

Best Portable Air Conditioners 2017: The Ultimate Buying Guide



Need a portable air conditioner for your home?

You've come to the right place!

If you've been shopping for a portable AC recently, then you know there are a LOT of choices on the market - from **small hand-carried units** for a small home office or bedroom, to **semi-permanent units** meant to serve multiple rooms.

When it comes to choosing the best portable air conditioner for your room and unique needs, there are a few key factors to consider - other than brand and price.

While it may be tempting to just buy the largest air conditioner/BTU rating you can afford, or maybe buy the smallest one thinking it will save you energy, neither of these strategies is smart.

The best way to pick a portable air conditioner is to select a few units that have the right BTU rating for the size of room(s) you're trying to cool; then, consider the other practical matters including:

- » how the unit ventilates waste heat out of your room - single or dual hose?
- » how quiet you need the system to be (decibels)
- » how the portable AC removes water condensation out of your room
- » installation requirements: are you going to ventilate through a window, door or wall?

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This 15-minute buying guide will tell you everything you need to know to select the best portable air conditioner for your room, home, garage or office. In it, we recommend the absolute best unit to buy for various room sizes and applications.

So, let's get to it!

Best Portable Air Conditioners of 2017

The table on the following page lists the **very-best portable air conditioners sold today** for use in a typical American home.

To arrive at this short list, I researched over 100 units from more than a dozen brands and whittled-down the list based on verified consumer reviews & ratings, brand reputation, how proven the unit is, whether it is sold online or not, and other factors.

Best Portable Air Conditioners of 2017

PORTABLE AC	PRICE	NOISE	DRAINAGE	SIZE	BTU	
Luma Comfort EC110S	<\$300	Low	Evaporative Cooler	Small	-	Learn More
LG Electronics LP0814WNR	\$200-\$500	High	Bucketless	Small	8,000	Learn More
Shinco YPL3-10C	<\$300	High	Self-Evaporation	Small	10,000	Learn More
Honeywell MN10CESWW	<\$500	Medium	Self-Evaporation	Medium	10,000	Learn More
DeLonghi America PACAN120EW	\$500-\$1,000	Low	Self-Evaporation	Medium	12,000	Learn More
Honeywell MN12CES	<\$500	Medium	Self-Evaporation	Small	12,000	Learn More
Whynter ARC-14SH	\$500-\$1,000	High	Auto-Evaporation	Medium	14,000	Learn More
Honeywell MM14CCS	\$500-\$1,000	Medium	Auto-Evaporation	Small	14,000	Learn More

Best Quiet Portable Air Conditioner: **Honeywell MN12CES 12,000 BTU**

Noise level can be a big factor when deciding on a portable air conditioner.

While some units are quieter than others, they tend to trade off features to result in a quieter operation.

With a maximum decibel level of 55 dB, the 62 lb. Honeywell MN12CES offers **plenty of features and cooling power**, with a tolerable noise level at even the highest cooling settings, making it the best all-around unit with a noise level on the quiet side of the spectrum.

BTU

[The Honeywell MN12CES](#) has a cooling capacity of 12,000 BTU, making it adequate for **rooms up to 400 square feet**. It includes **three different fan speeds**, along with a **timer** that you can set to shut off for when you aren't nearby.

Ventilation

The Honeywell MN12CES is a single-hose mode that includes a window ventilation kit that takes just a few minutes to install from start to finish.

Best Quiet Portable Air Conditioner: **Honeywell MN12CES 12,000 BTU**



Best Quiet Portable Air Conditioner: **Honeywell MN12CES 12,000 BTU**

Drainage

With the Honeywell MN12CES, you never have to worry about tending the moisture build-up thanks to the **auto-evaporation** system.

Other Features

The **Honeywell MN12CES** comes with a **remote control** that allows convenient operation from anywhere in the room. If you do end up using the controls on the unit, you'll appreciate the easy touch controls on the LCD display panel. This unit can also be used as a **dehumidifier**, ridding a space of up to 70 pints every 24 hours.

[Read Our In-Depth Product Review](#)

Best Small Portable Air Conditioner: **NewAir Ultra-Compact 10,000 BTU**

The whole point of a portable air conditioner is to be *portable*, so it makes sense that they should stay on the small side of things.

The smallest units also tend to blend a little better in a room, helping with the room's overall aesthetic.

As far as small portable air conditioners go, you'll be hard-pressed to find a better unit that combines both performance and size than the AC-10100E Ultra Compact from NewAir, which measures 12.1 x 15.1 x 29.8 inches and weighs just over 60 lbs.

BTU

The AC-10100E has a **BTU rating of 10,000**, making it useful for rooms under 300 square feet, while taking up minimal space.



Best Small Portable Air Conditioner: **NewAir Ultra-Compact 10,000 BTU**

Ventilation

This unit uses a **single hose** system, and comes with a window installation kit that can accommodate windows up to 42 inches.

Drainage

The AC-10100E is **self-evaporative**, which means you rarely have to worry about emptying the unit's moisture build-up. While it's not quite [auto-evaporative](#), it's almost there.

Other Features

The AC-10100E comes with a **12-hour timer**, **sleep mode**, **a remote control**, and an **auto-fan** function that automatically maintains your set temperature by raising and lowering the fan speed.

Best 10,000 BTU Portable Air Conditioner: **Shinco**

The [Shinco 10,000 BTU unit](#) is no-frills when it comes to features, but it is a very efficient unit that makes use of a sleek, pleasing design that easily blends in to any room while providing smooth and quiet operation.

Ventilation

No surprise here, given its size: this Shinco uses **single-hose ventilation**, and includes a standard window kit.



Best 10,000 BTU Portable Air Conditioner: **Shinco**

Drainage System

If you prefer not to empty your unit, you'll appreciate the Shinco. It utilizes a **self-evaporative system** that also works to cool off the condenser by recycling any remaining condensation.

Other Features

The Shinco has a **2-Speed** cooling fan along with a **4-way air direction** help spread the air evenly throughout the space. A **remote control** lets you control the air conditioner from across the room, while **digital controls** give you an on-board option.

[Read Our In-Depth Product Review](#)

Best 12,000 BTU Portable Air Conditioner: DeLonghi America Whisper Cool

The [DeLonghi America PACAN120EW 12,000 BTU Whisper Cool Portable Air Conditioner](#) offers the best of both worlds when it comes to a mid-size unit, combining quiet operation with ample cooling power and some nice extra features.

Ventilation

This unit ventilates outside using a single hose that measures around 5 feet long, but can be extended to 8 feet if you need some extra room from the unit to the window.

Drainage

The DeLonghi America PACAN120EW evaporates condensation on its own by recirculating it within the system, so **no annoying buckets or drain hoses here.**



Best 12,000 BTU Portable Air Conditioner: DeLonghi America Whisper Cool

Other Features

There are plenty of added features worth mentioning.

The unit's **BioSilver air filter traps bacteria, dust and pollen**, while also preventing the growth of mold and mildew.

The namesake **Whisper Cool function** cuts the noise down by about 50%, while the Real Feel mode controls the room's humidity and temperature blend.

The unit's remote operates the unit from across the room, and also stores easily in the top of it.

Durable casters make moving it around fairly effortless.



[Read Our In-Depth Product Review](#)

Best 14,000 BTU Portable Air Conditioner: **Whynter ARC-14SH**

Few full-size portable air conditioners actually deliver like the Whynter ARC-14SH, especially when you consider its low price.

Ventilation

The [Whynter ARC-14SH](#) utilizes a **dual-hose** ventilation system, helping its efficiency while noticeably balancing out the room's air pressure and feel. For a large room, that's important.

Drainage

The Whynter ARC-14SH completely recycles any remaining condensation that its **auto-evaporative system** misses, cooling its condenser and balancing out humidity.

Other Features

The controls are very simple and easy to use on this unit, and that includes its remote control. You can **program temperatures, change fan speeds, and use preset timers** with ease.

The Whynter ARC-14SH also includes a **washable air filter that helps neutralize odor**, and an also heat and dehumidify. It truly does it all, while still being easy to move from room to room.

[Read Our In-Depth Product Review](#)

Best 14,000 BTU Portable Air Conditioner: **Whynter ARC-14SH**



How We Rate Portable Air Conditioners

Our 5-star rating system considers the following features and specifications.



Customer Reviews

We give a lot of priority to third party verified owner reviews of each model. For a model to make our short list, they need to have a 3.5 star rating or higher on at least one major consumer review or retail site.

We give priority to products that have over a dozen ratings across multiple sites.

Price for BTU

This is obviously the **most important factor** when assessing a unit. Higher BTU ratings almost always come with a higher price, and often a few more features. We prefer units that deliver the highest BTU-per-dollar.

Noise

A portable air conditioner can be the coolest, most feature-rich unit on the market, but if it's loud, it's going to go down on our overall rating. The best units operate at a tolerable level (~77db or lower) on a maximum setting, and a very quiet level (~55-60 db) when they are on low and medium fan settings.

The fans aren't the only thing that adds to the noise level. **Compressors play a big role as well.**

Weight

The lower the weight, the more portable the unit is. Nobody wants to deal with an unnecessarily heavy air conditioner, even if it has all the extra features you appreciate. Moving it around your property should be fairly easy, which requires a lower weight.

Price

We are firm believers in [getting what you pay](#) for. If we don't think a unit's price reflects its actual value, then it won't make our short list.

Ventilation

We prefer dual-hose ventilation over single-hose, due to the more efficient operation and lack of back pressure issues. That said, most portable ACs are single-hose.

Drainage

All things being equal, we prefer units that are auto-evaporative systems which remove all humidity from the room without requiring drainage tubes, buckets or trays. That said, achieving 100% auto-evaporative exhaust often comes at the expense of a higher noise level and less energy efficiency.

Features

Some extra features barely improve the unit, while others have a huge role in its overall functionality, ease of use, and operation. Features such as a remote control, different fan speeds, and additional capabilities such as heating and dehumidifying can really help to push a unit over the top.

The Four Basic Types of Portable Air Conditioners

1. Mini-Split (ductless) Air Conditioners

A mini-split air conditioner falls in somewhere between traditional portable coolers and central home coolers. It is bigger and requires more installation work but it lacks the power of central air conditioners.

But because most mini-split air conditioners tend to be single-room coolers and they can be moved from room to room, we lump them together with portable air conditioners.

A mini-split air conditioner consists of two units, one installed inside the house and the second located outside next to the room where the indoor unit is. These two units are connected by a narrow line that is passed through the wall. Only a tiny hole is needed to connect the two.

The outdoor unit is the 'engine', containing various components such as a compressor and a condenser. Its work is to dispose the heat that has been collected from the room inside. The indoor unit, which can be located on the floor, wall or ceiling, removes warm air from the room and blows in cooler air.

A mini-split system can also be used to cool multiple rooms. In such a case, the main outdoor unit is connected to indoor units located in different rooms.

Pros

- » Most mini-split AC systems come with both cooling and heating functions. This eliminates the need for additional heating appliances during cold weather.

- » Some mini-split AC systems can be set up to cool multiple rooms.
- » Easier installation compared to central air conditioners.

Cons

- » Not as portable as conventional portable coolers.
- » Pricier than other portable air conditioners.

2. Hot Air Exhaust System

Majority of portable air conditioners are of this type. They work by blowing cool air into a room and scooping up the hot air.

Since this air cannot be released inside the room, they need exhaust (or ventilation systems to dispose the hot air outside or into another space such as the garage.

A hot air exhaust air conditioner may contain one of two ventilation methods: **single hose or double hose**. The difference between the two is the number of exhaust hoses.

Depending on design, a hot air exhaust system can be ventilated through the window, door or wall.

Pros

- » Great climate control.
- » Easier portability compared to mini-split systems. Most hot air exhaust portable air conditioners have wheels with which you can move the unit from one room to another.
- » Most come with advanced programming options.

Cons

- » They require ventilating.
- » Not as energy efficient as central air conditioners.

3. Water-Cooled Air Conditioners

A portable water-cooled air conditioner is a great alternative for those who prefer a system that doesn't require ventilation. Unlike hot air exhaust systems these water-cooled ACs can be used in enclosed spaces without requiring any venting.

But don't they release heat like other portable air conditioners?

Yes they do but in small amounts that do not necessitate any exhaust system. A water-cooled portable AC comes as a single unit. All you need to do is connect it to a power source and a water source such a sink and it is good to go.

Pros

- » They do not require any ventilation.
- » More efficient.
- » Better than hot air systems in places that frequently experience hot weather.

Cons

- » Requires water source and drainage to function.

4. Evaporative coolers



Evaporative portable coolers also rely on water to keep a room cool. But they don't have to be hooked to a water supply like water-cooled air conditioners. Instead, you regularly fill up the reservoir with water and keep adding more as necessary.

Evaporative coolers work via a simple principle that we witness around us all the time. If you stand next to a pool, lake or ocean you will experience a cool breeze. What happens is that as hot air passes over the water, it takes up some of the moisture and its temperature drops.

The water you add to an evaporative cooler is used to lower the temperature of hot air before it is released into the room.

Because no venting or complicated installation is necessary, portable evaporative water coolers provide some flexibility in terms of where you can set one up. But it is a good idea to place one near a window with the back of the unit facing the opening.

This ensures that the unit receives and circulates fresh air only. Furthermore, this type of portable air conditioner is recommended mostly for places with hot climates. The warmer the air the more efficient the unit will be.

Pros

- » No major installation necessary.
- » Lighter and more portable than most compact air coolers.

- » No ventilation necessary.

Cons

- » Needs to be filled with water regularly.
- » Doesn't work well in cooler climates.

5. Fans

Though they are not air conditioners, portable fans can still provide decent cooling for small and mid-size rooms. Compared to portable air conditioners, fans are cheap to run and do not require any major installation.

You can use portable fan on its own to cool a room or use it to complement a portable air conditioning system.

Pros

- » Can provide directional cooling.
- » Cheap to operate.
- » Easy installation.
- » Highly portable

Cons

- » Not ideal for large rooms. Even in smaller spaces, they are not as good as portable coolers.
- » The strong directional air movements can be noisy and a bother.

Portable Air Conditioners Pros and Cons

If you are thinking about climate control for your home, you have most likely wondered whether portable air conditioners would meet your needs. After all, they have some compelling advantages over central cooling systems. They are cheaper, portable and utilize less energy.

To make the right decision, it is important to weight both the good and bad of portable coolers. You can then determine whether they would work for your home. Here are the main pros and cons.

The Good

1. They are cheaper



While central air conditioners cost thousands of dollars, portable ACs barely clear \$500. The cheapest ones start at around \$250-\$300. The higher the BTUs the higher the price goes with 14,000 BTU coolers costing between \$400 and \$500.

Considering that there is no installation cost involved, portable coolers seem to be a better bargain.

2. They can be moved around

Portability is one of the biggest selling points of these coolers. It is true that most portable air conditioners are quite heavy – not lightweight in the sense that you can lift it on your own and move it to another room.

But in comparison to other air conditioning systems, portable coolers are light.

Most units weight between 40 and 80 pounds with a few coming in at over 100 pounds. Thankfully, they have wheels, which make it easier to move them around.

Portability comes in handy when you want to cool different rooms at different times. You can wheel it to the living room in the morning and back to the bedroom at night.

3. Minimal installation required



Portable air conditioners do not require any ductwork. So you don't have to worry about tearing open your walls or messing with your ceiling. Not only is it tedious work to install a network of ducts and vents, it also costs extra money.

With portable air conditioners, installation is easy. For most units, you can even do it yourself. All you need is to set up the exhaust hose as instructed in the manual.

If you have a water-cooled system, you simply need to connect it to a water source. If you have an evaporative cooler or portable fan, there is virtually no installation required.

4. Less maintenance required

With minimal installation also comes minimal maintenance. In traditional central air conditioners, the ductwork requires regular maintenance to ensure proper functioning. With no ducts, portable coolers are easy to maintain

Most of the maintenance work recommended in the instruction manual can be done without spending extra money on a technician. That more money saved.

5. They use less energy

While they are becoming increasingly energy efficient, central air conditioners still use a lot of power to keep multiple rooms cool. A portable air conditioner **only cools the room that is in use**, helping save a lot of energy.

Many manufacturers nowadays are making efforts to create energy efficient portable coolers that perform better but with less energy expenditure.

Cons

1. They are noisy

Unless you get a mini-split system where the 'engine' is outside, expect some noise from your portable air conditioner. Most portable coolers come with all the components put together in one unit. As it cools the room, noise is inevitable as all these parts work together to keep the heat out.

When shopping for a portable cooler, look for those that produce as little noise as possible. The normal

range is around 50 to 56dB. This is just below the normal level of conversation. But it can still be a bother when the house is quiet such as when you are sleeping.

Some of the quietest portable coolers can produce less than 40dB of noise, though they'll cost you more.

2. Pricier than window air conditioners

Window air conditioners are the choice climate control units for those who do not want a cumbersome portable cooler or the energy demands of a central cooling system.

While window air conditioners and portable coolers are both used for cooling a single room, portable coolers are more expensive.

Window units can cost as low as \$100 with the most expensive units (10,000 BTUs and above) costing less than \$300. Portable coolers start at \$250 and can cost as much as \$500 for high-powered units.

On the upside, portable air conditioners cool better and more efficiently than small window units.



3. Not ideal for cooling multiple rooms

The biggest downside with portable air conditioners is that you can only cool one room at a time. If you want multiple rooms or your entire home climate-controlled, consider getting a mini-split system or invest in a central air conditioner.

The alternative is to buy a portable air conditioner for each room that needs cooling. But be careful, you might find yourself using more energy than if you had installed a central system.

Selecting The Correct Size (BTU Capacity)

Every room is unique, and cooling energy requirements will vary by climate, etc.

For these and other practical reasons, you can't always accurately calculate the exact number of BTUs you'll need for a given room.

But you can get close enough to ensure you end up with the [right sized unit](#).

Manufacturers of portable air conditioners understand that buyers cannot calculate BTU requirements accurately, so they design their systems to cover a wide range of requirements and room

requirements accurately, so they design their systems to cover a wide range of requirements and room sizes.

When picking a portable air conditioner for a room, the rule of thumb is that it will need need about 20 BTU for [each square foot of floorspace](#) you are cooling.

To calculate your square footage, multiply the longest length of the room by the longest width.

If you have a complex or irregularly shaped room, you'll need to first divide the room into several rectangular sections and then calculate the footage of each separately.

Alternatively, you can ask your real estate agent or developer to help you calculate the room size. They'll most likely even have the exact room size written down somewhere in official documents.

Here's a quick ballpark estimate of a good BTU range to cool three common room sizes:

- ✓ 300 square feet or less: <10,000 BTU
- ✓ 300 to 500 square feet: 10,000 to 14,000 BTU
- ✓ over 500 square feet: >14,000 BTU

Adjusting BTU Rating For Special Conditions

There are a few other factor that you need to consider, too. Each will impact the BTU rating in some way, as follows:

- ➔ If the space has **ceiling higher than 8 feet**, increase the amount of BTU you need by 10 percent.
- ➔ If your space is **heavily shaded**, lower the BTU rating by 10 percent.
- ➔ If the space is **sunny and full of window light**, increase BTU capacity by 10 percent.
- ➔ If there are **more than two people** who will occupy the space, add 600 Btu for each person.
- ➔ If the unit is used in a **kitchen with appliances or in a server room**, increase capacity by 4,000 BTU.

Basically, any space that has **anything that causes it to be warmer than a standard room**, or increases its volume of air that needs to be cooled will need more BTU's on top of the standard calculation.

By [following these guidelines](#), you can be sure you'll choose the right-sized portable air conditioner for your room.

Other Factors to Consider

Ventilation

All portable air conditioners **need to vent hot air** out of the room being cooled, as a part of the cooling process.

The hot air needs to be directed out of the room, or you'll simply be pumping hot exhaust right back into the room and defeating the purpose of the unit.

Types of Ventilation Systems

Portable air conditioners have two different ventilation options: single-hose, or double-hose.



A **single-hose** portable air conditioner draws warm air from your room and cools it down before returning the majority of the air, now cooled, back into the room.

Part of the intake air is siphoned-off and used to pull heat off of the air conditioner's evaporator; that air is warmed considerably as it does its job, so it is vented outside using the air conditioner's single exhaust hose.

A **dual-hose** portable air conditioner pulls in room air, cools it down, and releases all of it back into your room. The unit uses 100% outside air to transport heat away from the evaporator unit.

One hose pulls in air from outside to cool down the unit, and the hot exhaust air is vented back outside through the second hose.

A dual-hose portable unit **does not create the negative pressure in a room** like single hose models do, and a dual-hose unit is often more efficient than a single-hose portable unit.

The drawback to a dual-hose portable air conditioner is that some models use two internal fans, which can lead to a slightly higher energy usage.

Ventilation Location

Choosing a unit that can work with the preferred ventilation opening in your room is a key consideration when buying a portable air conditioner.

Most units are designed to vent air outside through a window, a door or a wall. Sometimes, you will need to do a little installation work.

Windows

Most portable air conditioners come with a **window kit** to direct your ventilation outside. The kit includes either one or two vent hoses, a bracket, and some hose adapters.

Installation is typically very easy, and really just involves opening the window enough to fit the bracket in, and then closing the window back down on it to seal the room off. The hose goes from the unit to the bracket, and directs airflow outside.

This makes moving the unit to another location easy, as long as you have a window within the reach of the vent hose.

Doors

It's also possible to set up a ventilation bracket with a sliding glass door if you need the unit in a larger room.

The idea is the same as a window install, but you may need a special kit, or an extra piece of bracketing to

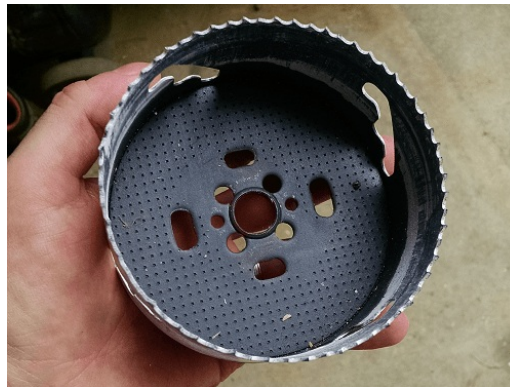
The idea is the same as a window install, but you may need a special kit, or an extra piece of bracketing to fit in the space.



Walls

Some may prefer to direct the hot air through a wall to outside or to another room or part of the house, such as a garage or storage room.

Venting through a wall takes a **little more ingenuity and planning**, but can often be done with a jigsaw and some well-placed measurements. Look at our gallery below for the general idea.



No matter which ventilation method you choose, just be sure that you can ventilate your unit appropriately. Portable air conditioners cannot do their job without it.

Features and Options

The [best portable air conditioners](#) are available in a number of different types and offer a range of options that give you more control and versatility over the unit's operation.

Programmability

Most people like to have a unit that does more than just power on and off.

Units that have programmable features let you to set specific temperatures, air speeds, and duration of operation. This **can be especially helpful** when you are trying to control the noise level of a unit, or have the air conditioner operate and maintain a specific temperature for a set time.



Electrical Strips

Some units have a built-in electrical strip that allows you to plug in other cords and devices. That can come in pretty handy.

Heat Pumps

If you want to heat a room in the winter and cool it in the summer, then look for units that have a [heat pump](#), which can push heat in either direction.

If you're in an in-between season like spring or fall, and need to alternate from heating to cooling depending on time of day, a unit with a heat pump can be especially convenient.

Dehumidifier

Many portable air conditioners can double as a dehumidifier, giving you a two-in-one appliance that can save you money and maintenance, especially when using one in an area such as a basement.

While all portable air conditioners [act as a dehumidifier](#) to some extent, some have exclusive settings that allow them to operate solely as a dehumidifier.

Noise Level

The vast majority of portable air conditioners are not completely silent.

Depending on the main location of your unit, the [decibel noise level](#) and even the quality of the sound emitted can be very significant when deciding on the best portable air conditioner for your room.

If you plan on using the unit in a **living room or dining room** area, the noise level should be as low as possible,

In the bedroom, decibel level may not be as important as the type of noise emitted.

Some people prefer to have what's known as "[white noise](#)" when they are sleeping, which is exactly what many portable air conditioners generate.

If you don't mind a little bit of humming noise, then anything in the 50-56dB range is good enough.

If you want something ultra-quiet, look for something in the low 40s.



Drainage Options

Because they often cool warm, humid air, portable air conditioners need some way to **remove water from the air and to move it out of the unit**. Every unit will have water **condensation** inside that needs to be dealt with. There are **four main methods** used to handle condensation; each has its own pros and cons.

1. Fully Self-Evaporative

Self-evaporative units exhaust all of the condensate that is built up by sending it out with the hot exhaust air. This means you'll never have to deal with dumping or draining water. If you want to constantly leave your unit unattended, this is your best option. That said, some fully evaporative are not suitable for extremely high humidity environments - make sure you check the **relative humidity range** on a unit, before you buy.

2. Partially Self-Evaporative

Partially evaporative units can evaporate most of the moisture into their own hot air exhaust, resulting in **little to no water** to empty on your own. The amount of drainage or tray dumping required depends on the usage time and environmental conditions of the area being cooled.



3. Gravity Drain/Drain Hose

Most portable air conditioners have the option of a permanent water drain hose connection to ensure that any water condensation is drained outside. Most drain tubes direct the water to a nearby floor drain.

4. Condensate Pumps

Condensate pumps are a separate accessory. They help to pump the collected water through the drain hose. This means that the hose can be routed upwards and through a window, for example, if you need to cool a basement.

Buckets

The simplest portable air conditioner models have an internal container that collects the extra water. These trays or buckets need to be dumped out on a regular basis during its use.

Reliability

This is extremely important. There is nothing as disappointing as spending hundreds of dollars on something that fails you when you need it most.

Before you buy a portable air conditioner, make sure it will not let you down. Of course, there is no way to be a hundred percent sure that it will work as expected. But customer reviews should give you an idea of how reliable a unit is. If too many people complain of frequent breakdowns or poor performance, click away to another brand.

Another good sign of reliability is a strong and long warranty. It indicates the manufacturer's confidence in their product. The standard warranty period provided by most manufacturers is one year.

Ease of Use

Here is something many people don't take into account when buying portable air conditioners: **how easy it will be to install and operate.**

It is common to come across customers complaining about complicated setup processes, unclear manufacturer instructions and all-round frustration with a unit.

Most portable coolers should be simple enough that you can easily install them on your own without any special tools or skills. And even after installation, a unit should be easy to operate. If you have to keep going back to the manual to figure out how to change a certain setting, that's not a good sign.

Some of the best portable coolers come with a remote control that makes it easier to change settings and program the unit.

Water-Cooled vs. Dehumidifying (Air-Cooled)

There are generally two types of portable air conditioners: water-cooled coolers and air-cooled dehumidifying coolers. The best choice for you will depend mostly on your climate.

Water-cooled portable air conditioners are at their most efficient in hot climates. They'll effectively bring down temperature in the room.

Air-cooled conditioners on the other hand, are ideal for humid climates. This is because they can provide both cooling and dehumidifying functions.

If you live in a place that experiences dry summers, get the first type. If your area frequently experiences heat accompanied by high humidity (e.g. areas near the ocean), the second type is better for you.

Don't Forget to Read the Reviews!

As you go through our top portable air conditioner picks, click the provided links to read our in-depth review of each. Then, click over to Amazon and other retailers to read their customers' reviews, too.

Our expert reviews will help you narrow down your options and eventually find the best portable cooler for your budget and needs.

If want to do a bit more homework on a specific portable cooler, you can look at what other customers are saying on the Amazon product page. You will also find links in our reviews to quickly get you there.

Focus mostly on verified customer reviews. These are the most reliable. Then, take a look at the 1-star reviews, to get a feel for the worst issues of each model.

Check what different customers are saying about reliability, ease of use, customer support and overall experience. This will give you an idea of what to expect if you settle for that specific air conditioner.



How to Install a Portable Air Conditioner

Generally, portable air conditioners do not require intensive installation. In fact, most can be installed without the help of a professional.

The installation process varies from one type and brand to another. So the best place to seek guidance is the instruction manual accompanying the portable cooler and if that fails, contact customer support.

If you are buying the **traditional window-vented portable cooler**, then it should come with a venting kit that can be used with a window, door or wall. Window and door kits are the easiest to install.

For **wall ventilation**, a bit more work is required since you have to drill a hole through the wall.

If you are planning to buy a water-cooled portable air conditioner, no venting is necessary. But you have to set up a water source and drain. Use the manufacturer's manual to properly install and set up the cooler.

Maintenance Tips for Portable Air Conditioners

Because of their size and simple setup, portable air conditioners are easy to maintain. To keep your portable cooler working well, you need to pay attention to various components such as the air filter and water drainage.

Here are the most important maintenance tips to keep in mind and implement.

Regularly clean and replace the air filters

As cool air passes through the portable cooler and into the room, it is filtered to ensure it is free of dust and other allergenic particles. With time, the filters fill up with trapped particles.

Without regular cleaning, some of the dust clogging the filters might start getting into the room along with the cool air. It also increases energy usage as the unit has to work harder to get air through the clogged filters.

The frequency of cleaning depends on how often you use your unit. If you use it daily, clean the filters weekly. If you use it less often, you can clean it every couple of weeks or every month.

Refer to the manual for instructions on how to remove the filter and clean it. The manual should also guide you on how often you should replace the filters.

Keep the hose straight and short

Due to natural condensation, moisture could form inside the hose and trickle back into the portable cooler. This could damage the internal electronics.

When installing, make sure the unit is close enough to a window such that the hose does not have to extend over a long distance.

Additionally, check the inside of the hose every now and then to ensure there is no excess moisture build-up.

Regular cleaning

Keep the body clean by wiping it regularly with a soft damp cloth. Avoid harsh detergents as they could damage the unit.

Occasionally, use a vacuum to clear the air intake vents.

At the beginning and at the end of the season, give the unit a deep clean. This involves opening it up and cleaning individual components including the filters, vents, cooling coils and external housing. Remember to unplug it before you take it apart.

Proper Storage

At the end of the season, it is important that you properly store the cooler in such a way that it will still be good for use when the hot season rolls around again. The exception is if your unit has a heat pump, meaning you can continue using it to heat the room during the cold season.

Drain all the water and give the unit a deep clean before stowing it away. Put the unit in fan mode for around two hours to completely dry out the interior.

If you have the original box it was delivered in, put it back in and store it in a cool and dry area. If you don't have a big enough box, cover it with a plastic sheet.

Avoid storing the unit in the garage or attic. The big temperature fluctuations in these areas are not ideal. A storage closet somewhere in the house will do.

Before you start using it again next season, remember to clean it first before switching it on.



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