



Home > Health > Personal care

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## Test: Hair straighteners

A good hair straightener will give you smooth, sleek and dead-straight hair at home, without the expense of professional styling.

Online 12/07

### Contents

Hair straighteners	Hair straightening tips
What to buy	Profiles - the best
Results table	Profiles - the rest
What to look for	

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## Hair straighteners

### Test results for 10 hair straighteners priced from \$15 to \$299

You can't change the genes that make your hair straight or curly, but now you can easily change the way it looks, if you want to wear your wavy mane straight once in a while.

Investing in a good hair straightener can save you a lot of time and money at the hairdresser's. But it must do the job well, gliding smoothly through your hair and leaving it frizz-free all day. And it must be fast and easy-to-use — who's got hours in the morning to do their hair?

To find out which of the many hair straighteners on the market meet all these demands, we went to retail shops and bought 10 widely available models. We asked 15 volunteers to give us their verdict, and also tested the hair straighteners in our lab, measuring how fast they heated up and how hot they got.

### Brands tested

- **Diva Hair Straightener**
- **GHD IV Styler ghd 4.1B**
- **Joh Bailey Travel Straightener JBS75**
- **Living Essentials by Mistral Ceramic Hair Straightener LEHS10**
- **Maxim Professional Straightener HS988C**
- **Philips Tresemmé SalonShine Elite HP4669/07**
- **Tiffany Pro Series Digital Hair Straightener HST70**
- **VS Sassoon Premiere Series Total Freedom 230 cord/cordless VSP2099A**
- **VS Sassoon Pro 230°C Straightener VS2075MPA**
- **Wahl Cutek Ceramic/ZA105**

CHOICE tests are different. We buy the products we test — no freebies from manufacturers. Companies can't buy ads on our site and our work is funded by people like you.

## What to buy

### What to buy

Brand	Price
<a href="#">GHD IV Styler ghd 4.1B</a>	\$299
<a href="#">Diva Hair Straightener THLC 05</a>	\$160
<a href="#">VS Sassoon Premiere Series Total Freedom 230 Cord/Cordless VSP2099A</a>	\$120
<a href="#">VS Sassoon Pro 230°C Straightener VS2075MPA</a>	\$80

### About the rest

While the Philips Tresemmé and Tiffany Pro Series were also rated well for their immediate straightening effect, the Philips was criticised for its awkwardly positioned on/off switch and the Tiffany for its temperature variation and the time it took to achieve straightening results.

The remaining four models were all rated worse for their effectiveness at straightening.

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## Results table

Brand / model (in alphabetical order within groups)	Type	Price (\$)
<b>Excellent</b>		
<a href="#">GHD IV Styler ghd 4.1B (A)</a>	Tongs	299
<b>Very good</b>		
<a href="#">Diva Hair Straightener THLC 05</a>	Tongs	160
<a href="#">VS Sassoon Premiere Series Total Freedom 230 Cord/Cordless VSP2099A (B)</a>	Tongs	120
<a href="#">VS Sassoon Pro 230°C Straightener VS2075MPA</a>	Tongs	80
<b>Good</b>		
<a href="#">Philips TREsemmé SalonShine Elite HP4669/07 (C)</a>	Tongs	90
<a href="#">Wahl Cutek Ceramic/ZA105</a>	Tongs	80
<b>Ok</b>		
<a href="#">Joh Bailey Professional Ceramic Travel Straightener JBS75 (C)</a>	Tongs	40
<a href="#">Maxim Professional Straightener HS988C</a>	Tongs	15
<a href="#">Tiffany Pro Series Digital Hair Straightener HST70</a>	Tongs	40
<b>Borderline</b>		

Living Essentials by Mistral Ceramic Hair Straightener LEHS10

Scissors 18

### Table notes

(A) Currently being replaced by a new model, 4.2B.

(B) Recommended for use on mid-length to long hair, which we took into account in the trial. The rest are suitable for use on all types of hair of various lengths.

(C) Soon to be replaced by a new model.

Rating categories (excellent, very good, etc)

After using each straightener in the morning, trialists evaluated it for:

- Straightening performance (immediate effect; smoothness through hair; number of applications required to straighten a given section of hair; and whether the plates were hot enough).
- User friendliness (overall ease of use; heat-up time; handling and manoeuvrability).
- At the end of each day, they also rated the straightener overall and indicated how long the result lasted.

### Price

Recommended retail, as of December 2007, rounded to the nearest dollar.

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### How we tested

#### The trial

Fifteen volunteers, all experienced in using a hair straightener, trialled them over five weeks, each using two straighteners per week.

- Trialists used the straighteners in the morning (so they could determine how long the effect lasted throughout the day) on clean, dry and tangle-free hair. They were asked to follow the instructions and user guides provided by the manufacturers.
  - We recorded daily relative humidity throughout the trial to check whether it significantly affected trialists' evaluations of the straighteners. (It didn't.)
  - The test CHOICE's lab measured how long each straightener's plates took to heat up from room temperature to 150°C and 200°C, or the hottest they could manage after 15 minutes, if 200°C wasn't reached.
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## What to look for

### Type

Most hair straighteners are tong-style. The only scissor-style model in the test was rated lowest overall, with trialists commenting on its "clumsy" and "bulky" design, which they found more awkward to use.

### Plate material

Most have ceramic or ceramic-coated plates (sometimes with the addition of aluminium or tourmaline), which are claimed to eliminate frizz and static in hair and leave it smooth, shiny and silky — or even “fresh”, as Philips Tresemmé claims (its ceramic plate contains antibacterial nanosilver particles). The trialists showed no preference for one type or another.

#### Plate size

Slim to medium-width plates that are suitable for most hair types are the norm. Wider plates may speed up the styling process, particularly for those with longer hair, but they’ll make the straightener bulkier and perhaps heavier.

#### Control buttons

Some trialists remarked they sometimes switched a straightener off accidentally during use because of the position of the controls — something to check out in the shop. And trialists liked straighteners with a ‘ready to use’ indicator.

#### Heat-up time

The better straighteners in the test (the top five in the table) reached the desired temperature faster than the rest. This means you won’t have to wait long before you can start styling, and the plates reach the right temperature again very quickly after passing their heat into each individual section of hair. Slower heat-up between sections makes for less efficient straightening.

#### Adjustable heat setting

This is useful for people with fine or damaged hair who want to use the straightener at a lower heat.

#### Accessories

Some straighteners have a loop to hang it on a hook for storage; others come with a stand or a protective heat mat to rest it on, which may fold into a carry bag.

#### Price points

You’ll have to spend at least \$80 to get a good straightener — the cheaper ones failed to convince our trialists.

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## Hair straightening tips

A hair straightener lets you iron out frizz and tame unruly curls. It breaks down the hair’s hydrogen bonds that make it curly, leaving it straight until its next exposed to moisture. Ceramic heating elements help eliminate frizz and static electricity so the hair’s outer layer looks smooth and shiny.

Hair in good condition can withstand the high temperatures a straightener reaches, but it can easily become dry and brittle if you don’t look after it properly. The following points should help you avoid damage to your hair.

- **Frequency:** You can use a straightener every day, but it’s best not to if your hair is already weakened from other treatments, such as perming, or regular bleaching or highlighting, which make it more susceptible to breaking.
- **Temperature:** Use a hair straightener on a low heat setting (maximum 170°C) if you have fine, heavily bleached or damaged hair. Normal, thick and/or curly hair should be able to cope with temperatures upwards of 180°C.

- **Method:** Use a straightener on dry hair. With wet hair you can ‘boil’ the hair shaft, which can lead to breakage. Move it along the section of hair without stopping, so you don’t burn your hair. Read and follow the instructions for your straightener too.
  - **Diet:** Include sufficient protein and iron in your diet. Our hair consists almost entirely of protein, and 15 to 20% of our protein intake is used for skin and hair replacement. A low iron level is a common underlying cause of thinning hair in women.
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### Did you know?

Hair straighteners have become a new burns hazard for children in the home, according to an article published last year in the UK. And because they have two hotplates, which can both come in contact with the skin, they can cause two burns on adjacent parts of the body.

Adults can generally touch a ceramic surface of 86°C for up to a second before getting burnt, but significantly lower limits apply to the skin of children and elderly people. A hair straightener, though, gets a lot hotter than 86°C and will burn practically on contact with skin.

While minor superficial burns of ears, forehead and fingers are recognised hazards of using a hair straightener, take particular care when it’s heating up — and remember where you put it. We’ve heard of people who were burnt on the foot when they stepped on one left on the floor, or caught one by the plates when it was falling, or sat on one left on a chair to heat up ... Ouch!

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## Profiles - the best

These models were rated as excellent or very good by our trialists.

GHD IV Styler ghd 4.1B

Price: \$299

Rating: Excellent

### Features

- 'On' and 'ready-to-use' lights.
- Auto switch-off (after 30 minutes without use).
- Instructional DVD.



### Good points

- Very effective at straightening.
- Straightening result lasted longest: more than 12 hours on average.
- Very fast heat-up time.
- Very easy to use.
- Moved very smoothly through hair.

### Bad points

- The most expensive in the trial.

**Trialists' comments:**

- "Hair was straightened as well as a hairdresser would have done. Excellent."
- "Went over hair smoothly, good design, long-lasting effect. Great for creating different styles."

[TOP](#) ↑**Diva Hair Straightener THLC 05****Price:** \$160**Rating:** Very good**Features**

- Stand.
- Carry pouch.
- 'On' and 'ready-to-use' lights.

**Good points**

- Good straightening effect, both immediately and over time, lasting 9–12 hours on average.
- Very fast heat-up time.
- Easy to use.
- Moved smoothly through hair.

**Bad points**

- One trialist commented that it would've been useful to have instructions on the accessories.

**Trialists' comments**

- "Made my hair dead straight in next-to-no time!"
- "Lightweight, slim and compact design made it very easy to use."

[TOP](#) ↑**VS Sassoon Premiere Series Total Freedom 230 Cord/Cordless VSP2099A****Price:** \$120**Rating:** Very good**Features**

- With wider than usual plates, it's recommended for use on medium-long hair.
- Can be used cordless (it heats up on a base that's plugged into a power point) or with a 3m cord.
- Adjustable heat setting.
- 'On' and 'ready-to-use' lights.

**Good points**

- Good straightening effect, both immediately and over time, lasting 9–12 hours on average.

- Very fast heat-up time.
- Easy to use.
- Moved smoothly through hair.

#### Bad points

- The heaviest in the trial (560g), which one trialist thought made it "a bit heavy and unstable on the bench".

#### Trialists' comment

- "It heated up quickly and you didn't have to be right next to a power point, but because it heated up on the base, you had to [take care to] keep returning it to the base to keep the optimum temperature."

[TOP](#) ↑

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### VS Sassoon Pro 230°C Straightener VS2075MPA

Price: \$80

Rating: Very good

#### Features

- Adjustable heat setting.
- Digital temperature display.
- Protective heat mat, which can be used as a pouch.
- Auto switch-off (after 72 minutes without use).
- 'On' and 'ready-to-use' lights.



#### Good points

- Good straightening effect, both immediately and over time, lasting 9–12 hours on average.
- Very fast heat-up time.
- Easy to use.
- Moved very smoothly through hair.

#### Bad points

- One trialist remarked she had to hold it in an uncomfortable manner so as not to touch and change the heat setting controls inadvertently.

#### Trialists' comments

- "Hair stayed fairly straight, even after walking through light rain."
- "The padded area on the outside of the plates means you don't burn your head or neck." (Both VS Sassoon straighteners have this fabric coating.)

[TOP](#) ↑

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This article last updated December 2007

## Profiles - the rest

These models weren't rated as highly as the best models. They weren't as easy to use and/or didn't straighten hair as effectively.

#### Philips Tresemmé SalonShine Elite HP4669/07

Price: \$90

Rating: Good

#### Features

- Carry pouch.
- Adjustable heat setting.
- Digital temperature display.
- Auto switch-off (after 60 minutes without use).



#### Good points

- Good straightening effect, both immediately and over time, lasting 9–12 hours on average.
- Very fast heat-up time.
- Easy to use.
- Moved smoothly through hair.

#### Bad points

- Two trialists commented that the straightener can easily be switched off inadvertently during use because of the position of the on/off switch.

#### Trialists' comments

- "Didn't make my hair dead straight, but straight enough."
- "Left ends slightly frizzy; not a smooth finish."

[TOP](#) ↑

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#### Wahl Cutek Ceramic/ZA105

Price: \$80

Rating: Good

#### Features

- 'On' light.

#### Good points

- Easy to use.
- Fast heat-up time.
- Moved smoothly through hair.

#### Bad points

- Trialists had to use it three or more times on each section of hair to achieve the desired result — the better



models did it in just two goes.

- No 'ready-to-use' indicator.

#### Trialists' comments

- "Lightweight, slim design was easy to manoeuvre. Straightening effect was OK, but not great."
- "There's nothing to indicate when it's finished heating up and is ready for use, and no guide as to how long it'll take to heat up."

[TOP](#) ↑

### Joh Bailey Travel Straightener JBS75

Price: \$40

Rating: OK

#### Features

- 'On' light.



#### Good points

- Fast heat-up time.
- Moved smoothly through hair.

#### Bad points

- Trialists had to use it three or more times on each section of hair to achieve the desired result — the better models did it in just two goes.
- It required more time to achieve the straightening results — 16 to 20 minutes rather than the 10 to 15 with the other models trialled.
- The straightening result lasted a shorter time: just 5 to 8 hours on average.
- No 'ready-to-use' indicator.

#### Trialists' comments

- "With the controls on the outside, you're less likely to burn yourself when switching it off."
- "It's easy to use and manoeuvre, but didn't straighten my hair as it didn't get hot enough." (In our lab tests it took more than two minutes to reach even a low 150°C, much longer than most others.)

[TOP](#) ↑

### Maxim Professional Straightener HS988C

Price: \$15

Rating: OK

#### Features

- None.



### Good points

- Easy to use.
- Moved smoothly through hair.

### Bad points

- Trialists had to use it three or more times on each section of hair to achieve the desired result — the better models did it in just two goes.
- The straightening result lasted a shorter time: just 5 to 8 hours on average.
- Trialists found its temperature wasn't hot enough. (In our lab test it took much longer than most others to heat up — more than a minute to reach 150°C and more than three minutes to climb up to 200°C.)
- No 'power on' or 'ready-to-use' indicator.

### Trialists' comments

- "Simple, nothing flash, just straightforward. It smoothed my hair, it didn't straighten it."
- "It didn't work very well. My hair came out very frizzy."

[TOP](#) 

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## Tiffany Pro Series Digital Hair Straightener HST70

Price: \$40

Rating: OK

### Features

- Adjustable heat settings.
- Temperature display.



### Good points

- Good immediate straightening result, but it lasted a shorter time: just 5–8 hours on average.
- Easy to use.
- Moved smoothly through hair.

### Bad points

- Required more time to achieve straightening results (16 to 20 minutes rather than the 10 to 15 with the other models trialled, or three applications per section of hair, rather than two).

### Trialists' comments

- "The variable heat setting was good, but the temperature went up and down for a while before settling."
- "For best results I needed to hold the plates together with both hands, but then it seemed to be quite rough on my hair and pulled my hair on occasion."

[TOP](#) 

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## Living Essentials by Mistral Ceramic Hair Straightener LEHS10

**Price: \$18**

**Rating: Borderline**

#### **Features**

- 'On' indicator light.

#### **Good points**

- None to mention.

#### **Bad points**

- Required more time to achieve straightening results: 16 to 20 minutes rather than the 10 to 15 with the other models trialled, or three applications per section of hair, rather than two.
- Its straightening effect lasted the shortest time: just 1 to 4 hours on average.
- Trialists found its temperature wasn't hot enough. (It was the slowest to heat up in our test, taking almost 4.5 minutes to reach even a low 150°C.)
- Didn't move very smoothly through hair.
- No 'ready-to-use' indicator.

#### **Trialists' comments**

- "Because of its clumsy design [it was the only scissor-style straightener in the trial], it didn't pull my hair through smoothly — it got caught. And it wasn't effective at straightening at all. There was no noticeable difference in the end result."
- "The handle can be difficult to use at times."

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[TOP](#) 

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