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CLEANING

## CAN YOU CLEAN A PATIO WITH A ROBOT VACUUM?

The owner's manual says no, but our hearts say yes



Written by [Jonathan Chan](#), senior manager of lab operations with a decade of experience testing products.

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Here at Reviewed, we spend a considerable amount of time with **robot vacuums**, so people ask us a lot of questions about these automated floor cleaners. What is **the best robot vacuum**? Are **robot vacuums worth the money**? And always: Can my robot vacuum be an outdoor vacuum?

The short answer is no.

Look through any manual and there will be a warning about not using your robot vacuum outdoors, so we can't officially recommend using yours to clean your patio. Doing so will void the warranty and damage the unit. There's even a potential for danger if the unit shorts out.

This, of course, is our in-the-office answer. But, our at-the-bar-over-drinks answer is a little different.

But if you dared us to clean a patio with a robot vacuum, this is how we'd go about it.

### What model would we choose?

Can a robot vacuum clean a patio?



If your patio is flush with the lawn, you 100% need a robot vacuum with virtual barriers and smart mapping capabilities. Certain models like the **iRobot j7+** or **the iRobot S9** map the areas that they clean and send them to your smartphone. From there, you can draw virtual barriers, telling the robots where and where not to clean.

This way when your robot is being used as an outdoor vacuum it won't end up in the neighbor's lawn.



### iRobot Roomba j7+ Robot Vacuum

\$637.70

The iRobot Roomba j7+ is our favorite robot vacuum.

[Read Our Review](#)

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### iRobot Roomba s9+ Self Emptying Robot Vacuum

\$1,099

This self-emptying robot vacuum is good for pet hair, it has powerful suction, and is controllable over Wi-Fi.

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## How we'd go about it



Credit: Reviewed / Rachel Murphy

Yes, you can use your robot vacuum to clean your patio—at your own risk.

First, look at the weather forecast. There needs to be no chance of precipitation, rain, or drizzle, or the whole outdoor vacuum endeavor will be done before it begins.

Secondly, ensure that your patio floor is in good repair. Pieces of gravel larger than a pea, loose paving stones, and large cracks can all trip up a robot vacuum. **Coarse sand is OK.** Robot vacuums are designed to deal with thresholds and small gaps, usually no bigger than about a quarter-inch to half-an-inch.

A robot vacuum will operate on a variety of surfaces, as long as they're smooth with no gaps. If you have outdoor carpeting, including that wannabe-grass, you should be fine to use a robot vac as an outdoor vacuum as long as the thickness is less than a quarter-inch.

If the patio is not raised, you'll need to line its perimeter with boxes to contain the unit and prevent it from going onto the grass. Again, this isn't a problem for robot vacuums with smart mapping technology.

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## What about indoor patios?



Credit: Reviewed / Rachel Murphy

Some patios are partially enclosed but still exposed to the elements.

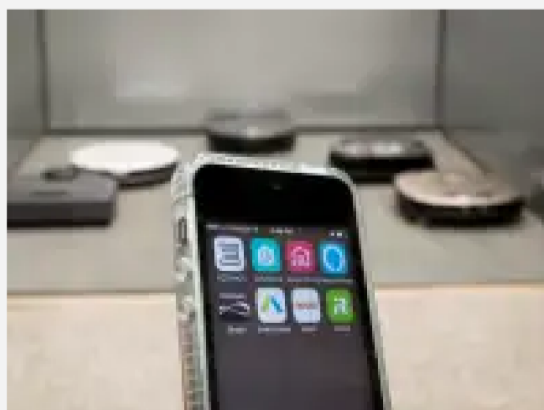
If you have a lanai or veranda enclosed with a roof, you have a lot more leeway when it comes to cleaning the space with a robot vacuum. An **affordable Roomba** is a good option for an outdoor vacuum.

The main issue to address is the weather. Your chance of success is dramatically better on a dry and sunny day, because many enclosed patios aren't sealed against the weather. That can mean they have just screens for windows or gaps in the walls to let in sunlight. It only takes a little wind for rain to go sideways.

## So, really, can you clean a patio with a robot vacuum?

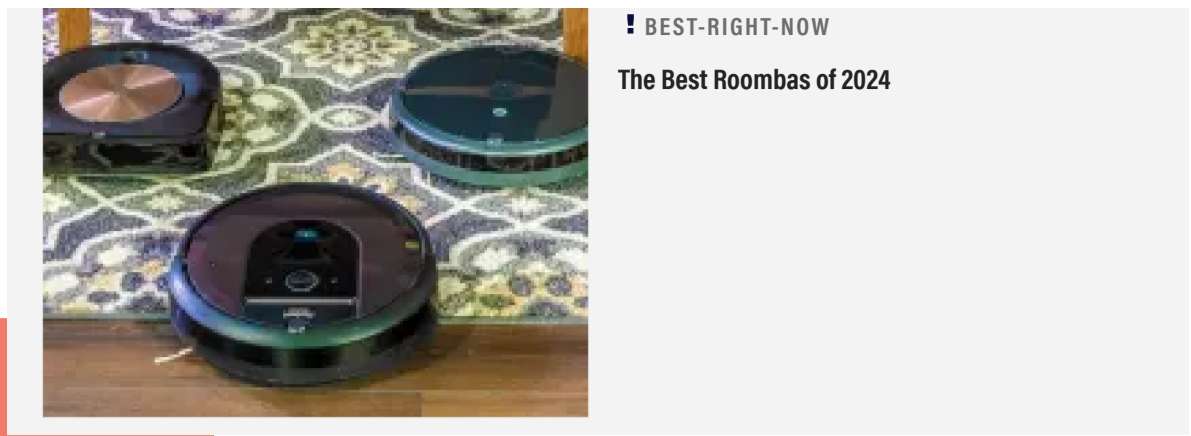
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