

## Refrigerators

The refrigerator is arguably the heart of the kitchen. Manufacturers recognize this and offer a wide selection of new models. Today's standard freestanding models boast features once found only in expensive built-ins. What's more, virtually all models now have a 12- to 15-year lifespan and improved energy efficiency.

To determine the size you need, plan 12 cu. ft. of freezer/refrigerator space for a two-person household, adding 2 cu. ft. for each additional person. Add a few more cubic feet if you throw big parties, like to stock up at sales, or live far from the nearest market. If your first refrigerator is always full, think about adding a second, small under-counter refrigerator/freezer.

Choose between freestanding or built-in models with the following door configurations:

**Single-door:** The cheapest to buy, it is not the best choice for energy efficiency.

**Side-by-side doors:** Works well in a tight space. Uses more energy than similarly sized, freezer-on-top models.

**Vertically stacked doors with freezer on top:** The most popular design, it offers the most features and sizes. Internal vents in the freezer permit cold air to fall into the refrigerator below.

**Vertically stacked doors with freezer on bottom:** Puts the most-often-used refrigerator shelves higher. You won't have to bend and stoop to reach low fruit and vegetable bins.

**Tip from the Pros:** Before you buy, make sure your new refrigerator will fit through the door of your house.