Autotrader Names 10 Great Cars for Grads in 2021

Editors Recommend Best New, Used Rides for Recent College Graduates

ATLANTA, May 17, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- After getting through another trying school year, many of this year's college graduates are in the market for a new vehicle as they launch into the world to forge their chosen path. Following the commemoration of the hard work they put in during the student years, young adults find themselves in need of their own car as they begin this next phase of life. To help guide the class of 2021 as they consider which vehicle to purchase, the experts at Autotrader recently named 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates with a practical focus on value, fuel economy, safety and reliability.

"Whether you're still driving the car you've had since high school or you're ready to purchase your first-ever vehicle, college graduates need affordable, reliable transportation," said Brian Moody, executive editor for Autotrader. "There are many factors to consider and hundreds of different car models available in the marketplace, so it can feel overwhelming when trying to decide which vehicle to choose. We understand that with a job offer in hand it may be tempting to consider splurging on a dream car, but we advise grads not to overdo it. There are plenty of great new and used cars available for a reasonable price that won't stretch your first real paychecks too far."

All vehicles on this year's 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates list – a mix of new and used cars and SUVs – are available for under $25,000 and achieve a combined fuel economy rating of at least 30 mpg. Check out the Great Cars for Grads selections for 2021 (unranked and listed below in alphabetical order):

Autotrader's 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates in 2021

2021 Chevrolet Trailblazer
The recently re-introduced new Chevrolet Trailblazer, with a starting price of $20,195, is a great choice for young adults looking for something stylish, versatile and affordable. This subcompact crossover is roomier than you may expect and comes with a solid list of standard tech features.

2018 Ford Focus
Available as a hatchback or sedan and a starting price of around $13,200, the Ford Focus is a great option in affordable used compact cars. The 2018 Focus features a well-designed interior that is aging well so far, and a fun-to-drive character - especially in the high-performance ST model.

2017 – 2018 Honda Civic
The reliable and efficient Honda Civic is a value-conscious choice that becomes an even better value on the used market after a little depreciation. You should be able to find one starting between $15,500-$17,400. Available as a sedan, coupe or hatchback, you can choose the Civic model that best suits your needs and style.

2018 – 2020 Hyundai Kona
The Hyundai Kona is a small, stylish, high-tech SUV. While it's likely most practical if you won't have regular backseat passengers or a ton of cargo, it's surely an affordable way to stand out in traffic - especially if you pick one of the more eye-catching paint colors available. A 2018-2020 Kona starts between $17,300-$20,000.

2021 Kia Soul
Some call it a hatchback and some call it an SUV, but either way the Kia Soul consistently is one of our favorite small cars. This quirky yet practical vehicle has a low base price (starting at around $18,765), a great warranty and a roomy interior thanks to its funky boxy shape.

2021 Mazda3
The athletic Mazda3 is a great choice for something on the sporty side of practical compact cars. Available as either a sedan or a hatchback and also available with AWD, it's fun to drive at any speed with agile handling, an eager base engine and a more exciting available turbo engine that still keeps the price under $25k (the Mazda3 starts at around $21,645). It also has available AWD, which is rare in this segment.

2021 Nissan Sentra
The Nissan Sentra is an affordable compact sedan with a muscular attitude, drawing inspiration from bigger, more expensive Nissan sedans. With a stylish exterior, an upscale interior and a lot of standard safety features, we like that you can go up to the top SR trim while still staying in the low-$20,000 range—the Sentra starts at around $20,410.

2021 Subaru Crosstrek
The Subaru Crosstrek is a small crossover that's big on quirks. Starting at around $23,295, there's nothing else quite like it with its unconventional look and impressive off-road chops thanks to tall ground clearance and standard AWD. If you need an efficient, practical car, but also like the idea of occasional off-road adventures, the Crosstrek can do it all without breaking the bank.

2016 – 2018 Toyota Prius
While some may argue that the Toyota Prius won't win any beauty contests, a used Prius is one of the most sensible car-buying decisions a college grad can make. Starting between $15,100-$19,300, the Prius is safe, reliable, affordable, roomy for a compact hatchback, and incredibly fuel-efficient. It achieves over 50 mpg in the city and on the highway.

2016 – 2018 Volkswagen Jetta
The Volkswagen Jetta boasts a strong engine lineup along with a spacious cabin and trunk for a compact sedan. Starting between $11,700-$14,500, the 2016 model year is a good spot to begin your search because that's when the Jetta got a standard touchscreen infotainment system and USB port plus a new turbocharged base engine.

To learn more about Autotrader's 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates in 2021, including photos, detailed vehicle information and available inventory, visit https://www.autotrader.com/best-cars/10-best-cars-recent-college-graduates-281474980013135.

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