

Product Test: Pressure Washers

→ Washing a bike is a far more intricate affair than sluicing down the bodywork of your average family saloon.

Bikes have lots of nooks and crannies that hold dirt and make cleaning with a sponge and bucket an especially tricky and - if you scrape a knuckle - bloody operation. A pressure washer, used with care, is the answer.

It should blast crud from crevices in seconds and easily clean all those hard-to-get-at areas like the rear suspension, exhaust downpipes and behind the front brake discs.

There's a wide range of pressure washers available varying hugely in specification and price. Which sort do you need - and which is the best for your budget?

How we did it

We set out to test a wide cross-section of pressure washers suitable for home use, ranging from a tiny £28 machine right up to a 3.5 horsepower petrol-driven monster.



To test them, we put them to work on a line of filthy bikes, aiming to judge them on their muck-shifting ability and their convenience of use.

In practice, none of these machines left the bikes completely clean. In every case, there was always some stubborn muck that needed agitating with a sponge or

brush before the pressure washer could shift it. Buying one isn't your cue to bin your bucket and brushes or your degreaser.

So, although some of the machines removed more grime than others unaided, the fact that they all needed help ruled out any meaningful scores for cleaning.

How the scores work

Points are awarded for various aspects of a washer's practicality.

Up to five points are available for both hose length and power cable length: in both cases, the longer the better. Short hoses in particular mean dragging the washer around like a reluctant puppy.

If a machine is light in weight and easy to move around, it could score a further five points for portability.

The storage score, again out of five, awards marks for the washer's ability to store its own lances, hoses and power leads, so they're not kicking round the garage floor.

The weights given are for each complete kit, including all tools supplied. The water delivery pressures and consumption rates are the figures provided by the manufacturers. Approach these with caution: some refer to the maximum pressure a machine can produce, usually by restricting the nozzle, while others refer to the normal operating pressure.

THE PERFECT PRESSURE WASHER

PRACTICAL

Cable and hose easy to get out and put away

VERSATILE

Easy to switch between different types of spray

ADAPTABLE

Able to spray both hot and cold water

STOWABLE

Storage space for any lances and brushes that aren't in use

FLEXIBLE

Easy to swap between lances and brushes for different phases of the cleaning operation

PORTABLE

Easy to move around while you're washing your bike

EXPERT TIPS

- Pressure washers can do a lot of harm if directed into bearings and electrics. Don't pressure hose the HT system, wiring loom or wheel bearings. Also, don't use high pressure near stickers, transfers, blistered paint or even old chrome. It may well lift them off the surface.

- Chain lube and oil are difficult to remove with a cold-spray pressure washer without working in degreaser first. Use warm or hot water through the washer, though, and it comes off much more easily. The hotter you go, the easier it gets. Most of the machines here will take warm to hot water if you're able to link the machine to a hot tap. Ensure the temperature from the tap is within the machine's acceptable range.

- Before turning on the electricity, always connect the water hose and pull the gun's trigger to prime the pump with water, which helps cool and lubricate it. Pressure washers don't like being run dry and will quickly go wrong if they are.

- Don't spray directly at any surface as this will embed dirt into it. Always use the lance at an angle to the surface being cleaned.

Clarke Jet 6000 £176.23

Contact: 01992 565300 or www.clarkeinternational.com

1 TESTER'S NOTES: This sturdy and very effective washer comes with a fantastic 8.2m-long pressure hose that uncoils easily. It has multi-pressure lances that between them provide fan spray, pencil jet and circular spray, and an angle-adjustable lance for getting to beneath the bike and other hard-to-reach areas. There's also a brush and an integral detergent tank. There's a storage compartment at the back for the five-metre-long power

cable and plenty of allowance for lance and accessory storage.

MOTOR: 1900 watt. **WEIGHT:** 17.8kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 420 litres per hour at a maximum pressure of 130 bar. **MAX WATER TEMPERATURE:** 40°C.

RiDE VERDICT

Pressure hose length	★★★★★	5
Power cable length	★★★★	4
Portability	★★★★	4
Storage	★★★★	4
Total		17/20



ACCESSORIES



OVERALL 17/20 RATING

RiDE MAGAZINE BEST BUY



Nilfisk £140.2 Excellent £247.25

Contact: 01768 868995 or www.nilfisk-alto.co.uk

=2 TESTER'S NOTES: This Nilfisk features adjustable-pressure fan spray and multi-pressure circular-spray nozzles plus a lance-mounted detergent tank. The hose is a useful nine metres long, although it's a bit stiff and awkward to use. There's room for storing all the components, and the five-metre power cable winds around clips for neat storing.

MOTOR: 2100 watt. **WEIGHT:** 19.5kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 420 litres per hour at 130 bar working pressure (140 bar max). **MAX WATER TEMP:** 50°C.

RiDE VERDICT

Pressure hose length	★★★★★	5
Power cable length	★★★★	4
Portability	★★★	3
Storage	★★★★	4
Total		16/20



ACCESSORIES



OVERALL 16/20 RATING

RiDE MAGAZINE RECOMMENDED

Karcher K4.91M with T200 £219.99

Contact: 01295 752200 or www.karcher.co.uk

=2 TESTER'S NOTES: The T200 comes with a six-metre pressure hose, a five-metre power cable and an integral detergent tank built into its bodywork. Netting behind the main unit provides plenty of storage for the adjustable-pressure fan spray and multi-pressure circular spray lances that are supplied with this washer.

MOTOR: 1900 watt. **WEIGHT:** 15.8kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 440 litres per hour at 120 bar working pressure (130 bar max). **MAX WATER TEMPERATURE:** 40°C.

RiDE VERDICT

Pressure hose length	★★★★	4
Power cable length	★★★★	4
Portability	★★★★	4
Storage	★★★★	4
Total		16/20



ACCESSORIES



Lavor Thermic 3/S £435.85

Contact: 01925 631100 or www.lavorpro.co.uk

4 **TESTER'S NOTES:** Because this washer is powered by a petrol engine there's no power cable to hinder progress. It's fairly hefty, but supported on pneumatic tyres. The six-metre hose comes with a lance nozzle that adjusts from fan to pencil jet, and a hose for sucking detergent from a bucket or bottle. The lance storage is good, but we found the hose hook ineffective. **MOTOR:** 3.5hp petrol engine. **WEIGHT:** 23.5kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 510 litres per hour at a maximum pressure of 140 bar. **MAX WATER TEMPERATURE:** 40°C.

OVERALL
16/20
RATING



RIDE VERDICT	
Pressure hose length	4
Power cable length	5
Portability	4
Storage	3
Total	16/20



Draper 2100 Power Wash £260.48

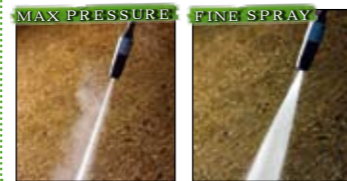
Contact: 023 8026 6355 or www.draper.co.uk

=5 **TESTER'S NOTES:** This washer comes with one lance which adjusts from a fan into a pencil jet by twisting the nozzle. There's a seven-metre hose that's on the stiff side, and an integral adjustable-feed detergent tank. There are storage slots for the lance and one hook for the pressure hose and the five-metre power lead. **MOTOR:** 2100 watt. **WEIGHT:** 16.3kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 450 litres per hour at 120 bar working pressure (130 bar max). **MAX WATER TEMPERATURE:** 60°C.

OVERALL
15/20
RATING



RIDE VERDICT	
Pressure hose length	4
Power cable length	4
Weight & portability	4
Storage	3
Total	15/20



RAC 1650 Watt £39.99

Contact: www.argos.co.uk

8 **TESTER'S NOTES:** Cheap and simple, this unit is designed to be dragged around on its wheels by the hose. Its power cable and hose are both five metres long, and it comes with a lance that adjusts from fan to pencil jet, plus a lance-mounted detergent bottle. There's nowhere to store the various components, unless you count the box the washer comes in. **MOTOR:** 1650 watt. **WEIGHT:** 6.2kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 300 litres per hour at 70 bar working pressure (105 bar max). **MAX WATER TEMPERATURE:** 50°C.

OVERALL
13/20
RATING



RIDE VERDICT	
Pressure hose length	3
Power cable length	4
Portability	5
Storage	1
Total	13/20



Halfords HP 1400 £69.99

Contact: www.halfords.com

=9 **TESTER'S NOTES:** This upright machine has no wheels, so it has to be picked up to be moved around. It's light enough for this, but not everyone will like having to do that. It comes with a lance that adjusts from fan to pencil jet and a lance-mounted detergent bottle. The hose and power cable are both five metres long. The hose is awkwardly stiff, and there's nowhere to store it. **MOTOR:** 1400 watt. **WEIGHT:** 6.2kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 340 litres per hour at 70 bar working pressure. **MAX WATER TEMPERATURE:** 50°C.

OVERALL
12/20
RATING



RIDE VERDICT	
Pressure hose length	3
Power cable length	4
Portability	3
Storage	2
Total	12/20



Nilfisk C120.4 Compact £182.85

Contact: 01768 868995 or www.nilfisk-alto.co.uk

=5 **TESTER'S NOTES:** This Nilfisk comes with a five-metre power cable and, like its bigger brother, the Excellent, it has a lance-mounted detergent bottle. It features adjustable-pressure fan spray and multi-pressure circular spray nozzles. The six-metre reeled pressure hose isn't as simple to set up as the bigger machine's, and it's relatively stiff and awkward too. **MOTOR:** 1700 watt. **WEIGHT:** 17.9kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 440 litres per hour at 110 bar working pressure (120 bar max). **MAX WATER TEMPERATURE:** 40°C.

OVERALL
15/20
RATING



RIDE VERDICT	
Pressure hose length	4
Power cable length	4
Portability	4
Storage	3
Total	15/20



Karcher K2.21M Plus £79.99

Contact: 01295 752200 or www.karcher.co.uk

=5 **TESTER'S NOTES:** This is supplied with a non-adjustable fan spray plus a multi-pressure circular spray lance. There's no built-in detergent storage, but a clear, plastic suction hose for submerging into a bottle. It has a four-metre pressure hose and a five-metre power cable, and at 4.9kg is the lightest here. Slots on the rear of the unit hold both lances and the trigger gun itself. **MOTOR:** 1400 watt. **WEIGHT:** 4.9kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 360 litres per hour at 80 bar working pressure (110 bar max). **MAX WATER TEMP:** 40°C.

OVERALL
15/20
RATING



RIDE VERDICT	
Pressure hose length	2
Power cable length	4
Portability	5
Storage	4
Total	15/20



Challenge YP-2000E £27.99

Contact: www.argos.co.uk

=9 **TESTER'S NOTES:** This lightweight washer can be dragged around on its wheels with the hose when you need to move it. It comes with an adjustable pencil jet fan, a lance-mounted detergent bottle and a five-metre power cable. It's let down by the hose, which is only three metres long and, like the RAC washer, it has nowhere to store the components. **MOTOR:** 1500 watt. **WEIGHT:** 5.7kg. **WATER DELIVERY:** 330 litres per hour at 55 bar working pressure (80 bar max). **MAX WATER TEMP:** 40°C.

OVERALL
12/20
RATING



RIDE VERDICT	
Pressure hose length	2
Power cable length	4
Portability	5
Storage	1
Total	12/20



VERDICT

Experience shows that pressure washers need to be built like tanks. They get dragged around, knocked over and trodden on. That's one of the reasons the Clarke Jet 6000 gets the Best Buy triangle. Other units may be much cheaper, while only scoring a couple of points less, but the Clarke feels like it's built to last. It cleans just as well as anything else here, but you'll still need to help it out with sponge or brush. It also has an array of lances, well thought-through storage, and a hose that doesn't want to stay coiled up when you get it out. Three washers tie on 16 points, but only two of them – the Nilfisk E140.2 Excellent and the Karcher K4.91M – get the Recommended triangle. The petrol-powered Lavor Thermic 3/S just misses out on a Recommended because of its price, but it's very versatile and portable – there's no power lead and the unit can even suck its water from a barrel.



NEXT MONTH: OVERSUITS