

Consumer Reports Shines A Light On The Best CFL, LED Bulbs

CR's First Full Report on LED Energy Savings Lightbulbs Finds More Choices and Savings

YONKERS, NY – The days of inefficient lightbulbs are slowly coming to an end and recent tests from Consumer Reports showcase more than 30 different compact fluorescents and light-emitting diodes that can brighten indoor and outdoor spaces. Consumer Reports' comprehensive report on CFL and LED bulbs reveal that many problems of the earlier versions have been overcome and that these new efficient bulbs last longer and use far less electricity than the traditional incandescent bulbs. Shoppers now have a variety of different bulbs to match their needs. The full report will be available exclusively for Fans on Consumer Reports' Facebook Page (www.Facebook.com/ConsumerReports). Also online at www.ConsumerReports.org additional information can be found on lightbulbs and further energy saving products.

The Ratings put a spotlight on 60-watt equivalent CFLs and LEDs, as those are the most popular types sold in the U.S. Out of the two types of bulbs tested, CFLs save money faster due to their low cost. It usually takes less than a year to recoup the cost of most CFLs, according to Consumer Reports tests, while LEDs can take four to 10 years to pay for themselves due to the high cost of the bulb. Also, CFLs now have less mercury. The amount in the bulbs Consumer Reports tested has dropped 60 to 75 percent, compared with already low levels they found in 2008, without affecting performance. Nevertheless, spent CFLs should be recycled. Home Depot, Ikea, Lowe's, and some ACE Hardware stores will accept used bulbs. Follow clean-up tips at www.epa.gov/cfl/cflcleanup.html.

LEDs are the newest choice, with the highest price. The best LEDs were still as bright as the incandescent they replaced, yet only half were as bright as promised. Consumer Reports found that all LEDs reached full brightness instantly, even at frigid temperatures, providing warm white light that was unaffected by frequently turning them on and off. Energy use matched or exceeded claims. LEDs are supposed to last 20,000 to 50,000 hours, or about 18 to 46 years when used 3 hours a day. Nearly all the LEDs are still burning brightly after 3,000 hours, and only four of the 100 LEDs stopped working. CR Recommended picks include three that were also evaluated by 19 Consumer Reports staffers

in their homes, the Philips AmbientLED 12.5W 12E26A60 60W, \$40 for table or floor lamps, the EcoSmart LED Downlight 10.5W 65W E26 ECO-575L Dimmable (Home Depot), \$50 for recessed or track lights, and the EcoSmart PAR38 ECS 38 Bright White 75W 866194 Dimmable LED (Home Depot), \$45 outdoor flood light.

"You can find a CFL or LED that will give you the brightness and light quality you like, and it will save you around \$50 over the life of each CFL and anywhere from \$65 to \$400 over the lifetime of each LED," said Celia Kuperszmid Lehrman, deputy home and yard editor at Consumer Reports. "Plus these new efficient bulbs last much longer than incandescent bulbs, so you won't have to change them as often."

How to Choose
It isn't socket science, but there are a few terms you need to know before buying any energy-saving bulb. Energy Star-qualified bulbs meet high standards for brightness, color, and energy use, and the mercury content is capped in CFLs. Additionally, a variety of federal regulations will be implemented in the coming years including a law that requires most screw-in bulbs to be more efficient by 2014.

Look at lumens. Watts tell only energy use, lumens measure



brightness. In spirals look for at least 450 lumens if replacing a 40-watt bulb, 800 lumens or more for a 60-watt bulb, 1,100 lumens for a 75-watt bulb, and 1,600 lumens or higher when replacing a 100-watt bulb. In floodlights look for a lumen count that is at least 10 times the wattage of the bulb replacing.

Don't confuse brightness with color. The whiteness, yellowness,

or blueness of light is measured by its temperature in kelvins. Incandescents produce a warm yellowish light with a color temperature of about 2,700K. At 3,000K to 4,100K range give off a cool, bright white light that's similar to a halogen bulb, and 5,000K to 6,500K bulbs mimic natural or daylight, but can have a bluer tones that may be unflattering indoors. Use kelvins to get the right color light because terms like soft white and warm white mean different things to different manufacturers.

Note CRI. In addition to temperature, the Color Rendering Index indicates how accurately colors appear under the light and ranges from 0 to 100, with daytime sunlight at 100. Most of the tested bulbs are in the low 80's; a few reached the upper 80's and low 90's. A CRI of at least 80 is generally recommended for interior lights, and differences of fewer than five points are insignificant.

Read the package. As of Jan. 1, 2012, a Lighting Facts label must appear on the packages of most bulbs to show brightness, energy use, estimated energy costs, expected life, light color in kelvins, and, for CFLs, mercury content. Note: Only the information on Energy Star bulbs has been independently verified.

Check for rebates and coupons. Visit www.dsireusa.org/incentives or www.energystar.gov to find utili-

ty rebates and search online for manufacturer rebates and coupons.

Keep your receipts. The bulbs are supposed to last for years, so save the receipts and UPC codes, which you will need to return a bulb to the manufacturer or retailer.

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