

Top Picks

The best models of the year in 10 categories



Six new models made our Top Picks list this year, representing a diverse selection from Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. No automaker dominates; the 10 picks come from six manufacturers and eight brands, which reflects the increasing competitiveness within today's auto market. Toyota is the only brand with more than one model.

Our Top Picks are the best all-around models in their

categories. They are chosen from the more than 270 vehicles we've recently tested and must meet our criteria in three areas:

Road test. Each must rank at or near the top of its category in overall test score, which includes the results of more than 50 individual tests and evaluations.

Reliability. Each must have earned an average or better predicted-reliability Rating, based on the problems CONSUMER REPORTS subscribers reported on

1.3 million vehicles in our latest Annual Auto Survey.

Safety. Top Picks must perform adequately if tested by the government or the insurance industry. In addition, each must offer electronic stability control, a proven lifesaving safety feature, as standard equipment.

Each model's report card shows its overall road-test and predicted-reliability Ratings, as well as its overall fuel economy in our tests. Multiple Ratings

apply to different versions of the same model. (See our Vehicle Ratings, page 27.) Prices are the retail amount for our tested cars. You can find more details on all of the Top Picks in the Vehicle Profiles, which begin on page 40.

Videos of the 2011 Top Picks are available free at www.ConsumerReports.org/april.



SMALL CAR

Hyundai Elantra

Redesigned for 2011, the Elantra delivers a lot for the money. With its makeover, this well-rounded sedan is now more stylish and engaging to drive. The Elantra provides fairly nimble handling; a decent ride, a smooth, responsive powertrain; a well-finished interior; and a relatively roomy rear seat. It's also miserly on gas, achieving 29 mpg overall

in our tests and 39 mpg on the highway. We expect this new model to be as reliable as the previous one. Price: \$18,445.

REPORT CARD	
Test score: ●	Reliability: ●
Overall mpg: 29	

BUDGET CAR

Honda Fit

Electronic stability control is now a standard feature in the 2011 Fit, which helps solidify this versatile subcompact hatchback as the best in its class and a great value. The Fit provides an amazing amount of interior space for its size, aided by a flexible rear-seat design in which the seatbacks can fold down or the lower cushion can flip up to open an area stretching from floor to ceiling. Agile handling makes the Fit enjoyable to drive. And it pays back with excellent fuel economy: 30 mpg overall with an automatic transmission, 33 mpg with a manual. Price: \$16,020 to \$16,730.

REPORT CARD	
Test score: ●	Reliability: ●
Overall mpg: 30-33	



FAMILY SEDAN

Nissan Altima

The Altima provides an impressive balance of comfort and performance while delivering some of the best fuel economy in its class: 26 mpg overall for four-cylinder models and 24 mpg with a V6. The Hybrid version gets 32 mpg. Its comfortable ride, secure handling, and spirited acceleration make the Altima enjoyable to drive. And it has a roomy, well-finished, and very quiet interior. The

four-cylinder models earned an above-average reliability Rating, and the V6 model was average. Price: \$23,970 to \$30,335.

REPORT CARD	
Test score: ●-●	Reliability: ○-●
Overall mpg: 24-32	



SMALL SUV

Toyota RAV4

The RAV4 returns to our Top Picks list for the fourth time in the past five years. Its winning formula includes a roomy interior, agile handling, and very good fuel economy for its class. The four-cylinder version provides the best gas mileage of any automatic, nonhybrid SUV we've tested. The spirited V6 version accelerates

about as quickly as the Cadillac CTS and Volkswagen GTI and gets only 1 mpg less than the four-cylinder model. A small third-row seat is optional. Price: \$25,405 to \$31,435.

REPORT CARD	
Test score: ●	Reliability: ●
Overall mpg: 22-23	

GREEN CAR

Toyota Prius

Even as more hybrids have entered the market in recent years, the Prius still gets the best fuel economy—44 mpg overall—of any vehicle we've recently tested. Moreover, the Prius is a pleasant car to drive, with a roomy interior, a comfortable ride, hatchback versatility, and excellent crash-test results. That combination of attributes has helped it earn our pick in this category for the eighth straight

year, the longest run of any current model. Software problems in the antilock brake system affected the first-year reliability of this redesigned model, but those problems have been fixed. Price: \$26,750.

REPORT CARD	
Test score: ●	Reliability: ○
Overall mpg: 44	



FAMILY SUV

Kia Sorento

The Sorento was redesigned for 2011 and is now a more well-rounded SUV. A roomy, nicely finished interior includes comfortable seats and easy-to-use controls. An optional third-row seat, although tight, allows the Sorento to carry up to seven passengers. The smooth V6 engine provides good performance and fuel economy—20 mpg overall—that's as efficient as the base four-cylinder engine. The Sorento is also stocked with an inviting list of features for its price, making it one of the bargains of this class. Price: \$26,590 to \$32,390.

REPORT CARD	
Test score: ●-●	Reliability: ○-○
Overall mpg: 20	



SPORTY CAR

Ford Mustang

One of the high points of this iconic sports car is the strong, rumbling V8 engine that propels our GT coupe and convertible test cars. It delivers scorching acceleration, a great exhaust sound, and good fuel economy for this class. For 2011, the Mustang received a refined, punchy V6, which provides strong acceleration and a decent 24 mpg overall with a manual transmission. But there's now more to the Mustang than power. Agile handling, a decent ride, comfortable front seats, and very good fit and finish make this thoroughly modern version a reasonable choice for daily driving. A tight rear seat limits passenger versatility, though. Price: \$28,880 to \$43,880.

REPORT CARD	
Test score: ●-●	Reliability: ●-○
Overall mpg: 22-24	





SPORTS SEDAN

Infiniti G37

The G37's inviting combination of agile handling, blistering acceleration, and a luxurious interior makes it one of our highest-scoring sedans and earned it a spot on this list for the fifth straight year. It's fun to drive on a twisty road but is still a fairly comfortable cruiser on the highway. A snug cabin and small trunk are the only notable weaknesses. Rear-wheel drive is standard, all-wheel drive optional. New for 2011 is a less expensive G25 model that gets 24 mpg, 3 better than the G37. Price: \$37,225.

REPORT CARD

Test score: ● **Reliability:** ○
Overall mpg: 21

FAMILY HAULER

Toyota Sienna

The previous Sienna set a high standard for minivans, earning it a place in our Top Picks in three of the past five years. Redesigned for 2011, the current model doesn't quite live up to that standard, but it's still a very comfortable, versatile minivan with excellent reliability. The spacious cabin can seat up to eight people. The engine delivers lively performance and decent fuel economy. And the Sienna is still the only minivan available with all-wheel drive. The redesigned Honda Odyssey scored slightly higher in our testing, but we don't have reliability data yet. Price: \$35,810 to \$38,201.

REPORT CARD

Test score: ● **Reliability:** ●
Overall mpg: 20



PICKUP TRUCK

Chevrolet Avalanche

This versatile crew-cab model is unique among full-sized pickups. Its unified bed and cab helps give it a steady, comfortable, quiet ride. And the innovative partition between the cab and bed can be folded to extend the cargo area into the back of the cab. That allows the truck to carry longer cargo. A three-piece bed cover provides a weather-tight and lockable cargo area. We recommend getting the optional backup camera to reduce the truck's large blind zone. Price: \$47,435.

REPORT CARD

Test score: ● **Reliability:** ○
Overall mpg: 14



WHY OUR CARS HAVE CONNECTICUT PLATES

We buy the cars we test—more than 80 vehicles each year, at a cost of more than \$2 million. We purchase them in various states, but we register them in Connecticut, home of our Auto Test Center. That's why our cars bear the plates of the Constitution State.