

Tried and tested

In our latest visit to the Joneses, we help the family find the best MPV to suit their needs

**MONEY
SAVED
£9,706**



Toni and Darren Jones sold their VW Golf GTI 1.8 litre because they wanted a car with greater versatility. They needed a model with six or seven seats to ferry everyone around. Toni said: 'A seven-seater will allow us to fit in the grandparents and the children's friends whenever we need to.'

To help the Joneses find the right model, our car team helped them to test drive three prospective buys.



**Honda FR-V
CTDI EX
£20,045**

On paper, the Honda had been the Joneses' leading contender. The couple had almost been tempted by a deal for the six-seater FR-V earlier in the year, but the short length of the warranty offered made them hold off. Surprisingly, first impressions weren't good. Darren said: 'I don't think the Honda is very eye-catching. In fact, it's quite bland.'

Although the powerful engine and handling impressed on a quick run around a variety of roads, the high expectations the Joneses had for the FR-V weren't met. Toni said: 'The big boot is a bonus for a car with

lots of seats, but the three seats in the front mean that space is tight.'



**Mazda5 1.8 TS2
£15,965**

The major selling points of the Mazda5 are its reasonable price tag and rear sliding doors that improve access. Sadly, the flexible seat design didn't impress. 'The under-seat storage system is clever but not very practical for us because we'd want to have the child car seats [see p56] fitted most of the time,' Toni explained.

They liked the high driving position, but a test drive did little to improve their opinion. 'The petrol engine felt sluggish and the ride was hard. Neither of us would want to drive a fully loaded Mazda,' Darren said.



**Toyota Verso
SR 2.2 D4D
£18,590**

We hoped we'd have better luck with our final suggestion, the Best Buy Toyota Verso. Its simple features fitted the Joneses' criteria, with Toni telling our car expert: 'Everything has a purpose – it feels as if the

The Joneses followed our advice and saved thousands of pounds

designers have tried not to be gimmicky.'

The Toyota's good ride and strong performance was also appealing. 'The 2.2 diesel engine is a bit of a cracker and we would be confident carrying six or seven passengers,' Darren said. The one slight drawback was the driving position. Toni felt the dash was high and wanted to adjust her seat to go higher than it could.

What happened next

Instead of buying a brand new Toyota, the Joneses followed our advice and saved thousands of pounds by opting for a used 2006 Toyota Verso 2.2-litre diesel. 'It came with built-in satnav and a 12-month warranty,' Darren said. They usually borrow from their bank, but saved nearly £66 by taking out a Best Buy loan (see p24).



■ We'd like to congratulate Toni on completing the London marathon.

How you can do it

You don't need a Which? expert with you to get the most out of test drives. Here are some quick ways to make more of your membership

- Think about your needs before you visit a garage. How often do you carry passengers? Do you need more boot space?
- Go to www.which.co.uk/cars for up-to-date car reviews, tips on buying used cars and help with comparing prices and running costs.
- Arrange to test drive as many cars as possible in quick succession to ensure you

have a good basis for comparison.

- Try to incorporate parking into a test drive to check all-round visibility.
- If you need to fit car child seats (see p56), make sure the Isofix points for securing the seat are clearly marked and easy to find.
- Check how flexible the cabin is by folding rear seats and searching out cubbyholes.

- If you need help with financing your new car, one of the cheapest ways to borrow a large sum of money is via an unsecured personal loan – see p24 for our Best Buys.

■ Consult *Which? Car 2008* – supplied free with next month's *Which?* – for more tips on how to buy a new or used car.