

# ConsumerReports®

**READY,  
SET,  
SPEND?**

America is shopping again—  
but wow, have our habits  
changed. See all the surprises  
in this Consumer Reports  
exclusive.



## Glowing Reviews

Hate compact fluorescents? Rejoice! LED bulbs are ready for prime time.

**ONCE IN A WHILE**, procrastination pays off. Take lightbulbs. If you were hoarding your old incandescents because you worry about the mercury in compact fluorescents (CFLs) and didn't want to shell out big bucks for LEDs, well, you're in luck. LED prices are dropping, and their improved energy efficiency now makes them worth the price. They also dominate CR's latest bulb Ratings.

The newest generation of LEDs looks more like traditional bulbs—though they use 80 percent less energy. They are still more expensive than CFLs, but they can last for decades. Most are dimmable.

Your utility might offer rebates for Energy Star qualified LEDs as well as for CFLs, which lowers prices even more.

A word about the light cast by CFLs and LEDs: If you're looking to duplicate the warm glow of an incandescent, you can do it with either a CFL or an LED by picking one with a temperature of about 2700K. (Check the package.) To match the white light of a halogen, get a bulb that's 3000 to 3500K. One improvement: LEDs are now bright enough to replace a 100-watt incandescent.

CFLs still outsell LEDs, according to a recent national survey by Consumer Reports. CFLs can cost as little as about \$1.25 per bulb and are almost as energy efficient as LEDs, but they have drawbacks. Many aren't dimmable, and all take a while to fully brighten.

If you're ready to take the LED plunge, be aware that our tests found that performance had little to do with price.

## The Best Bulbs for Your Needs

### LAMPS AND CEILING FIXTURES

- **A1 Samsung** \$16
- **A2 Feit** \$15
- **A5 Great Value** \$10
- **A7 Cree** \$13 CR Best Buy
- **A11 Great Value** \$1.25
- **C3 Philips** \$25

The top-scoring A1 LED costs \$16, down from \$30 a year ago. A2 is \$15, down from \$35. At those prices, either of the two should pay for itself in energy savings in about two years and save you roughly \$140 in electricity costs over its life. The newly tested A7 is a CR Best Buy and has a 10-year warranty. A5 and A11, both from Walmart, are as bright as a 60-watt bulb. The first is a \$10 LED, and the second is a CFL costing \$1.25. Both bulbs are also CR Best Buys. If you need more light, consider C3, which is equivalent to a 100-watt bulb and is a CR Best Buy. All of the LEDs are dimmable. The Feit, Great Values, Cree, and Philips can be used in fully enclosed light fixtures. Pick the Cree, Great Values, Philips, or Samsung if you prefer a warm, yellow light, or the Feit if you like a whiter light.

### RECESSED AND TRACK LIGHTS

- **D1 Great Value** \$16 CR Best Buy
- **D4 MaxLite** \$11 CR Best Buy

The top-rated D1, an LED from Walmart, can replace a 65-watt bulb in track lights or recessed ceiling fixtures. It provides a bright, warm, yellow light, but it doesn't work with a motion sensor, photocell, or timer. The D4 LED does, but it wasn't as bright as most top picks. Both of them are CR Best Buys and are dimmable.

### OUTDOOR LIGHTS

- **B1 MaxLite** \$45
- **B2 Great Value** \$25 CR Best Buy

Unlike CFLs, LEDs brighten instantly in cold temperatures. Among flood and reflector bulbs, the top-scoring B1 was the brightest of the bunch and casts a white light that's dimmable. You can use a timer, motion sensor, or photocell to save energy and to enhance outdoor security. B2, a CR Best Buy at \$25, can replace a 90-watt bulb and gives off a bright, white light; its long life makes it ideal for hard-to-reach fixtures or outdoor fixtures that aren't exposed to moisture. If you want to spend less money and don't need a bulb with quite as much longevity, consider B4, a CR Best Buy at \$7.50. One downside: Because it's a CFL, it may take longer to brighten in colder climates.



## Ratings: Lightbulbs

Scores in context: Of the 66 lightbulbs tested, the highest scored 99, the lowest 25. Listed below are the top-scoring models, in order of performance. Each bulb's claimed life is based on 3 hours of use

Best Buy  Recommended

### A. STANDARD 60-WATT EQUIVALENT

Rec.	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	PRICE	SCORE	TYPE	LIFE	TEST RESULTS		
							Claimed Life	Brightness	Light Distrib.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	<b>Samsung</b> A19 60-Watt Warm White	\$16.00	<b>99</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	<b>Felt Electric</b> A19/OM/800/LED	\$15.00	<b>99</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	<b>3M</b> LED 60W	\$20.00	<b>97</b>	LED	25 yr.	●	●	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	<b>Philips</b> A19 11W 60W Soft White 424382	\$18.00	<b>95</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	<b>Great Value</b> 60W Soft White A19 LED Dimmable (Walmart)	\$10.00	<b>94</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	<b>Switch</b> 60 Frost Soft White	\$50.00	<b>93</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	<b>Cree</b> 9.5-Watt (60W) A19 Warm White Dimmable LED <sup>1</sup>	\$13.00	<b>93</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	<b>EcoSmart</b> 12-Watt (60W) A19 Bright White 183210 (Home Depot)	\$20.00	<b>93</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	<b>GE</b> Energy Smart 60W (11W) A19 LED Soft White LED11DA19V-W/TP	\$11.00	<b>90</b>	LED	14 yr.	●	○	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	<b>Insignia</b> A19 60-Watt Dimmable LED	\$18.00	<b>88</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	<b>Great Value</b> 14W 60W Soft White CFL (Walmart)	\$1.25	<b>85</b>	CFL	9 yr.	●	●	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	<b>Felt Electric</b> Ecobulb Plus 60W CFL	\$2.50	<b>82</b>	CFL	9 yr.	●	●	Warm Yellow

### B. PAR38 REFLECTOR 90- TO 120-WATT EQUIVALENT

Rec.	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	PRICE	SCORE	TYPE	LIFE	TEST RESULTS		
							Claimed Life	Brightness	Light Distrib.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	<b>MaxLite</b> 20Watt PAR38 100W	\$45.00	<b>99</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	NA	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	<b>Great Value</b> 90W PAR38 LED Soft White Non Dimmable (Walmart)	\$25.00	<b>95</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	NA	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	<b>TCP</b> 17W PAR38 Flood LED2	\$40.00	<b>72</b>	LED	46 yr.	○	NA	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	<b>Utilitech</b> Soft White PAR38 90W 75232 (Lowe's)	\$7.50	<b>70</b>	CFL	7 yr.	●	NA	Warm Yellow

per day. Recommended models offer top performance and specific strengths. CR Best Buys offer a combination of value and performance, and are recommended.

● Excellent ● Very Good ○ Good ◐ Fair ● Poor

### C. STANDARD 100-WATT EQUIVALENT

Rec.	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	PRICE	SCORE	TYPE	LIFE	TEST RESULTS		
							Claimed Life	Brightness	Light Distrib.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	<b>Switch</b> 100 Bright White	\$50.00	<b>99</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	Bluer White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	<b>Sylvania</b> Ultra-LED 100W LED20A21/DIM/0/827	\$50.00	<b>95</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	<b>Philips</b> A21 19W 100W Soft White 432195	\$25.00	<b>92</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	●	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	<b>Utilitech</b> 100W Soft White CFL (Lowe's)	\$2.50	<b>68</b>	CFL	9 yr.	○	NA	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	<b>Felt Electric</b> Ecobulb Plus 100W CFL	\$2.33	<b>68</b>	CFL	9 yr.	●	NA	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	<b>EcoSmart</b> 100W Soft White CFL (Home Depot)	\$1.50	<b>63</b>	CFL	9 yr.	○	NA	Warm Yellow

### D. REFLECTOR 65- TO 90-WATT EQUIVALENT

Rec.	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	PRICE	SCORE	TYPE	LIFE	TEST RESULTS		
							Claimed Life	Brightness	Light Distrib.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	<b>Great Value</b> 65W BR30 Soft White LED Dimmable (Walmart)	\$16.00	<b>99</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	NA	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	<b>Utilitech</b> 13-Watt (75W) BR30 Soft White Outdoor Flood (Lowe's)	\$20.00	<b>98</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	NA	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	<b>Felt Electric</b> BR30 Dimmable LED	\$18.00	<b>96</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	NA	Warm Yellow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	<b>MaxLite</b> 10 Watt BR30	\$11.00	<b>89</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	NA	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	<b>EcoSmart</b> 6 in.9.5-Watt 65W LED Downlight Eco 575L (Home Depot) <sup>2</sup>	\$25.00	<b>89</b>	LED	32 yr.	●	NA	Warm Yellow

### E. PAR38 REFLECTOR 60- TO 75-WATT EQUIVALENT

Rec.	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	PRICE	SCORE	TYPE	LIFE	TEST RESULTS		
							Claimed Life	Brightness	Light Distrib.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	<b>Samsung</b> PAR38 LED 75W	\$55.00	<b>99</b>	LED	37 yr.	●	NA	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	<b>GE</b> PAR38 20W 619272	\$60.00	<b>98</b>	LED	23 yr.	●	NA	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	<b>LG</b> PAR38 E26 Warm White	\$43.00	<b>89</b>	LED	46 yr.	●	NA	White
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	<b>Sylvania</b> LED 18W PAR38 Dimmable	\$50.00	<b>66</b>	LED	46 yr.	○	NA	White

<sup>1</sup> Has plastic coating to contain debris if bulb breaks. <sup>2</sup> Tested for 12,500 hours.