

Used CARS

FIND A GOOD, CHEAP RIDE

Ten years of reliability data showed that the 2008 Mazda3 s and 2005 Honda CR-V hit the sweet spot for less than \$10K.

CHECK FOR RECALLS

Before buying a used car, be sure all recall work has been performed.

LOOK UNDER THE HOOD

But don't stop there. Giving a car close scrutiny, headlights to tailpipe, could save you from driving home a disaster.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT YEAR

Reliability varies by year, so don't make assumptions based only on a model's reputation.

GET THE PERFECT PREOWNED

CR's auto experts tell you why buying a car that's been around the block is a wise choice—and what to do before taking it home. Story on page 80.

Used Cars We Recommend to Family and Friends

Whether you have \$10,000 or \$25,000, there's a safe, reliable ride that's right for you

NEED NEW WHEELS but have a tight budget? Consumer Reports has long advocated buying used as a way to get the biggest bang for your buck. It's simple math: After one year, a new car has depreciated 27 percent of its sticker price; after three years, it's worth barely half of its sticker. When someone else takes the depreciation hit on the car, you benefit.

But picking out a good used car from a sea of bad ones has never been easy. You want to buy one that's reliable, affordable, and equipped with modern safety features. Add in the desire to avoid a car that has been damaged in an accident or a natural disaster, and the process can feel overwhelming.

It doesn't have to be. We've created this handy guide to help you find the small cars, sedans, and SUVs that are most likely to fulfill your needs without breaking down and soaking you in repair bills.

Every vehicle on this list performed well in our tests when it was new and has had above-average reliability for the model years shown, based on our latest Annual Auto Survey. Each also came standard with electronic stability control (ESC), unless otherwise noted. Consider these the used cars we'd recommend to our family and friends.



LESS THAN \$10,000

SMALL CARS

(with available ESC)

Mazda3 s (2008)

Pontiac Vibe (2005-08)

Volkswagen Rabbit (2007-09)

The Mazda3 has everything most shoppers want in a small car: reliability, fuel efficiency, a fun-to-drive attitude, an interior that feels upscale for the price, and seats that won't leave your back and behind screaming. The Vibe is a reliable and roomy compact hatchback similar to the Toyota Matrix. The Rabbit

hatchback is an alternative for shoppers who want a sporty, European driving experience and richer interior materials.

SEDANS

Acura TL (2005)

Acura TSX (2005)

Toyota Avalon (2005)

Hyundai Sonata 4-cyl. (2006-08)

Kia Optima 4-cyl. (2007-08)

You can stick to your budget and still get a reliable luxury car if you choose the slick-handling Acura TL or the coddling and

cavernous Avalon (with optional ESC). The TSX is a smaller but sportier alternative based on the European Honda Accord, and the economical Sonata and Optima deliver roominess and reliability in slightly newer packages.

SUVs

Honda CR-V (2005)

Mitsubishi Outlander (2007)

Honda Pilot (2005)

Standard ESC and curtain air bags, combined with near-minivan levels of space, make the reliable CR-V a can't-miss prospect. Need three rows in a pinch? Consider the

USED CARS

Outlander and its handy split tailgate. For even more room, check out the eight-seat Honda Pilot with its smooth V6 acceleration and carlike handling.

\$10,000 TO \$15,000

SMALL CARS

Subaru Impreza (2010)

Kia Soul (2010-12)

Standard all-wheel drive, the availability of hatchback and sedan body styles, and a rear seat with room for three adults contribute to the Impreza's versatility. The boxy—yet stylish—Soul has tons of features for a small car and an expansive cargo space, making it a smart choice for recent grads.

SEDANS

Infiniti G35 (2006-07)

Acura RL (2005-06)

The G35 is exhibit A in how to blend sporty handling with interior refinement. For less of a racetrack feel, the RL's all-wheel-drive traction, luxurious interior, and reliability make it a wise choice, once you get past its plain looks.

SUVs

Acura MDX (2005-06)

Toyota Highlander V6 (2005-07)

The MDX's quiet interior and responsive handling put an enjoyable spin on family-friendly vehicles, showing why it's the standard for three-row crossover SUVs. The rock-solid reliable Highlander is a slightly smaller package, but for some it's a handier size.

\$15,000 TO \$20,000

SMALL CARS

Toyota Prius (2010-13)

Hyundai Elantra (2013-14)

Honda Civic (2013-14)

The Prius has always proved that you don't have to give up space or ride comfort to get stellar gas mileage, and the redesigned 2010 model brought a quieter engine and standard electronic stability control. Lots of features for the money, a roomy backseat, and responsive handling make the Elantra a great deal. Go for a 2013 or newer Civic to

get its much-needed interior, braking, and suspension upgrades.

SEDANS

Honda Accord (2008-12)

Toyota Camry (2010-12)

Lexus ES (2007-08)

A cavernous backseat, Honda's usually responsive reflexes, and 23 mpg (25 mpg in 2011-12) from the four-cylinder engine make the Accord a perennial crowd pleaser. Ample room for five adults and stellar reliability make the Camry a no-brainer choice. The similar ES takes the Camry formula and adds luxury appointments, road-trip-worthy front seats, and a hushed cabin.

SUVs

Lexus RX (2006-08)

Toyota RAV4 (2009-11)

The RX is the go-to upscale SUV for used-car buyers, with its almost-never-leave-you-stranded reliability, plush seats, and a luxury ride. The hybrid offers that plus 23 mpg overall. The RAV4 is the rare small SUV to offer a V6 engine. It's a budget hot rod, and some came with a kid-friendly third-row seat.

\$20,000 TO \$25,000

SEDANS

Toyota Camry Hybrid (2012-13)

Infiniti M (2009)

With its composed ride and handling, and class-leading 38 mpg, we think the Hybrid is the best Camry available. The Infiniti M is reliable, luxurious, and fun to drive, whether it's powered by the strong V6 or snorting-bull V8.

SUVs

Lexus GX (2006-07)

Nissan Murano (2011-12)

Toyota Highlander Hybrid (2009)

A rock climber in a tux, the GX takes the off-road capability of a Toyota 4Runner and wraps it in Lexus luxury. The Murano has long been one of our favorite SUVs, with secure handling and a rich interior. The roomy three-row Highlander Hybrid delivers compact-car fuel economy and Lexus-like refinement—at a nonluxury price.

The Worst of the Worst Used Cars

These models, listed alphabetically, are the worst of the worst. They have multiple years of much-worse-than-average overall reliability, based on 2005-14 models, according to our Annual Auto Survey. Assessment for each is based on at least three model years of data.

BMW 330i, 335i

Buick Enclave

Buick Terraza

Chevrolet Cruze (1.4T)

Chevrolet Uplander, Venture

Chrysler PT Cruiser

Chrysler Town & Country

Dodge Grand Caravan

Dodge Journey

Dodge Ram 2500 and 3500 (diesel)

Ford F-250 and F-350 (diesel)

Ford Fiesta

GMC Acadia

Jeep Wrangler (4-door)

Kia Sedona

Mercedes-Benz GL-Class

Mini Cooper S

Mini Countryman

Nissan Pathfinder

Saturn Outlook

Saturn Relay

Volkswagen CC

Volkswagen GTI

Volkswagen Tiguan



CHEVROLET CRUZE



MINI COUNTRYMAN

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