

THE BUYERS GUIDE

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RATING THE CLASS • USED & BEST BUYS

Standing out from the average

The Motor News team looks at some options available in the medium family car segment

Choosing a medium family car is not an easy task. These days it has to be able to survive the urban jungle, do the school run, carry the kids to soccer practice and still traverse the length and breadth of SA on the weekend or during the school holidays.

Do you put style before practicality? Hatchback or sedan? Diesel, petrol or even hybrid? The choices in this segment seem almost endless but some basic rules still apply. If you are looking for an all-rounder then make sure it has versatility. Do the rear seats fold down for

extra storage or longer loads? How practical is the boot space? Be wary of hatchbacks which have a stylish coupe-inspired rear end which sometimes cuts off part of the boot space. If you only need to drop in a shopping bag then fine, but if you need to get the football kit for three teenagers in there, you might battle.

A sedan might give you that executive look but if you need a car that you can put the dog in, then a hatchback is a better option. A crossover would also fit the bill. Some crossover models have a bit of go-anywhere ability but some are all just show. Decide if you want something to look cool outside the pavement or if you really are going to have to drive across a field on the weekend.

Finally, the whole point of a family car is that it suits the needs of the family. Does it have good mounting points for a child seat? Are there USB ports for the kids' iPods? Will the car accommodate the family as it grows? There are so many things to consider you might think style is way down the list, but a car is often a reflection of you so always buy the best you can afford — just make sure the kids like it, too.

MN Top 5

1. Volkswagen Golf
2. Kia Cerato
3. Hyundai i30/Elantra
4. Honda Civic
5. Ford Focus

MN Top Pre-Owned Pick

1. Volkswagen Golf
2. Toyota Corolla
3. Ford Focus
4. Toyota Auris
5. Honda Civic

A to Z Medium family car



GEELY EMGRAND EC7 MN verdict ★

Geely's Emgrand EC7 remains unproven and, while it comes in at a relatively low pricing point, fit and finish is below par for the segment. Resale value is yet another thorn in its side, and a great many buyers in the segment are more than likely to lean towards a more traditional offering. To its credit the vehicle offers acres of space both from the passenger and the luggage quarters. The engine is lacklustre and lacks the overall refinement of its competitors.

CO₂ emission: 9.1l/100km **Power:** 102kW
Consumption: 9.1l/100km **Torque:** 172Nm
Range price: R149,900-R164,990
Our pick of the range: GT Executive



HONDA CIVIC MN verdict ★★★★★

The current generation Civic in the instance of the hatch offers sporty styling and a range of peppery and frugal petrol and diesel engines. Packaging is a highlight with a decent boot and interior space. However, the rear window spoiler hinders rearward vision, while the digital speedometer is also awkwardly obstructed by the steering rim. Resale value is one of the marque's inherent highlights. Build quality comes from the top drawer whether you go hatch or sedan.

CO₂ emission: 14.6g/km **Power:** 104kW
Consumption: 7.3l/100km **Torque:** 174Nm
Price range: R218,400-R356,400
Our pick of the range: Elegance 5dr



HYUNDAI ELANTRA MN verdict ★★★★★

Having won the 2012 South African Car of the Year competition, the Elantra's swoopy styling and high specification value at the price saw it take the top podium spot. The 1.8i engine in the flagship model is peppery while the six-speed manual transmission has a good rapport with the powerplant. Pricing is also keen so you are getting a great deal of car at the price.

CO₂ emission: 15.5g/km **Power:** 110kW
Consumption: 7.8l/100km **Torque:** 178Nm
Range price: R221,900-R264,900
Our pick of the range: 1.8 Executive



HYUNDAI i30 MN verdict ★★★★★

Essentially an Elantra with its boot lopped off, the i30 boasts similar specification features and engine range as its bootied sibling. Although comfortable, the ride is a little on the harsh side and steering feedback, despite the addition of a sport setting to add more weighting, still errs on the vague side. At the pricing point though, you still get a great deal of vehicle.

CO₂ emission: 15.7g/km **Power:** 110kW
Consumption: 8.7l/100km **Torque:** 178Nm
Range price: R244,500-R264,900
Our pick of the range: 1.8 Executive



KIA CERATO MN verdict ★★★★★

The Cerato range continues to impress and, while the previous generation was a steady proposition, the drive was remote. In part thanks to the vague electric steering, the driver felt disconnected from the drive. The new model addresses this, while the design with its LED driving lights makes the vehicle stand out. The Coup will soon join the hatch and sedan and will feature the company's first turbo-charged engine, so it should deliver livelier performance than its predecessor.

CO₂ emission: 17.3g/km **Power:** 118kW
Consumption: 8.7l/100km **Torque:** 194Nm
Range price: R219,995-R289,995
Our pick of the range: 2.0i



MAZDA 3 MN verdict ★★★★★

Now nearing the end of its lifecycle the current model never quite captured the imagination of the public as much as its predecessor. It offers a comfortable and well-appointed interior while the raft of engines and good handling ability makes it a fun vehicle to drive. Of course, the advent of the Korean offerings means it lacks a great deal of specification in comparison, particularly at the price. An all-new model will make its much needed debut during the course of 2014.

CO₂ emission: 18.7g/km **Power:** 110kW
Consumption: 9.4l/100km **Torque:** 187Nm
Range price: R213,300-R346,200
Our pick of the range: 2.0i Individual



MG6 MN verdict ★★

Perhaps not capturing the essence of the brand since it was taken over by its new Chinese custodians, the model comes with an all turbo engine line-up meaning performance up on the reef should prove sprightly. Interior ergonomics are not the model's strongest point and it competes among a bevy of more traditional brands, so its appeal is rather limited. Resale value is yet another bane when replacement is due.

CO₂ emission: 19.1g/km **Power:** 118kW
Consumption: 9.4l/100km **Torque:** 215Nm
Range price: R239,900-R269,900
Our pick of the range: Luxury



MITSUBISHI LANCER MN verdict ★★

Offering a lot of car at the price with decent build quality and a peppery, yet thrifty engine, the Lancer seems a bargain buy among its competitors. However, while it might have the superb Evo X to shout about, the regular 2.0 GLS is getting long in the tooth as a barrage of newer offerings make it to the market. That said, should you be in the market for a medium sedan with little frills, then the model is certainly a good bargain buy.

CO₂ emission: 19.3g/km **Power:** 114kW
Consumption: 9.7l/100km **Torque:** 199Nm
Range price: R239,900-R269,900
Our pick of the range: 2.0 GLS



NISSAN SENTRA MN verdict ★★

Here to take on the stalwarts of the segment, the Sentra is decent and a far cry from the Tiida model it replaces. However, with only one engine derivative there is very little in the way of choice for the buyer. Interior space, ergonomics and convenience items are commendable. Styling is perhaps a little demure, but for the buyer looking for an alternative to the run of the mill offerings, the Sentra is worth a second look.

CO₂ emission: 15.6g/km **Power:** 85kW
Consumption: 7.9l/100km **Torque:** 154Nm
Range price: R230,900-R253,600
Our pick of the range: Manual



OPEL ASTRA MN verdict ★★

Perhaps not as mainstream as some of the offerings in the segment, the Astra range offers good styling particularly in the instance of the sedan. Interior appointments are good if a little busy, but overall impression is of a spacious fun to drive vehicle with thrifty driving habits. Of course with the advent of the new turbo charged Cruze variants, there could be some cannibalising within the stable.

CO₂ emission: 13.8g/km **Power:** 103kW
Consumption: 7.1l/100km **Torque:** 200Nm
Range price: R234,500-R443,700
Our pick of the range: 1.4T Essentia Plus



PEUGEOT 308 MN verdict ★★

A bit of a left field player in the segment, the 308, much like Citroen C4, is an excellent hatch with good styling, a spacious interior and comfortable ride. The transmission in the non-turbo model could be better and the engine does feel a little under powered on the reef. An all-new model is currently standing in the wings, so it will be interesting to see how it fares when it gets here later in 2014.

CO₂ emission: 15.9g/km **Power:** 88kW
Consumption: 7.6l/100km **Torque:** 160Nm
Range price: R232,600-R402,500
Our pick of the range: 1.6 VTI



RENAULT FLUENCE MN verdict ★★

Perhaps not the most exciting offering, the Fluence has good standard specification including a standard satellite navigation system, excellent ride comfort, and a large boot. The 2.0i engine offers decent performance, but it is perhaps the 1.6 model that makes economic sense. A recent facelift replete with LED daytime driving lights and has managed to elevate the vehicle's styling somewhat. Resale value is likely to plague the model come replacement time.

CO₂ emission: 15.9g/km **Power:** 81kW
Consumption: 9.4l/100km **Torque:** 156Nm
Range price: R224,900-R259,900
Our pick of the range: 1.6 Expression



RENAULT MEGANE MN verdict ★★

With a comprehensive range and good pricing point, the Megane offers something a little different to other segment offerings. The coupe offers unique styling and good convenience items, but it is a little cramped in the rear and the rear view via the narrow rear window is not great. A turbo diesel offering in the coupe would be a welcome addition, but the 1.6i Expression is excellent value for money.

CO₂ emission: 16.3g/km **Power:** 81kW
Consumption: 8.3l/100km **Torque:** 151Nm
Range price: R219,000-R419,900
Our pick of the range: 1.6 Expression Coupe



SUBARU XV MN verdict ★★

A crossover hatch with the ability to traverse gravel roads with aplomb, thanks to the raised suspension and all-wheel drive mechanism, meaning the model will appeal to the more lifestyle oriented buyer. The interior is well laid out with good ergonomics and materials. However, engine performance is lacklustre, the gearbox is poor and boot space is decidedly compromised due to the high boot floor.

CO₂ emission: 21.0g/km **Power:** 110kW
Consumption: 10.5l/100km **Torque:** 196Nm
Range price: R299,000-R345,000
Our pick of the range: Manual



TOYOTA AURIS MN verdict ★★

Featuring sharper styling than its predecessor, the Auris is now a more attractive proposition. Interior appointments are good although some materials, particularly on the door padding could be better. The 1.6 engine lacks power, and while we have not drive it, we would expect the 1.3i to be perhaps even more asthmatic up on the reef. The hybrid is decidedly expensive, so the 1.6i models are your safest choice.

CO₂ emission: 14.5g/km **Power:** 97kW
Consumption: 7.4l/100km **Torque:** 160Nm
Range price: R198,000-R326,200
Our pick of the range: 1.6 XS



TOYOTA COROLLA MN verdict ★★

Well priced and a market sales leader, the Corolla is anything but a bad car, although its styling is not exciting. A comprehensive range of engines is on offer so buyers are spoilt for choice. It is perhaps the safest bet in the segment with good residual values should you decide to trade it in. An all-new model will be launched in the first quarter of next year, so perhaps one should wait for that model to hit the market before taking the plunge on the current model.

CO₂ emission: 16.2g/km **Power:** 90kW
Consumption: 8.2l/100km **Torque:** 154Nm
Range price: R194,600-R306,800
Our pick of the range: 1.6 Advanced



VOLKSWAGEN GOLF MN verdict ★★★★★

Having won the prestigious 2013 World Car of the Year award, the Golf is arguably the benchmark hatchback in its segment and seems to get better with every successive model. Available in a variety of both petrol and diesel engines, the Golf is currently a finalist in the 2014 South African Car of the Year competition, which speaks volumes about its quality. Interiors feature premium finishes and the ride quality bristles with a premium polish.

CO₂ emission: 12.0g/km **Power:** 90kW
Consumption: 6.2l/100km **Torque:** 200Nm
Range price: R242,700-R405,900
Our pick of the range: 1.4 TSI Comfortline



VOLKSWAGEN JETTA MN verdict ★★

No longer considered the Golf with a boot, the Jetta seems to be slowly forging its own identity away from the shadows of its popular sibling. It still manages to meld both the Passat and some of the Polo sedan's design cues, which means it is not unique among said stable mates. That said the ride quality, space, and ergonomics are some of the best in the business. It does, however, face some stiff opposition in the segment.

CO₂ emission: 13.8g/km **Power:** 90kW
Consumption: 7.4l/100km **Torque:** 156Nm
Fuel consumption: 7.4l/100km
Range price: R236,200-R318,900
Our pick of the range: 1.4 TSI Comfortline