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## BMW Buying Guide

Get the lowdown on all the esteemed German automaker's luxury cars and SUVs. *by Chad Gallion*

### Introduction

BMW has established itself as something of a driving force, excuse the pun, in the automotive industry. With vehicles, engines, technologies and safety innovations that are constantly winning critical acclaim, it's easy to understand why the demand for BMW vehicles and their resale value remains some of the highest in the industry. In the past decade, they have moved through a period of groundbreaking yet divisive styling statements mostly unscathed, but now are in the process of introducing segment-defining and -defying vehicles like the 5 Series Gran Turismo, the ponderous X6 coupe/SUV cross-breed, ActiveHybrid models that are as innovative as they are expensive, and newly turbocharged engines across most of their models. One thing that cannot be denied is BMW's ability to build cars that seem to strike an otherworldly balance of performance, luxury and driver connection that makes this brand the envy of most of its competitors.

Photos courtesy of BMW.



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\*Whichever comes first.

## BMW Buying Guide

### BMW 1 Series Overview

The 1 Series is BMW's smallest offering and was created to be the spiritual successor to the popular BMW 2002 from the early 1970s. Available in either coupe or soft top convertible, buyers can choose the base 128i or the seriously quick, 300-hp 135i. The 128i coupe's standard sunroof has been made optional, while HD radio has been added along with optional automatic high beam headlights. The 1 Series does have quirks like polarizing styling, miniscule rear seats, and a somewhat entry-level feel, but most of these can be overlooked because of the excellent and fun driving dynamics.

**MSRP:** \$29,150 - \$40,350

**Base Engine:** 3.0-liter inline 6-cylinder with 230 hp

**Base EPA mpg:** 18 city/28 hwy/22 cmb

**Competition:** Volkswagen GTI, Audi A3, Nissan 370Z, Audi TT

**Model Highlights**

- 300-hp turbo 135i is pricey but fast
- Convertible features sun reflective leather to keep seats cool
- Revamped iDrive with HDD Navigation is much improved
- Sport Package front seats far outshine unsupportive standard seats

- [BMW 128i Research](#)
- [BMW 135i Research](#)
- [BMW 1 Series Price Quote](#)

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### BMW 3 Series Overview

2011 begins the fifth year of production for the current version of BMW's quintessential luxury sport sedan. As usual, the 3 Series can be had in sedan, coupe, hard-top convertible and wagon versions with a dizzying array of engine and transmission combinations. Notable changes this year are a slight exterior restyling for the coupe and convertible, the 335i's new single-turbo engine with better fuel economy, a sportier 335is trim, a Competition Package for the M3, and the return of Harman Kardon premium audio. While options can quickly inflate the overall cost and the well-built interior is somewhat lacking in personality, all versions of the BMW 3 Series are basically without flaw.

**MSRP:** \$33,150 - \$67,050  
**Base Engine:** 3.0-liter inline 6-cylinder with 230 hp  
**Base EPA mpg:** 18 city/28 hwy/22 cmb  
**Competition:** Audi A4, Mercedes-Benz C-Class, Cadillac CTS, Infiniti G37

- Model Highlights**
- All engines are great, 3.0-liter I-6, turbo, twin-turbo or diesel
  - Diesel returns 27 mpg highway with plenty of power
  - Variety of configurations have something for everyone
  - 5-star side-impact crash rating (sedan & wagon), high-tech braking safety features

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