Coolest Cars Under $18,000 Named

Editors of Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com Reveal Top 10 Affordable Cool Vehicles

Despite incentives (or maybe because of them), "sticker shock" continues to plague new-car buyers. Vehicle equipment levels keep getting more extensive, and vehicle suggested list prices continue to go higher. But despite this trend, there are desirable vehicles that are reasonably priced for the average car buyer. As proof, the editors of Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com have recently driven and reviewed all of the latest vehicles on the market and identified 10 very cool models selling below $18,000.

"Cool is, of course, in the eye of the beholder, but the good news is there are a variety of exciting, fun-to-drive vehicles that are still affordable," said Jack R. Nerad, editorial director, Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com. "A couple of vehicles on our list carry sticker prices above $18,000, but in addition to reporting the MSRP for a vehicle, we track what the car is actually selling for -- its New Car Blue Book value. The New Car Blue Book value allows car buyers to understand what the current street price for each vehicle is, helping them determine what they can really afford."

The $18,000 price point offers buyers an average monthly payment of $300 to $350 over a 5-year loan term. Their actual payment amount will be determined by the amount put down on the vehicle and the finance rate available to them. While fuel economy was not the key criteria is choosing the list, all the vehicles on it deliver good mileage figures, which will provide additional help to car-buyers' pocketbooks.

2005 Top 10 Coolest Cars Selling Under $18,000

Vehicle	MSRP	New Car Blue Book Value
2005 Toyota Tacoma PreRunner	$14,850	$14,768
2005 Scion xB	$15,045	$15,045
2005 Ford Focus ZX3 SES	$16,460	$15,853
2005 Kia Spectra Hatchback	$16,665	$16,109
2005 Chevrolet Cobalt LS Coupe	$16,485	$16,145
2005 Hyundai Tiburon	$17,494	$16,643
2005 Mazda MAZDA3 S Hatchback	$17,665	$17,216
2005 Scion tC	$17,315	$17,315
2005 Mini Cooper	$17,500	$17,500
2005 Honda Element	$18,765	$17,827

All vehicles are listed by their New Car Blue Book value l. New Car Blue Book values represent transaction values or what others are paying for this vehicle during the week of April 18, 2005. New Car Blue Book values are updated weekly on kbb.com. All vehicles priced with automatic transmissions except Toyota Tacoma Prerunner. Adding optional equipment will increase the price of the vehicle.

Editorial Comments on the Top 10 Coolest New Cars Under $18,000

Toyota Tacoma PreRunner -- There are darn few inexpensive vehicles that a guy can feel comfortable in, but the Tacoma is a great personal-use truck that rides and handles better than many cars.

Scion xB -- The 2005 epitome of it's hip-to-be-square, the xB breadbox on wheels is the automotive equivalent of Dickies shorts and skate shoes -- if somebody has to explain them to you, you'll never understand.

Ford Focus ZX3 SES -- Pocket rocket American style, the ZX3 SES shows that Ford's U.S. engineers have learned a great deal from their European colleagues, and the styling is distinctive, not "me too."

Kia Spectra Hatchback -- This new-for-05 Spectra offers station wagon-like

versatility and space in an inexpensive-to-buy and reasonable-to-maintain package. The big plus is its lengthy warranty coverage.

Chevrolet Cobalt LS coupe -- This good-looking new package is a far cry from its predecessor, the late, unlamented Chevrolet Cavalier. Its taut feel and good response are a revelation.

Hyundai Tiburon -- There's still room in the American market for an inexpensive sporty coupe, and the Tiburon plays that tune about as well as anyone these days.

MAZDA 3 Hatchback -- The MAZDA3 is a huge advance over its predecessor Protege, and while the Protege was a very good car, the MAZDA3's great interior and exterior design, plus good power make it a killer deal.

Scion tC -- Take sophisticated styling, a willing engine, a palatable price; mix in Toyota quality and what do you have? Another winner from the young Scion brand.

MINI Cooper -- When it comes to surprise-and-delight features few cars at any price can top the MINI Cooper; in this car you discover more cool features every time you drive it, and the driving experience itself is remarkable.

Honda Element -- If you want versatility, you're in your Element. The reverse-hinged rear doors make a fashion statement, but the big advantages of the Element are its form-follows-function design and its overall usability.

The top 10 coolest new cars under $18,000 were chosen based on the expert opinions of the Kelley Blue Book editorial team. Selection was based on price, design, style and performance as well as extensive research of each vehicle and test drives of vehicles selling at or below $18,000 during the week of April 18, 2005. For more information on these and other new vehicles, log on to www.kbb.com.

About Kelley Blue Book

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SOURCE: Kelley Blue Book

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