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Make sure you buy a good product

Vacuum testers at Consumer Reports spend months in the labs vacuuming carpets and floors and measuring the airflow critical for tools. In our tough carpet tests, sand and then cat hair is embedded into the carpet piles and we've discovered that not all models are up to the task of removing it. Our most recent testsconfirm that you don't have to pay a lot for good performance: Nine of the uprights we recommend cost $200 or less and four of the recommended canisters cost $300 or less.

Hoover's WindTunnel T-Series UH30300, $140, and Pet UH30310, $150, are two additions to the list. Both bagged uprights whisked away embedded grit and pet hair. We also found top bagless uprights for as little as $50. Prefer a canister? Kenmore's new
Progressive 21614
, $300, is among the lower-priced bagged models that ranked high in our Ratings.

When buying a new vacuum, start by choosing a type. Uprights do better overall on carpets, while canisters are easier to maneuver, especially on stairs. And while we have a mechanical arm that aids us in some of our tests, you'll want a machine that is easy to maneuver. So no matter where you purchase your vacuum, go to a store first to push, pull, turn and lift models you're considering. For more tips, watch our new video buying guide.