





# Growing room

If kids, dogs and garden centre trips demand a lot from your car, why not go for an estate? We pick the best for all budgets

With so many 'niche' new cars appearing, it's easy to forget the good old estate. In the days before the MPV (multi-purpose vehicle) and SUV (sports utility vehicle), millions of drivers enjoyed the flexibility of a larger boot on the back of a standard family car.

The estate used to be seen as the noisier and less attractive cousin of the saloon or hatchback it was based on. The large, open load space can amplify road and

engine noise. But with today's much more refined vehicles this isn't a problem – to most people, there is virtually no difference between the estate and its hatchback counterpart.

All of this means that, for a slight premium over the 'normal' car, you can have more load space and flexibility without having to suffer earache on a long journey. Manufacturers have made efforts to ensure their cars don't resemble

vans with windows – indeed, the current trend is to refer to estates as lifestyle 'touring' models.

However, be warned: some of these more heavily styled estate cars don't actually carry any more luggage than the hatchback or saloon they're based on.

Several of you have asked us for our Best Buy estate cars, so in this special review we've picked estates of various sizes and prices to see exactly what they can deliver.

## Luxury estates

### Big on image, not space

These luxury estates may cost slightly more than their saloon counterparts, but they do offer some added flexibility. Don't expect vast load space, though – you may be surprised to find that two of these estates are actually less capacious (when loaded up to the window line) than the medium car estates reviewed over the page.

It's also ironic that on a car costing upwards of £25,000 there's so much optional equipment. Arguably, this helps satisfy fickle customers, but the option costs soon mount up and you'll need to prioritise your budget, or even switch to a smaller-engined derivative. Try to tick off any safety options first.

## Also try...



### Volvo V70

#### Not yet tested

The all-new V70 is based on the S80 saloon – it shares its interior, engines and front-end looks. You can specify a pair of integrated child booster cushions for £260.



### Chrysler 300C 60%

Mean-streets Chrysler is loaded with chrome and is available with a monstrous 6.1-litre 425bhp V8 engine, or a Mercedes-Benz 3.0 V6 diesel for the sane among us.

## How we test

Our tests compare cars side by side and against the manufacturers' claims



### Cold starts

Our test lab includes a sophisticated 'rolling road' to help measure fuel economy (pictured, left). It's climate-controlled, so one of our tests simulates a -10°C cold start (cold starts use more fuel). At the same time, we can assess how quickly the heater warms up the car's cabin; rear-seat passengers often get a raw deal in this respect, as the air distribution is biased towards the front.

### Luggage space

Manufacturers claim an estate has a load capacity of so many litres, which assumes you will pile luggage right up to the roof. But most drivers want to be able to see out of the rear window and are worried about items flying forward in a sudden stop. So we test 'real-life' capacity, using foam blocks to accurately measure load space up to the bottom of the window line – as stated in the car reviews here.



## 78% Audi A6

£26,960 to £56,745

The 2.7-litre 180bhp V6 diesel we tested sits in the middle of the A6 range; you can also choose from 2.0 (140bhp) or 3.0 (233bhp) diesel units. There's also the option of Audi's famed 'Quattro' four-wheel-drive system (£1,250).

The A6 Avant we tried was front-wheel drive with a manual gearbox. However, it was fitted with air suspension (£1,500) and sports seats (£450), which shows you need to look past list prices and study the options list carefully.

Ride and handling are excellent – maybe not to the standards of the BMW but not far off. There's enormous pulling power available from just 1,400rpm, making for effortless cruising and overtaking.

Our test economy was a bit short of Audi's 39.8mpg, at 36.7. This doesn't match the BMW we tested, but the boot space is better at 415/785 litres (seats up/down).

Audi's MMI (Multi-Media Interface) is aimed at reducing the number of buttons on the dashboard. It's better than the BMW's i-Drive system, thanks to an easier menu system and some handy shortcut functions, although some drivers will still inevitably find it baffling.

**VERDICT** We're already a big fan of the A6 saloon, which is a Best Buy. The estate also gains this accolade although its boot isn't as large as that of the Mercedes-Benz E-class. Owners report it's been fairly reliable to date.

**Engines** 2.0, 2.4, 2.8, 3.2, 4.2, 5.2 petrol; 2.0, 2.7, 3.0 diesel **Gearbox options** 6-spd manual; 6- or 7-spd semi-auto **Model tested** A6 Avant 2.7 TDI SE (£29,105) **Test fuel economy** (combined) 36.7mpg (39.8mpg claimed) **Estimated resale value** £16,000 (55%) (3 years/36,000 miles) **Est'd running cost** £19,800 (3 years/36,000 miles)



## 72% BMW 5 Series

£29,200 to £67,725

BMW's face-lift of the 5 Series earlier this year probably passed you by. Although the exterior remains virtually identical, the engine range has been tweaked for extra economy. On some engines, the effect is pretty dramatic.

The improvements are referred to as 'EfficientDynamics' and comprise various tricks to save weight and fuel. For example, the alternator is programmed to work only when your foot's off the throttle, to reduce drag on the engine during normal driving.

We tested the 530d SE Touring Steptronic (automatic). It averaged 38.7mpg versus BMW's 41.5, which is impressive, given how it seems to take off at the slightest prod of the accelerator. The auto box shifts smoothly, and motorway revs are kept low to boost cruising economy.

Much has been written elsewhere regarding the 5 Series' prowess around corners and we wouldn't disagree – not that the ride quality suffers (our testers described it as 'tranquil'), but fitting very large alloy wheels can upset it.

Again, it seems the more you spend on an estate, the less space you get. The boot takes 395 litres, or 720 with the rear seats folded.

Sadly, the i-Drive control system (for satnav, audio and communications functions) takes some getting used to and is distracting to use.

**VERDICT** Great-driving estate with superb power and economy, if not bags of room. Diesel versions aren't as reliable as the Audi.

**Engines** 2.5 (190, 218bhp), 3.0, 4.8 petrol; 2.0, 3.0 (197, 235, 286bhp) diesel **Gearbox options** 6-spd man; 6-spd semi-auto **Model tested** 530d SE Touring Step auto (£38,490) **Test fuel economy** (combined) 38.7mpg (41.5mpg claimed) **Est'd resale value** £19,625 (51%) (3 years/36,000 miles) **Est'd running cost** £27,000 (3 years/36,000 miles)



## 72% Mercedes E-class

£29,602 to £69,097

The E-class estate breaks no new ground – indeed, it's still called an estate, which is refreshing. It's aimed at buyers looking for real load-lugging ability – the boot capacity of 550 litres is impressive, but you can expand it to a colossal 1,455 litres by folding the rear seats.

Our E220 CDI test car had a 2.1-litre 170bhp diesel engine. The options list is as long as it is costly: air suspension is £810 and 'cornering' xenon headlamps a hefty £1,120. We'd argue that automatic transmission is a must on the luxury E-class but it costs £1,480 extra. For that price it should work superbly, and it does, with shifts that are barely perceptible during normal driving. This should be the first option you tick.

You might think this basic E220CDI might struggle with the vast E-class estate body but it's impressively lively and refined. There's a hint of clatter when you fire it up from cold but it soon disappears. Economy matches that of the manual Audi at 36.7mpg (claimed 38.7).

The E-class handles well, with surprising amounts of grip available. The air suspension gives a smooth, quiet ride and automatically levels the car to compensate for any load on board. Unlike its rivals, the E-class uses 'old-fashioned' knobs and buttons for all its functions, but some are obscurely placed.

**VERDICT** The luxury estate of choice if space is the top priority, but owners have reported some reliability worries with early versions.

**Engines** 1.8, 3.0, 3.5, 5.5 petrol; 2.1, 3.0 (190, 224bhp) diesel **Gearbox options** 6-spd man; 5- or 7-spd semi-auto **Model tested** E220 CDI Classic Tip Auto Estate (£32,512) **Test fuel economy** (combined) 36.7mpg (38.7mpg claimed) **Est'd resale value** £16,250 (50%) (3 years/36,000 miles) **Est'd running cost** £24,480 (3 years/36,000 miles)

ESTATE MODEL	PRICE	WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE									SCORE %
	STARTING PRICE (£)	RISE AND HANDLING	SUSPENSION AND COMFORT	BRAKES	VISIBILITY AND PARKING	SPACE IN REAR	BOOT SIZE	BOOT PRACTICALITY	EURO NCAP ADULT PROTECTION	BRAND RELIABILITY	
AUDI A6	26,960	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	78
BMW 5 Series	29,200	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	72
MERCEDES Benz E-class	29,602	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	72



# Medium estates

## Bags of room for golf clubs

In the hard-fought medium-car class, you can get a really affordable and useful combination of abilities from mid-sized estates. There aren't many to choose from (carmakers now often produce a compact MPV instead), but that doesn't mean it's Hobson's choice – the Golf estate, for example, is a quality addition.

## Coming soon

Two new mid-sized estates are on the way from Kia and Peugeot



### Kia Cee'd SW

We like the hatchback Cee'd and the SW version is quite a looker – for an estate car. Kia claims it holds nearly 200 litres more luggage than the hatchback.



### Peugeot 308 SW

Peugeot's latest medium car is offered with a comprehensive range of efficient diesels. Euro NCAP safety results are impressive, too – see p26 for more.



## 68% Volkswagen Golf

### £14,347 to £20,417

More than three years have passed since VW launched the Mk5 Golf, but only now has it launched the estate.

The estate can actually cost less than its equivalent five-door hatch, depending on which specification you go for. VW says the boot will swallow 505 litres, but we found it takes 475 litres (40 litres of which are in a handy under-floor compartment).

Folding the seats down expands this to 840 litres. The sloping tailgate doesn't help when loading something really bulky, but the low boot floor is flat with the rear seats folded.

On the road, you'd be pushed to tell the difference between this and the Golf hatch. It feels almost as agile, with a surprisingly supple ride. It's good fun, so strap that luggage down before tackling your favourite B-road.

The high-quality cabin has some thoughtful touches, but too many features are optional – the steering-wheel audio controls cost £370 and would be standard on most rivals. At least electronic stability control is standard.

We drove the 1.9 TDI (105bhp). This isn't as sophisticated as the 2.0-litre diesel, as the engine transmits a fair amount of noise and vibration into the cabin. But economy is good at 49.6mpg, albeit short of the 54.3mpg claim.

**VERDICT** The Golf estate is a top-quality mid-sized estate. It should hold its value well, keeping running costs relatively low.

**Engines** 1.6 petrol; 1.9 TDI and 2.0 TDI diesel **Gearbox options** 5- or 6-spd manual; 6-spd semi-auto (DSG) **Model tested** 1.9 TDI SE £16,592 **Test fuel economy** (combined) 49.6mpg (54.3mpg claimed) **Estimated resale value** £8,300 (50%) (3 years/36,000 miles) **Estimated running cost** £14,040 (3 years/36,000 miles)

WHICH?  
BEST  
BUY



## 66% Ford Focus

### £13,645 to £19,195

The Focus estate is a solid, if unremarkable, workhorse. New, it costs around £850 more than the equivalent five-door hatchback, but we'd suggest buying it used, as there are plenty of depreciation-busting deals around.

Load space is remarkably similar to that of the Golf estate: 465/860 litres (with the seats up/down). But the tailgate is more upright, which could be the difference between taking furniture home in the car or having it delivered.

Like the Golf, it delivers an entertaining drive, with great steering and neutral, safe cornering. There's barely any difference between the Focus hatch and estate in terms of cabin noise.

We drove the Focus estate with the excellent 2.0 TDCi (136bhp) diesel engine, which is smooth, powerful and well mannered. Average fuel economy was 47.1mpg in our tests (official 49.6mpg), which is excellent, considering the power that's on tap. Our only criticism is engine vibration, of which there is a noticeable amount at medium revs.

Ford charges £300 extra to fit a diesel particulate filter (DPF), a device which removes most harmful soot emissions from the exhaust. We think it should be standard, along with electronic stability control (a £250 option).

**VERDICT** Discounts are easier to come by than for the Golf and, with a face-lift due in spring, prices should be very competitive.

**Engines** 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 petrol; 1.6, 1.8, 2.0 diesel; 1.8 FFV (flex-fuel; can also use E85 bio-ethanol) **Gearbox options** 5- or 6-spd manual; 4-spd auto **Model tested** 2.0 TDCi Zetec Climate w/DPF (£18,445) **Test fuel economy** (combined) 47.1mpg (49.6 claimed) **Estimated resale value** £7,000 (38%) (3 years/36,000 miles) **Estimated running cost** £16,560 (3 years/36,000 miles)

ESTATE MODEL	PRICE	WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE									SCORE %
	STARTING PRICE (£)	RIDE AND HANDLING	SUSPENSION AND COMFORT	BRAKES	VISIBILITY AND PARKING	SPACE IN REAR	BOOT SIZE	BOOT PRACTICALITY	EURO NCAP ADULT PROTECTION	BRAND RELIABILITY	
VOLKSWAGEN Golf	14,347	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	68
FORD Focus	13,645	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	66
RENAULT Mégane	14,230	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	53



## 53% Renault Mégane

£14,230 to £19,420

Renault's Mégane has been with us since 2002, and Renault-Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn has promised a replacement will arrive in 2008. For both of these reasons, there should be plenty of discounts as dealers clear stock.

The Mégane Sport Tourer exhibits all the qualities you'd associate with a French car – it rides extremely well and there's a certain amount of style, inside and out. The U-shaped handbrake is an acquired taste but seems to work well enough. Visibility is good for a modern car, as the pillars are fairly narrow.

Front passengers won't have any trouble fitting in, as there's lots of room. The seats themselves are surprisingly firmly padded, while some testers felt the backrest was a little short. The rear bench seat is a bit more comfortable but there's less shoulder-room, as the roof pillars sit right next to your head.

The Mégane is one of the biggest estates in this class, especially with the rear seats up, when you can stash 505 litres of luggage below the parcel shelf. This grows to 860 litres when you drop them down.

Build quality can't match the others here – there seems to be evidence of cost cutting in some of the cheap materials used in the cabin.

**VERDICT** It's roomy and often discounted but the Mégane loses value quickly. Its reliability record is patchy in our *Which? Car* survey.

**Engine range** 1.4, 1.6, 2.0 petrol; 1.5 (86, 106bhp), 1.9, 2.0 diesel  
**Gearbox options** 5- or 6-spd manual; 4-spd auto **Model tested** 1.9 dCi (128bhp) Dynamique auto w/DPF (£18,420)  
**Test fuel economy** (combined) 39.8mpg (42.8mpg claimed)  
**Estimated resale value** £6,275 (34%) (3 years/36,000 miles)  
**Estimated running cost** £18,000 (3 years/36,000 miles)

### USING THE TABLES

The more stars the better.

#### Price

**Starting price** The lowest on-the-road price in the estate range (including registration, delivery and 12 months' road tax).

#### Test performance

Ratings based on our rigorous

independent road tests and convenience assessments. **Boot practicality** How versatile the boot is, including space, loading and unloading. **Euro NCAP adult protection** Rating, out of five, based on car's ability to protect adult occupants in the Euro NCAP front and side crash tests. **Brand reliability** Manufacturer rating based on owner feedback from

our 2007 *Which? Car* survey. It is not model specific (see *Which? Car* for more detailed ratings).

#### Score

Ignores price and is based on:  
 Driving and practicality **45%**  
 Safety **15%**  
 Owner satisfaction **15%**  
 Brand reliability **15%**  
 Security **10%**

## What you should look for

### PULLING POWER

In heavily loaded estates, a hearty diesel is usually the best choice for power and economy

### TAILGATE

It's easy to bash your head on an open tailgate, so check compatibility between yourself and the car. Some estates have electronic tailgates, too

### BOOT SPACE

Don't assume a larger, costlier estate will be bigger. Boot shape is just as important, and some luxury estates can't match cheaper load-luggers

### ANTI-SKID SYSTEM

Electronic stability control isn't always fitted in mid-sized estates. Choose a car with it, if possible

### REAR SEATS

Besides seat space, check how easily seats fold and whether they leave a totally flat load floor to maximise space and ease of use

## Also try...

If a mid-sized estate doesn't appeal, how about one of these mini MPVs?



### Nissan Note 62%

It's a mini MPV, but you should also consider the Note if you're looking for a small estate. It's extremely practical and great value for money. The boot takes 265/595 litres (seats up/down).



### Renault Modus 60%

It shares much with the Nissan Note, its sister model, although it's not quite as large inside. That may be resolved by the new and expanded Grand Modus, due to arrive in February.



### Vauxhall Meriva 55%

The Meriva is reasonable to drive and very competitively priced with typical Vauxhall discounts. The 1.3 CDTi engine is extremely efficient and quick enough for most.

## WHICH? ONLINE

For up-to-the-minute car prices, specs, news and reviews, log on to [www.which.co.uk/cars](http://www.which.co.uk/cars) where you will find our 'Car reviews' section. This is regularly updated with new road tests, first drives and hot deals. See [www.which.co.uk/loginhelp](http://www.which.co.uk/loginhelp) if you would like help logging in.

# Large estates

So much choice – but do you want ‘lifestyle’ or utility?

Although they're usually more expensive to buy new than their medium car cousins, large cars tend to depreciate faster. They've fallen out of favour as buyers flock to buy premium-badged rivals or discover they prefer the high-riding view provided by off-roaders. There's plenty of choice if you want a large estate, though – not least the choice between lifestyle models and those aimed squarely at utility.

## OUR RESEARCH

When selecting cars to test, we look for the big sellers in the relevant sectors and the new models taking them on. We also consider your feedback – for example, many of you have asked for a review dedicated to estate cars.

Whatever the car, we put it through its paces, testing it in normal driving conditions as well as at the extremes.



## 75% Honda Accord £18,377 to £27,652

Honda's Accord underwent the most minor of revisions in September – basically just a ‘cabinet reshuffle’ of the range. It's been repositioned mainly to add value as it heads towards the end of its life (rarely does a Japanese model stay on sale for more than seven years). That's great news for buyers more concerned with value and reliability than image and outright performance.

There are only two diesel Tourer models now offered; we tried the cheaper Sport GT grade which is comprehensively equipped – satnav is standard, and the only options are metallic paint and snazzy wheels. About the only thing missing is a parking sensor; fortunately, it's not too difficult to judge where the front and rear extremes are.

The Tourer's party piece is its powered tailgate (which comes as standard). You can press a button on the dash or the key fob to open it – great if your hands are full with shopping. The boot itself holds 525 litres, expanding to 885 litres once the rear seats are folded. The back seats are a doddle to drop down, because the headrests retract automatically when the seat is folded, and the seat base also drops down to leave a flat load floor.

Honda's 2.2-litre diesel performs strongly and it's pretty quiet, too. The six-speed manual gearbox shifts very cleanly and is well matched to the engine. Some owners might have trouble slipping into parking spaces, though – the 11.7m turning circle is a bit unwieldy. And don't expect a smooth ride – the Accord can feel pretty bumpy. Honda plans to replace the Accord during 2008.

**VERDICT** You don't see many on the roads, but the Accord estate is a cracking load-lugger with good reliability. If you can put up with the firm ride, it's an excellent choice.

**Engines** 2.0, 2.4 petrol; 2.2 diesel **Gearbox options** 5- or 6-spd manual; 5-spd semi-auto **Model tested** Accord Tourer 2.2CDTi Sport GT (£21,967) **Test fuel economy** (combined) 42.8mpg (47.9mpg claimed) **Estimated resale value** £10,550 (48%) (3 years/36,000 miles) **Estimated running cost** £16,920 (3 years/36,000 miles)

## Also try...

There are numerous large estates to try if our choices don't tickle your fancy



### Alfa Romeo 159 SportWagon 55%

This Italian lifestyle estate with knockout looks is the ideal vehicle for moving your designer luggage. It drives well, with a great range of engines, but Alfa's brand reliability is poor, as is its dealer service.



### Citroën C5 Estate 58%

Thanks to hydro-pneumatic suspension, the C5 rides like a dream. It's self-levelling, too, so great for towing. The estate is enormous inside. It's due to be replaced soon, so you can expect bargain-basement prices from Citroën dealers.



### Renault Laguna Sport Tourer Not yet tested

The all-new Laguna may look similar to the old one but Renault has made very bold claims about its reliability – we'll wait and see, given the last model's record. The 1.5 dCi Tourer claims to return 53.3mpg combined.



### Vauxhall Vectra Estate 61%

The Vectra estate's big boot holds 1,850 litres (up to the roof) with the rear seats folded. But we have ongoing concerns about the Vectra's handbrake safety – see ‘Handbrake concerns grow’, *Which?*, September 2007, p4.



### Audi A4 Avant Coming soon

The saloon of the all-new (if subtly restyled) A4 is already on sale – we'll be reporting our first impressions soon. Don't expect a big boot in the estate – it will be another lifestyle model – but quality interiors are an Audi hallmark.



### Mazda 6 estate Coming soon

It's too soon to have full details on the all-new 6 range, but we liked the old model's style and practicality. The Karakuri easy-folding rear seats, which drop down via a simple pull-handle in the boot, are carried over to the new 6. It shares a chassis with the new Mondeo, so it should drive well.







## 74% Toyota Avensis

£17,245 to £23,095

It's understandable if the Avensis has slipped under your radar. It's nothing special to look at, and the range has been with us long enough to become part of the furniture of our roads.

The Avensis was refreshed in 2006

and offers deceptively good value for money. All cars get a driver's knee airbag and electronic stability control (ESC, which Toyota calls VSC).

Commendably, there are no safety options on the Avensis range (all safety kit is standard).

We tried the Avensis Tourer with a powerful 177bhp 2.2 D-Cat diesel engine. It's got bags of power as long as you keep it above 2,000 revs – below this, it feels a little flat. The standard six-speed gearbox shifts cleanly, helping us average 45.6mpg (the same as the official figure). On the downside, engine vibrations disturb the otherwise tranquil cabin.

The interior is easy to get to grips with and well screwed together. But boot space (up to the window line) is unremarkable at 430/805 litres (seats up/down). It's a bit of a pain to fold the rear seats, because first you have to take the headrests off. The tailgate sits at head-banging height when opened, too.

**VERDICT** More modest diesel engines are a better bet than the T180 we tested, and cheaper. The Avensis Tourer is a solid car but not as practical as its Accord rival.

**Engine range** 1.8, 2.0 petrol; 2.0, 2.2 (150, 174bhp) diesel **Gearbox options** 5- and 6-spd manual; 4-spd semi-auto **Model tested** 2.2 D-4D T180 (£22,745) **Test fuel economy** (combined) 45.6mpg (45.6 claimed) **Estimated resale value** £10,000 (44%) (3 years/36,000 miles) **Estimated running cost** £18,360 (3 years/36,000 miles)



## 72% BMW 3 Series

£22,215 to £37,530

We make no secret of our admiration for the BMW 3 Series. It's already a Best Buy saloon, thanks to its impeccable drive and BMW's improved reliability. The Touring version really differs only in body shape – it's still the same sharp-handling, refined and fun-to-drive car.

The super-efficient 2.0 diesel engine is offered with two power outputs. The 177bhp 320d is the beefier choice, and it's no slouch. It pulls very well even from low revs, and the manual gearbox is a peach.

The boot's measured capacity is 335 litres, which is actually 70 litres less than the saloon. However, the estate's tailgate makes access easier and, of course, the seats fold down. This creates 715 litres, which isn't enormous but might be enough for the occasional trip to the garden centre.

Standard equipment doesn't include leather seats, external audio input, xenon headlamps or an upgraded stereo. Adding these would bump up prices by £3,000 or so. But you may be able to afford these with the savings generated by the very efficient diesel engine (which returned 54.8mpg in our tests) and the strong future resale values.

**VERDICT** The 3 Series Touring is less about load-lugging and more about unruffled driving pleasure – its handling is among the best we've tested this side of sports cars.

**Engines** 2.0 (143, 170bhp), 3.0 (218, 272, 306bhp) petrol; 2.0 (143, 177bhp), 3.0 (197, 231, 286bhp) diesel **Gearbox options** 6-spd man; 6-spd auto **Model tested** 320d SE Touring (£27,120) **Test fuel economy** 54.8mpg (57.6 mpg claimed) **Est'd resale value** £14,100 (52%) (3yr/36,000 miles) **Est'd running cost** £18,360 (3yr/36,000 miles)



## 68% Ford Mondeo

£16,445 to £24,395

Ford has given its new Mondeo estate a sportier profile with a sloping tailgate. You'd expect luggage capacity to suffer as a result, but it's quite a looker and Ford has actually managed to increase load space.

Our tests show that the new estate will take 530/950 litres of luggage with the rear seats up and down, respectively. It feels big to park, though, especially if you don't have off-street parking or your garage is on the small side.

There's much to praise about the Mondeo. It drives extremely well, with a good balance between sharp handling and comfy ride.

We tested the top-of-the-range 2.5-litre five-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine, also used in the Focus ST hot hatch. There's no shortage of power but it's probably not the best engine to choose for this estate.

We achieved an average of 30.7mpg, beating the official figure by a whisker. But a diesel will undoubtedly be more frugal – we've also driven the 2.0 TDCi hatchback, which performed well and returned 44.8mpg.

Safety is excellent (see p26), with electronic stability control, curtain airbags and a driver's knee airbag as standard.

**VERDICT** The Mondeo estate is attractive, very spacious and a pleasure to drive. But depreciation is a worry and reliability is still unknown – so it's not a Best Buy.

**Engine range** 1.6 (110, 125bhp), 2.0, 2.3, 2.5 petrol; 1.8 (100, 125bhp), 2.0 diesel **Gearbox options** 5- or 6-spd man; 6-spd auto **Model tested** 2.5T Titanium X (£24,395) **Test fuel economy** (combined) 30.7mpg (30.4mpg claimed) **Est'd resale value** £9,275 (38%) (3 years/36,000 miles) **Est'd running cost** £23,040 (3 years/36,000 miles)

ESTATE MODEL	PRICE	WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE									SCORE %
	STARTING PRICE (£)	RIDE AND HANDLING	SUSPENSION AND COMFORT	BRAKES	VISIBILITY AND PARKING	SPACE IN REAR	BOOT SIZE	BOOT PRACTICALITY	EURO NCAP ADULT PROTECTION	BRAND RELIABILITY	
HONDA Accord	18,377	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	75
TOYOTA Avensis	17,245	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★★	74
BMW 3 Series	22,215	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	72
FORD Mondeo	16,445	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★★	★★★★	68