

BMW 5-Series

Featuring 530d SE Automatic



SCORECARD

- Overtaking / pulling power
●●●●●
- Fuel economy
●●●●○
- Handling / steering
●●●●○
- Comfort / ease of control
●●●●○
- Interior space / practicality
●●○○○
- Accident / injury avoidance
●●●●○
- Costs in service
●●●○○
- Depreciation prospects
●●●●●

OF COURSE, THE BMW 5-SERIES ISN'T everybody's ideal car. Although there's a £2000-costlier Touring (estate car) version, it's normally seen as a saloon with a fixed back seat and a separate boot; there's a lot of it to park and insurance, and other operational costs, like the model itself, don't come cheap. Not until the advent of the latest three-litre diesel, that is.

Replacing the indirect-injection 2.5-litre/143bhp version, this latest six-cylinder boasts no less than 184 bhp via direct-injection, common-rail fuelling. More important perhaps is the massive low-speed (288 lb ft) torque, accompanied by smoothness and hush that defy your telling it's a diesel, once you're under way – only those waving you goodbye can tell.

Acceleration is a match for the 523i and, even with the engine encumbered with the 5 or 6mpg penalty exacted by the otherwise obliging automatic 'box, we still managed 30mpg on local trips and 40mpg on longer journeys. Incredibly long legs in fifth ratio reward with effortless motorway cruising and mpg that's in the mid-forties, if you stick to 70mph.

The 5-Series has become the exemplary executive saloon

because of its poised handling that keeps the driver "involved", allied to a level of comfort and absorbency that handles any surface with aplomb; the complete absence of trim fretting is notable. In fact, interior oddments spaces are all soft-lined, perhaps to make the point, and the boot contents are secure at a hotel or garage because there's a suitable second key for the convenient central locking that leaves the boot locked.

Indeed, the model bristles with details that typify the good life. And it all works so well – whether it's the radio or the trip computer, the cruise control or the air conditioning, it just delivers as promised. The seats are comfortable, too, although low cushions, a rear centre tunnel and heavy doors complicate getting in.

With superb brakes and electronically constrained cornering on the limit, this is also a very safe cocoon, if it comes to the crunch.

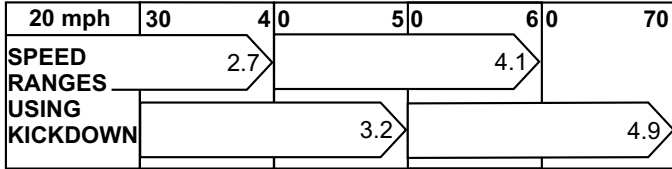
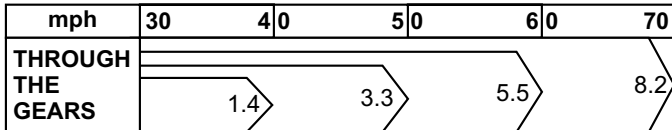
Whether you opt for the more accommodating Touring version, or perhaps the 2.5-litre petrol-powered 523i instead of this diesel, the 5-Series remains the benchmark by which all other "Executive" contenders (at any price) must be judged.

HOW THE 530d COMPARES	Engine cap/power (cyl/cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)†	Maximum legroom - front (cm)	Typical leg/kneerom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
BMW 530d SALOON	6/2926/184	2040	8.2	Auto	35½	24/15	116	103/77	3.0/11.0	478
Audi A6 2.5TDi Saloon (man)	V6/2496/150	2120	8.9	18.3/12.3	44	23/19	109	100/74	2.8/11.1	480
Vauxhall Omega 2.5TD Est*	6/2498/130	2350	14.0	Auto	31½	24/18	114	95/70	3.1/10.7	482
Mercedes-Benz E240 (petrol)	V6/2398/170	2950	9.7	Auto	26½	26/16	120	112/79	3.2/10.6	479

*1995 version with earlier BMW engine - still used in Omega †all with ABS (p) all power assisted

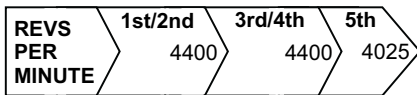
PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

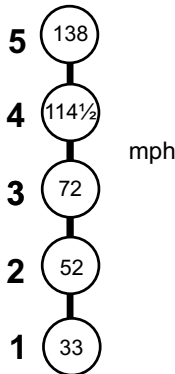


Maximum speeds

using accelerator kickdown



2040rpm observed at 70mph
on level track = 34.3mph per 1000rpm



FUEL CONSUMPTION

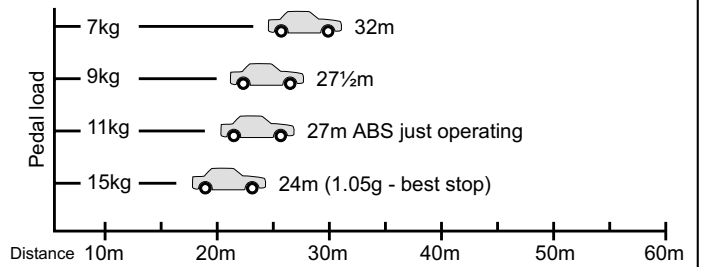
Type of use - with air conditioning off*	mpg
Urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	20
Suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	27
Motorway (70mph cruising)	47
Cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	31½
Rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	34½
Typical mpg overall	35½
Realistic tank range (not nominal tank capacity)	65 litres/505 miles

*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2-4% in winter and 4-8% in summer

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●●○ Handbrake ●●○○○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with standard ABS)
(A good-to-average best stop is about 26m at 15-20kg pedal load)

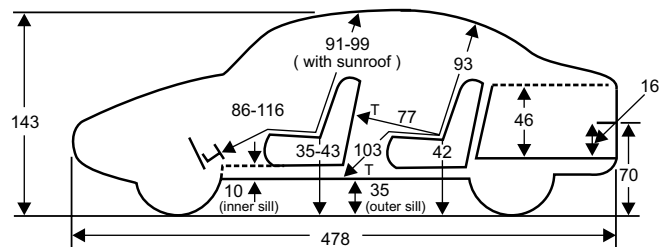


Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:
8kg at start of test, 9½kg at end of test (Ideal brakes show no change)

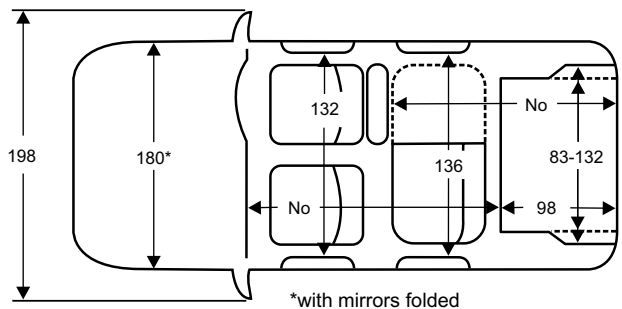
MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Four door saloon



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



*with mirrors folded

LIKES AND GRIPES

- | | | |
|--|-----|---|
| Tiptronic gives good manual control | ... | but S mode redundant with this torquey diesel |
| Interlock prevents inadvertent gear engagement | ... | but cumbersome handbrake complicates life in traffic queues |
| Clever wiper sweep with rain sensor at front | ... | but nothing for rear glass |
| Five lap-and-diagonal seatbelts | ... | but front sockets reluctant to engage |
| Trip computer well nigh accurate | ... | more so than speedo, in fact |
| Toolkit, torch, first aid kit all standard | ... | but three-year warranty tied to dealer servicing |