

# Mazda Demio



**H**ERE IS A SMALL CAR WITH BIG IDEAS. As you look at it, it's hard to believe that the Demio takes up less parking length than a Mazda 121 (or the identical Ford Fiesta). Of course, it's nine inches taller and an inch or so wider, but our dimensions table demonstrates how great are the interior space benefits of its burly, boxy shape.

The Demio is also much easier to enter and leave, thanks to its higher-than-average back seat and generously angled door pillars – although foot entry is still a bit cluttered at the back.

The fact that you can share out the rear space between passengers and luggage is a sensible idea, with an easy-acting seat-sliding arrangement that produces the two sets of “typical rear legroom”, and the load length behind, that we quote in the table. However, there's a snag – the one-piece rear cushion is a struggle to disentangle from the seatbelts, and when you tip it forward (to attain a large, flat luggage platform), it intrudes on the front seat adjustment so severely that you can't drive the car! In practice, you tilt only the split rear backrests and live with the stepped cargo area, with no protective dam, that results. There's also provision for carrying long objects right up to the fascia, plus the “bed-settee” arrangement that's also a variation on this theme.

In more everyday use, setting the back seat midway on its fore and aft slides gives still generous rear legroom, although its backrest is a bit hard and slab-like. Still there's over 13cu ft of luggage space beneath the roller blind at the back (that compares with 10cu ft on the average supermini) plus a loading height to the tailgate hinge that's particularly advantageous; it's a pity there's a five-inch load sill, however.

So much for the interior furniture – how does the Demio drive? In fact, the 121/Fiesta is a hard act to follow and the Demio's ride is made worse by the importer's desire to make it look sporty on low-profile tyres and alloy wheels; this results in distinct fretfulness over secondary surfaces. It doesn't roll, though, and the power steering's modest weight and stability, combined with admittedly good tyre grip, results in tidy cornering.

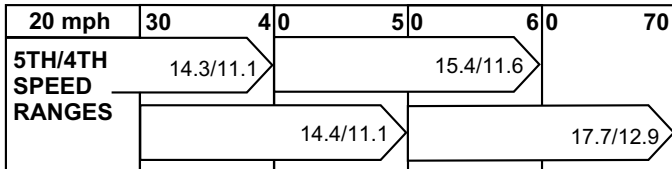
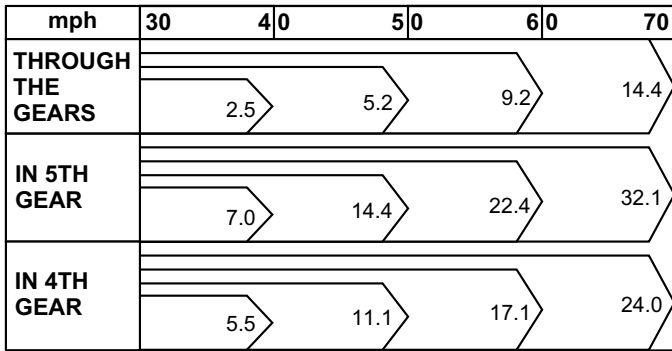
The brakes are very sharp in response to light pressure, which is flattering on a trip round the block, but with no anti-lock control, it's tricky to make urgent stops without skidding; changes in pedal response as the pads warm up only serve to complicate things even more.

Performance and fuel consumption both show some losses compared with more conventionally shaped small-car counterparts, but the engine is reasonably smooth in low speed work and quite well subdued on the motorway.

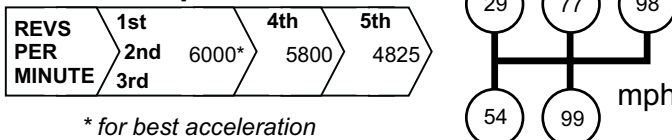
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## PERFORMANCE

### Acceleration time in seconds



### Maximum speeds



## FUEL CONSUMPTION

Type of use - with air conditioning off*	mpg
Urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	29
Suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	34
Motorway - 70mph cruising	36
Cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	41½
Rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	48
<b>Typical mpg overall</b>	<b>39½</b>

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

## FOR THE TECHNICAL

### ENGINE

**Type** Transverse four in line; iron block and alloy head, with five main bearings.

**Size** 71 x 83.6mm = 1323cc

**Power** 72bhp at 5500rpm

**Torque** 77 lb ft at 3500rpm

**Valves** belt-driven single overhead camshaft actuating four valves per cylinder

**Fuel/ignition** electronic multi-point petrol injection with integrated, programmed spark timing. Exhaust catalyser and 43-litre tank - no low-level warning lamp

### TRANSMISSION

**Type** five-speed manual, front-wheel drive (no auto option)

**Mph per 1000rpm** 20.3 in 5th; 17.1 in 4th

### CHASSIS

**Suspension** front: independent MacPherson damper/struts with integral coil springs. Rear: torsion beam (dead) axle with coil springs, trailing arms. Anti-roll bars and telescopic dampers all round

**Steering** rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance; 3.1 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 9.6m between kerbs, with 14.5m circle for one turn of the wheel

**Wheels** 5½J alloy with 175/60R14H tyres (Pirelli P2000 on test car)

**Brakes** ventilated discs front, drums rear with vacuum servo; no anti-lock option

## SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

### Seatbelts

front ●●●●○ rear ●●○○○

### Door locking

central locking?  ●●○○○

remote control?  ●●○○○

### Head restraints

front ●●●○○ rear ●●●○○

auto window closure?  ●●○○○

dead locks?  ●●○○○

### Interior

safety padding ●●●○○

driver's airbag?  ●●○○○

other airbags?  ●●○○○

side impact protection ●●●○○

### Luggage

secure from interior/hidden from view ●●○○○

### Alarm

engine immobilised?  ●●○○○

### Fuel anti-spillage

●●●○○

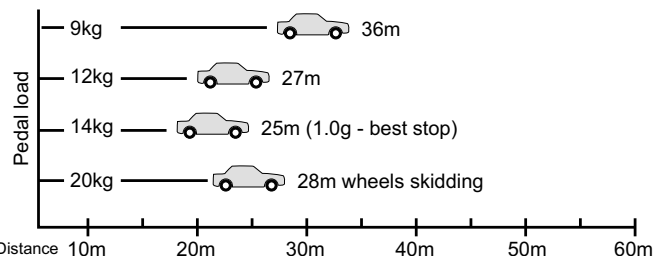
standard on test car  factory fitted option  not available

**Euro NCAP crash test results** - Not available

## BRAKES

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

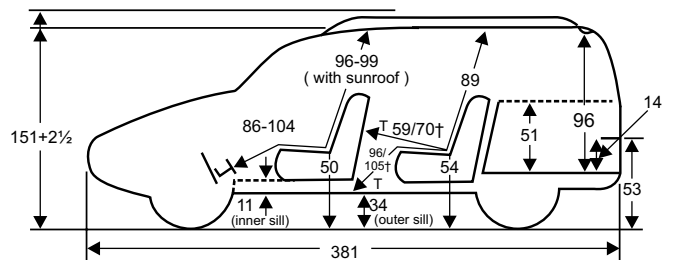
Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (no ABS)  
(A good-to-average best stop is about 28m at 20-30kg pedal load)



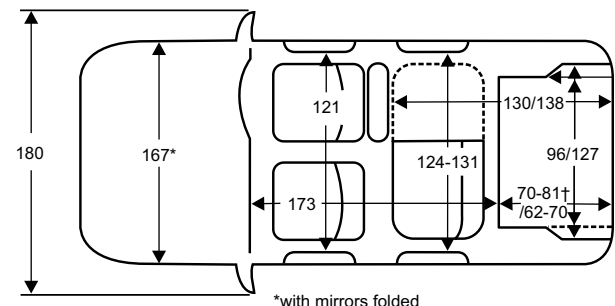
Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:  
10kg at start of test, 7½kg at end of test (Ideal brakes show no change)

## MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres




T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants  
↑ rear seat forwards/backwards



\*with mirrors folded

With an odd cushion-only height adjuster and unconvincing backrest shaping, it takes a while to get settled at the wheel, but it's better for knowing. You get a commanding view all round, however, and backed up by an excellent turning circle, this shape is much easier to "place" when parking – especially if you dispense with the easy-to-remove rear head restraints.

The Demio comes as one model with no options – the choice of equipment is somewhat incongruous, with no interior door mirror adjusters, but four electric door windows as well as a larger-than-average glass sunroof, which slides but doesn't tilt; it has a sunshade, however. The powerful heater serves all footwells and it's willing to give cooler air at face level with lower warmth, if desired.

 The interior is nicely trimmed, including the bits in the load area not normally on show. The central locking is annoying, however, because the key only works it in the driver's door and the door sill buttons pop up again if you try it any other way; the driver soon learns not to be considerate of passengers getting in and out! One redeeming feature is that the tailgate lock is encompassed by the central locking.

The Demio gives the impression that it will prove a dependable steed; its bumpers look fit for their job (unlike many these days) and we expect

better-than-average reliability – in line with Mazda's established reputation. Unfortunately, this virtue amounts to necessity when you compare parts prices – they don't come much dearer unless you have a 121. There's a three-year general warranty – but there are some exclusions to watch out for.

#### VERDICT

**The market place is becoming increasingly bewildering for buyers of the traditional family holdall. There are multi-purpose vehicles, "recreational" lifestyle conveyances, small but burly off-roaders, as well as conventional estate cars. It's a good thing really, because car makers are increasingly determined to offer more space and variety, and easier access within more compact external dimensions – so that vehicles are easier to park, as well.**

**The Demio certainly succeeds in terms of "quarts into pint pots", but there are unresolved adaptability shortcomings and we rate its road manners as merely competent. Nevertheless, it offers real accommodation advantages to people with special requirements, which could outweigh our criticisms. It's reasonably priced, too.**

#### LIKES AND GRIPES

Sturdy plastic bumpers and door mirrors	...	but no interior adjusters for mirrors
Heated rear window tell-tale in main display	...	but alarmist gauge and no low fuel light
Tidy displays with rheostat	...	but they proved very inaccurate
Versatile main luggage areas	...	but deficient in oddments spaces
Left footrest and cushion-height adjuster	...	but fixed steering wheel
Good front wash and wipe	...	but it also needs an intermittent rear wiper
Tailgate opens to a sensible height	...	but hands get soiled closing it

HOW THE DEMIO COMPARES	Engine Cap/power (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/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
<b>MAZDA DEMIO</b>	<b>1323/72</b>	<b>3450</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>32.1/24.0</b>	<b>39½</b>	<b>25/14</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>105/70</b>	<b>3.1/9.6</b>	<b>381</b>
Mazda 121GSi	1242/75	3550	12.4	28.1/18.5	42	28/16	108	92/66	2.8/10.1	383
Citroen Xsara 1.4 Estate	1360/75	3400	14.0	31.9/22.1	38	29/20	107	99/73	3.3/10.7	435
Renault Megane Scenic 1.6	1598/90	3450	13.7	28.4/21.0	34	29/30*	105	102/76	3.5/10.5	414
							*with ABS		(p)all power assisted	