



ROAD
REPORT

WHAT MAKES A VEHICLE HASSLE-FREE

QUICK READ GAUGES

The speedometer, fuel gauge, and other information displays are simple to read and understand.

UNCOMPLICATED CONTROLS

Physical knobs and buttons tend to make more sense than fussy digital menus.

COMFORTABLE SEATS

Supportive padding, multiple adjustments, and adequate legroom provide the most pleasant seating.

GOOD VISIBILITY

Unobstructed outward views make a car easier to drive. Large windows and thin roof pillars help.

THE 9 EASIEST CARS TO DRIVE

These models top our ratings in how effortless they are to use in your everyday life. Think comfy seats, straightforward controls, and good visibility.

by Benjamin Preston



MORE RELIABLE

Nothing causes stress like a car that's constantly in the shop for repairs.

EASY ACCESS

Vehicles with hip-height seats and wide door openings are less difficult to enter and exit.

NICE DRIVER POSITIONING

An ergonomic driving position reduces fatigue over time, making the journey more enjoyable.

SMOOTH RIDE

The best suspension systems soak up bumps nicely and keep occupant-jostling to a minimum.

QUIET INTERIOR

Excessive tire and wind noise can be irritating. Adequate soundproofing allows greater tranquility.

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ANCY WILLIAMS, a retired public school administrative assistant, says she has always considered her vehicle as “simply a way to get me from here to there.” That is, until she leased her first Subaru Forester, with its wide windows, comfortable seats, and simple controls. “It’s the perfect size,” says the 74-year-old, who lives in Lexington, Ky. “The GPS screen is large and easy to follow, and you can pack a couple of kids in there.”

With its unique body design, the Forester is small enough to navigate crowded parking lots but big enough to hold large plants from the nearby Lowe’s, Williams says. “It feels heavy when you drive. It’s not a dinky little car.”

When the lease on her 2018 model was up, she signed a new one for a 2021 version, which is slightly wider and comes with safety features she likes, such as automatic emergency braking (AEB).

With shoppers like Williams in mind, we used our test data to identify CR-recommended vehicles that are the easiest to drive, including the Forester. We looked for vehicles with the highest scores in nine variables. (See the previous pages.) These autos boast smooth rides, easy access, uncomplicated infotainment systems, and unobstructed views, among other stress-reducing attributes.

Many of the models are sedans in the \$35,000 range. No trucks and just one large SUV made our list, because those bigger vehicles can be difficult to get in and out of and are trickier to maneuver and park. You also won’t see any luxury cars, because many have complicated infotainment systems and are prone to technical problems, such as software glitches. The models here offer standard forward collision warning (FCW) and AEB with pedestrian detection.

As CR-recommended vehicles, they have strong reliability, owner satisfaction, and road-test scores. They’re arranged by category and then by the price of the entry-level trim.



WITH ITS COMFORTABLE front and rear seats, good outward visibility, and quiet cabin, Volkswagen’s affordable, fuel-efficient compact sedan proved easy to drive for CR’s testers. Wide door openings make the Jetta easy to access, and its controls make sense and won’t leave you scratching your head. The

suspension system provides a soft, pleasant ride. The driving position is good for visibility and comfort, with plenty of headroom, and the front seats offer ample legroom. The rear seats have comfortable cushions, and because the Jetta is longer than most of its competitors, it has plenty of rear-seat

legroom and a large trunk. As an added stress-relieving bonus, all trim levels of the Jetta come standard with blind spot warning (BSW) and rear cross traffic warning (RCTW). Child car seats are fairly easy to install, although three car seats are not likely to fit next to one another across the back seat.



MIDSIZE SEDAN

✓ Kia K5

\$23,790 - \$31,190

76 OVERALL SCORE 32 MPG

A ROOMY SEDAN, the K5 has slim roof pillars and long side windows that offer excellent outward visibility. CR testers liked the raised lip on top of the interior door panel that makes it easier to close the doors from inside the car. Higher trim levels—including the all-wheel-drive LXS—come with the most comfort-

able driver’s seat, although the GT-Line and EX trims come with larger wheels and lower-profile tires that can make the ride less smooth. The rear seats have plenty of room for passengers of all sizes. The cabin layout is fairly conventional, and the K5’s traditional gear selector, gauges, and controls are logically placed and easy to use. Buyers are rewarded for choosing a lower trim level by getting the smaller 8-inch infotainment screen, which comes with wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay; the larger screen doesn’t. All trims also get dual-zone climate control with three levels of automatic fan speed—a feature you don’t realize you need until you have it. BSW is standard on all trims but the base level.

MIDSIZE SEDAN

✓ Subaru Legacy

\$23,495 - \$36,695

87 OVERALL SCORE 28 MPG

THE LEGACY SEDAN is a perennial favorite among CR testers, not least because it offers the sort of smooth ride, quiet cabin, and desirable features often seen in luxury cars that cost a lot more money. The Legacy also delivers the best ride comfort

of any midsize sedan we’ve tested, and even eclipsed much more expensive sedans, such as the Mercedes-Benz E-Class and the Lexus LS, in the ride comfort category. Slim roof pillars allow excellent outward visibility, and the Legacy’s driver’s seat area can accommodate people of various sizes. Regardless of the trim, generously padded armrests add to the driver’s comfort. The Premium trim includes supportive leather seats and a power-adjustable driver’s seat, and the more basic cloth seats offered in the lower trims are comfortable, too. Heated and ventilated front seats are available and add a bit of extra comfort during inclement weather.



MIDSIZE SEDAN

✓ Toyota Camry Hybrid

\$27,980 - \$33,420

86 OVERALL SCORE 47 MPG

THE CAMRY is a longtime stalwart among sedans. CR testers found that the hybrid version, with its quieter powertrain and outstanding fuel economy, is the one to spring for when looking for a car that’s easy to drive and to live with. Like all Camry models, it features a comfortable driver’s seat with

multiple adjustments, easy-to-use controls, and a smooth, quiet ride that soaks up most bumps. Slim A-pillars and simple styling allow for big windows and great visibility compared with many other sedans. The hybrid comes standard with automatic climate control, and its cargo area doesn’t make any sacrifices

on account of the large hybrid battery sitting beneath the trunk. The Hybrid’s list of standard active safety features includes low-light pedestrian detection, daytime cyclist detection, lane departure warning (LDW), and lane keeping assistance (LKA). Rear-seat-reminder systems come standard on all trim levels.





SMALL SUV

✓ **Subaru
Forester**

\$25,895 - \$35,995

90 OVERALL
SCORE 28 MPG

AS IN YEARS PAST, the Forester is a no-nonsense utilitarian vehicle that has a roomy interior, a smooth ride, and good fuel economy. Large

door openings provide easy access. An upright driving position, combined with tall windows, makes for easy outward visibility. The Premium trim includes single-zone automatic climate control, and the All-Weather package adds heated front seats and side mirrors. Unlike other Subaru models, the Forester has a simple infotainment system, with physical buttons and knobs that make the climate controls easier to use. LDW, LKA, and adaptive cruise control (ACC) come standard on all trims.



MIDSIZE 2 ROW SUV

✓ **Subaru
Outback**

\$27,645 - \$40,645

85 OVERALL
SCORE 24 MPG

WITH ITS SLIGHTLY ELEVATED ride height and upright driving position, the Outback has most of the benefits of an SUV in an easier-to-manage, not-quite-SUV package. It outshines similar SUVs in

terms of ride and handling but still offers strong light-duty off-road capability. Outward visibility is excellent, and the interior is roomy, with lots of cargo space—especially with the back seats folded down. Both front and rear doors offer good access to the seats, which are supple and supportive. The Outback has a quieter cabin than the taller, slightly smaller Forester, and its roof rack crossbars swivel easily to the side when not in use to further reduce wind noise at highway speeds. Like the Forester, the Outback comes standard with LDW, LKA, and ACC. BSW, RCTW, and rear automatic braking are optional.



SMALL SUV

✓ **Toyota
RAV4 Prime**

\$40,300 - \$43,625

88 OVERALL
SCORE 34 MPG*

*Gas only



THE PLUG-IN HYBRID version of the RAV4 has a smoother, more comfortable ride than its gasoline-only and conventional hybrid (non-plug-in) counterparts, possibly because of the greater weight of its plug-in hybrid battery pack.

When running in its electric-only mode—the driver can decide when to use its 42-mile EV range—the RAV4 Prime is quiet. Hybrid mode is quiet, too; electric assist keeps engine revs low. The Prime's interior is a little nicer than other versions of

the RAV4, with more soft-touch surfaces throughout. Drivers of all sizes will benefit from ample legroom and an upright seating position that aids outward visibility. The controls are easy to use, thanks to large knobs and physical buttons.

PHOTOS: SUBARU (2); CHEVROLET; JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS; HONDA

MIDSIZE 3 ROW SUV

✓ **Chevrolet
Traverse**

\$33,920 - \$53,600

83 OVERALL
SCORE 20 MPG



OF ALL THE THREE-ROW SUVs CR has tested, the Traverse is the easiest to drive. It has all the attributes of a hassle-free car. Large front and rear doors offer painless access to a quiet, cavernous interior, and even though the roof pillars are rather wide, outward visibility is

very good due to large windows. An optional surround-view camera system makes visibility while backing up even better, aiding maneuverability, and the third-row headrests flip down for unobstructed rear views. A long wheelbase lends itself to a smooth ride.

Inside, the controls are logically arranged and easy to use, and a built-in WiFi hot spot and multiple USB charging ports will appeal to families with multiple devices to charge and connect. Access to the third row is uncomplicated. All-wheel drive is an optional feature.



MINIVAN

✓ **Honda
Odyssey**

\$37,340 - \$49,470

79 OVERALL
SCORE 22 MPG

SUVs AND PICKUP TRUCKS may be more popular, but minivans have long provided a level of practical versatility that can't be beat. The Odyssey, with its huge interior, flexible seating, smooth ride, and prolific child car-seat anchoring options, is the easiest to drive and enjoy among this dwindling breed of family hauler. An

elevated driving position and large windows create great outward visibility, and a standard multi-angle backup camera makes it even better. A low floor, tall roof, and big doors allow easy front-seat access. Large sliding doors on both sides make second-row access even better. LKA, road departure mitigation, and ACC are standard on all trims.