



# LARGE CARS

## HONDA ACCORD

£16,417 to £24,002



## LEXUS IS200/IS300

£18,709 to £30,989



## MAZDA 6

£13,112 to £20,202



There's a hushed, comfortable feel to driving the Honda Accord, particularly in the excellent diesel version. Owners love the deft engine response, smooth gear change and high-quality trim – it's a practical family car that's made a fair stab at bridging the gap to more plush executive models, such as the Jaguar X-type.

The classiness pays off with acceptable depreciation; you can be pretty sure of getting an OK second-hand price for an Accord. People know it's a good buy and feel reassured by Honda's typically solid levels of reliability.

Also typical of Honda, though, is the rather punishing suspension; go for a long test run to see how comfortable you feel with its characteristically jerky ride. While you're at it, have a go at parking – it's not always easy to see where you're going – and check the small boot space.

<b>OUR CHOICE</b>	2.2i-CDTi Sport Saloon <b>£18,747</b>
<b>USED CHOICE</b>	2.0 Sport NE (2003) <b>£9,999</b>

The stylish Lexus IS200/IS300 is a Best Buy for the fifth year running and one of the most popular large cars: 83 per cent of owners would recommend it to a friend.

Some find it a little cramped in the front but otherwise it's comfortable and enjoyable to drive; you can't help but notice the lack of engine and road noise.

Security levels are better than for the Honda but not nearly as impressive as the Mazda's. Safety is as good, reliability fantastic, and depreciation so low that you needn't give it a second thought. The only place it really falls down is the boot, where there's a shortage of space.

The difference between models is engine size: the IS200 has a two-litre engine, the IS300 a three-litre one. Both use a lot of petrol – here's hoping the new IS200 will address this problem when it goes on sale in late 2005.

<b>OUR CHOICE</b>	IS200 saloon <b>£18,709</b>
<b>USED CHOICE</b>	IS200 SE (2002) <b>£12,375</b>

The 6 is great value for money, the only Best Buy large car you can drive away for less than £14,000. And it stays easy on the wallet after you leave the forecourt: running costs are remarkably low, thanks to relatively untaxing insurance and servicing. Depreciation is reasonable, too.

The drive in the diesel version is tremendous, and the petrol model isn't too shabby, either. What's more, it's the most spacious and secure of our medium-sized Best Buys. There's plenty of leg- and headroom in the back, and loading the boot is easy. It's also harder for thieves to break into than either the Lexus IS or Honda Accord.

Safety isn't as good as on the other Best Buys, and the odd problem with exhausts and electric windows means it isn't as reliable. The road and engine noise can get a bit much as well. Overall, though, this is still a cracking car.

<b>OUR CHOICE</b>	2.0TD TS saloon <b>£16,307</b>
<b>USED CHOICE</b>	2.0TD TS saloon (2002) <b>£9,750</b>

## WORTH CONSIDERING



### JAGUAR X-TYPE

**£19,797 to £32,722**

The X-type compares well with other executive favourites, the Mercedes C-Class and BMW 3 series.

Owners find it a relaxing and smooth drive, and its classic, refined look goes down well. It's safe and secure – harder to break into than the Honda and Lexus Best Buys, in fact – but space is limited and running costs are high.



### TOYOTA AVENSIS

**£13,797 to £22,937**

There are plenty of positive things about the Avensis.

For example, it has an excellent crash-test score (perhaps no wonder, given its nine airbags); the petrol model is good to drive; there's lots of room for rear passengers and luggage; and running costs are low.

It's very nearly a Best Buy – if only it was a little better across the board.



### VOLVO S60

**£19,797 to £35,615**

The S60 is one of the safest cars in its class, and more difficult to break into than our Best Buys. It feels good behind the wheel, with a comfortable driving position, and it's well insulated against noise.

But there are a few problems – for example, poor rear visibility, quite a stingy boot and limited room for rear passengers.

## USED-ONLY BEST BUYS



### HONDA ACCORD

**Jul 98 to May 03**  
**£3,500 to £11,000**

The old Honda Accord still compares well with many cars in this class, and is well liked by owners.

But they say that boot space in the saloon is tight. And safety levels don't match the latest Accord. It's generally reliable, but brakes and air conditioning are troublespots – check before you buy.



### MAZDA 626

**Jun 97 to Jun 02**  
**£2,000 to £5,500**

The 626 is a reliable used buy that's popular with owners. It's a decent drive and there's lots of space for luggage and passengers.

But the Mazda 6's predecessor isn't perfect. The rear view is restricted and the ride is noisy. Check for problems in the brakes on any models more than seven years old.



### TOYOTA AVENSIS

**Nov 97 to Feb 03**  
**£2,800 to £9,400**

The old Avensis is every bit as driveable as the updated version. It's cheap to run and there's plenty of storage space, particularly in the hatchback and estate.

However, owners of saloon and hatchback models warn that it's difficult to park. A tight squeeze in the front won't suit larger people either.

## DON'T BUYS



### ALFA ROMEO 156

**£15,362 to £21,447**

The 156 is mostly a victory of style over substance. Don't be fooled by the sharp looks or comfortable driving position – it's a noisy, bumpy drive, cramped in the rear seats and lacking storage space.



### BMW 3 SERIES

**Apr 91 to May 00**  
**Up to £13,000**

As on the 156, a rather enjoyable drive here masks some serious problems – the oldest 3 series model has a dire crash-test score and there's a lack of space in the back and the boot.



### CITROEN XANTIA

**May 93 to Oct 00**  
**Up to £4,700**

The unattractive Xantia gets a clear thumbs-down from owners. It's scarily poor in crash tests and there's a multitude of complaints from owners – not exactly a fun drive.