

10 Best Back-to-School Cars For Students In 2012: KBB.com Ranks Kia Soul Best

2012 Top New Cars for Students Determined by Kelley Blue Book, Each Available for Less Than \$16,000

IRVINE, Calif., Aug. 8, 2012 [/PRNewswire/](#) -- The [2012 Kia Soul](#) is this year's No. 1 Back-to-School Car according to Kelley Blue Book, the leading provider of new car and used car information. In this annual list published by KBB.com, the expert editors rank their top affordable new-car choices for students, naming the [10 Best Back-to-School Cars of 2012](#) (<http://www.kbb.com/car-reviews-and-news/top-10/best-back-to-school-cars-2012/>).

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In addition to picking up the usual school supplies, sometimes back-to-school shopping includes test drives and negotiating, which can be an education in itself. To help give first-time car buyers a head start, the KBB.com editors looked at the most affordable cars of 2012 and then picked the 10 best bets according to the needs and wants of students. Even better, all of the top new Back-to-School Cars on this year's list are available for less than \$16,000 according to Kelley Blue Book's [Fair Purchase Price](#), which shows you the average price others in your area paid for the same car based on actual transaction data updated each week.

"From funky hatchbacks to stylish sedans, all of KBB.com's 10 Best Back-to-School Cars of 2012 are affordable, safe and reliable, not to mention fun to drive and fuel efficient. Most importantly, these vehicles fulfill the often distinctively different set of new-car criteria of both parents and students, striking a healthy balance," said Jack R. Nerad, executive editorial director and executive market analyst for Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com. "Parents will be amazed at the sheer selection of amenity-laden student-friendly new cars available today for less than \$16,000."

Below is a 'cheat sheet' of sample selections from KBB.com's 10 Best Back-to-School Cars of 2012:

2012 Kia Soul

With a low price tag, roomy interior and singular looks, the Kia Soul charms with a practical but youthful exuberance. And it gets even better for 2012, gaining direct injection technology and six-speed transmissions that yield bumps in power, responsiveness and fuel economy. Stir in tastefully refreshed exterior and interior bits, and the Soul convincingly grabs the top spot on our list of Best Back-to-School Cars for 2012.

2012 Hyundai Accent

Like an adolescent outgrowing that gawky stage and becoming a runway-worthy young adult, the Accent has shed its econobox self to become a real stunner. Done with its automotive puberty, 2012 marked an all-new Accent sedan and hatchback with fresh sheet metal, more power and even better fuel economy. Retained is a 10-year powertrain warranty that will last beyond the college years.

2012 Chevrolet Sonic

Sporty design, vibrant colors, lots of space for friends and even that cool name make the Sonic hatchback and sedan attractive to younger drivers. Their parents, meanwhile, will be keen on this subcompact's outward visibility, easy-to-drive manners, good fuel economy and eager (but not overwhelming) engines.

2012 Mazda3

Student bodies seeking a bit more space for passengers and cargo will find lots to like in the stylish and sporty Mazda3. Available in sedan and hatchback forms, even the most affordable 4-door version of this well-finished compact comes with a respectable measure of Mazda's zoom-zoom character, impressive safety features and a utility-enhancing 60/40 split-folding rear seat.

2012 Nissan Versa

As the least expensive car in America, the Nissan Versa makes an excellent choice for students looking for the most sensible way to get from A to B. And despite its rock-bottom price tag, the 5-passenger Versa sedan includes a full suite of basic creature comforts plus unexpected niceties like an auxiliary audio jack for portable music players.

For the remaining five vehicles, including full editorial commentary for each of the editors' picks and the rank order, please visit <http://www.kbb.com/car-reviews-and-news/top-10/best-back-to-school-cars-2012/>.

Car Shopping and Buying Tips for Students and Parents:

To help ensure driving and ownership satisfaction into the coming school year and beyond, follow these guidelines for getting the [right car at the right price](#):

- **Do Your Research:** All the information you need to make a smart car-buying decision is available at KBB.com, including both expert and consumer reviews and ratings, Fair Purchase Price, side-by-side comparisons, safety and reliability ratings and more.
- **Know What It Is Going to Cost You:** Once you've narrowed it down to a few models that you are interested in, be sure to check out not only what it will cost you up front to buy the car, but also what it will cost you over time to own the vehicle. KBB.com's 5-Year Cost-to-Own information for new cars can help you determine both.
- **Drive Two or Three Different Models:** It's easy to enjoy a test drive in the vehicle at the top of your list, but without driving one or two others to compare, you might easily miss out on something you'd like even more.
- **If Buying New:** Always use a vehicle's Fair Purchase Price, not Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price, as your basis for comparing vehicles and negotiating with the dealer. Kelley Blue Book's Fair Purchase Price reflects real-world selling prices, which are often hundreds or even thousands of dollars less than MSRP.
- **If Buying Used:** Whether buying from a private party or a dealer, it's always a good idea to have any used vehicle checked out by a reputable independent service shop. When purchasing from an individual, check out the private-party value from KBB.com as well as Kelley Blue Book's Quick Condition Quiz. These items will help you determine the "actual" condition and value of the vehicle.
- **Consider Certified Pre-Owned (CPO):** When you buy a CPO vehicle, you get the value of buying a used car with the peace of mind that comes from getting new-car-like features, such as a manufacturer-backed vehicle warranty, full vehicle inspection and more. Learn more about buying CPO, compare all manufacturer CPO programs and even search for CPO vehicle inventory in your local area on KBB.com here: www.kbb.com/certified-pre-owned/
- **Shop Online:** Use the Internet to find the exact vehicles local dealers in your area currently have on their lots. You can check out inventory in the '[Cars for Sale](#)' section on KBB.com to save time and hassle of driving around from dealership to dealership. This way you can choose wisely which models you want to go test drive.
- **Parents:** Don't buy a car for your teen without driving it yourself, as your experience can help you identify problems or shortcomings that your teen may not notice. Also, trust your own judgment and don't let your teen talk you into buying a vehicle with which you're not fully comfortable.
- **Teens:** Do all of your homework before you meet with mom or dad; show them you are responsible and ready for a car, and make it easy for them to say "yes" to your well-researched choice.

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For further information: Robyn Eagles, +1-949-268-3049, reagles@kbb.com, or Joanna Pinkham, +1-949-268-3079, jpinkham@kbb.com, or Brenna Robinson, +1-949-267-4781, berobinson@kbb.com

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