



**WET WEATHER GEAR:** To test wet braking, we drive on wet roads and brake the car from 50mph, measuring the distance it takes to slow to 12.5mph. On wet concrete, the Wanli S1032 M+S travelled nearly 24 metres further than the 185/60 R14 H tyre that was best in the wet – the Fulda Carat Progresso. That's nearly the length of three Routemaster buses. Tyres have to perform well in all conditions to be Which? Best Buys.

# Drive safely

Our tests mean you don't have to guess which tyre will keep you safe on the road

**W**e've put 32 tyres in two popular sizes through their paces to help you choose the one that best suits your needs. Many are from the world's biggest tyre makers, but there are some lesser-known brands in the test, too. We show you which cheaper brands can give you really good

value compared with the premium models, and which ones you should avoid at all costs.

To sort the wheat from the chaff, we assess how well they cling on when our test drivers try changing lanes and going through 's' bends at more than 90mph. We test to see how quickly they allow you to stop – both in the dry and in severe wet

conditions, on tarmac and on concrete. We check how easily the tyres slip when accelerating away, in standing water 7mm deep. And we ask our testers to see how fast they can go round a circular track that's 200 metres in diameter (about the length of two football pitches) and covered with 4mm of standing water before the car skids off.

## HOW TO MAKE YOUR TYRES LAST LONGER

In the past, we've gone to great lengths to test how tyres wear in normal service. However, with a readership as large as ours, it's difficult to emulate conditions that represent 'normal service' for everyone, so for this report we've decided to give our top tips for maximising tyre life.

**1) Check the pressure of each tyre (when cold), including the spare, every two weeks and before long journeys. Adjust**



them to the correct pressure for the load you're carrying. See your handbook (or the driver's door pillar) for details. Under-inflation will cause wear to the outer edges of the tread. Over-inflation wears the centre. Both can cause unpredictable handling.

**2) Avoid harsh braking, rapid acceleration and fast cornering,** which cause tyres to wear quickly, and avoid hitting kerbs or potholes, which can cause internal damage.

**3) Check tyres regularly for excessive or uneven wear.** If you spot anything unusual, seek professional advice.

**4) Carry out frequent checks for stones, nails and other debris** trapped in the tread grooves.



**5) Have your car's steering and suspension geometry checked** at normal service intervals or if you spot any uneven wear.

**6) Avoid parking in confined spaces** where you need to keep steering from lock to lock. This can cause 'feathering' of the tread blocks.

**7) Don't use a pressure washer on tyres.** This can wash away essential oils added to protect tyres from the sun.

### 205/55 R16 W

**Best = Kumho Ecsta HM KH31**

Braking distance on wet concrete = **45.79m**

**Worst = Hankook Ventus Prime K105**

Braking distance on wet concrete = **53.50m**

### 185/60 R14 H

**Best = Fulda Carat Progresso**

Braking distance on wet concrete = **43.81m**

**Worst = Wanli S1032 M+S**

Braking distance on wet concrete = **67.34m**

## 205/55 R16 W



**69% Continental PremiumContact 2**  
£82

The Continental PremiumContact 2 offers first-rate handling on dry roads, good wet and dry braking and good resistance to aquaplaning in bends and on straight roads. It's around average for noise, so motorway cruising at speed shouldn't be too much of a strain.

## 185/60 R14 H



**73% Continental PremiumContact 2**  
£58

With this Best Buy you'll get excellent handling on dry roads, good wet and dry braking, and decent wet grip in bends and on straight roads. Rolling resistance is around average. It's slightly noisier than some of the tyres we tested, but the tyre noise isn't intrusive.

**Which.co.uk**

To check out detailed ratings for all the tyres tested here, and another 87 tyres in seven other size groups, visit [www.which.co.uk/tyres](http://www.which.co.uk/tyres). We'll also help you save money – visit [www.which.co.uk/cheapyres](http://www.which.co.uk/cheapyres). Finally, if you're not sure how to change a wheel, watch our online video at [www.which.co.uk/changingawheel](http://www.which.co.uk/changingawheel).

The 205/55 R16 W is fitted to medium cars, such as the **Alfa Romeo 147**, **Toyota Auris** and **VW Golf**; to large cars, like the **Jaguar X-type**, **Renault Laguna** and **Volvo V40** and **S50**; and to mid-sized MPVs, like the **Chrysler PT Cruiser**, **Honda FR-V** and **Vauxhall Zafira**.



## 68% Michelin Primacy HP £90

The Michelin Primacy HP is a very well-balanced tyre, providing excellent handling on dry roads, good wet and dry braking and reasonable wet grip in bends and on straight roads. It's around average for noise, and rolling resistance is slightly lower than most, so it should give reasonable fuel consumption.



## 68% Uniroyal RainSport 2 £67

This tyre has good all-round grip, handles well in wet and dry conditions, and resists aquaplaning well on the straight and in bends. **You could buy four of them for less than the price of three Michelins (left).**

which? **EXCEPTIONAL VALUE**



## 67% Bridgestone Turanza ER300 £81

The Turanza ER300 performs well in dry conditions. Wet grip is good on the straight and acceptable in bends, and although wet braking is not exceptional, it's still OK. Noise and rolling resistance are around average, so motorway cruising should be reasonably quiet and economical. It's widely available.



## 67% Nokian Z G2 £72

The Nokian Z G2 is a very well-balanced tyre that offers first-rate handling on dry roads, good wet and dry braking, and good resistance to aquaplaning in bends and on straight roads. It's around average for noise and rolling resistance. When we checked, availability was reasonably limited.

The 185/60 R14 H is popular on superminis, such as the **Ford Fusion**, **Renault Clio** and **Skoda Fabia**, and on older medium cars, like the **Honda Civic**, **Hyundai Accent** and the **Renault Mégane**.



## 72% Bridgestone Turanza ER300 £59

The Bridgestone Turanza ER300 put in a top-notch performance on dry roads and a good performance in the wet. It's rated around average for noise, so it shouldn't be too wearing on long journeys, and slightly better than average for fuel consumption, which will help the car achieve the maker's fuel claims.



## 67% Kumho Solus KH17 £43

The Solus scored well on wet and dry braking, dry handling and wet grip in a straight line. Wet grip in bends was acceptable. **Buying a set of these instead of premium tyres like the Michelin Energy Saver (61%) could save you as much as £72.**

which? **EXCEPTIONAL VALUE**



## 67% Uniroyal Rain Expert £46

The Uniroyal Rain Expert lives up to its name tag thanks to its class-leading wet grip. Dry handling is good, and dry braking is acceptable. It's slightly noisier than average, which could prove a bit irksome on long journeys. This tyre isn't that easy to find, but in the outlets that do stock it, the price is reasonable.

## DON'T BUY

which? **DON'T BUY**

(all 185/60 R14 H)

### Vredestein Hi-Trac, £45

Dry braking and dry handling with this tyre are so poor that we suggest you steer clear of it.



### Kenda Komet SPT-1, £37

When we tested this tyre, wet braking and wet grip in a bend were well below par.



### Maloya Futura Primato, £47

The Maloya Futura Primato was the worst in this test for braking on dry roads.



### Wanli S1032 M+S, £37

This tyre is meant to be suitable for mud and snow. We found woeful wet braking and poor dry handling and wet grip in bends, which means we don't recommend it for normal UK summer conditions, let alone winter extremes.



## Contacts

### ONLINE RETAILERS

Black Circles 0845 620 2000  
www.blackcircles.com

Etyres 0800 028 9000  
www.etyres.co.uk

Event Tyres 0870 240 7787  
www.event-tyres.co.uk

Mytyres 0800 328 6532  
www.mytyres.co.uk

Pneus-online 00 33 (0) 47 8645519  
www.pneus-online.co.uk

Tyres-online 0845 450 0475  
www.tyres-online.co.uk

Tyreplus 0845 600 9730  
www.tyreplus.co.uk

Tyreshopper 0800 731 0133  
www.tyre-shopper.co.uk

Fast Tyres 0845 833 2531  
www.fasttyres.co.uk

### TYRE MANUFACTURERS (BEST BUYS ONLY)

Bridgestone 01926 488500  
www.bridgestone-eu.com

Continental 01895 425900  
www.conti-online.com

Kumho 0208 661 6112  
www.kumhotyre.co.uk

Michelin  
www.michelin.co.uk

Nokian  
www.nokiantyres.com

Uniroyal  
www.uniroyal-online.co.uk

### TYRE SAFETY ORGANISATION

TyreSafe www.tyresafe.org



MODEL	PRICE		WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE						SCORE (%)
	PRICE (£)	AVAILABILITY	DRY BRAKING	DRY HANDLING	WET BRAKING	WET GRIP (STRAIGHT)	WET GRIP (BEND)	NOISE AND ECO RATING	
<b>205/55 R16 W</b>									
<b>1 CONTINENTAL</b> PremiumContact 2	82	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	69
<b>2 MICHELIN</b> Primacy HP	90	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	68
<b>3 UNIROYAL</b> RainSport 2	67	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	68
<b>4 BRIDGESTONE</b> Turanza ER300	81	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	67
<b>5 NOKIAN</b> Z G2	72	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	67
<b>6 FIRESTONE</b> TZ300 a	71	✓✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	66
<b>7 DUNLOP</b> SP Sport Fastresponse	81	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	63
<b>8 FULDA</b> Carat Exellero	65	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	63
<b>9 KUMHO</b> Ecsta HM KH31	63	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	60
<b>10 SEMPERIT</b> Speed-Life	65	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	60
<b>11 MATADOR</b> Ultra Sport Hectorra 2	52	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	55
<b>12 HANKOOK</b> Ventus Prime K105	66	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	52
<b>13 AVON</b> ZV5	67	✓✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	51
<b>14 MABOR</b> Sport-Jet 2	53	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	47
<b>185/60 R14 H</b>									
<b>15 CONTINENTAL</b> PremiumContact 2	58	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	73
<b>16 BRIDGESTONE</b> Turanza ER300	59	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	72
<b>17 KUMHO</b> Solus KH17	43	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	67
<b>18 UNIROYAL</b> Rain Expert	46	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	67
<b>19 FIRESTONE</b> TZ300 a	48	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	65
<b>20 FULDA</b> Carat Progresso	45	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	65
<b>21 DUNLOP</b> SP Sport Fast Response	54	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	64
<b>22 MICHELIN</b> Energy Saver	61	✓✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	63
<b>23 SEMPERIT</b> Comfort Life	46	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	63
<b>24 GOODYEAR</b> DuraGrip	50	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	62
<b>25 HANKOOK</b> Optimo K415	44	✓✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	57
<b>26 YOKOHAMA</b> C Drive	54	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	56
<b>27 PNEUMANT</b> PN550	46	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	54
<b>28 MAXXIS</b> MA-V1 SURPASA	40	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	51
<b>29 VREDESTEIN</b> Hi-Trac	45	✓	★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	38
<b>30 KENDA</b> Komet SPT-1	37	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★	20
<b>31 MALOYA</b> Futura Primato	47	✓	★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	20
<b>32 WANLI</b> S1032 M+S	37	✓	★★★★★	★★	★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	10

#### USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

#### Guide price and availability

We checked availability in Jan 09 at independent, regional, national and online retailers and calculated

the average price. ✓✓ means the tyre was in 30-60% of outlets.

✓ means it was in less than 30%.

#### Test performance

**Dry braking/dry handling** How well a car fitted with these tyres grips on

dry surfaces. **Wet grip** How well the tyre grips when tackling straights and bends in the wet. **Noise rating** Based on subjective assessments and measured levels. **Eco rating** Based on how many toxic products

are emitted as the tyre wears.

#### Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Wet road grip **40%**  
Dry road grip **40%**  
Noise and eco rating **20%**