

# Motoring news

## Bigger Corsa is mixed bag

**FIRST DRIVE**

**VAUXHALL CORSA**  
£7,495 TO £13,795

The new Corsa will be driven by an awful lot of people, which makes it one of the most important UK launches this year. We've driven a five-door 1.3 diesel in 'Design' specification, which has a not inconsiderable sticker price of £12,645 (bear in mind a Mazda 3 1.4 TS 5-door costs £12,700). For this, you get plenty of cabin space, air conditioning, 'sports' seats, 16-inch alloy wheels and auto lights and wipers. Disappointingly, electronic stability control is not standard on any Corsa, costing £250 extra across the range.

Initial driving impressions show the diesel engine to be sprightly enough for all types of driving – indeed, the Corsa feels very at home on the motorway. Economy is listed as 61.4mpg combined (so should give 50mpg or more for normal driving).

However, the large alloy wheels on the Corsa we tried don't do the low-speed ride comfort any favours – you can choose a lesser model with steel wheels to get around this. Perhaps the biggest oversight is with the folding seats, which have a fixed base and split/fold back rest, which leaves a big step in the boot floor when folded.

Our advice is to try before you buy, but wait until initial demand has died down – we didn't get a discount when we shopped for the new Corsa in October (see p22).



Vauxhall Corsa is bigger than before



Ford has tried to create a trendy MPV with the S-Max

## Smacks of the Galaxy?

**FIRST DRIVE**

**FORD S-MAX £16,995 TO £21,995**

The new Ford S-Max and Galaxy share many common parts and look fairly similar, but they're pitched at different buyers. The Galaxy is aimed at people who carry six or seven people regularly, while the S-Max is slightly smaller and sportier, with a pair of 'occasional' fold-down seats in the third row (mainly suitable for children). Inside, it's nicely laid out, despite a few foibles.

We've driven the S-Max with the 2.0 TDCi diesel engine, which is very smooth and powerful. It does feel quite sporty for

**The S-Max feels sporty and sure-footed but isn't cheap**

## Your say

Security guard Brian Cooper, 68, has just bought an S-Max. 'As granddad, I'm now a taxi service,' jokes Brian. 'We need the space for the pram and other baby paraphernalia, and with the third row of seats folded down the S-Max has a large boot.'



Brian plumped for Titanium spec, which comes with front and rear parking sensors. 'They're useful because you can't see the front of the car when parking,' says Brian. He also likes the seats: 'My old Mondeo gave me backache, but I've had no trouble in the S-Max.'

an MPV, with good steering feel and a sure-footed, if sometimes slightly firm, ride. The official fuel economy for this model is 44.1mpg, but around 40mpg seemed realistic in the time we spent with it.

You can also opt for a 1.8 TDCi, or choose between 2.0 and 2.5-litre petrol units. We'd plump for one of the cheaper models, as the S-Max can look a bit pricey against some rivals (see p24 for more on this).

## Mercedes shows the way

**TECHNOLOGY**

**T**he Mercedes-Benz S-class has often showcased new technology. It was the first major car to feature anti-lock brakes, in 1978, and airbags in 1981.

So we're hoping this £1,320 Night Vision system will one day be available on cars costing less than £54,215. It uses a black-and-white screen on the S-class's dash where the speedometer was, with a small bar graph

speedo underneath. We found that objects shown on the screen are bright and clear regardless of actual colour, so a person cycling without lights, or walking their dog wearing dark clothing, can be spotted much earlier than normal. The same applies to wildlife such as deer and sheep.

The screen functions a bit like a mirror – you glance at it for extra information about the road around you, but you wouldn't drive with your eyes glued to it.



Night Vision – working in Germany



**£5bn**  
what we spend on 'dent-  
and-run' repairs each year  
EBAYMOTORS.CO.UK



**33mpg**  
average fuel consumption  
of all cars in the UK last year  
DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT

Six new cars score high marks in latest round of crash tests

# Crash-test winners

## CAR SAFETY

If you're splashing out on a new car this Christmas there's some good news from Euro NCAP, the crash-test organisation of which we're a member. All the latest models to go through the programme have scored either four or five stars for occupant safety, as our round-up table, below, shows.

It's good to see that Vauxhall's new Corsa achieved the top five-star rating. The old Corsa was one of Britain's bestsellers and we expect this one to follow suit – so many buyers will benefit from its better safety.

The new Lexus IS also made the top grade, with its knee-protecting airbags for driver and front passenger proving effective in crash tests. Another car to feature a knee airbag (for the driver only) is Citroën's new C4 Picasso MPV, which also scored five stars. That will earn it fans in this family-oriented class, but its child safety score could have been better – use the C4 Picasso's Isofix child-seat fittings for best protection.

Honda's new Civic missed out on a five-star rating. Euro NCAP testers found that 'structures in the dashboard presented a potential hazard to the knees...and [in the frontal crash test] the accelerator pedal



The Lexus IS, one of our current Best Buys, scored highly

## The Honda Civic didn't make the five-star grade

moved rearward more than 10cm, posing some threat to the driver's lower legs.' But testers praised the Civic's seat-belt reminder system, which shows the belt status for front and rear-seat passengers. We still have concerns about the rear belt buckle, though (see *Which? Car 2006/07*, p17).

Kia's new Sedona MPV can't quite match the standards of Ford's new S-Max and Galaxy but is still a big step forward for the budget Korean manufacturer – the old Sedona scored just two stars in the occupant safety test in 2003.

See other results at [www.euroncap.com](http://www.euroncap.com).

EURO NCAP CRASH TESTS: LATEST SAFETY SCORES				
	CLASS	OCCUPANT (out of five)	PEDESTRIAN (out of four)	CHILDREN (out of five)
VAUXHALL Corsa	Supermini	★★★★★	★★★	★★★
HONDA Civic	Medium car	★★★★	★★★	★★★★
MAZDA 3	Medium car	★★★★	★★	★★★
MERCEDES-BENZ B-class	Medium car	★★★★★	★★	★★★★
LEXUS IS	Large car	★★★★★	★★	★★★★
CITROËN C4 Picasso	Small MPV	★★★★★	★★	★★★
FORD Galaxy	MPV	★★★★★	★★	★★★★
FORD S-Max	MPV	★★★★★	★★	★★★★
KIA Sedona	MPV	★★★★	★	★★★
AUDI Q7	Off-roader	★★★★	★★	★★★★

Note Occupant and child safety scores can be compared only with other cars in the same class

## In brief

### Fiat to fix 21,000 cars

Around 21,000 Fiat Grande Punto owners should receive a letter in November or early December advising them to take their car to a dealer to fit a missing metal plate in the steering column.

We asked Fiat in October to recall the cars (*Which?*, p7).



### Air in your spare?

Sick of emptying the boot to check the pressure in your spare? Then

Pirtek's Air in Your Spare (£15 from independent spares retailers) can help you check tyre pressure and top up your spare without lifting the boot floor. The pressure gauge on the end of the flexible hose shows when the pressure falls too low.



### Honda's new CR-V

The new CR-V arrives next month, with a lower centre of gravity and a wider track – good for on-road stability. And, let's face it, that's where most CR-Vs spend their time. It has clever folding rear seats (like those in the Honda Jazz) and a normal hatch



tailgate instead of a side-hinged door. It starts from £19,000.

### Volvo targets Audi

Continuing Volvo's thrust into sportier, sexier models, the C30 is a 'premium hatchback' intended to take on the Audi A3 and BMW 1 Series. It's not particularly large (that's not the point) but it is well appointed, with four individual seats and a glass tailgate. Prices start at £14,750 and rise to £23,795, with the first cars arriving this month.

