

Autotrader Names Best Cars for Recent College Graduates in 2025

Expert Recommendations for New Grads Amid Volatile Automotive Marketplace

ATLANTA, May 12, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- When May comes around, many college graduates are in the market for a new getaway car as they race toward their exciting futures. To help guide grads toward making wise choices, Autotrader, a Cox Automotive brand, recently named the [Best Cars for Recent College Graduates in 2025](#). Given looming tariffs* and volatile pricing in the automotive marketplace, it's more important than ever for car shoppers to maximize their research and consider the advice from experts.

"College students are graduating into a very uncertain economic climate this year, which adds yet another layer into the massive purchase decision that is buying a new car," said Brian Moody, executive editor for Autotrader. "The most recent data from Cox Automotive reveals the average price of a new car in the United States reaches above \$47,000, but we don't necessarily recommend new grads spend that much as they launch into their new phase of adulthood. There are plenty of great vehicles, both brand-new and gently used certified pre-owned (CPO) models, that will fit the bill perfectly at a sub-\$30,000 price point."

All of the featured 2025 model-year vehicles make the grade when it comes to the Autotrader editors' three primary criteria for this list. First, candidates must have a starting price under \$30,000,** including destination charge. Next, they must have a 5-Star Overall Safety Rating from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA). And finally, each car must have at least one cool feature that stands out to the editors. This cool thing may be functional, it might be part of the design, or it might be unexpected, but it is a feature grads will appreciate.

Below, presented in alphabetical order by brand, are Autotrader's 2025 choices for the Best Cars for Recent College Graduates:

Autotrader's Best Cars for Recent College Graduates in 2025
2025 Chevrolet Equinox
2025 Honda Civic
2025 Hyundai Elantra and Elantra Hybrid
2025 Kia K4
2025 Mazda3
2025 Mazda CX-30
2025 Nissan Rogue
2025 Subaru Crosstrek
2025 Toyota Corolla
2025 Toyota Prius

To learn more about the Best Cars for Recent College Graduates in 2025 from Autotrader, including each vehicle's standout cool feature, pricing details, photos, additional vehicle information and available inventory, visit <https://www.autotrader.com/car-shopping/10-best-cars-recent-college-graduates-281474980013135>.

*For the latest information on auto tariffs, visit <https://www.autotrader.com/tariffs>.

**New-car pricing is expected to be volatile this year, so Autotrader cannot guarantee that listed cars currently under \$30,000 at the time of publishing will stay that way all year with expected tariffs and price increases.

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About Autotrader

Autotrader is the most recognized third-party car listings brand, with the most engaged audience of in-market car shoppers. As the foremost authority on automotive consumer insights and expert in online and mobile marketing, Autotrader makes the car shopping experience easy and fun for today's empowered car shopper looking to find or sell the perfect new, used or Certified Pre-Owned car. Using technology, shopper insights and local market guidance, Autotrader's comprehensive marketing and retailing solutions allow consumers to build their deal online, and guide dealers to personalized digital marketing strategies that grow brand, drive traffic and connect the online and in-store shopping experience. Autotrader is a Cox Automotive™ brand. Cox Automotive is a subsidiary of Cox Enterprises. For more information, please visit <http://press.autotrader.com>.

About Cox Automotive

Cox Automotive is the world's largest automotive services and technology provider. Fueled by the largest breadth of first-party data fed by 2.3 billion online interactions a year, Cox Automotive tailors leading solutions for car shoppers, auto manufacturers, dealers, lenders and fleets. The company has 29,000+ employees on five continents and a portfolio of industry-leading brands that include Autotrader®, Kelley Blue Book®, Manheim®, vAuto®, Dealertrack®, NextGear Capital™, CentralDispatch® and FleetNet America®. Cox Automotive is a subsidiary of Cox Enterprises Inc., a privately owned, Atlanta-based company with \$22 billion in annual revenue. Visit coxautoinc.com or connect via [@CoxAutomotive](#) on X, [CoxAutoInc](#) on Facebook or [Cox-Automotive-Inc](#) on LinkedIn.

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