

Key Takeaway

Noise is manageable if you plan ahead. Know your room type and understand that alfresco and commercial units will naturally run louder. There's a solution for every situation — we just need to match it to your setup.

Any Queries — 1300 376 849

Noise Levels – Bar Fridges Australia

Noise levels are definitely our biggest complaint over the years. The recent trend of glass door refrigeration is very popular, but a lot of people really don't know what they're buying — glass door fridges were never really available for home use until about 10 years ago.

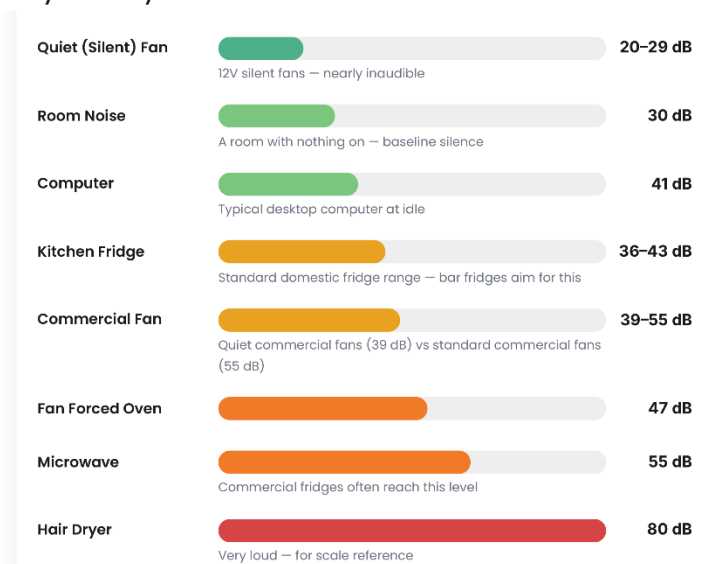
Everyone's perception of noise is different, which makes it hard to explain. The standard metric is the **Decibel (dB) rating** — a figure you can compare against everyday appliances. The scale is non-linear and surprising: 25 dB is nearly silent, a household fridge runs 36–43 dB, and a microwave reaches 55 dB — which sounds far louder than that small number gap suggests.

There are many variables that affect how loud your fridge feels in your home: the compressor type, the fans, the room surfaces, where you place it, and even whether the door is solid or glass. Understanding these before you buy can save a lot of frustration.

Noise Level Comparison Chart

*Measured at 1000mm from each appliance.
Based on median readings across 5 homes.*

*Noise level comparison — quiet fan through hair
dryer, measured in decibels.*



Understanding Fridge Noise

What the dB Scale Actually Means

The decibel scale is non-linear — small number jumps feel much louder than they look.

The dB scale is logarithmic, meaning each 10 dB increase is perceived as roughly twice as loud. This is why the jump from 39 dB to 55 dB on a fan feels enormous — it's not just 16 units, it's a dramatically louder experience.

- **20–29 dB** – Nearly inaudible. Specialist quiet fans operate here.
- **30 dB** – A completely silent room with nothing running.
- **36–43 dB** – Typical household fridge. Most people find this acceptable.
- **47 dB** – Fan forced oven. You notice it but it's not disruptive.
- **55 dB** – Microwave / standard commercial fan. Clearly audible in a quiet room.
- **80 dB** – Hair dryer. Very loud — for reference only.

Key insight

A fridge running at 43 dB in a kitchen with normal background noise will be barely noticed. The same fridge in a quiet bedroom or library-style room will sound much louder because the gap between ambient and fridge noise is larger.

Fans: The Biggest Variable

The fan is usually the loudest component.

Most of the noise you hear from a bar fridge comes from its fans — and depending on the model, it's often the condenser fan that's loudest, not the evaporator fan. The condenser fan has to cool the compressor and condenser, so it works harder; the evaporator fan just circulates air around the cabinet, so it's usually quieter by default (it's a lower-powered 12V fan). The quality and speed of these fans makes an enormous difference.

- **Standard commercial fans:** ~55 dB — very noticeable, similar to a microwave.
- **Quiet commercial fans:** ~39 dB — a massive improvement, similar to a domestic fridge.
- **12V silent fans:** 20–29 dB — nearly inaudible.

The trade-off: slower fans (quieter) move less air, so the unit takes slightly longer to recover temperature after door openings. This increases energy use marginally, but for home use it's generally the right call.

What Else Affects Noise?

Room surfaces, placement, and compressor type all play a role.

Even with a quiet fan, your environment and installation can amplify or dampen the perceived noise significantly:

- **Hard floors & walls:** Timber, tiles and concrete reflect sound — the same fridge will sound noticeably louder in a tiled alfresco than a carpeted rumpus room.
- **Cavity installation:** Built-in or under-bench installations can amplify sound if the cavity resonates. Lining the rear wall with foam or acoustic backing makes a real difference.
- **Rubber mat under fridge:** Reduces vibration transfer to hard floors. Simple and cheap fix.
- **Compressor noise:** The compressor cycles on and off and contributes noise during run periods, even if the fans are quiet — typically 39–43 dB on a quality bar fridge, rising toward 55 dB on lower-grade commercial compressors. Compressor quality varies significantly between brands.
- **Door type:** Triple-glazed and solid door units better contain internal fan noise inside the cabinet.
- **Space in front:** Units with open space in front of them tend to project less noise than ones tucked in tight spots — though it really depends on the surrounding materials. An empty room with hardwood or tiled flooring can echo and increase the perceived noise further, while a tight spot lined with a more porous material will actually absorb sound and reduce it.

Alfresco & Commercial Units

Outdoor fridges work harder and are inherently louder — here's why.

Alfresco fridges used outdoors face much hotter ambient temperatures, especially in Australian summers. To maintain temperature efficiently, they need faster fans to expel heat quickly — which means more noise.

The same applies to commercial units: frequent door openings mean the fridge needs to recover temperature fast, which requires the fans to run harder.

We can configure fans to run slower and quieter on these units, and they'll still function fine — but the trade-off is slightly higher energy consumption and longer recovery times after door openings.

💡 For alfresco placement

If your alfresco area is open-air, the ambient noise level is usually higher (wind, outdoor sounds), so fridge noise tends to be less noticeable than indoors. Covered alfresco areas with hard surfaces are where noise becomes most noticeable — foam lining on walls nearby can help significantly.

Is This Noise Normal?

Most fridge sounds are completely normal — a few are worth acting on.

Along with the expected hum of the compressor and fans, your fridge may make a couple of other sounds. Most of the time these are harmless and don't need any investigation:

- **Soft popping or cracking:** Internal parts expand and contract as temperatures change through the cooling cycle — this is a normal adjustment, not a fault.
- **A mild hum:** The quiet hum of the evaporator fan, or a slightly louder hum from the compressor, is the most common sound you'll hear and is nothing to worry about.

⚠️ Grinding, knocking or scraping

These aren't typical fridge sounds. If you hear any of them, get in touch with us so we can take a look.

Reducing Noise — Practical Fixes

Simple, low-cost changes that make a real difference — levelling, sound-absorbing materials, and placement.

Level the fridge. Uneven legs are one of the most common causes of rattly noise. Adjust each leg so it makes firm contact with the floor — some models have more than four legs, so check them all. A vibration-absorbing mat or pad underneath helps further and keeps the fridge stable.

Add sound-absorbing materials. These work by converting sound energy into heat through friction as it passes through their structure, reducing what's reflected back into the room. Effective options include:

- Carpet, rugs or a mat, plus soft furnishings in the room
- Fibrous materials — fibreglass, mineral wool, or natural fibres like wool and cotton
- Acoustic foam — open-cell polyurethane designed specifically to absorb sound waves
- Heavy fabric or curtains
- Wood-fibre acoustic panels or acoustic plasterboard

Thicker materials with a more porous structure absorb more sound — including lower frequencies. Check a product's absorption coefficient and flammability rating before using it near a fridge.

Don't block the vents

Sound-absorbing material must never restrict the fridge's ventilation clearance — see the Building In Bible for the clearances your model needs. If you're unsure where materials can safely go, give us a call.

Reposition into an alcove. If your kitchen has a recessed nook, placing the fridge there limits how far noise from the rear can travel and bounce back into the room. Adding soundproofing material to the surrounding walls further dampens it — again, keeping ventilation clearance in mind.