chip over time, since the enamel coating is exposed to so much heat during use.

Stainless steel pan supports are harder to find. Often used to match a stainless steel hob surface, they are prone to tarnishing from the heat. Black versions are a great solution to this problem.

Pan supports with rubber feet prevent the hob from getting scratched by the metal. They’re particularly useful with cast iron supports since they’re so heavy and can scratch the surface otherwise.
Finish

Your new hob will add a real feature to your worktops, so you’ll need to choose one you like the look of.

Metal

Stainless steel adds an industrial look, while brushed stainless steel creates a more muted, matte effect. Steel and brushed steel create a similar impression, only in a darker shade of silver. All are hardwearing, stylish and add a luxurious feel.

Glass

A ceramic glass surface is sleek, stylish and easy to clean. Spillages wipe away easily because glass is harder for food to stick to. At the highest end of the market you’ll find frameless glass designs, which lie flush alongside your worktop. This creates an uninterrupted look for the finest detail of quality.

Enamel

Less modern in design, an enamel finish is available on cheap entry models and retro models. If glass or exposed metal isn’t to your taste, you can choose a white, cream or black enamel design. These colours ensure the hob blends in rather than standing out.

If glass or exposed metal isn’t to your taste, you can choose a white, cream or black enamel design.
Electric Hob Features

With an electric hob, there are plenty of special features and options available. This guide will help you understand which details would make an important addition to your kitchen.
Cooking Zones

While gas hobs have burners, the cooking elements on electric hobs are usually called cooking zones or rings. There are usually four of these on an electric hob, but domino hobs are space-saving with just one or two, and some top-of-the-range designs have up to six. Find out more in our guide to hob sizes. These may cover a range of sizes, to accommodate the different types of pan.

Power Levels

Most electric hobs have four cooking zones, in two or three different power levels. A combination of high and low power zones will help you juggle multiple cooking tasks with ease.

To tell how powerful a ceramic or induction hob is, take a look at the kWh details listed in the product’s technical details. They tend to range from 1.2 kWh for an economy zone to around 2.4 kWh for rapid heat. Some top-of-the-range induction zones can be as high as 3 kWh - sometimes even more. This kind of power isn’t required by most families, but may be worth the investment for the most passionate cooks. These figures are the maximum outputs for each zone. They’ll have adjustable temperatures which you can drop lower to save energy on lighter cooking tasks.

You won’t find individual kWh numbers for a solid plate hob, but the larger rings will be the most powerful.

Most electric hobs have four cooking zones, in two or three different power levels.
Dual Elements

A dual element offers that little bit of extra flexibility with an electric hob. They have two heated sections in one zone - a smaller inner part and larger outer part. If you’re only using a small saucepan, you’ll be able to switch off the section which sits outside your pan, saving electricity.

A fish zone is a type of dual zone. The second section (which can be switched on or off) extends the zone outwards on one side, for a longer heated space. This means that long fish pans can be heated evenly.

Specialist Cooking

Hobs have recently adapted to accommodate our favourite cuisines from across the globe. More expensive models (particularly those with 5 or 6 cooking zones) may have a wok burner. This will be gas powered to provide the instant, high heat required for stir frying. They tend to be combined with induction cooking zones, for the best of both worlds.

Some hobs can be combined with a matching teppanyaki griddle. These are simply a flat iron surface where you can cook meat, fish and vegetables. It’s a speedy and healthy Japanese cooking style which is surprisingly versatile. Often they’re a standalone installation, designed to sit next to a hob or domino hob, but sometimes they’re an additional plate you can buy to place on top of an induction surface.

Barbecue griddles are similar to teppanyaki ones in that they can be installed next to a traditional hob. They have a cast iron griddle which produces the distinctive chargrilled effect without the smoke.

Power Boost

Busy lifestyles sometimes make it impossible to cook at a leisurely pace. A power boost function is there when you just need to feed the family, fast. They’ll increase the power of a cooking zone by as much as 50%, so you can boil a big pan of rice in no time at all.
Safety Features

Manufacturers incorporate all sorts of safety features to make using your electric hob stress-free.

Heat Indicators

A heat indicator provides a handy visual reminder that the surface is still hot. They’ll remind you not to touch the zone or place anything on it, and also let you know once it’s cool again.

This indicator is often an eye-catching red LED light. Sealed plates sometimes have heat sensitive centres which turn red when they’re hot.

While induction hobs work by heating the pan rather than the cooking surface, they’re still prone to a little residual heat transfer. A heat indicator is a handy feature to look out for on any electric hob.

Pan Presence Sensor

An induction hob can sense when a compatible pan is placed on the surface. This is how it heats your food, but it’s a handy safety feature too. If a pan is removed, the zone will automatically switch off.

Child Lock

Prevent wandering fingers from causing mischief with a child lock on a hob. Models with touch controls can often be locked using a certain sequence of buttons, making it nearly impossible for little ones to activate the heat or tweak your settings.

Overheat Protection

Overheating protection will protect the appliance if there’s a problem. This feature can sense when the temperature is too high, and sometimes also if liquid spills onto the cooking surface. It’ll then automatically switch off the element or whole hob, protecting it from damage.

Auto Standby

If you leave the heat unattended for a long period, a model with auto standby will switch the hob off.
Cooking Features

Electric hobs generally offer more high-tech cooking features than gas hobs. These intelligent details help you produce impressive cooking results.

Magnetic Field Technology
Magnetic fields are used in induction hobs. They use circular coils to produce a magnetic field, which directly heats the bottom of ferrous metal pans. This new technology is fast and efficient.

Multiple Heat Settings
Tweak the power level until it’s perfect with a choice of heat settings.

Timers and Minute Minders
Different types of timer help you maintain control in the kitchen. Some will switch the hob off when your allocated time has run out, while a minute minder will sound an alarm to alert you. Count up timers start at zero and increase until you stop or reset it.

Quick Start and Restart
A quick start, sometimes called boil start, will start the cooking process at its most powerful. After a set time, this will reduce to a simmer. This means there’s no need to worry about turning your back and overcooking your food.

If overheat protection is triggered by a pan which has boiled over, restart will automatically restore your settings once the spillage is clean and you’ve turned the heat back on.

Special Modes
Some brands have gone one step further when it comes to taking the hard work out of cooking. You may find special modes tailored to different tasks such as steaming vegetables, melting chocolate, poaching eggs or maintaining a steady boil. They offer precise results, and are usually found on the best induction hobs.

Electric hobs generally offer more high-tech cooking features than gas hobs.
Controls

If you want to make use of all of the cooking features on offer, you'll need to choose a hob you can easily control. An LCD display is also handy when it comes to displaying the timer, temperature settings and modes.

Rotary Controls

A traditional dial is easy to use. They’re commonly found on cheaper electric hobs, and are sometimes removable for cleaning. Some state-of-the-art rotary controls are attached by magnets. These are also removable, and can be kept away from the hob as a type of child lock.

Touch Controls

For an uninterrupted sleek surface, touch controls can’t be beaten. They sit flush in the glass surface, making operation and cleaning effortless. Slider controls are a form of touch control, providing complete freedom over the temperature.

Touch controls are not available on cheaper electric hobs, and virtually unheard of on sealed plate ones.

Position

The control panel will be placed either at the front or side of the cooking zones. This means there’s no leaning over pans with hot steam to tweak your settings.
Finish and Cleaning

A main advantage of electric hobs is their appearance. They don’t need pan supports, so the cooking surface is much neater and easier to clean than a gas model.

Ceramic Glass

Ceramic and induction hobs use a special type of heat-proof ceramic glass. The result is a stylish, smooth surface which wipes clean easily. They’re usually black and are available in frameless designs, which means the edges lie flat against your worktops for an extra touch of quality.

Enamel

Electric plate hobs have sealed metal cooking zones, which are raised above the hob’s main surface. The surface will have an enamel finish, often in white or cream.

Stainless Steel

Also only available for electric plate models, stainless steel gives the traditional hob a more modern twist. Some are flush fitted, which is when the edges lie flat along your work surface.
Hob Splashbacks and Cooker Hoods

Once you’ve chosen the perfect hob, you’ll need to consider what’s going around it. Splashbacks and cooker hoods are an important addition to any kitchen - we’ll explain why here.
Do I Need a Hob Splashback?

If you’re changing your hob anyway, it’s well worth considering your splashback. Perhaps your old hob was in a different location, or you’d like a new splashback which matches in size or style. They’re the perfect finishing touch, and can really tie a kitchen’s look together.

If you value your kitchen decor and want to maintain a clean cooking area, a hob splashback is essential. These screens are fitted to the wall behind your hob. They capture splatters caused by boiling sauces, grease from sizzling bacon, and other bits of food which would otherwise end up on your wall. They also prevent damage to your wallpaper or paint from the heat or condensation. Some choose to install an additional splashback behind the sink, since this is another messy area.
Types of Splashback

Many hob manufacturers have ventured into the world of splashbacks. Each type has different advantages and disadvantages, but all are designed to protect the wall and make cleaning easier.

Tiles

A traditional type of splashback. Many kitchens already have wall tile upstands behind the worktops, so adding tiles above the hob is a natural progression.

Advantages

- Tiles available to suit all budgets.
- Consistent look, since they can match the tiles around the room.
- Completely flexible in terms of size. Decide how wide and how high up the wall you want your splashback to go - it’s possible to stretch it right up to the cooker hood.
- Many different styles and colour combinations available. A great way to get creative and add a focal point.

Disadvantages

- If you’re not too handy, you’ll need a tiler to fit yours. And even if you’re a fan of DIY, they still take more work to install than other splashback types.
- Food can get trapped in the edges and grout, making cleaning more difficult.
- The grout will need maintenance to keep it looking its best.

Tile splashbacks have a consistent look, since they can match the tiles around the room.
Glass

Usually made from a single sheet of glass, these splashbacks are available in transparent and coloured variations. To avoid cracking from the heat of your hob, it’s vital you choose a toughened, or ‘tempered’, design. The highest quality designs often also have thicker glass for additional strength.

Advantages

• Contemporary splashback which matches any colour scheme. Choose from transparent, textured, coloured and coloured behind the glass styles.
• They reflect light beautifully, making a kitchen look bigger and brighter.
• Hygienic - easy to wipe clean and stain resistant.
• Requires no maintenance once fitted.
• They tend to come with a fixing kit and self-adhesive backing, so you’ll probably have everything you need.
• Toughened versions are extremely heat resistant - some manufacturers promise to protect against temperatures as high as 200°C.

Disadvantages

• Fitting can be fiddly and requires a lot of care.
• Can be pricey for a hardwearing tempered glass design. Made-to-measure sizes are particularly expensive.
• While cleaning away food marks is easy, keeping them shiny and smear-free is more difficult.

**Glass splashbacks are available in transparent and coloured variations.**
Stainless Steel

With stainless steel appliances becoming increasingly popular, it’s no surprise many people want a stylish splashback to match. Stainless steel gives a modern, professional kitchen effect.

**Advantages**

- Creates a bold style statement which can match your hob and/or cooker hood.
- Easy to wipe food off.
- A wide choice on offer from many retailers.
- Designs available to fit most budgets.

**Disadvantages**

- Their modern design might not suit all kitchens.
- While they are durable against serious damage, stainless steel can scratch and mark easily.
- Can be prone to showing up fingerprints and water marks.
Acrylic splashbacks are often cut to size, and many people choose to continue the splashback over a larger area so it acts as an upstand too. Look for a fire rated acrylic, since normal plastic shouldn’t be used in close proximity to your hob. Alternatively, you could cover the acrylic with a transparent piece of glass.

**Advantages**

- A cheap alternative to glass, with a similar visual effect.
- Available in a rainbow of different colours.
- Usually cut to measure, so you can choose the exact size and shape you want.
- Repels dust better than glass or stainless steel.
- Light and easy to install.
- Easy to clean - not prone to smudges and marks.

**Disadvantages**

- Can be difficult to find a heat proof, fire rated version.
- Scratches easily.
- Has a cheaper ‘feel’ than glass.
Other Types of Splashback

There are plenty of options when it comes to choosing a splashback. Some people choose to simply leave the painted wall, although this does leave it vulnerable to damage from grease, food stains and condensation.

MDF can also be used as a budget option. It’s coated in a range of laminate effects to give the impression of exotic woods, marble or granite.

Solid timber can also be used, and can match a wooden worktop. This can be an expensive option as it’ll be made to measure, and you’ll need to check it has been properly sealed to protect it from water damage. Creative designs like mirrors, sheets of mosaic tiles, and even LED lit glass are also available.

Measurements

If you have a cooker hood and nearby wall units, it’s important to measure the available space. Your splashback should be at least the same width as your hob. This means it’ll provide adequate protection to your wall and give a neat appearance. Because of this, most splashbacks are around 60cm wide, the standard four burner hob width. Wider rectangular designs can be as big as 90cm.

You’ll find square splashbacks start at 60cm high, while others stretch as tall as 75cm.
Do I Need a Cooker Hood?

Cooker hoods minimise the airborne grease which can stick to your units. They remove cooking smells, steam and condensation, keeping everything fresher and more hygienic. This makes them a must-have in any kitchen.

If you’re choosing a new hob, you’ll want a cooker hood which matches. Perhaps you’ve upgraded to a six burner design and want a wider hood to cover the whole cooking surface, or maybe you’ve switched to a more powerful gas model and you’re looking for an efficient extractor.

How They Work

Cooker hoods can be divided into two groups: those which extract the air, and those which recirculate it. Extractors vent the air outside through ducts, while recirculation hoods use filters to clean the air before releasing it back into the kitchen. Some designs can be used as either, depending on how you install them.

Extraction Hoods

Extractors are generally considered the most efficient, simply because the grease, cooking smells and smoke are sent outside. They don’t have a filter restricting the air’s movement, so the airflow rate is often higher.

Their design makes installation more difficult. The ducting system will need to be fitted by a professional, and you’ll need to buy the kit separately too.

Recirculation Hoods

Separate grease and activated charcoal filters remove smells and other nasties from the air, before releasing the clean air back into your kitchen. Recirculation hoods still do their job well, but their design means they can release some heat and moisture back into the room. You’ll need to clean the grease off the filter and replace the charcoal filter annually to keep it working efficiently. A main advantage of choosing a recirculation model is how easy they are to fit. They’re a standalone unit, so you don’t need to worry about finding somewhere to vent through an outside wall.
Types of Cooker Hoods

Chimney Hoods

The most common design, with a long chimney which stretches down from the ceiling. They’re wall mounted, so not suitable for hobs which are placed on a kitchen island.

Freestanding Hoods

Also known as visor hoods, freestanding models tend to be less powerful and only suitable for smaller kitchens. They have the flat part without the chimney, and can be placed on the wall independently or fixed to the underside of a kitchen unit. A visor will help guide smoke into the filters, while a telescopic design extends outwards when needed for maximum area coverage.

Integrated Hoods

These are built into a kitchen unit, keeping them neatly hidden away behind a door. A canopy design is also concealed within a cupboard, but lies flat within the base.

Island Hoods

If your hob doesn’t back onto a wall, you’ll need an island hob. They can be more expensive, but designer models let you really make a statement.
Sizes

Your cooker hood will need to at least match your hob in width to work effectively. The most common sizes are exactly 60cm, 70cm or 90cm wide, suiting nearly all four to six burner hobs. Compact versions are available if wall units have left you with limited space.

Height-wise, you’ll need to leave a gap of at least 50cm above an electric hob, or 65cm above a gas one. Check the manufacturer’s guidelines, however, as this does vary. Extendable chimneys can help you get the perfect position.

Airflow Rates

The airflow rate is also worth looking at. This will be measured in cubic metres per hour, so think about the size of your room. The larger your kitchen, the more powerful you’ll need your hood to be. This can also mean it’s noisier, so don’t simply choose the highest airflow rate you can find.

Work out your kitchen’s volume by multiplying its floor space by the ceiling height. You’ll want to then multiply this by 10, because it should be able to replace all of the air at least 10 times per hour. The result is the minimum m3/h rate which you’re looking for.

Features

Built-in lights are a common feature across all budget cooker hoods. They help you see what you’re cooking more easily, and are definitely a useful feature to have.

Most models have two or three different speed settings, so you can save energy and run it more quietly if you’re only cooking something small.

Both of these features will be controlled by buttons or sliders on the front, inside or underside.
Energy Efficiency

We all want to do our bit for the environment and save money on our energy bills, but which hobs will help us achieve this? This guide will help you decide between gas, induction and electric cooking.
The Most Energy Efficient Hobs

If your current hob is really old, it’s safe to say a new one will be more energy efficient. Hobs aren’t given EU energy ratings like other appliances, so other than that it can be difficult to know where to start.

A number of different factors matter when you’re considering it all. The gas or electricity usage (BTU/h or KW/h) and how long it takes to heat something show how efficient a hob is - that is how much energy it uses in relation to how much it wastes (on heat loss through the zone, pan supports and air, for example). Running costs are how expensive the fuel is in relation to the energy usage. To make matters even more complicated, manufacturers usually won’t list all, if any, of these factors. It’s a good idea to generalise the different benefits of gas and electricity power.
Gas vs Electric

One litre of food will always need the same amount of energy to heat it. A simple rule is that induction hobs are by far the most efficient at this transfer of energy. A magnetic field induces heat directly from your pan, rather than passing it through the cooking surface. This means more of the energy is used to heat your food, and the average energy consumption per use remains extremely low compared to other hobs.

Other electric models, such as solid plate and ceramic designs, tend to have the second lowest energy consumption rate, while gas has the highest. But when you take into account a ceramic hob can take 11 minutes to boil two litres of water and a gas one 9 minutes, things get complicated. This is why most people refer to gas as second most efficient to induction.

The cost per kWh is significantly higher for electricity, so gas hobs nearly always offer the lowest annual running costs of all three types - sometimes by £20 a year or more. Induction is always the second cheapest to run, and other electric hobs third.

Basically, if you’re looking to do your bit for the planet by minimising energy wastage, induction is the way forward. If you’re looking for low running costs, and you have a mains supply, gas is your best bet.
Tips and Tricks

Whichever hob type you choose, there are a few tips and tricks which can save even more energy when cooking.

• Always put lids on your pans to keep the heat in.
• When boiling, only use just enough water to cover the food.
• Choose the right size pan for the burner or zone. For electric hobs, flat bottomed pans maximise the surface in contact with the heat.
• Choose the right pan size for the amount of food.
• Turn the heat down to a simmer as soon as the pan starts boiling.
• Use a multi level steamer to cook multiple vegetables on one ring.
• Consider which pans you’re using. While copper heats up quickly, heavy bottomed cast iron pans will take longer to heat up but retain it more. It all depends on what you’re cooking.
• Keep solid plates clean, or energy will be wasted on heating burnt bits of foods.
• Use any built-in timers and minute minders to prevent wasting energy overcooking your food.

Use a multi level steamer to cook multiple vegetables on one ring.
Hob Prices and Installation

By now you’ll probably have a relatively good idea of what you’re going to buy. Before you go ahead and make the purchase, the two last things to consider are its price, and how it’s going to be installed. We explain what you can get for your money here, along with what you need to think about when fitting it.
Hob Prices

Different types of hob have different price ranges. If you’re looking at standard four burner/zone design, gas and ceramic models range from £90 to £300, and solid plate electric ones a budget-friendly £70 to £120. Induction and gas-on-glass designs are more expensive, starting at £200. The sky’s the limit with induction hob prices - zoneless models, where the whole hob is a cooking surface, can cost upwards of £700.

Most of the time, you get what you pay for. Upwards of £1000 you’ll find designer induction hobs with five or six cooking zones, and a whole heap of special features. Gas hobs offer a similar level of luxury for around £800.

Considering they’re around half the size of a standard hob, domino models aren’t actually cheaper. They start around £100 for a gas or ceramic design, or £150 for an induction one. The most expensive types tend to be the specialist BBQ or teppanyaki hobs - they’re harder to find and an investment made only by the keenest cooks.
Installation

Hobs are harder to install than a freestanding cooker, so you’ll definitely need some help from a professional. Take a look at our guide to sizes for details on measuring your hob and the cutout section which it will sit inside.

Many retailers offer an installation service for an additional charge, saving you the hassle of having to find an experienced and trustworthy trades person. Remember to find out if they’ll disconnect your old one and dispose of it too. It’s also worth noting that some only cut the hole in your worktop if it’s made from a certain material such as wood, while some have restrictions on how much new pipework they’ll fit (so the closer it is to your gas supply the better).

Many retailers offer an installation service for an additional charge.

Gas Hob Installation

Your hob will need to be connected to your gas supply by a Gas Safe registered engineer. A qualified electrician will hardwire it into your electricity supply to power the ignition and timers. If you’re planning on running your hob off LPG bottled gas, speak to your engineer about the conversion and purchasing the kit.

Electric Hob Installation

It’s a little easier to install an electric hob, but you’ll still need help from a qualified electrician. They’ll connect it to your supply for you, ensuring it’s all done safely. Check your hob has the right amp rating for your power supply - you should see either 13 amp standard plug sockets or 32 amp hardwired switches next to your current hob or cooker.