



Motoring focus



New, bigger A4 has that unmistakable Audi style, but a few rough edges, too

Audi on top in the space race

FIRST DRIVE

AUDI A4, £19,890 TO £34,380

Never mind *Vorsprung durch Technik*: Audi's new A4 is looking to beat its BMW and Mercedes rivals by decidedly non-technological means. It's simply bigger than either of them, or the previous model, particularly in the back seats and boot.

However, the new car is no taller, giving it a sleek style that will doubtless appeal to buyers before they worry about the costs. Mind you, it's good news there, too: the A4 generally undercuts its competition, despite a wealth of optional gadgets that you might expect only in a car from the class above.

On the road, though, the extra size shows, and the A4 doesn't feel as agile as a BMW 3 Series. However, the Audi is solid

and sure-footed and, for drivers who spend much of their lives on the motorway, it's superb. The one downside is the ride, which is firm, if rarely uncomfortable.

So far, we've driven only the TDI diesels, but almost 80 per cent of A4 drivers will do the same. And, even before you consider price and economy, the basic 2.0-litre TDI is the pick of the bunch, pulling strongly from below 2,000rpm. The fact that it's also the cheapest to buy and the most economical – claiming 51.4mpg on the combined cycle – just seals the deal.

VERDICT If you like the mature quality and understated style of Audis, you'll love the spacious and practical new A4. It's a fine motorway cruiser, so it's a shame that it's not more exciting to drive and doesn't ride more smoothly.



It's not all about your *Vorsprung durch Technik*, you know

Revisions to Navara improve its safety, but there will be no recall

Nissan airbag troubles

EURO NCAP

Euro NCap has praised Nissan's 'responsible' and 'prompt' response to a poor result for the Navara pick-up in its latest crash tests.

When the car was first tested, it received a one-star score – with the star struck through to indicate a high risk of potentially fatal injury – partly as a result of a late-firing airbag.

Nissan reacted with a 'service campaign' (not a recall) to update the airbag control software. All owners of Navaras built from 2005 onwards have been invited to visit their dealer to have the new software installed.



Navara – airbags fired late

Nissan then submitted a revised Navara for test, and it scored three stars – better, but still not that great when most new cars score more. By comparison, the Mitsubishi L200 scored four stars in the same tests.

MODEL	CLASS	EURO NCAP SAFETY SCORE		
		ADULT OCCUPANT PROTECTION (OUT OF FIVE)	CHILD OCCUPANT PROTECTION (OUT OF FIVE)	PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION (OUT OF FOUR)
BMW X3	small off-road	★★★★★	★★★★★	★
CITROËN C5	large car	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★
DAIHATSU Terios	small off-road	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
MITSUBISHI L200	pick-up	★★★★★	★★★★	★
NISSAN Navara	pick-up	★★★	★★★★★	★★
RENAULT Kangoo	small MPV	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★
SUZUKI Splash	supermini	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★

This is Euro NCap's first test of pick-ups and reflects their increasing use as family cars. The DVLA classes them as 'commercial', so self-employed workers can run one and pay less tax on it than on a 'normal' car.

Other cars tested in this latest batch include the BMW X3, new Citroën C5, Daihatsu Terios, new Renault Kangoo and Suzuki Splash, which shares much with the latest Vauxhall Agila (reviewed next month).



2 out of 3

big German makers (BMW and VW) won't be at the British Motor Show

BMW AND VOLKSWAGEN



77%

of people driving for work admit to speeding in 30mph zones

BRAKE/GREEN FLAG

New 6 benefits from weight-loss regime

Struck by lightning

FIRST DRIVE

MAZDA6, £15,100 TO £22,040

The previous Mazda6 was a real hit, so the new car has a lot to live up to. The first signs are good: despite being larger and more spacious, the new 6 is lighter, benefiting fuel economy and driving dynamics. And, as before, the trims offer lots of standard kit at competitive prices right across the range.

Much of the reason for the previous car's success was its fine drive, and it's just the same with the new car. The steering has a direct, precise feel, and the handling is good, although the price you pay for that is stiff suspension.

We've driven only the petrol engines so far and, while the 1.8 feels a little gutless and less refined, the 2.0 and 2.5 units are



New Mazda6 offers a fine drive and more space

Every trim level offers lots of kit at competitive prices

eager. However, despite better fuel economy than the previous model, the new 6 is still thirstier than many rivals.

Inside, the build quality is impressive, which is more than you can say for the unexciting design of the cabin. However, for clarity and ease of use, it's hard to fault, with neat touches, including controls on the steering wheel.

VERDICT The old Mazda6 was good to drive, spacious, well built and a joy to own, according to buyers. If our first impressions are anything to go by, this new version is no different.

VW 4x4 on right track

FIRST DRIVE

VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN
£19,370 TO £23,750

Some people may consider 4x4s the ultimate evil, but that hasn't stemmed the tide of new models, including this new Tiguan, which sits below the Touareg in Volkswagen's range.

It's just a five-seater, but the front seats are comfortable and supportive. Three children should happily fit across the back seat, while the boot capacity is similar to that of the Golf Plus.

Every model has four-wheel drive, but for real off-roading you'll need the diesel-only Escape version.

This has a less bulky front end (which makes it more capable over rough terrain), as well as hill descent control and an 'off-road' button, which reduces throttle sensitivity for smoother off-road progress.

On the road, we found the 147bhp 1.4 TSI petrol version sluggish, but the 137bhp 2.0 diesel had more pull and was far better. However, on both, the suspension was on the firm side, making for bumpy progress, even without the optional Sport suspension.

On the other hand, the Tiguan's towing capacity could be an attraction, and its safety credentials are first rate, with five-star adult occupant protection in Euro NCap



The Tiguan's 'Golf with wellies' appeal is sure to win fans

tests. Also, its residual values are expected to be strong, which is good news, as the Tiguan is not the cheapest to buy.

VERDICT With its all-round abilities, the Tiguan could well attract buyers in the market for a Honda CR-V or Toyota RAV4.

In brief

Congestion charge increase

From October, owners of high-polluting cars in London will see their daily congestion charge rise from £8 to £25 as part of the Mayor's plan to reduce the capital's greenhouse gas emissions. See www.which.co.uk/CO2charge for more details on the changes.



Land Rover sold

Ford has finally sold Land Rover (which is 60 years old this year) and Jaguar to Indian conglomerate Tata Motors for around £1.2 billion.

Under the terms of the deal, Ford will continue to supply engines and other parts to the new operation for some time, as well as providing finance to customers and dealers during a transitional period of up to 12 months. Warranties will be unaffected.



New arrivals

Audi A3 cabriolet (medium car, on sale now, from £22,290), BMW 1 Series convertible (medium car, now, £22,325 – pictured above), Chevrolet Epica (large car, now, £13,595), Hyundai i30 Estate (medium car, now, £12,995), Kia Pro_cee'd (medium car, now, from £12,295 – see 'First look', p10), Lexus IS-F (large car, now, from £51,000), Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X (medium car, now, £27,849), Seat Ibiza Ecomotive (supermini, now, £10,995), Subaru Impreza WRX STI (medium car, now, from £24,990), VW Golf BlueMotion (medium car, now, from £15,565), Audi A4 Avant (large car, June, from £23,390), BMW X6 (4x4, June, from £42,625), Honda Accord (large car, June, from £19,250 – pictured right).

