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**Nutshell**

- Mulcher models distribute clippings into the lawn.
- All mowers on test cut well, but not all are easy to use.
- We didn't test two-stroke mowers, as they're too inefficient.

**T**he smell of freshly cut grass can trigger happy memories or dread of a chore you'd prefer to avoid. Whatever your response, you'll want a lawnmower that cuts well and makes mowing as pleasant – or as quick – a job as possible.

While all models on test cut well, there are some substantial variations in terms of catcher design, how easy it is to change the cutting height and the design of the push handle.

Buying lawnmowers for this test proved difficult. There were limited mulcher models available thanks to manufacturers releasing mowers just before the beginning of summer, so we also included some catcher-only models. These are good if you just want to remove the clippings after mowing. However, the catcher/mulcher models give you the option of mulching (cutting finely) the grass clippings as

you mow and distributing them into the lawn rather than on top. We've separated the mulcher and catcher-only models into two tables (pages 71 and 72), but cutting scores for catcher mode are comparable between all models of both types.

There is one battery mulcher lawnmower on test; the rest have four-stroke petrol engines. One lawnmower, the AL-KO 470BRV, is self-propelled and the rest pushed by the user.

Self-propelled mowers work via the engine driving the rear wheels, usually activated when you push on a bar on the handle. This means less work as you just have to guide the mower rather than push it – a handy piece of technology.

We didn't include any Rovers as the new models weren't available at the time of testing. We also didn't include any two-stroke mowers due to their inefficient engines and excess exhaust emissions.

**Reliability**

**I**n our March reliability survey, members favoured Honda and Flymo mowers for reliability.

**Brand loyalty** Honda and John Deere owners are most likely to buy those brands again at 96% and 94% respectively.

**Lawnmower problems** 37% reported the engine failed to start while 11% said the cord didn't start the motor.

PERCENTAGE WITH NO PROBLEMS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS *	(%)
Honda (569)	89
Flymo (163)	88
Masport (434)	86
Rover (423)	83
Victa (1275)	81
Other (1063)	78
John Deere (120)	75
Toro (59)	73
All lawnmowers (4106)	82

\* The number in brackets is the number of responses received for that brand.

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**WHAT TO BUY** We've recommended combination models that score 85% overall and at least 70% for ease of use.

For profiles of all models, go to [choice.com.au/lawnmowers](http://choice.com.au/lawnmowers)



**85%**  
**AL-KO Silver Premium 470BRV, \$599**

**Good points**

Engine brake – engine stops almost instantly when the bar is released.  
 Self-propelled drive with six speeds.  
 Very easy to adjust the cutting height  
 Starter cord is very easy to pull.  
 Easy to convert from catcher to mulching mode.

**Bad points**

Initial assembly takes a long time.  
 Handlebar becomes uncomfortable with extended use and wobbles.  
 Catcher lets dust and small grass clippings through the holes, showering the user.



**85%**  
**Ryobi Cordless Lawn Mower Kit RLM36, \$499**

**Good points**

Cuts 480 square metres of grass with one battery charge.  
 Quick-release handle for easy folding.  
 Much quieter than petrol models.  
 Very small handle vibration only.  
 Very easy to adjust the cutting height.  
 Starting the motor is very easy.  
 Easy to convert from catcher to mulching mode.

**Bad points**

Borderline for cutting long grass.  
 Catcher lets dust and small grass clippings through the holes, showering the user.



**85%**  
**Victa Corvette 650 GMS486, \$649**

**Good points**

Quick-release handle for easy folding.  
 Snorkel for the engine to keep the dust away from the air filter.  
 Very comfortable handle.  
 Catcher is easy to remove/attach and empty.  
 Easy to convert from catcher to mulching mode.

**Bad points**

Adjusting the cutting height lever requires a fair amount of effort.  
 Starter cord requires a fair amount of effort to pull.

**CATCHER ONLY PERFORMANCE SPECIFICATIONS**



	Price (\$)	Overall score (%)	Cutting score (% with catcher)	Ease of use score (%)	Noise at 7.5 m/user's position (dB)	Type	Starter toggle	Cutting positions (as counted)	Cutting height range (mm, measured)	Width of cut (cm, measured)	Closeness of cut to a vertical edge (mm, front / right / left)	Weight (kg)	Contact
<b>Victa Bronco BRA484 (A)</b>	599	85	98	72	72/87	C/P	On motor	10	15-70	48	115/18/18	28	victa.com.au
<b>Sanli Power Cut 460 PCS400</b>	329	79	95	62	72/86	C/P	On motor	10	10-65	46	125/40/23	31	sanli.com.au
<b>Pope Aurora 101PM450</b>	246	77	93	60	70/86	C/P	On motor	6	12-80	44	155/35/35	27	toro.com.au

Overall score is made up of: Cutting score with catcher: 50%; Ease of use: 50%. Price Average retail, as of September 2011. C Catcher. P Push. (A) Discontinued, but may be available in some stores.

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CATCHER/MULCHER	PERFORMANCE				SPECIFICATIONS										
	Price (\$)	Overall score (%)	Cutting score (% with catcher)	Cutting score (% mulching)	Ease of use score (%)	Noise at 7.5 m / user's position (dB)	Type	Motor	Starter toggle	Cutting positions (as counted)	Cutting height range (mm, measured)	Width of cut (cm, measured)	Closeness of cut to a vertical edge (mm, front / right / left)	Weight (kg)	Contact
AL-KO Silver Premium 470BRV	599	85	98	100	71	70/82	C/M/S	Petrol	On motor	7	30-70	46	135/40/18	37	alko.com.au
Ryobi Cordless Kit RLM36	499	85	88	95	78	65/80	C/M/P	Battery	On handle	5	16-65	40	135/32/32	18	ryobi.com.au
Victa Corvette 650 GMS486	649	85	98	100	71	74/86	C/M/P	Petrol	On motor	10	15-70	48	115/18/18	28	victa.com.au
Masport President 4000ST Combo 579937	729	84	98	100	68	75/90	C/M/P	Petrol	On handle	11	3-66	48	120/12/15	28	masport.com.au
Victa Mustang MCA495	729	84	98	100	68	76/91	C/M/P	Petrol	On motor	10	15-70	48	115/18/18	28	victa.com.au
SupaSwift Lawn Range Blue	439	83	95	100	68	70/83	C/M/P	Petrol	On handle	10	17-58	45	110/18/18	30	allpower.com.au
Masport President 2000 Combo 567817	649	82	98	100	64	73/88	C/M/P	Petrol	On handle	10	10-88	46	130/35/22	26	masport.com.au
Toro Recycler 20323	696	82	98	100	64	70/85	C/M/P	Petrol	On handle	7	25-105	50	155/18/18	29	toro.com.au
Honda HRU19M1PKUA	839	80	98	100	61	73/85	C/M/P	Petrol	On handle	11	12-70	47	135/15/15	33	hondampe.com.au
Honda HRU196M1PBUH	1039	70	98	100	40	71/83	C/M/P	Petrol	On handle	11	12-70	47	135/15/15	43	hondampe.com.au

USING THE TABLES Overall score is made up of: Cutting: 50% (with catcher: 25%, with mulcher: 25%), Ease of use: 50%. C Catcher. M Mulcher. P Push. S Self-propelled.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

**Handle** This should be comfortable to hold and height-adjustable. A turned-up handle is easier on your wrists and gives better control over the mower.

**Engine control lever** should be on the handlebar and easy to operate.

**Manoeuvrability** The mower should be easy to push and manoeuvre in all conditions. Big wheels improve handling on rough ground and a lightweight model is easier to push and turn.

**Starter cord** is generally easier to operate when it's on the engine, but a cord mounted half-way up the handle is good if you can't easily bend over.

**Cutting positions** Look for a large number spread over a useful range of cutting heights. Make sure the cutting height is easily adjustable.

**Cleaning** A wash port or nozzle on top of

the mower's housing makes it easy to clean underneath and on top of it.

**Mulching adapter or plug** should be easy to fit and remove.

**Maintenance** Can you easily change the oil, air filter and spark plugs?

**Catcher** A good catcher has two handles – one on top for carrying, and one on the back for easy emptying.

