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## Wet shop vac

Our expert editors independently review, test and recommend products to help you make an informed decision. We can earn commissions on purchases made through our product links. You may have heard of wet/dry vacuum cleaners, but you wouldn't really have a good idea of why you might want to know about the best wet-dry shop vacs for your home. If your household is something like mine, messes don't come into defined categories. You might have a mix of broken glass and the liquid contents that once inside, or dust from a demo project, along with tracked-in wet leaves. Wet-dry shop vacs are what you need to deal with this kind of mess. You'll be forgiven for not knowing much about wet-dry vacs, also known as store vacuum cleaners, because they don't yet have a common piece of home cleaning equipment. So, to help you, I've come up with a list of the five best store vacs currently on the market, as well as a complete buyers guide telling you everything you need to know about these fantastic cleaning machines. To make it easier for you, we've already tested and compared the best products available to narrow the field to these top choices. 5 Best Wet/Dry Shop Vacs • Best For Overall: DeWALT 12 Liter Poly Wet/Dry Vac Model DXV12P | 23.2 lbs. | 20' cord | 7' hose | 5.5 HP | 12 bile. | 3 Year Limited Warranty • Best For Professional Job Site: Vacmaster Professional Wet/Dry Vac, 16 Gallon Model VJH1612PF0201 | 24.65 lbs. | 20' cord | 7' hose | 6.5 HP | 16 gal. | 5-year Limited Warranty • Best for Limited Storage: BISSELL Crosswave Pet Pro All In One Wet Dry Vacuum Cleaner Model 2306A | 11.5 lbs. | 25' cord | N/A hose | N/A HP | 1.75 gal. | 3-year Limited Warranty • Best For Portability: RIDGID 50313 4000RV Portable Wet Dry Vacuum, 4-Gallon Model 4000RV | 14.5 lbs. | 20' cord | 8' hose | 5.0 HP | 4 gal. | Lifetime Limited Warranty • Best For Budget: CRAFTSMAN 9 Gallon 4.25 Peak HP Wet/Dry Vac Model CMXEBE17590 | 13.0 lbs. | 10' cord | 7' hose | 4.25 HP | 9 gal. | 3-year limited warranty Please note that the Shop Vac brand has been removed from our product recommendations. They cease operations in September 2020. Read more here. Scorecards Price: A Portability: B+ Cleaning effectiveness: A Noise: A Manufacturer: DeWalt – part of Stanley Black & Decker (founded in 1924, HQ in Baltimore, MD) Model: DXV12P Weight: 23.2 lbs. Hose length: 7 meters Cord length: 20 meters Size: 12 liters Power: 5.5 Peak HP Airflow: 105 CFM (cubic meter per minute) Warranty: 3 years, 1 year free service User Manual Customer Support: 1-800-433-9258 DeWalt, a well-known name in both pro and homeowner construction tools, entered the wet-dry vac market with the intention of expanding its iconic yellow and black design to all goods you need in your workshop. This model is one of a range of sizes offered that seems to the most enthusiastic hobbyist or DIYer out there. It features a plastic canister, so emptying it regularly will be a good idea to avoid odors. A drain removes wet debris from the bus tank. The rear blower port is good for moving debris as leaves out of the way, and the device generally travels easily on turning wheels. The power button is large and prominently colored, so you don't accidentally change the setting while you've deepened a task. The system comes with plenty of accessories with plenty of accessories with their own carrying case, a point that some customers want and others don't. Some complain about the suction and blame the washable filter for limiting air flow. In general, however, most users are happy with the power and variety of tasks that DeWalt can overcome in their workshops and around the home. Best For Professional Job Sites: Vacmaster Professional Wet/Dry Vac, 16 Gallon Price: A Portability: B+ Cleaning effectiveness: A Noise: A- Manufacturer: Vacmaster – part of Clevea North America (founded in 2002, HQ in Greenville, SC) Model: VJHH1612PF0201 Weight: 24.65 lbs. Hose length: 7 meters Cord length: 20 meters Size: 16 liters Power: 6.5 Peak HP Airflow: 150 CFM (cubic meter per minute) Warranty: 5 years Manual Customer Support: 1-866-384-8432 As we have found with other manufacturers, Vacmaster makes a series of wet-dry vacs about sizes and features. This model features amazing airflow, the reason it can support a detachable blower with settings up to 240mph. The extra large drain port on the tank helps you avoid clogs while removing wet dirt from the plastic canister. This is a very powerful machine (which is why the pros love it) and some users have noted that blowing an electric crusher is a possibility if you connect it to a circuit less than 20 amps. The longer power cord helps you avoid extension cords and both the cord and the long hose can wrap around the machine. Store elaborate accessories in slots around the wheelbase of this device. Customers note that the exhaust in this vac makes it quiet to turn, unique under this style of vacuum. Based on the six and a half horsepower engine, it would be nice if it offered a little more suction, note others. For heavy shop or construction site needs, however, this Vacmaster makes the grade with professionals and DIYers alike. Best For Limited Storage: BISSELL Crosswave Pet Pro All In One Wet Dry Vacuum Cleaner Price: B Portability: A- Cleaning Effectiveness: B+ Noise: A- Manufacturer: Bissell (founded in 1876, HQ in Grand Rapids, MI) Model: 2306A Weight: 11.5 lbs. Snake length: N/A Cord length: 25 meters Capacity: 14.5 oz. dirt cup / 28 oz. water tank Warranty: 3 User Manual Customer Support: 1-800-237-7691 If you live in a small space where storage will be a problem and need a machine to do all your dirty work, you want to consider this Bissell. Although it is not the type of type or power you would find in a workshop system, which is not the reason you would buy this device. The manufacturer notes that it is not designed to be a standard dry vacuum, although customers are excited about performance doing just that. One advantage this machine has over other wet-dry vacs is that it can be used safely on different types of floor material. Users vote positively for its effectiveness on tile and hardwood as well as wall-to-wall carpet and field rugs. A single pass over the average stain lifts it out, and a double pass over set in versions creates the problem. Note that this does not use the vacuum if you are working on major renovation projects or creating a lot of sawdust or dirt in the garage. It doesn't have the power or ability to do that debris justice, and you'll end up ruining the internal parts. If your pets are making your little home a mess, though, this Bissell will help you cope with the results. Best For Portability: RIDGID 50313 4000RV Portable Wet Dry Vacuum, 4-Gallon Price: A- Portability: A- Cleaning: A Cleaning effectiveness: B+ Noise: B Manufacturer: Ridgid – part of Emerson Electric (founded in 1923, HQ in Elyria, OH) Model: 4000RV (Catalogue #: 50313) Weight: 14.5 lbs. Hose length: 8 meters Cord length: 20 meters Size: 4 liters Power: 5.0 Peak HP Airflow: 92 CFM (cubic meter per minute) Warranty: Lifetime User Manual Customer Support: 1-800-474-3443 Although we cannot confirm the suction power of this Ridgid brand vacuum, users note that the five horsepower engine is more than up for cleaning professional messes. Its small size allows it to get into places larger machines can't, making it a favorite of contractors such as plumbers under sinks. The 20 foot power cord and low amp requirements (nine amplifiers) means it won't need an extension cord and won't blow out circuits. The amount of air that moves this vacuum is on par with much larger pro units. Although the weight is not light in itself, the slim design and longer hose you put down the base and work without fear of not having enough distance. The fast filter release and fine dust accessory make even drywall dust easy to clean. Customers wish this vacuum came with more accessories. Subjectively, they may disagree on whether it is quieter than expected or a little louder. However, for a portable unit backed by a lifetime warranty, this Ridgid seems to live up to the manufacturer's reputation. Best For Budget: CRAFTSMAN 9 Gallon 4.25 Peak HP Wet/Dry Vac Price: A Portability: B+ Cleaning effectiveness: B Noise: B Manufacturer: Craftsman – part of Stanley Black & Decker (founded in HQ in New Britain, CT) Model: CMXEBE17590 Weight: 13.0 lbs. Hose length: 7 meters Cord length: 10 meters Size: 9 liters Power: 4.25 Peak HP Airflow: 72 CFM (cubic meter per minute) Warranty: 3 years Manual Customer Support: 1-888-331-4569 Rated as a medium-duty medium-duty This Craftsman is equipped with the durability we are used to from the brand at a reasonable price. It's a good all-round vacuum for indoor and outdoor projects, while not as powerful as the larger units on our list. That's okay, because you buy this for the price, and you know it's not for the pro-level high-volume user. The power cord wraps around the upper handle, and the hose attaches to the body. Accessories can also be stored on board. Filters are easily released for quick cleanup and replacement. Customers say that adding more length to the hose or attracting more attachments reduces suction. While four and a quarter horsepower is deemed to be adequate under industry standards, some customers had a hard time sucking debris they considered usual things with this machine. However, Craftsman has proven to be a workhorse under normal circumstances and many who were bought a decade ago are still strong. Back to Top The complete wet/dry shop Vacs Buyer's Guide What you need to know about wet-dry Vacs The uses you find for a wet-dry vac around your home are limited only by your imagination in creating spills and debris. If you are a toddler or pet or like working on home improvement projects, you know what I mean. Even those of us without tykes underfoot and those messier projects behind us find the occasional broken container of food product or dribbling on wall-to-wall carpet a challenge without the proper equipment. The use of a regular vacuum for the dry products is not a good idea when texture or volume is involved. Ditto for sucking up fine particles unless your vacuum has an industrial filter inside. I can attest to this, with a burnout of a high quality (and expensive) vacuum to deal with drywall dust and chunks. Not all cleaning cleaners will be made for the same purposes, so it's a good idea to consider what and how to use your wet-dry vac before you make a choice about the machine. Think about the factors we've listed below to determine which features will be most important in finding the right wet-dry vac for you. Types of Messes Are you looking for something to help you clean up after the construction crew (or you) are ready for the day? You want heavy, with good suction and airflow and high container capacity. If it comes on rolls and has a special filter for fine drywall dust, all the better. Living in an apartment with carpets and cap hair? Storage space needed for the device will be the key, as will the machine's ability to clean what ends up in the carpet courtesy of your non-human housemates. Dust control through a vacuum filter and portability are factors to think about. If you're a busy young family, you'll probably need something with features from both extremes. Soil scattered from pots of tumbled plants and overturned beverage glasses can occur with daily frequency. Frequency, a large machine from the garage might seem overkill, but needing that kind of cleaning power in a household model would be important. Dusty dust and allergens This cannot be stressed enough. The standard vacuum cleaner is not designed to pick up fine particles, and without a filter, allergens will float in the air after you're clean. If you are prone to dropping, say, baking flour, you want the ability to vacuum in the allergens & dust without the exhaust of the machine sending it back into your atmosphere. Not all wet-drying vacs come with a fine particle filter system. The vacuum you use for your floors and carpets has a filter, but it is also not optimal for things like flour. Unless you have an allergy-specific HEPA filtering system, you don't have enough pickup options. Developing fragrances There is no polite way to say this – the types of things you suck wet-dry will develop odors over time. They penetrate the plastic of the system and the materials of the filters. For this reason, with a system that trumps you thoroughly cleaning using a household vacuum and dealing with persistent smells of dog, cat, or your failed attempt at cupcakes for the rest of its existence. That's why we like wet-drying vacs with canisters or dumpsters that can be completely washed out and dried. A wet/dry that cleans itself has not yet been invented, so you should stay on top of this to make sure your home stays fresh-smelling after using it. The exhaust of the machine will carry all the odors through the work area. Filters can also attract and stick to odors. If you're diligent about washing the washable kind and replacing disposable filters and debris bags regularly, you avoid a smelly mess. Replaceable filters and debris bags come at a cost, but for the average low-volume user, that cost is not significant. Capacity For emptying There is a reason that commercial shop vacs are such a large size. Employees do not want to stop every few minutes to carry the full bus to the container. You also won't want to, so think about debris capacity before you buy. While we're on this topic, consider where to dump the debris. Directly in your trash container seems like a good idea, but fine dust in your tin results in clouds every time you add a bag from the house. If you're dealing with a trash shoo, you can't throw the contents out without pockets. If your debris is a mix of wet and dry, your predicament becomes more complicated. Wet stuff only can be dumped in a utility sink or in a toilet, but when mixed with dry debris, that's impossible. Some people spread an old shower lining over a five liter bucket to use as a sieve when emptying their wet-dry vacs to separate the contents for removal. Distances to power If you use this machine as a shop vac in the Will your power cord be long enough to span your space? How about vacuuming the interior of the car in the driveway? You want a cord length that works for your needs. If the space is at a premium in your apartment or apartment, you also consider retractable cords. Not many large machines come with this feature. Winding up the 60-foot cord can be a chore almost as big as the cleaning itself. If you live in an older house or you buy a larger capacity machine, pay attention to the ampere needed to run your wet-dry vac. The standard 15-amp wall plug would be fine for your television and a few other electronics, but once you add it to a vacuum, it can blow the crusher. That's why many pro users recommend plugging your wet-dry into a special 20 amp circuit or using the plugs in your kitchen that are usually on higher amplifier circuits. Multiple applications Should you vacuum the interior of your SUV with this machine? You want accessories and a portable size. What about blowing the leaves out of outdoor steps (an inverted airflow or 'blower' function) or vacuuming the wood shavings from the inside of your furniture-making project (with a soft brush that works best)? Once you have a wet-dry vac, you will find many more applications for it than you currently imagine – unless you have had it before and it will go from home to garage to car to holiday setting. It's a good idea to think about your possible future requirements as well, because these vacuum cleaners are made to be durable and last. Please note that manufacturers do not recommend using these machines as a replacement for your standard vacuum. They provide too much suction and cannot be adjusted for less. You burn the engine of the vac because it applies on the floor or carpet and can not suck in the air that it has to run. Noise Factor A feature that none of us can ignore is the sound that makes this acceleration when it spins. Most are not designed with insulated motors or silencers such as our household vacuum. They also don't have the exhaust controls and other design aspects that they do well around sleeping babies or spouses. There's no workaroud here. These mechanical ones are loud, often louder than adults should hear on a regular basis, much fewer children or skittery pets. Consider ear protection for you and others when you use your wet-dry vac and be aware of the hours you run vac, so that you don't bother neighbors. Safety factor filters on most smaller wet-dry vacs are not de-created to remove all particles from the air that move through the machine. Some will exhaust in the air you breathe, and for that reason, wear it Respiratory protection of a species can be important if you clean up, say, drywall dust after sanding or the remains of your children's flower struggle. Some machines come with a special particulate filter. Liquids may also contain toxins that you're Breathing. To clean up a questionable wet leak, read about the material either on the original packaging of the product or online to ensure that there are no special treatment requirements. If you use this machine for fine particles or a wet mess with questionable substances in it, mask. Back to Top FAQs About Wet-Dry Vacuums Let's dig into the questions often asked about wet-dry vacs. Some have to do with features, and others are about vacuum use. What is the main purpose of a wet-dry shopping vacuum? Wet-dry store vacuum cleaners are mainly used on construction sites because they are versatile enough to clean up almost any kind of mess. This is why they are also great for home DIY projects, or for anyone who wants an easy way to deal with a variety of messes. The cleaner can be used for liquid spillage, especially if there is debris mixed with the leakage, such as broken glass. It can also be used to clean the fireplace, remove snow from the door, or even empty the water from a waterbed. The machine can also be converted into a blower, which can be used for tasks such as declonging wells. Is it possible to use a shopping vacuum as a blower? Yes, it is possible to use your store vacuum as a blower for activities such as leaf clearing, blowing out your dryer vent, or for removing debris from tools. It's a simple matter of removing the hose from the vacuum port and attaching it to the exhaust port of the vacuum cleaner, and you get blowing instead of sucking action when you put on the vacuum cleaner. How important is a vacuum filter? There is a good reason why large shop-vacs come with reusable or replaceable filter systems. They will be clogged all the time from the dust of a job site or home improvement effort. That's why so many are made to be washed out and stay on top of that is important. If your allergies or those of others in your household are severe, shift your messy projects outside or to a larger open space such as a garage. Consider other methods to keep the dust out of your lungs, such as wearing individual breathing masks that are suitable for smaller particles. Buy a vacuum with a reusable dust filter that can be cleaned after each use to avoid running costs. Remember that liquids can carry allergens and toxins as well. You will want to take precautions when working around solvents or chemicals, even outdoors. Some are best sopped up, not sucked up, so read your product labels for the manufacturer's recommendations. Will make a small vac store as effective as a big one in sucking up The number one reason why this is a big no-no is the damage it can do to the machine. Yes, we said they are generally durable, but that's under normal circumstances. Nails and screws torpedooed through a plastic tube and into a plastic canister, rattling around in a volume of suction and airflow, reduces that durability faster than then Get a broom and a dust pan instead to pick up as much of the material as you first. How big should my investment be for a quality wet-dry Vac? Shop-vacs can be found at value prices with stripped-down features and accessories. That could be everything you need for your projects. Household machines with greater portability and more features will run you more, but have less heavy applications. You want to think of a wet-dry vac as an investment, but one with a life cycle characterized by how often (and how hard) you use it. An entire home renovation will burn it out faster than the occasional run through the SUV and pick up broken potted plants. Fortunately, you have affordable choices to select from. Does drain plugs really remove the liquid inside? Opinions on this are mixed. You often hear a professional say they don't last long because they tend to get clogged, especially if they have some kind of bend or elbow to them. Household users may find them very useful with mixed messes. It depends on what you're draining. Anything that can build up in the drain with use and clog it will be different from regular suction on liquids and little else. The experience depends on what you clean with the machine. What's not to love about wet-dry or shop-vacs? Probably the number one complaint is the amount of dust that comes out of the exhaust stream of a wet-dry vac. For the standard model, the filter may not have control over fine particles. It's always a good idea to wipe as much as you do when treating dusty fabrics before using the vacuum for what's left. The other problem is related to sustainability. Plastics pick up odors, and depending on what you clean, those odors can stay with you even after a project or mess is a distant memory. For this reason, people with frequent smelly cleaning needs should select a machine with a metal canister that fights against persistent residue. Back to Top How We Test Wet-Dry Vacs There is not a best wet-dry vac, but the one that is best for your specific cleaning requirements. That's why we include criteria that should guide you to the person who works for your unique situation. Other features of each machine are noted in the comments for that acceleration. Capacity Capacity refers to how much debris the bus can hold for emptying, expressed in litres. Small units hold about six liters or less, while the large capacity can be more than 14 liters. While the bus size is often in the name of the machine, we call it here as well. Portability While stick vacs (and especially wireless stick vacs) have carry convenience and weight in their corner, smaller, lighter shop-vacs Exist. Some have removable canisters, most larger models come with rolling power, and others require you to turn the whole device around to empty it. We assess this criterion on a A to F scale. Airflow Airflow is the speed/volume of air that can flow through the machine. It is expressed in cubic meters per minute or CFM. If you want to pick up heavier or larger pieces, you want a higher CFM. Suction suction picks up liquid, which weighs more than you might think. The standard measurement is how far the suction force can lift an accurate size tube of liquid. We assess the suction on inches if available, although not all manufacturers provide this data easily. Snake length snake length is a trade-off. Too short and you don't get to debris, but too long means you need a better suction to pull that gunk through the distance. We give you the hose length that comes standard with the machine (without accessories or additions). Weight When you use your machine, the weight becomes just as important as the bulk and functions. Think of muscling around a heavy bus and motorbike with a short hose and lots of ground cover. Here we notice the weight, and if it comes with a long hose and power cord, it receives its kudos in the product comments. Back to Top The Verdict While wet-dry shop vacs may have been developed for use in places like construction sites, where builders have to deal with a lot of different types of debris, it makes a great addition to the cleaning kit of any home. These cleaners make dealing with any kind of mess easy and fast, as you do it all with just one machine. Whether you are dealing with spilled milk, cleaning the fireplace, or tackling sawdust poles from a home DIY project, you are using a store vacuum. Do you have experience using a wet-dry shop vac at home? Share your thoughts and tips with the community in the comments below. About Yvonne KohanoYvonne Kohano never met a renovation project she didn't like – almost. Ditto on tools to keep things look great. She is a fiction author of romantic suspense and psychological thrillers, book/business coach for creatives, and nerdy student of human behavior and the natural world. World.