

Boilers Buying Guide

What to look for when shopping for a new boiler.



Introduction

A reliable boiler is critical for any UK home, providing both heating and hot water. Over time, boilers become less efficient and more prone to breakdowns, which can lead to higher energy bills, frequent repair costs, and unpredictable heating. Upgrading to a modern, energy-efficient boiler can help you save money in the long run while ensuring a comfortable and warm home.



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When Should You Consider Replacing Your Boiler?



1. Frequent Breakdowns

If your current boiler requires regular repairs, it may be more cost-effective in the long run to replace it with a newer, more reliable model.

2. Rising Energy Bills

Older boilers tend to be less energy-efficient, increasing your monthly bills.

3. Age and Obsolete Parts

Many boilers older than 10-15 years may no longer have readily available replacement parts, making repairs challenging.

4. Safety Concerns

Carbon monoxide leaks can be dangerous. If you notice warning signs such as the boiler flame burning yellow instead of blue or frequent pilot light extinguishing, consult a Gas Safe-registered engineer.



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Key Factors to Consider When Selecting a New Boiler



1. Home Size and Heating Requirements

Number of Bathrooms and Occupants: More inhabitants and bathrooms typically require a higher hot water output.

Space Constraints: Smaller homes or flats may benefit from compact boilers (e.g., combi boilers), while larger homes might need more robust system boilers.

2. Energy Efficiency

Look for boilers with high efficiency ratings (A-rated on the ErP scale).

An efficient boiler can help reduce your carbon footprint and save on energy costs.

3. Fuel Type

Most UK homes use mains gas, but oil, LPG, and electric boilers are alternatives for off-grid properties.

Compare fuel prices and availability in your area before deciding.



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4. Controls and Smart Features

Smart thermostats can help you manage heating schedules, monitor usage, and optimize energy savings.

Features like remote control through a smartphone app provide added convenience.

5. Warranty and Service Packages

Check the length and coverage of the manufacturer's warranty or guarantee (often 2–10+ years).

Investigate whether maintenance and servicing options are included or available at an additional cost.

Types Of Boilers



1. Combi Boilers

How They Work: Provide hot water on demand without a storage tank.

Best For: Smaller to medium-sized homes with one to two bathrooms; properties with limited space.

Pros: Compact, cost-effective installation, no hot water cylinder needed.

Cons: May struggle with simultaneous hot water demand (e.g., multiple showers at once).

2. System Boilers

How They Work: Use a separate hot water cylinder but incorporate many heating system components inside the boiler unit.

Best For: Homes with multiple bathrooms; larger households with higher hot water demand.

Pros: Efficient, can handle multiple hot water outlets at once, often quicker to install than traditional systems.

Cons: Need space for a hot water cylinder.

3. Regular (Heat-Only) Boilers

How They Work: Require separate hot water and cold water tanks, often located in a loft and airing cupboard.

Best For: Homes with older traditional heating systems that have not been modernized; properties with multiple bathrooms.

Pros: Can deliver hot water to multiple outlets simultaneously.

Cons: Need space for cistern tanks and a hot water cylinder; installation can be more complex.

4. Condensing Boilers

How They Work: A specific design (whether combi, system, or regular) that captures extra heat from the flue gases to improve efficiency.

Pros: Significantly more energy-efficient, in line with current UK regulations requiring high-efficiency condensing boilers.

Cons: Must ensure a suitable condensate drainage setup is installed.

Mainstream Boiler Brands in the UK



Many manufacturers offer high-quality boilers with varied features, warranties, and price points. Some of the most popular and trusted brands include:

1. Worcester Bosch

Consistently high-rated, well-known for reliability.
Offers lengthy warranties and a wide product range.

2. Vaillant

Renowned for energy-efficient and quiet operation.
Popular for combi and system boilers with innovative controls.

3. Ideal

Competitive pricing with solid performance.
Good choice for budget-conscious homeowners needing reliability.

4. Baxi

Known for robust design and ease of maintenance.
Established brand with a range of models to suit various home sizes.

5. Viessmann

Focus on energy efficiency and advanced engineering.
Often praised for high-quality components and long warranties.

Selecting the right Installer



1. Credentials and Registrations

Always choose a Gas Safe-registered engineer for gas boilers. Ask for evidence of their registration; you can verify their credentials using the Gas Safe Register online.

2. Experience and Reviews

Look for a company with proven experience, such as Bishops Plumbers, and check customer testimonials or online feedback.

3. Accreditations and Manufacturer Partnerships

Some installers are accredited by specific boiler brands and can offer extended warranties or expertise in that brand's products.

4. Detailed Quotes and Written Contracts

Obtain multiple quotes to compare pricing and service levels. Request a written contract outlining the scope of work, timeline, costs, and warranty terms.

5. After-Sales Support

Check if the installer offers ongoing support, annual servicing, and emergency call-outs.

Costs & Financing



1. Boiler Cost

Prices vary widely depending on the boiler type, brand, and model. Combi boilers often range from £700 to £1,500 or even higher, while system or heat-only boilers can be the same or higher.

2. Installation Fees

The complexity of installation (e.g., pipework adjustments, flue placement, etc.) can significantly affect costs. Expect anywhere from £600 to £2,000 or more, depending on the job's scope.

3. Maintenance Contracts

Some installers or manufacturers offer ongoing service plans to spread out maintenance costs.

4. Financing Options

Many companies provide finance packages or monthly payment plans, making it easier to spread the cost of a new boiler.

Additional Tips & Best Practices

1. Check for Government Schemes

Periodically, government incentives or grants may be available to encourage energy-efficient installations. Check relevant UK government websites for details.

2. Consider Smart Controls

Investing in programmable thermostats or smart heating controls can help optimize energy use and save money.

3. Regular Servicing

Annual servicing extends the life of your boiler and ensures it runs at maximum efficiency.

Maintenance also helps detect any potential safety issues early.

4. Power Flushing

If you're installing a new boiler in an older heating system, a power flush clears debris and sludge, improving system efficiency and longevity.

5. Future-Proofing

If you're planning any home extensions or renovations, discuss anticipated changes with your engineer to size your new boiler appropriately.

Conclusion

Replacing a boiler can be a significant investment but also an excellent opportunity to improve your home's comfort and efficiency. By understanding the key considerations—home size, energy efficiency, budget, and installation preferences—you can make an informed choice. When in doubt, rely on a reputable, Gas Safe-registered company such as Bishops Plumbers. With the right support, your new boiler will deliver cozy heating and hot water for years to come.

If you have any questions or need further guidance, feel free to reach out to Bishops Plumbers, and we'll be happy to help you through every step of the boiler replacement process. This guide is provided by Bishops Plumbers, a trusted UK plumbing and heating specialist dedicated to helping homeowners find the most reliable and efficient boiler solutions.

