

JUST TESTING

Open and shut case

Jar and bottle openers are put to the test

Gadgets that give you extra grip or provide better leverage on a stubborn lid or stopper may not be essential, but they can save time and temper. They are also particularly useful if you have arthritic hands. Most of the jar openers tested were designed to deal with small screw-top bottles in addition, and the Brabantia Universal Opener, £4.36, could open crown caps on beer bottles.

There are several different types of jar opener on the market. Those like the Leifheit Jar And Bottle Opener, £3.99, and the Tefal Jar Opener, £11, have a pair of metal jaws that clamp

tightly around the lid, giving you a better grip, and long handles for additional leverage. If you are worried about scratching or denting jar lids, opt for an opener like the Prestige Jar And Bottle Opener, £5.49, which has a flexible rubber loop you can pull tightly round the lid before twisting it off.

Another simple but effective device is the JarKey, £2.99, by Sterling Marketing. This is placed against the edge of the lid and lifted gently to release the vacuum in the jar, making it much easier to twist off the lid manually.

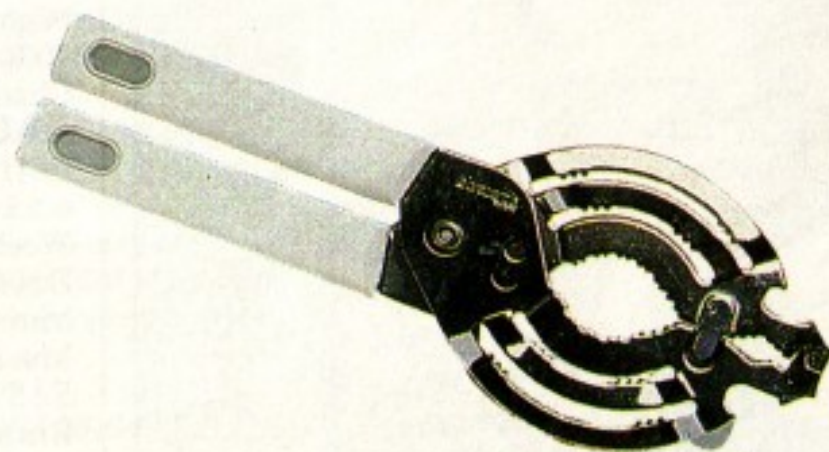
Linda Parker and Helen Barnett



Lakeland Plastics Bottle Opener, £1.50

Small, brightly-coloured, doughnut-shaped device with a ridged inner surface designed to grip securely and open a variety of bottle screw tops of different sizes. Our testers didn't find this particular design terribly successful, as the gripping surface didn't seem strong enough. For details, call 05394 88100.

Rating (out of five): ★



Brabantia Universal Opener, £4.36

Offers a choice of four metal jaws of different sizes to deal with lids up to 4 1/2in (11cm) in diameter. It also has a bottle lever for crown caps. Although handles are comfortable, the grip around jars is not always secure and teeth often slip on stubborn lids. Opens bottles reasonably well. Call 01275 810600 for stockists.

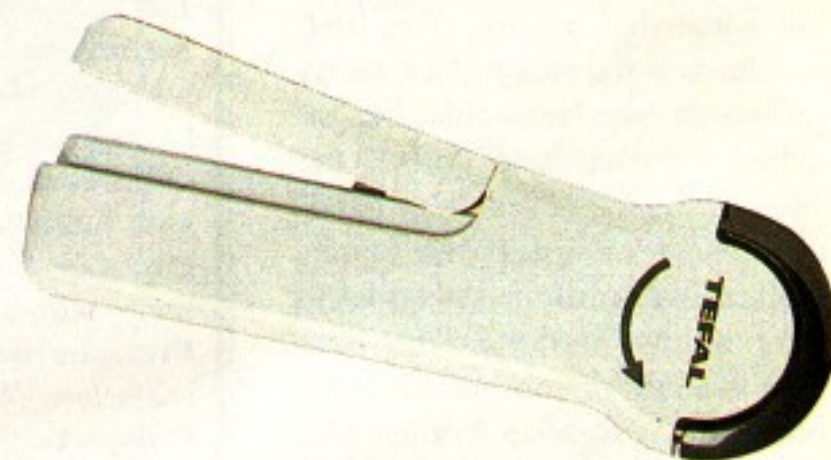
Rating: ★★★



Hermetus Crown Cap And Sealer, £2.95

A lever opener at one end of this device opens crown caps on bottles quickly and efficiently. Small teeth on the underside can be used for opening screw tops. The opener can also be used to seal unfinished crown-cap bottles and it successfully keeps beer fizzy overnight. Call 01603 488019 for stockists.

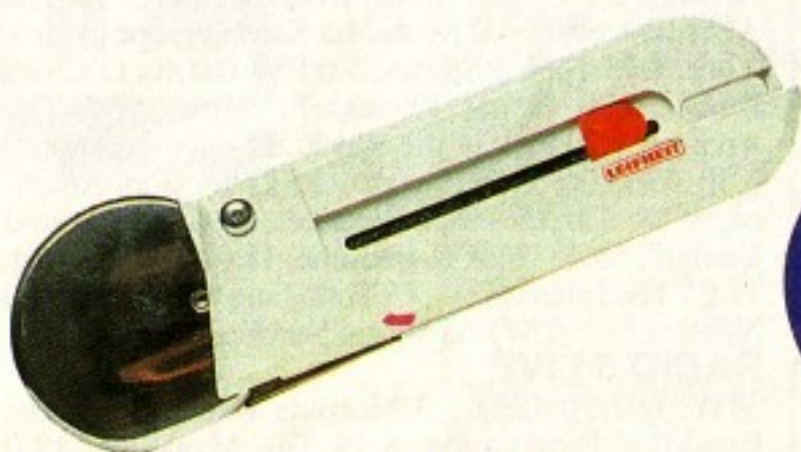
Rating: ★★★★★



Tefal Jar Opener, £11

Works on the same principle as the Leifheit opener, but spring-loaded jaws are more awkward to fit around lids — you need two hands to do it properly. Handles are comfortable and sturdy, and device opens jars and bottle tops easily. Copes with lids up to 3 1/2in (8.5cm) in diameter. Good but pricey. For stockists, ring 01604 762726.

Rating: ★★★★★



Leifheit Jar And Bottle Opener, £3.99

Metal jaws grip lids securely, making opening easy, but the teeth slip on stubborn lids. Fitting the jaws around small bottle tops is fiddly, but gives acceptable results. Useful button in handle controls jaws and means the device can be used in one hand. Copes with lids up to 6in (15cm) in diameter. For stockists, call 081-749 7211.

Rating: ★★★



JarKey, £2.99, by Sterling Marketing

Plastic opener that needs no twisting and little effort to open jars and bottles. Gently levering the JarKey against the rim of the lid releases the vacuum inside the jar, taking all the hard work out of twisting off the lid. Works well on stubborn lids of any diameter, up to a depth of 1cm. Call 071-225 3773 for details.

Best all-round performer.

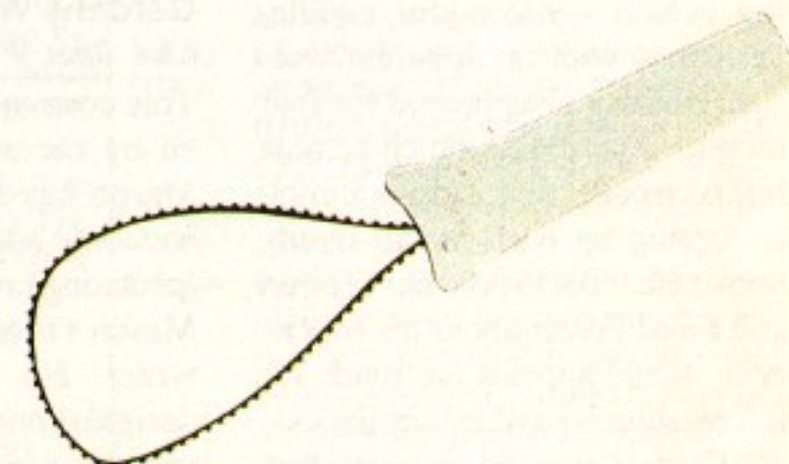
Rating: ★★★★★



Lakeland Plastics Rubber Jar Grippers, £1.30 for 2

These floppy rubber discs simply fit over jar and bottle lids, providing a non-slip surface for you to grip. Work reasonably well but are not as efficient at opening really stubborn lids; you still need a good, strong wrist to cope with these. For details, call 05394 88100.

Rating: ★★★



Prestige Jar And Bottle Opener, £5.49

Although you need two hands to fit the flexible rubber noose around lids, it is very quick and efficient at opening jars. Can be used on lids of all sizes, so is more versatile than many other openers. Works reasonably well on bottles, but rubber strip must be pulled tight or it will slip. Call 01282 830101 for stockists.

Rating: ★★★★★