

# Modern styling, new tech, fuel economy highlight new Malibu

April 20 2016, by By Ann M. Job

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Chevrolet revamped the Malibu for 2016, making the family sedan look more modern and giving it more safety and technology features, including software that helps keep teen-agers safe and parents in the know.

The 2016 Malibu also ranks as the fifth-best mid-size sedan in fuel mileage in the U.S., tying the Honda Accord four-door and beating the Toyota Camry.

While Consumer Reports gave the new Malibu an average reliability rating, the federal government said the 2016 Malibu earned five out of five stars in frontal and side crash tests.

All this comes in a roomy car whose starting manufacturer's suggested [retail price](#), including destination charge, is on the low end—just \$22,500 for a five-seat model with the base, fuel-sipping engine and six-speed automatic transmission.

This 1.5-liter, double overhead cam, turbocharged four-cylinder generates only 163 horsepower, which is the lowest base horsepower in a Malibu since 2008. It's also less than what most competitors offer in their base models.

But the Malibu with this engine is rated by the government at 27 mpg in city driving and 37 mpg on highways.

Note that the base price doesn't include the rearview camera or power-adjustable driver's seat that are standard on the base 178-horsepower 2016 Camry, which starts at \$23,905. A rearview camera with moving guidelines that show where the car is headed as it backs up is also standard on the 185-horsepower 2016 Honda Accord, which has a starting retail price of \$23,840.

The 2016 Malibu offers a second turbo four-cylinder—a larger, 2-liter unit that generates a V-6-like 250 horsepower. Mated to an eight-speed [automatic transmission](#), this higher output four-cylinder comes with a starting price of \$29,495.

This was the engine in the test-driven Malibu Premier, and it did a good job of moving the 3,388-pound sedan in city and highway travel. There was especially good get up and go, as torque peaked at 258 foot-pounds at a low 1,700 rpm.

This engine doesn't include the automatic stop/start system that helps save gas on the base model. And, aggressive driving of the test-driven model put the average combined city/highway mileage at 24 mpg, rather than the government's estimate of 26 mpg.

More disconcerting was that the gas tank held only 13 gallons of fuel, which is far below the 17- or 18-gallon tanks that are typical of this class. So, the test-driven Malibu had to stop for gas after 300 miles, which isn't a great travel range.

The Malibu drove easily, with steering that was comfortably responsive. And its 19-inch wheels and suspension provided a firm ride.

Some consumers might not recognize the new Malibu. It's longer than its predecessor and has modern styling, and the back end reminds some of an Audi.

The Malibu's interior is also bigger. Rear-seat legroom now measures 38.1 inches, which is an increase of 1.3 inches. This is still less than the 38.5 inches in the back seat of the Accord and the 38.9 inches in the Camry, though. The Accord's 42.5 inches of front-seat legroom also is more than the Malibu's 42 inches.

The Malibu also offers more safety features now, though many, such as the forward collision alert system, are optional and will cost extra.

The 2016 Malibu also is the first vehicle to have Teen Driver, which is software that lets parents review how a teen-ager drove, including the highest speed attained, distance driven and the number of times safety equipment was engaged.

Teen Driver also keeps the stereo and connected devices muted until front-seat passengers buckle up.

The 2016 Malibu has been the subject of three U.S. safety recalls. Two involved air bags that might deploy improperly. The third was for an intermittent defect that may not alert a driver when a seat belt is unfastened or a door is opened and the key is still in the ignition.

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