

Publication	The Sunday Times (In Gear)
Date	April 25 th 2010
Circulation	1,111,660

THE SUNDAY TIMES

26 ingear NET



TEST BENCH
Cordless home phones

BEST BUY

BEST FOR CALL QUALITY
BT FREESTYLE 750 £40

This phone stands out for clarity of calls and easy operation, and don't be put off by the badge on the base station — the Freestyle works with all telephone lines, not just BT's. The simplicity starts as soon as you open the box, as this has the most straightforward setup instructions of any phone on test (if you want the full version of the manual it can be downloaded to a computer, and there's also a free 0900 number to dial for help). The handset has big buttons and a clear two-line display to tell you exactly what's going on. Call quality was the best on test — so clear that nobody would guess you were on a cordless handset. Even the speakerphone sounds good, and the Freestyle is the only phone here to offer inductive coupling for use with digital hearing aids. However, it may not suit the largest or busiest homes: the digital answering machine in the base station can store only 15 minutes of messages, the phone book holds only 50 numbers and its wireless range is short.

Verdict A winner thanks to its price, simplicity of use and great call quality.
★★★★☆
shop.bt.com

HEED THE CALL OF THE SMART SET

Wireless home phones have never sounded clearer or had more ingenious technology packed into them. Caramel Quin sounds out five of the best

THE SUNDAY TIMES timesonline.co.uk/ingear 25.04.10 27

BEST FOR BLUETOOTH IDECT MSI £70

If you use a hands-free headset in the car, you can pair the same hardware with this IDECT in the home, thanks to its built-in Bluetooth. Or you can link the phone to your mobile to share contacts and even reroute calls. This gives you great flexibility: for instance, you can use your free mobile minutes to make calls from home or, if you get mobile reception in only one room, leave the mobile there and take calls via the IDECT. Its range is excellent and the slender handset's display and 100-number phone book are easy to find your way around. Call quality is excellent on a landline but poor on speakerphone or via a mobile. The answering machine holds just 14 minutes of messages.

Verdict A useful accessory if you already own plenty of Bluetooth kit.
★★★★☆
idect.co.uk



BEST FOR INTERNET CALLS SKYPE RTX DUALPHONE 3088 £75

Take advantage of Skype's cheap internet calls (or even free to another Skype number) without involving a computer, though you do need broadband. Wire the Dualphone's base station to the router and your phone line and you'll be able to use the handset to choose whether to make a call via Skype or your landline. High-tech households can do away with the landline completely. The colour menus and rubberised buttons are easy to read and use (although, annoyingly, it takes slight button presses to retrieve and call a number from the 200-entry phone book); while call quality is good, the speakerphone is of only average quality. Cordless range is shorter than in all other phones on test bar the BT Freestyle, and the Dualphone alone doesn't have a built-in answering machine.

Verdict A simple way to Skype away from your computer.
★★★★☆
skype.com



EXTEND A HOME PHONE'S RANGE

All these phones use the Dect (digital enhanced cordless telecommunications) standard, which means you can connect multiple handsets — usually up to five — to a single base station. The prices we quote are for a single phone and base station. The BT, Skype and IDECT phones are also sold in money-saving packs containing a single base station and two or three handsets.

Of course, you may not need additional handsets, as these phones have a claimed range of about 50 metres indoors and 300 metres outdoors: In practice, they all struggle over such distances if there are thick walls between the handset and the base station.

One solution to the problem is to place a Dect repeater, such as the RTX4002 (£45, ntpuk.co.uk), at a location where the signal starts to fade. A repeater automatically senses the base station and boosts its signal. Repeaters work with any Dect phone that is — jargon alert — "Gap compatible", and all the phones here are.

You can register as many as six repeaters to a single base station — one for each wing of your mansion: the gallery, the ballroom, the stables and the grounds, perhaps.

BEST FOR BATTERY LIFE AND RANGE PHILIPS ID9651B £150

The most comfortable phone to hold for a long time, this stylish handset even boasts a leather back. Setup is simple, and the handset comes with a charger, so you don't have to keep it near the base station. It had the best range of any phone on test — nearly twice that of the BT Freestyle. The 200-memory phone book and capacious 50-minute answering machine are impressive, and with a battery charge giving 14 hours of talk time and 170 hours on standby, it will last about 50% longer than all the other phones here before needing a recharge. Calls sound a little muffled and the phone picks up background noise in both directions; using the speakerphone makes you sound as if you have your head in a bucket.

Verdict Powerful enough — and suitably priced — for the owner of a mansion.
★★★★☆
philips.co.uk



BEST FOR TEXT MESSAGING JOHN LEWIS JLJAS0941 £50

This handset includes the useful extra function of sending and receiving text messages (which commonly cost 10p a go with BT). Some of its other features are more gimmicky, such as the "torch" (sorry, but making its small screen turn bright and white does not constitute a torch), alarm clock and calculator. The text-based menus are good, it has a 200-entry phone book and the answering machine stores 24 minutes of messages. Phone-book and answerphone functions are easy to control from the handset (though not so easy from the base station). It has excellent call quality (second only to that of the BT Freestyle) and a good range. The speakerphone, though, is faint and fuzzy.

Verdict Good value handset for text junkies.
★★★★☆
johnlewis.com



