

Kelley Blue Book's 2022 Best Cars for Teens - The List Every Parent Needs in Today's Challenging Car Market

Experts Help Guide Parents with Comprehensive Advice, Recommend Affordable Vehicles at Various Price Points

ATLANTA, Oct. 17, 2022 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Parents of teens are faced with a significant milestone decision when they consider which car to buy for their young driver. At some point most teens need their own vehicle, whether it is for driving to school, work, extracurricular activities, or even heading off to college. When the time comes, many parents feel overwhelmed with the choices available and the many factors they need to consider, not to mention the current vehicle inventory and market challenges. To help guide parents as they make these important decisions, the experts at Kelley Blue Book, a Cox Automotive brand, created the [Best Cars for Teens: The List Every Parent Needs](#).

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Beyond affordability, safety is a primary parental concern – and with good reason. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), teens drive less than all but the oldest people, yet their instances of crashes and crash deaths are unreasonably high. In the United States, the fatal crash rate per mile driven for 16- to 19-year-olds is nearly three times the rate for drivers ages 20 and over. The most significant risk is at ages 16 and 17. In 2020, 60% of deaths among passenger vehicle occupants ages 16 to 19 were drivers of the vehicle.

"As we compiled Kelley Blue Book's Best Cars for Teens list this year, it really all boiled down to safety – the factor at the top of parents' minds when thinking about their newly minted young driver – but the current market also dictates parents need to pay attention to other factors and considerations, as well," said [Brian Moody](#), executive editor for Kelley Blue Book. "Today's car shoppers likely are aware of tight inventory challenges among both new and used cars due to the semiconductor chip shortage, supply-chain disruptions, and other factors that have caused auto manufacturers to reduce production resulting in crippling inventories. While it is beginning to ease up some, both used and new car prices skyrocketed higher than usual, so dealers are less likely to bargain on price. This means shoppers must work harder, research more, remain patient and be willing to compromise. The odds of finding exactly what you want at the price you want to pay are not in your favor, so any feature that isn't a basic need – color, for instance – is something buyers should be prepared to trade off. When you find a good vehicle for your teen that you can live with and afford, we recommend you buy it, because chances are good that it won't linger on the lot for long."

Factors to Keep in Mind

It is important to balance the potential vehicle's cost with the safety features it includes. If your family budget allows, 2013-and-newer vehicles come with what the Kelley Blue Book experts consider the "big three" of safety features: anti-lock brakes, traction control and stability control, as required by the federal government. Beginning in 2018, carmakers had to comply with a federal mandate to include rearview cameras in new cars. While newer models likely will have more

advanced safety features and driver assists than older models, a new car's price may not be realistic for many families. In addition to regular maintenance costs, it is wise to factor into the budget the potential cost of repair and bodywork.

Types of Vehicles to Avoid

While teens may have strong feelings about what type of car they want, the Kelley Blue Book experts recommend staying away from some types of vehicles for new drivers.

- City Cars – they may be more affordable and get better gas mileage than compact or midsize cars, but in a contest with a full-size truck or SUV on the road, they will always come out in second.
- Sports Cars – they may look cool, but they could tempt your teenager to drive beyond his or her skill.
- Big SUVs or Pickup Trucks – they may surround your teen with more metal, but they could be too big for your teen to handle, they are challenging to park and there is the fuel-economy issue.
- High-Horsepower Cars – while they may be at the top of the must-have list for some teen drivers, increased horsepower translates into higher insurance premiums and more potential for trouble.

Insurance Considerations

Adding a teenager to your car insurance is costly. It can inflate your premium by 150% or more, and it usually is more for a male teen than a female. While there are many factors considered when calculating a premium, the bulk of the new driver's added insurance cost is liability coverage. It's important to involve your insurance agent early in the process, as they are the only person who can accurately ballpark what your new premium might be. They also can help you understand any discounts your provider may offer to reduce the insurance burden. For example, some companies will discount if your teen driver takes a driving safety course, while others may offer a discount for students with good grades. Beyond the potential insurance benefit, it's always a good idea to enroll your teen in a driver safety program if possible.

Important Key Safety Features

Safety technology gets expensive, and it's one of the factors relentlessly pushing up the sticker cost of new cars. If your family can afford to buy a new car for your teen, look for a vehicle that has all of the following features. If you're buying a used car, then your chances of finding more of these safety features improves with the newer the car. Keep in mind that these features may not come standard on the base model, so you may need to shop for a mid- or upper-level trim. Generally speaking, the higher trim level you can find, the more safety features the car is likely to have.

- Advanced Safety and Driver-Assist Features: anti-lock brakes, traction control, stability control, forward-collision warning, blind-spot monitoring.
- Other Features to Consider for Safety: outboard mirrors with turn-signal indicators; power-adjustable driver's seat; tilt-and-telescopic steering wheel; automatic climate control; LED headlights and taillights; automatic high beams; adaptive cruise control; hill-start assist; head-up display; infotainment system with voice recognition; airbags (at least six); auto on-off headlights; 360-degree cameras.

In addition, several carmakers offer some type of programmable driving monitor to help keep track of and set limits for your teen driver, including Chevrolet, Ford, Kia, Hyundai, Lexus, Toyota and Volkswagen.

Crash Test Ratings

When compiling these lists, the Kelley Blue Book experts factored in important crash-test scores based on data from third-party crash-test

organizations. The non-profit IIHS and the government's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) have different approaches and testing parameters.

- IIHS performs and scores crash tests and uses other data and qualifiers to issue its annual Top Safety Pick and Top Safety Pick+ awards. Currently, it scores "Good," "Acceptable," "Marginal," or "Poor" in six testing areas: driver's side small-overlap front; passenger-side small-overlap front; moderate-overlap front; side; roof strength; head restraints and seats.
- NHTSA performs three tests scoring each using a system of stars, with five stars being the best and one star being the worst. NHTSA scores each test individually – frontal crash, side crash, rollover crash – and then also issues an overall score.

Kelley Blue Book's Best Cars for Teens Lists

When creating the Best Cars for Teens lists, the Kelley Blue Book experts set specific parameters. Pricing was based on Kelley Blue Book Fair Purchase Price range. Where a model offers both a sedan and hatchback, pricing was used for the sedan. All picks in the "Under \$20,000" list come with the advanced safety and driver-assist features listed above. The "Under \$20,000" vehicles listed all have at least a "Good" rating in at least five of the IIHS crash tests, but almost all the vehicles listed are a Top Safety Pick or Top Safety Pick+. While older vehicles often are not available with all the latest safety features, the vehicles selected in the more affordable Best Cars for Teens lists have many of them and performed very well in NHTSA and IIHS testing. All vehicles listed are lauded for their reliability and fuel economy.

Kelley Blue Book's Best Used Cars for Teens Under \$20,000	
1. 2017 Toyota RAV4	6. 2017 Honda Accord
2. 2018 Mazda CX-5	7. 2017 Toyota Prius
3. 2017 Honda CR-V	8. 2018 Kia Sportage
4. 2020 Toyota Corolla	9. 2018 Honda Civic
5. 2019 Mazda Mazda3	10. 2019 Chevrolet Equinox

Kelley Blue Book's Best Cars for Teens Under \$15,000	
1. 2018 Kia Soul	4. 2015 Honda CR-V
2. 2017 Toyota Corolla	5. 2016 Mazda CX-5
3. 2018 Mazda Mazda3	6. 2015 Toyota Prius

Kelley Blue Book's Best Cars for Teens Under \$10,000	
1. 2013 Honda Accord	5. 2015 Honda Civic
2. 2013 Toyota Camry	6. 2009 Toyota RAV4
3. 2014 Mazda Mazda3	7. 2011 Honda Element
4. 2013 Toyota Corolla	8. 2011 Toyota Avalon

Kelley Blue Book's Best Cars for Teens Under \$5,000	
1. 2006 Honda Civic	4. 2006 Honda Pilot
2. 2007 Toyota Corolla	5. 2004 Toyota Prius
3. 2005 Toyota Avalon	6. 2002 Toyota Highlander

For more information about the Best Cars for Teens from Kelley Blue Book, including detailed expert reviews, safety information for each model and more, visit <https://www.kbb.com/best-cars/teens/>.

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