



Volvo S60



AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Controls/displays	☆☆☆☆○
Handling/steering	☆☆☆☆○
Comfort	☆☆☆☆○
Space/practicality	☆☆○○○

THE S60 RANGE

body upper medium (premium priced) 4 door saloon

trim levels S, SE

engines petrol: 5 cylinder/2.0 litre/180bhp; 5/2.4/200; 5/2.3/250 all turbocharged.

diesel: V5 coming later

drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual (5 speed automatic with torque converter optional on all versions)

notable features "comfort" and "dynamic" interior seats/trim variations, dual-stage airbags, day running lamps, CD/cassette/radios, cruise control, alloy wheels and air conditioning on all versions

LIKES AND GRIPES

door pull/armrests help lateral location
 rear seat backrest releases inside boot
 side-to-side dual temperature controls
 CD and cassette player
 double pockets on both front seatbacks

poor forward vision at rear
 screen reflections from facia top
 no rear wiper - window retains rain
 rear hump/console restricts leg space
 handbrake location not ideal

VITAL STATISTICS (cm)

length x width (inc mirrors)	458x208
front - legroom	84-115
- headroom (no sunroof)	92-100
rear - typical legroom	98
- typical kneeroom	73
- headroom	93
- hiproom	138-140
load space (all seats in use) (litres/cu ft)	545/19.2
load length (seats up/folded)	96/165
load width	115-130
load sill height (inside/outside)	13/67
boot height	43-51

VERDICT

Ford and Volvo, between them, have rendered the S40 obsolete overnight. They've also mounted a twin-pronged attack on the Germans that, prestige apart, puts them ahead for anyone with £15,000-£21,000 to spend. We like the Volvo S60 very much, as a driver's car. And the nice thing about it is, the cheaper the better.

WITHIN A WEEK OF ASSESSING Ford's excellent new Mondeo, we found ourselves driving this Volvo S60. The point isn't lost when one realises that Ford now owns Volvo and these two cars, though entirely discrete developments, are competing in a close-coupled market sector. But not quite – that subtle but important name "Volvo" means that the S60 is challenging BMW's 3-Series, Audi's A4 and the new Mercedes C-Class, rather than similarly-sized volume offerings, however worthy. S60's range of three engines (all with turbos) plus its higher price, confirm that it has been brought to market to complement, rather than compete with, Ford's new Mondeo.

The S60 has much of its underpinnings and power units in common with the latest V70 (estate car) and larger S80. It seeks an identity as the sportier, driver-enthusiast offering of this trio. A drive in the T5 SE certainly confirms this expectation – it's very fast, though not furious.

However, it was the "basic" offering at the other end of the range that surprised and delighted us. With 180bhp and a £20,000 price tag, the 2.0S produces more than enough cornering grip and agility, yet also treats everyone to a remarkably shock-free, untroubled ride to rival any BMW. Move to the SE with its lower-profile tyres and something of this tranquility is lost.

All power units display excellent tremor-free flexibility low down and can be wound up to 6000rpm with no more than a loud hum from under-bonnet. Here again, the 2.0S is a serious challenge to the popular BMW 318, with only four cylinders.

The front seats are shaped to give good lateral location, backed up by plenty of adjusters for height and lumbar support, although the latter handwheel is masked by the centre console box; this too-proximate console also compromises gearshifting and handbrake positioning.

The idea is to make you feel snug and enveloped in the driving position and in other respects it works, though the accelerator could be better placed on UK cars. At the back, it's really only fit for two and to facilitate sufficient headroom, the cushion is too low for enough thigh support. Legroom is adequate rather than generous, but at least there's enough on both sides.

The SE enhancements don't represent shrewd value and the S trim and equipment is very complete, as our "Likes and Gripes" panel shows. There's a good secure boot, too, but it's a pity about the space-saver spare beneath.