

**TEST  
EXTRA**

# Renault Clio 1.4RT



## What's different?

A new grille, reshaped door mirrors, Safrane-style rubbing strips and dark-tinted rear lamps form the basis of a mild make-over for Renault's best-selling supermini. Safety features and equipment levels have been upgraded, too.

**N**ICOLE'S FAVOURITE SUPERMINI HAS been a consistent top-ten seller every year since its 1990 launch. But with newer, roomier rivals like the Micra, Corsa, Polo and Ibiza on the scene, Renault decided it was time to freshen up its stylish supermini.

The New-Generation Clio – introduced in March 1994 – remains faithful to the model's successful formula, with all but a few detail changes made to its popular looks. So, there are few external clues to spotting the latest Clio from the previous one.

Elsewhere, safety and equipment levels have been raised across the board, with side impact bars, seat belt pre-tensioners and new head restraints now standard on all models. Further revisions include a longer driver's side windscreen wiper, standard rear wash-wipe (with integral washer jets) and more widespread availability of anti-lock brakes. From September 1994, a driver's airbag became standard on RT, RSi, 16V and Baccara Clios, and a £250 option – compared with nearly twice that, previously – on all other versions.

Build quality and noise levels have come in for attention, 1.4-litre models get shorter gear ratios to pep up in-gear performance, and power steering is now standard on all petrol models from RN upwards. Sporting the new look and revised gear ratios (though not its '95-spec airbag), we revisited the Clio in top-specification, 1.4-litre RT form, installed in the £450 cheaper three-door body.

Apart from revised gearing, little has changed under the 1.4 Clio's bonnet. The 1.4RT boasts a hearty 80bhp from its single-point fuel-injected 1.4-litre

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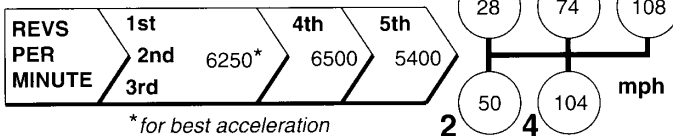
**PERFORMANCE**

**Acceleration** time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>THROUGH THE GEARS</b>		2.0	4.3	7.6	11.7
<b>IN 5TH GEAR</b>		6.5	13.0	20.0	28.0
<b>IN 4TH GEAR</b>		4.5	9.1	14.0	19.3

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES</b>		13.1/9.2		13.5/9.5	
			13.0/9.1		15.0/10.2

**Maximum speeds**



**FUEL CONSUMPTION**

Worst/best mpg	33/48
Typical mpg overall	41½
Realistic tank range*	36 litres/330 miles

\* based on fuel gauge, warning lamp and filling station experience

**FOR THE TECHNICAL**

**ENGINE**

**Type** transverse four cylinder with iron block and alloy head; 5 main bearings  
**Size** 75.8mm bore x 77.0mm stroke = 1390cc  
**Power** 80bhp at 5750rpm  
**Torque** 79 lb ft at 3500rpm  
**Valves** single belt-driven overhead camshaft actuating two valves per cylinder via rockers  
**Fuel/ignition** electronic single-point fuel injection with integrated, fully programmed ignition via coil and distributor. 43-litre fuel tank with low-level warning lamp

**TRANSMISSION**

**Type** five-speed manual, front-wheel drive  
**Mph per 1000rpm** 16.0 in 4th, 20.0 in 5th

**CHASSIS**

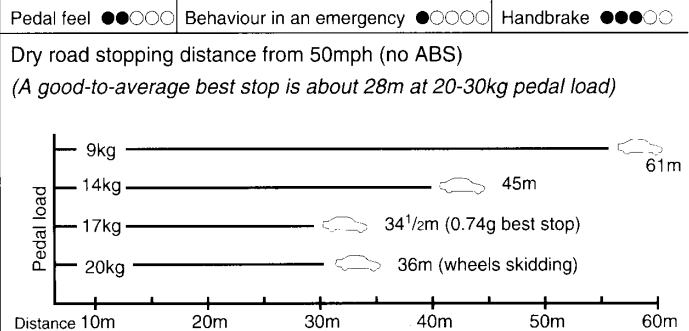
**Suspension** front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, lower wishbones and anti-roll bar. Rear: independent by twin concentric transverse torsion bars, trailing arms and anti-roll bar. Telescopic dampers all round  
**Steering** power-assisted (standard on all except RL models) rack and pinion with 3.4 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 10.4m between kerbs, with 17.2m circle for one turn of the wheel  
**Wheels** 5.00B steel with 165/65R13 76T tyres (Michelin MXL on test car)  
**Brakes** solid discs front, drums rear with vacuum servo. (Bosch electronic ABS optional on 1.4RT, 1.8 RSi and 16-valve – includes rear discs on 1.4RT)

**SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES**

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

<b>Seatbelts</b>	front ●●●●○ rear ●●○○○	<b>Door locking</b>	●●●●○
<b>Head restraints</b>	front ●●○○○ rear [X]	central locking?	[✓]
<b>Interior</b>	safety padding ●●○○○	remote control?	[✓]
driver's airbag?	[✓]	auto window closure?	[X]
other airbags?	[X]	deadlocks?	[X]
side impact protection	●●●○○	<b>Luggage</b>	
<b>Fuel anti-spillage</b>	●●○○○	secure from interior/hidden	●●○○○
		from view	●●○○○
		<b>Alarm</b>	[○] ●●●○○
		engine immobilised?	[✓]
[✓] standard on test car	[○] factory fitted option	[X] not available	

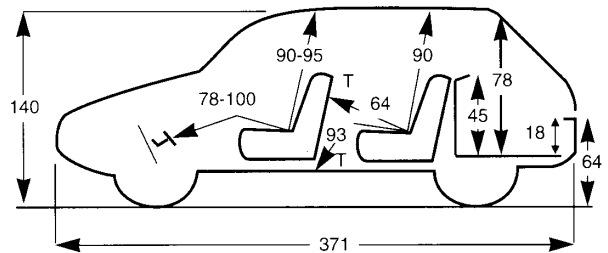
**BRAKES**



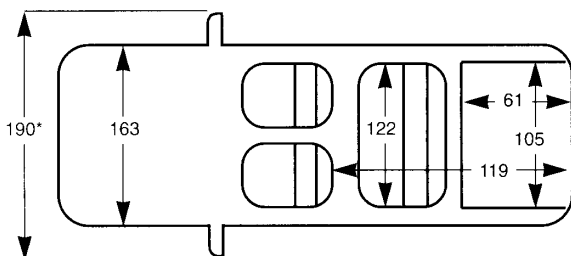
Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop: 23½kg at start of test, 54kg at end of test. (Ideal brakes show no change)

**DIMENSIONS – 3-door**

Centimetres



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



\* 173 with mirrors partially folded

Energy power unit, along with a fairly robust 79 lb ft of torque peaking at 3500rpm. It's no featherweight, but the shorter legs give a useful tickle to the comfortably brisk, if not quite class-beating performance. This translates into a 108mph top speed, together with nimble, sub-12sec 30–70mph sprinting ability, though the power unit's neither particularly quiet nor endearing if driven to these levels. Lower gearing makes things a shade busier under the bonnet, of course, but the new noise-quelling measures make for a quieter, more relaxed cabin. They haven't managed to eradicate an intrusive boom that surfaces around the motorway legal limit, however.

Unsurprisingly, top-spec weight plus the lowered gearing don't do fuel economy any favours. Overall, though, we averaged a very respectable 41½mpg with the 1.4 – showing significant gains over the 1.4 automatic's comparatively thirsty 37½mpg, and not too far adrift from the 43mpg we obtained in our original test of the 1.2-litre.

Apart from the reduced ease of getting to and from the back seats, we found the three-door reasonably enjoyable and easy to live with. Power steering significantly boosts driver appeal, taking much of the hard work out of the previously weighty helm, especially for parking, though it offers less feel of what the front tyres are up to.

Despite claimed improvements, we remain less

than impressed with the Clio's braking performance. Normally things are fine, but in more arduous use, the singularly unimpressive stopping power, tendency to lock the wheels prematurely, and susceptibility to fade, remain disappointing. Not bad, but other small cars stop better.

There's a revised look inside the Clio, with smart new upholstery for all models and new seats for RL and RN versions. However, these seats continue to look more comfortable than they really are, while the cramped, high-set pedal layout causes foot fatigue for some drivers during longer spells at the wheel.

### VERDICT

**There are some seriously good superminis around, these days – as winsome in their way as Nicole. And with the advances some of them have made in areas such as interior space, dynamic competence and sheer driver appeal, the Clio was beginning to fall behind.**

**The New Generation Clio is quieter, easier to drive and receives a number of welcome equipment and cosmetic improvements. Consequently, it's a little prettier to look at and nicer to sit in. The trouble is that the changes fail to close the gap on the class leaders as much as we would have hoped – and no amount of advertising hype can disguise the fact.**

### Likes . . . and gripes

- Cleaner, tidier looks ● ● Seat comfort and back seat space remain mediocre
- Lively performance ● ● Brakes disappointing in hard use
- Quieter, better looking cabin ● ● Engine still busy and boomy at higher speeds
- Improved safety equipment ● ● Alarm and immobiliser on dearer versions only
- Radio remote-control stalk convenient and safe ● ● Pedal layout cramped and awkward

<b>HOW THE CLIO COMPARES</b>	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom – front (cm)	Typical leg/kneerom – rear (cm)	Steering turns/circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
Renault Clio 1.4RT (3-door)	1390/80	3505	11.7	28.0/19.3	41½	34½/17	100	93/64	3.4/10.4 (p)	371
Fiat Punto 1.2 75ELX (5-door)	1242/75	3650	13.7	33.6/23.1	42	26½/16	105	102/71	4.4/10.2	376
Nissan Micra 1.3SLX auto (5-door)	1275/75	3000	12.3	NA	42½	29/15	103	94/66	3.7/9.7	370
Peugeot 106 1.4XR (5-door)	1360/75	3670	11.6	26.5/18.2	42	28½/25	104	91/64	3.7/10.7	356
Seat Ibiza 1.6S (5-door)	1598/75	3380	13.3	27.5/20.4	35½	25/32	105	94/70	3.1/10.1 (p)	368
VW Polo 1.3CL (5-door)†	1296/55	3710	16.7	26.8/20.4	42½	24½/23	105	95/67	3.8/10.1 (p)	372
† 1.3 litre/55bhp replaced by 1.4 litre/60bhp									(p) = power steering	