

# Consumer Reports

## FANTASY SPORTS

- Chevrolet Corvette Z06
- Jaguar XK
- Mercedes-Benz SL550
- Porsche 911 & 5 more



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**UNBIASED  
RATINGS**  
**321**  
**PRODUCTS**



### Vacuums

61 tested, 2 to avoid.  
PLUS our new  
pet-hair test

### Safety alert

Benzene found in some  
beverages. Page 7

### Supermarkets

Shop smarter, cheaper  
& faster. Page 36

### Auto batteries

Price does not  
equal performance

### PLUS

- Cordless phones
- Walking shoes
- Chain saws
- Generators

## SPECIAL REPORT

# THE ETHANOL MYTH



**E85 vs. gas: CR's FIRST test**

**The TRUE costs and mileage**

**Will it REALLY solve  
America's energy problems?**



CR BEST BUY



4 Briggs &amp; Stratton

CR BEST BUY



7 Kohler



1 Husqvarna

3 Stihl

## CR Quick Recommendations

Our tests of generators and chain saws include many adequate performers. Our Quick Pick Ratings help you choose the best of the bunch by including only tested models that offer the performance and value required for our Quick Picks list.

### GENERATORS

Best for higher power needs:

- 4 Briggs & Stratton \$1,100, CR Best Buy
- 5 Northstar \$2,000
- 7 Kohler \$3,700, CR Best Buy

Among portables, pick the Briggs & Stratton for its value, the Northstar for its multi-fuel option. The stationary Kohler is more powerful and easier to use.

For more basic emergency power:

- 1 Honda \$2,000
- 2 Craftsman \$590
- 3 Troy-Bilt \$500
- 6 Coleman \$600

Among the smaller, lower-wattage units, paying more for the Honda buys better power quality and much quieter running. The Coleman delivers more wattage for the price at the expense of power quality.

### CHAIN SAWS

Cleaner, easier-to-maintain electrics:

- 1 Husqvarna \$220
- 2 Poulan Pro \$110, CR Best Buy

Both include a chain brake. The in-line Husqvarna is quieter and slimmer; the Poulan Pro offers an 18-inch chain bar.

For added cutting power and speed:

- 3 Stihl \$230
- 4 Husqvarna \$220
- 5 Craftsman \$200
- 6 Echo \$200

All are competent performers and include a chain brake and other safety features. The Echo is as light as many electric saws.

# QUICK PICK Ratings generators

Top choices from our tests of 15 models

Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor

Within types, in performance order.

Key number	Brand & model	Price	Claimed output (watts)	Tested output (watts)	Tested run time (hr.)	Weight (lb.)	Overall score	Test results			
								Emergency power	Power quality	Ease of use	Noise
<b>SMALL PORTABLE UNITS (2,800 TO 3,600 WATTS)</b>											
1	Honda EU3000i	\$2,000	2,800	3,000	6.5	132	59	○	●	○	●
2	Craftsman 30250	590	3,600	2,500	7.4	110	46	○	○	○	○
3	Troy-Bilt 30248	500	3,550	2,600	7.3	113	46	○	○	○	○
<b>MIDSIZED PORTABLE UNITS (4,500 TO 6,600 WATTS)</b>											
4	Briggs & Stratton Elite Series 30242	1,100	6,200	4,600	7.2	185	63	○	○	○	○
5	Northstar 8000 TFG	2,000	6,600	5,000	5.8 <sup>1)</sup>	260	62	○	○	○	○
6	Coleman PM0545005 PM0545003, PM0545004, PM0545005, PM0435000	600	5,000	3,700	6.0	133	48	○	○	○	○
<b>STATIONARY UNITS (6,000 TO 12,000 WATTS)</b>											
7	Kohler 12RESL 12RES	3,700	10,400	10,100	59 <sup>2)</sup>	410	95	●	●	●	●

<sup>1)</sup> Discontinued; similar models available. <sup>2)</sup> Runs 4.4 hours with a standard 20-pound liquid-propane tank, 193 hours with 250-gallon tank. <sup>3)</sup> With 250-gallon liquid-propane tank; runs indefinitely with natural-gas hookup.

### Guide to the Ratings

**Overall score** is based on emergency power, power quality, ease of use, run time and noise. **Emergency power** is the capacity to deliver enough wattage to run essential devices such as a well pump, refrigerator, lights, and a heater or window a/c at once. **Power quality** is the ability to deliver consistent voltage. **Ease of use** includes starting, fuel shutoff, panel features, and (for portables) transport. **Tested run time** is how long the unit provided 80 percent capacity on a full tank of gas/line (portables) or a 250-gallon tank of liquid propane (stationary). **Noise** is at 50 feet with generator 3 feet from a building. **Claimed output** is the manufacturer's rated maximum electrical output. **Tested output** is our measure of maximum sustained wattage. **Price** is approximate retail.

## Top choices from our tests of 26 models chain saws

Within types, in performance order.

Key number	Brand & model	Price	Weight (lb.)	Bar length (in.)	CCs or HP	Overall score	Test results			
							Cutting speed	Safety	Ease of use	Ease of upkeep
<b>ELECTRIC MODELS</b>										
1	Husqvarna 316	\$220	10	16	2.0 hp	68	○	○	○	○
2	Poulan Pro 400E	110	11	18	4.0 hp	60	○	○	○	○
<b>GASOLINE MODELS</b>										
3	Stihl MS180C-BE	230	11	14	32 cc	84	●	○	○	○
4	Husqvarna 142	220	12	16	40 cc	81	●	○	○	○
5	Craftsman 35082	200	14	18	42 cc	80	○	○	○	○
6	Echo CS-305-14	200	9	14	30 cc	73	○	○	○	○

### Guide to the Ratings

**Overall score** is based mainly on cutting speed, safety, and ease of use. **Cutting speed** is how fast a saw cut through a 10-inch-square oak beam. **Safety** denotes resistance to kickback, based on our judgments, and the presence of safety features such as chain brakes and anti-kickback bars and chains. **Ease of use** includes freedom from vibration, horizontal-cutting comfort, saw weight, and how easily the chain could be oiled. **Ease of upkeep** is how easy it was to check and add fluids, adjust the chain, start and store the saw, and perform regular maintenance such as replacing the spark plug and air filter. **Price** is approximate retail.