

# Audi A4

*Featured model: 2.0 4-door with Sport Pack*



**F**OR YEARS, AUDI TRIED HARD, yet failed to get into the lucrative Prestige Executive sector of the car market, dominated for so long by BMW and Mercedes-Benz. The breakthrough came with the A4, and nowadays, VW Group's poshest brand stands as imposing in an office car park or domestic drive, as any 318 or C-Class.

The residual values reflect this, too, with a three-year-old A4 1.8 undercut only by the BMW, and actually faring better than the equivalent Merc (by £2500). Yet our 1996 test of the old A4 1.8 (see R9641) was less than fulsome in its praise, not for the way it was crafted, but in the manner in which it drove.

This new A4 is a big improvement. The new all-alloy two-litre engine is smoother and quieter than the old 1.8; though not noticeably quicker in the gears, it's also more economical on petrol than most.

However, we would recommend trying the new stepless automatic – the first that can equal the manual version's performance and economy, as we proved on an A6. Also try the now well-established 1.8 Turbo version before settling on this two litre; the figures are likely to be very similar to those we recorded on the identically-powered Skoda, shown in the comparison table.

Our A4 test car arrived with the sports pack option, which did us no favours as we were hoping to gauge the benefits to ride comfort conferred by the new A4's fully independent rear suspension. This is the

first non-quattro Audi to offer this and it's long overdue.

We can testify to the model's prowess on the twisty bits, but the sports settings were designed for German billiard-table roads, by engineers who don't know about the second-rate surfaces that are nowadays all too familiar here in the UK.

The A4's build quality is impeccable and there are some really interesting features in the offing (hands-free phone, individual-user keys that will readjust seats, mirrors, even the radio settings). Unfortunately, their cost is likely to be high and the basic price of an A4 is merely a prelude to a long list of extras you may well need. Even a folding rear backrest, with fifth full seatbelt and head restraint, will add £380. We calculated that to up-spec the A4 1.8T, to match the equivalent Octavia's standard kit, will cost list price plus £2535 – with metallic paint that adds up to 55 per cent more than the Skoda.

## VERDICT

**Of course, people choose certain brands for reasons other than utility; also, there's no denying the sheer quality of the latest A4, from aluminium suspension arms to close-fitting double door seals. The trouble is, BMW and Mercedes don't (as yet) make similar sized models for less. VW Group does.**

## AT A GLANCE

*considering size, price and rivals*

<b>Overtaking ability</b>	★☆☆○○
<b>Space/practicality</b>	★☆☆○○
<b>Controls/displays</b>	★☆☆○○
<b>Safety</b>	★☆☆○○
<b>Handling/steering</b>	★☆☆○○
<b>Comfort</b>	★☆☆○○
<b>Fuel economy</b>	★☆☆○○

## SPECIFICATION

**engine** 1984cc, all-alloy 4-cylinder, petrol; 130bhp at 5700rpm, 144 lb ft at 3300rpm; belt-driven double overhead camshafts (20 valves) plus balancer shaft  
**transmission** 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 22.1mph/1000rpm in 5th, 16.9 in 4th

**suspension** front: independent damper/struts with upper and lower wishbones  
 Rear: independent trapezoidal-links, coil springs

**steering** hydraulic power assistance; 2.9 turns lock-to-lock; 10.8m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.5m for one turn of the wheel)

**brakes** ventilated discs front solid discs rear, with standard anti-lock, distribution and handling stability controls

**wheels/tyres** 6½in alloy with 195/65R15V tyres (optional 7in alloy with 205/55R16W on test car); full-size alloy spare

## LIKES ...

gas struts support boot and bonnet  
 synchromesh on reverse gear  
 side-to-side temperature variation  
 quality of components not on show

## and GRIPES

head restraints impede rear vision  
 awkward door sills at rear  
 too many extras that should be standard

## THE A4 RANGE

**size and type** upper-medium (premium priced) 4-door saloon (estate to follow)  
**trim levels** standard, with SE and Sport trim option packs  
**engines** petrol 4 cylinder/2.0 litre/130bhp, 4/1.8 turbo/150, V6/3.0/220\*; diesel: 4/1.9/130, V6/2.5/180\* (\*quattro 4WD only)  
**drive** 2- or 4-wheel drive, 5- or 6-speed manual; (optional continuously variable automatic available on front-wheel drive versions)

OVERTAKING ABILITY <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>					
<i>Despite variable valve timing, still not a lusty low-speed performer. Always smooth and quiet, however – a big improvement on old 1.8. "Multitronic" CVT auto worth the extra</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ <sup>th</sup> gear	⑤ <sup>th</sup> gear		
20-40mph	3.3	9.3	13.9		
30-50mph	4.1	8.7	13.2		
40-60mph	4.8	8.2	12.6		
50-70mph	5.8	8.2	12.2		
<b>30-70mph</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>25.4</b>		
<b>max speed in each gear</b> (*using 6000rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
<b>speed (mph)</b>	30	50	73	101½	128

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>				
<i>Your old-style four doors, fixed seats and a boot. Not very roomy in the back, but good boot; high load sill, though. Sensible courtesy lights, but oddments room mostly up front</i>				
<i>in centimetres (4-door saloon)</i>		<b>inside</b> († without sunroof)		
<b>outside</b>		front - legroom	88-112	
length	455	- headroom	94-102†	
width - inc mirrors	194	rear - typical leg/	97/	
- mirrors folded	177	kneeroom	71	
height (no roof bars)	143	- headroom	92	
load sill height	20	- hiproom	129-136	
(inside/outside)	/69	<b>load space</b> (all seats in use)		
<b>steering</b>		(litres/cu ft)	550/19.3	
turns lock-to-lock	2.9	load length	97	
turning circle (metres)	10.8	full length to fascia	No	
easy to park/garage?		load width	100-41	
	★☆☆○○	load height (to shelf/	48/	
		to top of aperture)	No	

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>	
<i>Sports seats support well with height-adjustable lumbar adjusters. Excellent air con and radio controls, but gearchange slightly weighty. Head restraints hard to reset/remove</i>	
	

HOW THE A4 SALOON COMPARES	engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes – best stop from * 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	overall length (cm)
<b>AUDI A4 2.0</b>	<b>4/1984/130</b>	<b>3170</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>25.4/16.9</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>25/18</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>97/71</b>	<b>2.9/10.8</b>	<b>455</b>
<b>Volvo S60 TS</b>	5/1984/180	2880	8.4	20.0/15.3	30	25/16	115	98/73	3.0/11.5	458
<b>Mercedes-Benz C200K</b>	4/1998/163	2820	8.0	16.8/12.6	30½	23/19	118	98/75	2.9/10.4	453
<b>Alfa Romeo 156 Twin Spark</b>	4/1970/155	3310	7.8	22.6/15.7	31	26/22	106	95/76	2.2/11.4	443
<b>Skoda Octavia 1.8T</b>	4/1781/150	3040	8.5	19.7/14.4	35½	24/27	112	97/72	3.1/10.5	451
<b>Previous A4 1.8</b>	4/1781/125	3330	10.3	24.8/18.0	35½	24/23	109	95/68	2.8/10.7	448

\* all with ABS (p) all power assisted

SAFETY <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>	
<i>Poor pedestrian protection, but fine for those inside. Consistent, fade-free brakes and handbrake remarkably powerful, if weighty</i>	
<b>braking</b>	<b>dry road stopping distance</b> <i>from 50mph (with b rake-assist ABS)</i>
pedal feel ★☆☆○○	pedal load   distance
in emergency ★☆☆○○	10kg   28½m
handbrake ★☆☆○○	18kg   <b>25m best stop</b>
	+4kg ie 22kg   25½m

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS (tested Summer 2001)			
front impact	75%	side impact	100%
overall	88% ★☆☆○○	pedestrian rating	★☆☆○○

SECURITY FEATURES			
central locking	✓	alarm	✓
remote control	✓	immobiliser	✓
auto window closure	✓	luggage security	★☆☆○○
deadlocks	✓		
✓ standard	0 factory option	* not available	

HANDLING AND STEERING <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>	
<i>Our test car's sports suspension conferred good roll-free grip with the "safety-curtain" of ESP on the limit. Foolproof, but not as enjoyable as VW Bora V5 or a Volvo</i>	
	

COMFORT <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>	
<i>A good independent rear suspension at last on a front-drive Audi. In this case, the Sports Pack ruined the ride, however.</i>	

FUEL ECONOMY <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>	
<i>A good result by class standards, with an excellent range, too. Easy filling tank with a cap you can't lose</i>	
<b>type of use</b> (air conditioning off)	<b>AA test (mpg)</b>
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	21
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	27½
motorway (70mph cruising)	35½
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	33½
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	39
<b>typical mpg overall</b>	<b>34</b>
realistic tank capacity/range	64 litres/480 miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	24.8/47.9/35.8
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions 190g/km	car tax band D