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Best and worst used cars

The most reliable models and those to avoid

Last reviewed: April 2010

The average new car loses 47 percent of its value in the first three years of ownership. That's why savvy consumers know the smart money is on used cars, which have already taken that hit. But finding a good, reliable used car can be a challenge.

The Best of the Best list on these pages guides you to 2000 to 2009 models that scored well in our tests when new and have been consistently reliable over time. Each has achieved multiple years of above average [used-car verdicts](#), indicating that owners have had relatively few problems.

Models built by Honda and Toyota dominate the list. Several Toyota models that would normally have been included were left off this year's list, however, because at the time this issue went to press they were recalled for a sticking accelerator pedal but dealers were only beginning to get the necessary parts to fix them. Some models listed here, including the Toyota Highlander, Prius, and Tacoma and the Lexus ES and IS, have been recalled for "floor-mat entrapment," which can also cause unintended acceleration. That can be easily remedied by removing the floor mat; a hardware fix is also available at dealerships (for more information on the Toyota recalls, see our [unintended acceleration guide](#)). When buying any used car, always check that any recall work has been performed.

The Worst of the Worst list shows models that have had multiple years of belowaverage reliability, so you can steer clear of them. Reliability data are derived from our Annual Auto Survey, which generated responses from subscribers on about 1.4 million vehicles.

Best of the best

These are the most well-rounded vehicles in nine categories. We highlight the top choice and list other contenders in order of their overall reliability scores for model years 2000 to 2009. Each model has at least three years of reliability data.

Small cars

Honda Civic

The Civic is reliable, economical, and fun to drive. In 2003 the Hybrid model arrived, and 2006 brought standard antilock brakes and curtain air bags. But electronic stability control is available only on later high-end models. The Honda Fit hatchback is smaller than the Civic.

Other good choices:

- Honda Fit
- Toyota Echo
- Volkswagen Rabbit
- Scion xB
- Mazda3
- Subaru Impreza (nonturbo)
- Mazda Protegé

Family cars

Honda Accord

The Accord is a very reliable choice and is enjoyable to drive. It's a quiet, agile car that received a standard antilock brake system with the 2003 redesign. In 2006 the V6 models received standard ESC, which was added to all models with the 2008 redesign. The Toyota

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Prius hybrid is a good choice for the fuel-economy-minded, and the Ford Fusion and Mercury Milan have very good reliability and are affordable.

Other good choices:

- Toyota Prius
- Ford Fusion (FWD)
- Mercury Milan (FWD)
- Mazda 6 (4-cyl.)



Honda Accord

Upscale cars

Lexus ES

The ES has continually been a very reliable choice. It's quiet and comfortable and became more fuel efficient in 2004. In 2007 standard ESC was added. The Lincoln MKZ and Zephyr are reliable domestic cars.

Other good choices:

- Lincoln MKZ, Zephyr (FWD)
- Acura TSX
- Acura TL
- Lexus IS
- Infiniti I30, I35
- Infiniti G
- Hyundai Azera
- Volvo S60 (FWD)

Luxury cars

Infiniti M35

The M35, a reliable, luxurious sedan, is enjoyable to drive whether you're cruising on a highway or navigating a twisty road. A more luxurious but less sporty choice is the Lexus LS.

Other good choices

- Lexus LS
- Lexus GS (RWD)
- Acura RL
- Mercedes-Benz E-Class (V6, RWD)

Sports and sporty cars

Mazda MX-5 Miata

The Miata is affordable and fun to drive, with its nimble handling and slick shifter. Look for models built after 2006, when the Miata got standard ABS. The Honda S2000 is a more hard-core roadster, and the Lexus SC is geared more toward luxury.



Mazda Miata

Other good choices

- Honda S2000
- Lexus SC
- Toyota Camry Solara
- Acura RSX
- Toyota Celica
- BMW Z3, Z4 ('00-06)
- Nissan 350Z
- Ford Mustang (V6)
- Porsche 911

Small SUVs

Honda CR-V

The comfortable, carlike CR-V has a smooth, spirited four-cylinder engine and gets good fuel economy. Look for models from 2005 on, when ESC and curtain air bags became standard. Reliability has been better than average each year.

Another good choice:

Acura RDX
 Hyundai Tucson
 Mitsubishi Outlander
 Kia Sportage ('05-09)
 Ford Escape Hybrid
 Mercury Mariner Hybrid
 Subaru Forester

Midsized & large SUVs**Honda Pilot**

The Pilot is a roomy, refined, and fuel-efficient SUV. It has flexible seating for eight passengers, and crash-test results are impressive. The Toyota Highlander is another good car-based SUV, and the truck-based 4Runner is a good choice for serious off-roading.



Honda Pilot

Other good choices:

Toyota 4Runner
 Toyota Highlander*
 Lexus RX
 Toyota Land Cruiser
 Acura MDX
 Infiniti FX35
 Infiniti QX4
 Hyundai Santa Fe (V6)
 Lexus GX (except '08-09)
 Subaru Tribeca

Minivans**Honda Odyssey**

The Odyssey is a spacious and comfortable minivan that has always had a good ride and handling. A 2005 redesign improved interior flexibility. Look for models built after 2003. The Sienna is more plush but less enjoyable to drive.

Another good choice:

Toyota Sienna

Pickup trucks**Honda Ridgeline**

The Ridgeline combines the handling of a car with the utility of a pickup truck. The cabin is easy to access, and the engine is smooth and responsive. Choose the Tacoma if you need a traditional pickup truck.



Honda Ridgeline

Other good choices:

Toyota Tacoma V6 ('05-09)
 Subaru Baja

Worst of the worst

These vehicles have multiple years of much-worse-than-average reliability among 2000 to 2009 models. They're listed alphabetically.

Audi A6 Allroad	GMC Jimmy
Cadillac SRX	GMC S-15 Sonoma (4WD)
Cadillac STS (V8)	Jeep Commander
Chevrolet Aveo	Jeep Wrangler (four-door)
Chevrolet Blazer	Kia Sedona
Chevrolet Colorado (4WD)	Lincoln Aviator
Chevrolet Monte Carlo	Mercedes-Benz R-Class
Chevrolet S-10 Pickup (4WD)	Mini Cooper Convertible

Chevrolet TrailBlazer (V8)	Oldsmobile Silhouette
Chevrolet Uplander	Pontiac Montana, Montana SV6
Chevrolet Venture	Saturn Relay
Chrysler Sebring Convertible	Volkswagen Cabrio
Chrysler Town & Country	Volkswagen New Beetle (turbo)
Dodge Caravan (V6)	Volkswagen Passat (V6, FWD)
Dodge Grand Caravan	Volkswagen Touareg
GMC Canyon (4WD)	Volvo XC90 (6-cyl.)
GMC Envoy (V8)	

* Recently recalled by Toyota

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