Autotrader Names 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates in 2023

ATLANTA, June 1, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- May officially kicked off graduation season, with a fresh new crop of college graduates accepting their diplomas and heading off into the world in the market for a new vehicle to take them down their chosen path. To help new grads sort out their vehicle choices as they embark upon the journey called "real life," Autotrader, a Cox Automotive company, has named the 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates.

"Today's grads have it better than ever when it comes to the wide variety of affordable, good-looking, eco-conscious and tech-laden new vehicles available in today's marketplace," said Brian Moody, executive editor for Autotrader. "The Class of 2023 also has the benefit of dealer inventories bouncing back and prices evening out from the crisis the auto industry experienced over the last few years, so their chances of finding the vehicle they want at a fair price has greatly improved. While Autotrader's list of the 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates consists of new 2023-model-year vehicles, we definitely recommend graduates also consider adding used vehicles – particularly certified pre-owned (CPO) models – to their consideration lists."

In recognition of the likelihood that graduates' finances may take a while to catch up with their ambition, Autotrader's list of the Best Cars for Recent College Graduates recommends new vehicles with a base manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) under $30,000, which is substantially below the average cost of a new car in the United States. The list features a wide variety of options, including a mix of gas, hybrid and battery-powered vehicles, along with SUVs, sedans, hatchbacks and even a pickup truck. Below are Autotrader's choices for the 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates in 2023, listed in alphabetical order by brand:

Autotrader's 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates in 2023*

1. 2023 Chevrolet Bolt EUV
Starting MSRP: $27,800
This electric vehicle (EV) is in its last year of production, but the 2023 Chevrolet Bolt EUV represents a solid value for grads who want to start their post-education lives driving an example of forward-looking technology. This roomy compact SUV has an all-electric range of up to 247 miles on a full charge and may qualify for a federal tax credit of up to $7,500.

2. 2023 Ford Maverick
Starting MSRP: $22,595
Grads often find themselves on the move, and a compact pickup truck like the 2023 Ford Maverick can be a game-changer. The base truck comes with a 2.5-liter hybrid gasoline-electric powertrain good for 37 mpg, crew-cab configuration, and a slew of convenience features.

3. 2023 Honda Civic
Starting MSRP: $23,750
The 2023 Honda Civic is an excellent choice for grads for several reasons. Not only is it a lot of car for the money, but it also comes with legendary Honda build quality and reliability. Below our $30,000 limit, grads can choose from the Civic Sedan, Civic Hatchback and Civic Si Sedan – only the Civic Type R is beyond reach at $43,795.

4. 2023 Honda CR-V
Starting MSRP: $28,410
As one of the pioneering vehicles of the compact crossover SUV set, the CR-V has a long reputation for quality and value. The 2023 Honda CR-V is a mature, elegant iteration and undeniably the best version of the CR-V so far – and a willing companion

for the adventures only a new graduate can imagine.

5. 2023 Hyundai Sonata Hybrid

Starting MSRP: $28,250

As long as sedans like the 2023 Hyundai Sonata Hybrid keep rolling off the line, graduates who want to make an intelligent, grown-up choice will keep buying them. With Hyundai's traditional value-packed feature set, a 10-year/100,000-mile powertrain warranty, and EPA-reported fuel economy estimates of up to 54 mpg on the highway, the Sonata Hybrid earns consideration from well-educated graduates.

6. 2023 Kia Niro Hybrid

Starting MSRP: $26,590

Kia offers the Niro as a hybrid (HEV), plug-in hybrid (PHEV) and pure electric (BEV). New grads can snatch up the 2023 Kia Niro Hybrid starting at $26,590 with an EPA-estimated 53 mpg and up to 588 miles of range on a full tank of regular gas. The Niro's compact footprint and hatchback/crossover form make it a great companion for city dwellers and road-trippers alike.

7. 2023 Mazda Mazda3 Hatchback

Starting MSRP: $23,550

The Mazda3 consistently ranks well among compact cars as a responsive, fun-to-drive hatchback. In recent years, Mazda has upgraded its interiors to near-luxury levels, even on base models. The 2023 Mazda3 is a hatchback a graduate can live with for years, as appropriate for a young professional as it is for a rising executive.

8. 2023 Subaru Forester

Starting MSRP: $26,495

While many grads clamor for the new subcompact Crosstrek or stretch for the wagon-like Outback, the smart money considers Subaru's middle child, the Forester. With its tall cabin and many available off-roading options, the 2023 Subaru Forester is great for active grads who crave a competent off-roader at a bargain price.

9. 2023 Toyota Corolla Hybrid

Starting MSRP: $23,050

The Toyota Corolla is the world's all-time best-selling car, and the 2023 Toyota Corolla Hybrid continues the tradition and ups the ante with an efficient hybrid powertrain capable of delivering up to 53 mpg. This budget-friendly machine is good-looking, fun to drive, and has Toyota Safety Sense 3.0 as standard equipment, just the ticket for new graduates.

10. 2023 Toyota Prius

Starting MSRP: $27,450

Toyota has been selling the Prius in the United States since 2001 – maybe for as long as many graduates have been alive. As the hybrid car that started it all, the Prius has drifted out of the spotlight as BEVs have become the media stars of the moment. But a sexy new design and some upgraded technology make the 2023 Toyota Prius an excellent choice for grads, as the sensible hybrid boasts capability, dependability, value and style in one attractive package.

**Vehicles are listed alphabetically by brand.*

To learn more about the 2023 list of the 10 Best Cars for Recent College Graduates from Autotrader, including pricing details, photos, additional vehicle information and available inventory, visit https://www.autotrader.com/best-cars/10-best-cars-recent-college-graduates-281474980013135.

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