



MR SWEEP CHIMNEYS & STOVES

BUYING A LOG BURNER

**The Staffordshire Homeowner's Guide to Choosing
the Right Wood-Burning or Multi-Fuel Stove**
What to consider before you buy • Chimneys • Flues
• Heat output • Fuel • Regulations • Installation • Running
costs

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Serving Staffordshire & surrounding areas

WELCOME TO MR SWEEP

A log burner can be a fantastic addition to your home.

It can provide warmth, create a comfortable atmosphere and become an attractive centrepiece in a room.

But choosing a stove shouldn't start with the question:

"Which one looks nicest?"

The right stove needs to be suitable for your property, your room, your chimney or flue system, the fuel you intend to burn and the rules that apply to your location.

Getting the choice right at the beginning can save you money and frustration later.

This guide has been created by **Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves** to help homeowners across Staffordshire understand the important questions to ask before buying a log burner or solid-fuel stove.

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1. BEFORE YOU BUY

Before choosing a stove, take a step back.

Ask yourself:

Why do I want a stove?

Is it primarily for:

- Heating a room?
- Supplementing your central heating?
- Occasional use?
- Regular winter heating?
- Creating a focal point?

Your intended use will influence the type and size of appliance you should consider.

2. WHAT TYPE OF STOVE DO YOU WANT?

There are several different types of solid-fuel appliances.

Two common choices are:

WOOD-BURNING STOVES

Designed primarily for burning wood.

MULTI-FUEL STOVES

Designed to burn more than one type of approved solid fuel, depending on the appliance.

Which is better?

Neither is automatically better.

It depends on:

- Your preferred fuel.
- How you want to use the appliance.

- Your location.
 - Your chimney.
 - Your budget.
 - The manufacturer's specifications.
-

3. WOOD-BURNING STOVES

If your main intention is to burn logs, a dedicated wood-burning stove may be worth considering.

These appliances are designed specifically around wood combustion.

You will need to use suitable firewood and operate the stove according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Remember

Wood-burning doesn't mean you can burn any timber.

Painted, treated and contaminated timber should not be used as firewood.

4. MULTI-FUEL STOVES

A multi-fuel appliance can provide greater flexibility where the manufacturer approves different fuels.

However, don't assume that every solid fuel can be burned in every multi-fuel stove.

Always check:

- Manufacturer's instructions.
 - Approved fuels.
 - Local restrictions.
 - Smoke Control Area requirements.
-

5. CHOOSING THE CORRECT HEAT OUTPUT

One of the most important decisions is the stove's heat output.

It is commonly expressed in **kilowatts (kW)**.

A stove that's too small may struggle to heat the room.

A stove that's too large may encourage you to operate it at an unnecessarily low output.

Bigger isn't automatically better.

The correct size should be based on the room and the intended use of the appliance.

6. WHY BIGGER ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER

Imagine buying a stove capable of producing significantly more heat than your room needs.

You may be tempted to reduce the air supply to make the fire burn more slowly.

If operated incorrectly, this can result in poor combustion and increased smoke and deposits.

The goal isn't:

"The biggest stove I can fit."

The goal is:

"The right stove for my property."

7. YOUR ROOM SIZE MATTERS

The room's size, insulation, layout and other heating sources should all be considered.

Other factors can include:

- Ceiling height.
- Number of external walls.
- Windows.
- Insulation.
- Open-plan layout.
- Property age.
- Existing heating system.

A professional installer should assess the property rather than choosing an appliance based solely on appearance.

8. YOUR EXISTING CHIMNEY

If you already have a chimney, don't assume it is automatically suitable for a modern stove.

The chimney may need to be assessed for:

- Condition.
- Size.
- Suitability.
- Integrity.
- Lining requirements.
- Flue compatibility.
- Appliance compatibility.

An old open fireplace and a modern stove can have very different requirements.

9. WHAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE A CHIMNEY?

It may still be possible to install a suitable stove using an appropriate manufactured flue system, subject to the property, appliance, installation requirements and applicable regulations.

This is something to discuss with a suitably qualified installer before purchasing the appliance.

Don't buy the stove first

Find out whether the proposed installation is actually practical.

10. CHIMNEY LINERS

Some installations require a chimney liner.

A liner can form part of the flue system and may be important for compatibility, performance and safety.

Whether a liner is required depends on the particular chimney and appliance.

Never assume

An existing chimney being physically present does not automatically mean it can be used without modification.

Get appropriate advice.

11. THE FLUE SYSTEM

The flue is a critical part of the installation.

It needs to be compatible with:

- The stove.
- The chimney.
- The fuel.
- The building.
- The installation arrangement.

The flue needs to safely carry combustion products away from the appliance.

A beautiful stove with a poorly designed flue system isn't a good installation.

12. VENTILATION

Solid-fuel appliances may require ventilation to provide combustion air.

Ventilation requirements can depend on:

- Appliance output.
- Property.
- Room.
- Building characteristics.
- Installation arrangement.

Never block an existing ventilation opening

If you experience draught problems, don't simply cover an air vent.

Get professional advice.

13. THE HEARTH

The hearth is an important part of a stove installation.

It provides protection between the hot appliance/fire and surrounding combustible materials.

Its dimensions and construction need to meet the applicable requirements for the installation.

Don't treat the hearth as decoration

A hearth is a safety component.

If you're changing an existing fireplace, make sure the proposed alteration is suitable before work begins.

14. SMOKE CONTROL AREAS

Smoke Control Areas are particularly important when choosing a stove.

In these areas, additional restrictions apply to the emission of smoke from domestic solid-fuel appliances.

This can affect:

- Which appliance you can install.
- Which fuel you can burn.
- How the appliance must be operated.

Check before you buy

Don't purchase a stove and only investigate Smoke Control Area requirements afterwards.

15. STAFFORDSHIRE & LOCAL RESTRICTIONS

Staffordshire isn't subject to one single set of local conditions.

Different parts of the county have different local authority arrangements.

For example, **Stoke-on-Trent contains Smoke Control Areas**.

Your exact property therefore matters.

Before buying:

Check the current Smoke Control Area status for your address.

If you live in a restricted area, make sure the appliance and fuel arrangements comply with the applicable requirements.

16. CHOOSING YOUR FUEL

Think about fuel before buying your appliance.

If you want to burn logs, consider:

- Where you will buy them.
- Where you'll store them.
- Whether you have sufficient storage.
- How often you'll use the stove.
- Whether the wood is sufficiently dry.

If you want to burn other solid fuels, check that the appliance is specifically designed and approved for them.

17. READY TO BURN FIREWOOD

If you're buying firewood for domestic burning, the **Ready to Burn** requirements are important.

For firewood sold in England in quantities below 2 cubic metres, the relevant requirements include a moisture content of no more than **20%**.

Look for appropriate information from reputable suppliers.

18. DRY WOOD MATTERS

Good-quality dry firewood can help your stove burn more effectively.

Wet wood can contribute to:

- More smoke.

- Poorer combustion.
- Lower useful heat.
- Dirty stove glass.
- Increased deposits.

Buy the right wood.

Store it correctly.

Keep it dry.

19. CHOOSING A STOVE MANUFACTURER

Don't choose a stove based entirely on appearance.

Research:

- Manufacturer reputation.
- Appliance specifications.
- Warranty.
- Spare parts availability.
- Operating instructions.
- Approved fuels.
- Maintenance requirements.
- Replacement glass.
- Door seals.
- Firebricks.
- Local support.

A stove may remain in your home for many years.

Think about its long-term ownership, not just its first impression.

20. NEW OR SECOND-HAND?

A second-hand stove may look like a bargain.

But be careful.

You need to know:

- Its age.
- Model.
- Output.
- Condition.
- Whether parts remain available.
- Whether it meets current requirements.
- Whether it is suitable for your property.
- Whether it is suitable for your location.

Missing paperwork can also make things harder.

If you're considering a second-hand appliance, get appropriate advice before buying.

21. BUYING ONLINE

Online retailers make it easy to compare hundreds of stoves.

But don't allow the convenience of online shopping to replace proper installation planning. Before pressing **BUY**, establish:

- Is this appliance suitable for my room?
 - Is it suitable for my chimney?
 - Is it suitable for my property?
 - Is it suitable for my location?
 - Does it comply with applicable requirements?
 - Are spare parts available?
 - Can it be installed correctly?
 - What fuel can it burn?
-

22. INSTALLATION

The installation is just as important as the appliance.

A high-quality stove installed incorrectly is still an unsafe installation.

Your installer should consider the complete system:

STOVE + FLUE + CHIMNEY + HEARTH + VENTILATION + PROPERTY

23. BUILDING REGULATIONS

Solid-fuel appliance installations can be subject to Building Regulations and other requirements.

These can cover matters including:

- Hearths.
- Combustion air.
- Chimneys.
- Flues.
- Clearances.
- Appliance installation.

Requirements can change and depend on the specific installation.

Always check the current requirements.

24. COMPETENT INSTALLATION

Use an appropriately qualified and competent installer.

Ask what credentials, certification or scheme membership they hold and what documentation they will provide.

You should understand:

- Who is carrying out the installation.
 - What work is included.
 - What certification will be provided.
 - What testing will be carried out.
 - What happens if a problem is found.
-

25. CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY

A solid-fuel appliance should always be treated as a potential carbon monoxide source if something goes wrong.

Carbon monoxide is:

- Colourless.
- Odourless.
- Poisonous.

Install an appropriate carbon monoxide alarm

Follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding positioning, testing and replacement. Never rely on smell to detect carbon monoxide.

26. WHAT TO ASK YOUR INSTALLER

Before work starts, ask:

"Is my chimney suitable?"

"Does it need a liner?"

"What size stove do I need?"

"Will I need additional ventilation?"

"Is the hearth suitable?"

"Are there any Smoke Control Area restrictions?"

"What certification will I receive?"

"Who is responsible for Building Regulations compliance?"

"What maintenance will the stove require?"

"How often should the chimney be swept?"

A good installer should be happy to explain the proposed installation.

27. WHAT TO ASK THE STOVE SUPPLIER

Ask:

- What is the nominal heat output?
- What fuels can I burn?
- Is the appliance suitable for my location?
- Is it approved for use where I live?
- What is the efficiency?
- What are the recommended operating procedures?
- What spare parts are available?
- How long is the warranty?
- What are the recommended maintenance intervals?
- Is a chimney liner required?

Keep the answers with your stove documentation.

28. RUNNING COSTS

Buying the stove is only the beginning.

Think about ongoing costs.

These can include:

- Firewood.
- Other approved fuel.
- Chimney sweeping.
- Maintenance.
- Replacement components.
- Repairs.
- Professional inspections where necessary.

Fuel storage also has a cost

If you burn logs regularly, you'll need somewhere suitable to store them.

29. MAINTENANCE COSTS

Every stove has components that can eventually require replacement.

Potential examples include:

- Door seals.
- Stove glass.
- Firebricks.
- Grates.
- Baffles.
- Other appliance-specific components.

Regular maintenance doesn't necessarily mean expensive repairs.

Often, identifying wear early is better than allowing a small problem to become a major one.

30. CHIMNEY SWEEPING

Once your stove is installed, don't forget the chimney.

A new stove doesn't mean you can forget about sweeping.

The chimney should be swept at an appropriate frequency based on:

- Fuel.
- Usage.
- Appliance.
- Chimney.
- Manufacturer recommendations.
- Professional advice.

Put your chimney sweep in your annual calendar.

31. COMMON BUYING MISTAKES

MISTAKE 1 — Buying the biggest stove

Why it happens: Bigger sounds better.

Problem: An oversized appliance may not be suitable for the room.

Better approach: Choose the appropriate output.

MISTAKE 2 — Choosing based only on looks

Why it happens: Stoves are attractive.

Problem: The appliance may not suit the installation.

Better approach: Check the technical requirements first.

MISTAKE 3 — Buying before checking the chimney

Problem: You may discover additional work is required.

Better approach: Assess the proposed installation first.

MISTAKE 4 — Ignoring local rules

Problem: Smoke Control Area requirements can affect your choice.

Better approach: Check your property before buying.

MISTAKE 5 — Buying cheap fuel

Problem: Wet or unsuitable fuel can cause problems.

Better approach: Buy suitable, properly dried firewood.

MISTAKE 6 — Forgetting ventilation

Problem: The appliance may require combustion air.

Better approach: Have ventilation requirements assessed.

MISTAKE 7 — Forgetting maintenance

Problem: The stove and chimney still need looking after.

Better approach: Budget for regular sweeping and maintenance.

32. THE MR SWEEP PRE-PURCHASE CHECKLIST

Before buying a stove, tick each box.

PROPERTY

Room assessed.

Heat requirement considered.

Existing heating considered.

Suitable location identified.

CHIMNEY

Chimney identified.

Chimney condition considered.

Flue requirements checked.

Liner requirements checked.

Chimney height/configuration considered.

STOVE

Correct heat output.

Appropriate appliance type.

Suitable fuel.

Suitable for location.

Current manufacturer information available.

Spare parts available.

INSTALLATION

Installer identified.
Ventilation considered.
Hearth considered.
Clearances considered.
Building Regulations considered.
Certification/documentation discussed.

SAFETY

Carbon monoxide alarm planned.
Smoke alarms checked.
Combustible materials considered.
Children/pets considered.

33. YOUR STOVE INSTALLATION CHECKLIST

BEFORE INSTALLATION

Stove selected.
Installer chosen.
Chimney assessed.
Flue requirements confirmed.
Hearth checked.
Ventilation requirements confirmed.
Local restrictions checked.
Installation requirements discussed.

AFTER INSTALLATION

Appliance instructions received.
Installation documentation received.
Relevant certification received.
Carbon monoxide alarm installed appropriately.
Stove operation explained.
Correct fuel explained.
Maintenance requirements explained.
Sweeping requirements explained.

34. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much does a log burner cost?

The total cost varies considerably.
The stove itself is only one part of the cost.
You may also need to budget for:

- Installation.
- Flue work.

- Chimney liner.
- Hearth.
- Ventilation.
- Building work.
- Certification.
- Ongoing maintenance.

Is a wood burner cheaper than central heating?

There is no universal answer.

The cost depends on fuel prices, appliance efficiency, how you use the stove, the property's heating requirements and your existing heating system.

Don't buy a stove solely because someone tells you it will definitely save money.

Can I install a stove myself?

Solid-fuel installation involves important safety and regulatory considerations.

Even where self-installation may be legally possible in particular circumstances, homeowners need to understand the applicable requirements and ensure the installation is safe and compliant.

For most homeowners, using an appropriately qualified professional is the sensible route.

Can I install a stove into my existing fireplace?

Often this may be possible, but the existing fireplace and chimney need to be assessed. The existing opening, hearth, chimney, flue and ventilation all matter.

Do I need a chimney liner?

Not every installation is identical.

Whether a liner is required depends on the chimney and proposed appliance.

An appropriate assessment should be carried out before installation.

Do I need an air vent?

It depends on the appliance and installation.

Ventilation requirements should be assessed rather than guessed.

Can I install any stove in a Smoke Control Area?

No.

Smoke Control Area restrictions can affect the appliances and fuels that may be used.

Always check the current requirements applying to your property.

Can I burn coal on a multi-fuel stove?

Only if the particular fuel is permitted for your appliance and location.

Smoke Control Area restrictions may also apply.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions and current legal requirements.

Can I burn wet logs if I only do it occasionally?

Wet wood is not recommended.

Using properly dried firewood helps support better combustion.

35. THE MR SWEEP GOLDEN RULES

1. CHECK YOUR CHIMNEY FIRST

Don't buy the stove before understanding the installation.

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT SIZE

Bigger isn't necessarily better.

3. THINK ABOUT THE WHOLE SYSTEM

Stove, chimney, flue, hearth and ventilation all matter.

4. CHECK LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

Especially Smoke Control Area restrictions.

5. USE SUITABLE FUEL

Follow the appliance manufacturer's instructions.

6. BUY DRY FIREWOOD

Moisture matters.

7. USE A COMPETENT INSTALLER

Installation is just as important as the appliance.

8. FIT AN APPROPRIATE CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM

Never rely on smell.

9. BUDGET FOR MAINTENANCE

Sweeping and replacement parts are part of stove ownership.

10. THINK LONG TERM

Buy a stove you can maintain, operate and live with for years.

36. THE MR SWEEP PRE-PURCHASE QUESTIONS

Before you spend any money, make sure you can answer:

"What size stove do I actually need?"

"Is my chimney suitable?"

"Do I need a liner?"

"Do I need additional ventilation?"

"Is my hearth suitable?"

"Is my property in a Smoke Control Area?"

"Can I burn the fuel I want to use?"

"Who will install it?"

"What certification will I receive?"

"What will it cost to maintain?"

"How often will the chimney need sweeping?"

If you don't know the answers, **ask before you buy.**

A FINAL WORD FROM MR SWEEP

A stove should be more than something that looks good in your fireplace.

It should be the right appliance for your home.

Take your time.

Assess the chimney.

Choose the correct heat output.

Understand the fuel requirements.

Check local restrictions.

Use an appropriate installer.

Plan for maintenance.

And remember that the cheapest stove or installation isn't necessarily the best value.

A properly planned installation can give you many years of enjoyment.

MR SWEEP CHIMNEYS & STOVES

PROFESSIONAL CHIMNEY SWEEPING

STAFFORDSHIRE & SURROUNDING AREAS

Thinking about buying a log burner?

Before you order the stove, speak to **Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves** about your chimney and proposed installation.

We can help you understand the questions you should be asking before committing to your purchase.

CLEAN CHIMNEY

SAFE STOVE

PEACE OF MIND

CONTACT MR SWEEP

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This guide is provided for general homeowner information only.

It is not a substitute for professional advice, appliance manufacturer's instructions, Building Regulations, government guidance, local-authority requirements, planning requirements, installation certification or other applicable legal requirements.

Requirements can vary according to the appliance, property, chimney, flue, fuel and location and can change over time.

Smoke Control Area restrictions vary between locations. Always check the current requirements applying to your exact property before purchasing or installing an appliance.

Where specialist assessment, installation, testing, certification, repair or other professional work is required, seek advice from an appropriately qualified professional.

Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves accepts no responsibility for decisions made solely on the basis of this general guide.

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