

Today's Toilets Use Less Water and Make Less Noise

CR checks out the bathroom innovations at the 2018 International Builders' Show

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From space age-looking models to new technologies that greatly improve water efficiency, the latest toilets on display at the recent International Builders' Show featured all kinds of innovations. Here are five toilet trends Consumer Reports is following.

Sleeker Toilets Are In



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Manufacturers like Toto, Gerber, Niagara, and Geberit all make simple, one-piece and two-piece toilets with traps covered by smooth ceramics—

no ridges or meandering piping underneath the tank. “We’re finding that remodelers and new homeowners want a streamlined look because it’s easier to clean,” says Vicki Nguyen, a spokeswoman for Niagara. “With these toilets it’s a quick swipe and you’re done.”

Or, you can opt for a wall-mounted toilet with the tank behind the wall and save yourself some hassle from trying to get into toilet crevices.

Toilets Need Better Flappers

According to Uponor, broken toilet flappers—the rubber stopper that opens when you flush and allows water to drain out of the tank into the bowl—are the leading source of leaks. On average, the water that leaks from a broken flapper could serve the water needs of a family of three over the course of a year.

In a pilot study of 300 homes, Uponor found that more than half of homeowners with leaks had issues with their toilet flapper. Uponor has partnered with Belkin to install Belkin's new Phyn smart water-monitoring system, which measures changes in your home's water pressure to detect leaks.

And Some Need No Flapper at All

The new Niagara Ecologic toilet replaces the flapper with a tip bucket, a shallow shelf filled with water that empties when you press the flush lever. And Niagara’s Nano model is the only toilet on the market that can use on average 0.6 gallons per flush for both solid and liquid waste, thanks to a patent-pending device inside the tank that uses an air vacuum instead of water pressure. Most of the water-saving toilets in our tests use twice that.

Check out Consumer Reports' reviews of dozens of toilets, including wall-mounted versions and water-efficient single-flush toilets that work better than some dual-flush models.

Toilet Parts Aren't Always Interchangeable

Toto makes a Washlet that incorporates the company's Actilight technology, a UV light that shines into the bowl and kills bacteria. But Actilight Washlets work only with Toto bowls that have a zirconium glaze. (A Washlet is a high-tech toilet seat that can, for example, spritz warm water. Other companies call these luxury add-ons an electronic bidet seat or a bidet toilet seat.)

If you're thinking of buying a one of these seats for a standard toilet from Toto or another manufacturer, check whether it requires the washlet manufacturer's proprietary toilet technology to keep the toilet bowl clean.

Toilets Are Getting Quieter

At Gerber, toilets with the company's QuietClean technology are noticeably easier on the ears than the company's standard models. Gerber spokeswoman Katie Ericsson suggests that these more discrete toilets are a good choice for a powder room or a guest bathroom. Unfortunately, they don't have quite the flushing power of a standard toilet, though Ericsson says the company is addressing that issue.

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