

POWER INVERTERS

Turn your car's battery into a source of mains power

Ring Powersource 300W Compact Inverter RINVU300

Price: £27.86 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 0113 213 7379, www.ringautomotive.com

BEST BUY OUR previous test winner still has lots to commend it. The RINVU300 was the lightest we tried, at 618g, plus it also had one of the best crocodile clip leads, and managed 215V on the bulb test. The USB socket charged both of our phones, and we really liked the flush three-pin socket built into the plastic casing.

Like its more powerful stablemate (below), its fan came on as soon as the rocker was used, so it was always cool, but that could be irritating for some. Nevertheless, it didn't balk at any of our tests, and the fan speed remained stable regardless of load.



Ring Powersource 500W Compact Inverter RINVU500

Price: £49.99 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 0113 213 7379, www.ringautomotive.com

RECOMMENDED THE same design as our winner (above), but slightly bigger and heavier (up 250g, at 868g) to cope with the increased capability. The fan was always on, which may be technically good, but could be irritating.

We liked the 2.1A USB socket, which was Apple-compliant, and the long leads – a very practical 93cm. As on the 300W version, the flush three-pin socket made it feel more solid. The bulb test showed 222V and the fan speed didn't vary as it powered all our test devices. Its price was reasonable, but the quieter 700W Silverline (opposite) costs just £4 more.



AE Dave Pollard

IT'S an electronic world, and ever more devices are portable. To keep them charged you could use a power bank, but they can struggle at times and ultimately go flat.

An inverter converts the 12V from your car's battery into regular mains power, so you can use items such as a laptop, battery charger or

coolbox. In a workshop, it could be used for power tools like drills, or to provide lighting where there's no mains power supply.

Capacities and prices vary greatly, so you should choose to meet your needs. Lighting will require less capacity, while power tools need a higher rating. So which is the one to bring mains power to your car?

How we tested them

WE tried each inverter with various electrical devices including smartphones (both Android and Apple), Campingaz coolbox, 19.5V Dell laptop and Bosch 14.4V cordless drill battery charger. In addition, we measured the voltage and fan noise when powering a 60W light bulb. We also looked at practicalities like sockets and lead length, plus we took into account the best prices we could find online.



Silverline 12v 700W Inverter 263764

Price: £53.01 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 01935 382222, www.silverlinetools.com



RECOMMENDED LIKE its bigger brother (Page 62), this inverter couldn't charge Apple devices, which is missing a trick. At 1.1kg, it wasn't light, but it was 50 per cent lighter than the Clarke CI1200B and produced more wattage. The leads had crocodile clips, but they were 66cm, joint shortest here and less user-friendly than rivals'.

Despite its claimed performance, it logged the lowest bulb voltage – 205V – but still powered up all our kit without using the fan at all. Not perfect, but it is well priced and, if you don't like a constant fan noise, definitely one to check out.



Sealey Power Inverter 300W P1300

Price: £54.92 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 01284 757500, www.sealey.co.uk

UNIQUELY here, the Sealey came with a choice of crocodile clips for the battery or a cigar lighter plug, giving it some extra versatility and meaning there was no need to access the engine bay. The leads themselves seemed a bit lightweight and, more disappointing, the cables were equal shortest here, at just 66cm.

Its 2.1A USB socket happily charged our phones, and we liked the unit's high-quality feel as it waltzed to the highest bulb voltage of the day, at 247V. Despite claiming only 300W, it had no trouble with any of our test products.



PRODUCT GROUP TEST 16 | 09 | 2020

Every week, we extensively test all the latest car kit, from tyres to trim cleaners. Log on to www.autoexpress.co.uk to look through our huge online test archive

Clarke CI800B 400W Power Inverter

Price: £47.98 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 0115 956 5555, www.machinemart.co.uk

PLENTY of performance from this well priced Clarke. We really liked the upmarket, strong and plastic-covered crocodile clips, which made it impossible to make an accidental bad contact. On the downside, it was one of just two here without a USB socket, which is a big minus in a world of smartphones and tablets.

At 973g it was a bit weighty and, at 75cm, the leads were on the short side, which would not be ideal for many users. It managed 229V on the bulb test and powered all our devices without complaint. Not a bad price, but lacking a little in watts and spec.



Silverline 12v, 1000W (2 x 500W) Inverter 168754

Price: £84.99 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 01935 382222, www.silverlinetools.com

ONE of two 1000W twin-socket inverters, this was a big, heavy machine, but a touch lighter than the Draper, in part due to the ring terminal leads, which felt less substantial. Rated at 0.5A, its USB socket charged the Android phone but not the Apple, like the 700W Silverline (Page 61).

We liked the general build and appearance, and it clocked 217V with the bulb. It didn't balk at any of the other challenges, but our main gripe was that the two sockets were too close together, making it tricky to fit two plugs, depending on their design.



Clarke CI1200B 600W Power Inverter

Price: £74.39 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 0115 956 5555, www.machinemart.co.uk

THIS Clarke had a really solid feel to it and was very similar in design to the Draper (below) – and not so far off in terms of weight. At 1.7kg for only 600W it was really too heavy, and a little too pricey as well.

As with the smaller Clarke (above), the safer, plastic-covered crocodile clips were very welcome, and the leads were usefully long, at 94cm. On the downside, it also lacked a USB socket, which lost it points to the Silverline 1000W (above). The socket powered all our test items and, apart from the odd squeak as they were connected, in total silence.



Draper 1000W DC-AC Inverter IN1000

Price: £124.72 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: 023 8049 4333, www.drapertools.com

CLAIMING 1000W and weighing in at 2.3kg, this was big, although it felt really well made. We liked the heavy-duty leads, joint longest at 98cm, which were clearly designed for more permanent fitment in something like a caravan or motorhome.

Though just 0.5A, its USB charged Apple devices without the inverter switched on. It powered all our test pieces and the 60W bulb at a healthy 244V. It was also happy to run the laptop and coolbox at the same time. We weren't troubled by the fan at any point. Impressive and high-quality, but at a price.



Auto Express Verdict

THE Ring RINVU300 continues to provide the best blend of performance, features and price, while the slightly flawed 700W Silverline offers enough value to end up in second place, and the RINVU500 takes the third spot.

1. Ring Powersource 300W Compact Inverter RINVU300
2. Silverline 12v 700W Inverter 263764
3. Ring Powersource 500W Compact Inverter RINVU500