



Volvo 850

Featuring 2.0S 10-valve saloon



What's different?

No facelifts or fancy new grilles for the "drivers" Volvo yet, but there's a new 10-valve version of the two-litre, so both two- and 2.5-litre "fives" now come in either 10- or 20-valve versions. Continuing its safety lead, all 850s now sport side airbags, supplementing the existing side-impact protection system

WE'VE SAMPLED MOST OF THE 850's power units to date and have rarely come away less than impressed. Until we can get our itchy little hands on the turbo-diesel (coming soon), the recently added two-litre 10-valve made an intriguing stop-gap. Would it deliver the same glorious five-pot howl as its 20-valve stablemate? And would 12 per cent less power in return for a half-measure of valves prove all that noticeable?

Have no fears on the first count. The 850's banshee top-end howl is still there in full measure, and is but a small part of what makes the 850 such a keen driver's delight.

Things look a shade less rosy on the second count, though. The 10-valve gives away 17bhp and produces four per cent less peak torque than its 20-valve stablemate. And the torque peaks at a heady 4800rpm, 1000rpm higher up the rev range. With similar gearing and much the same weight to move, this makes the two-litre 10-valve contented enough at a sedate amble, but calls for increased cog-stirring and a generally busier time for the driver at a more cut-and-thrust pace.

The 10-valve's reduced get-up-and-go (adding around a second to 30-70mph acceleration through-the-gears, two or three seconds in fourth and fifth, and knocking about 5mph off the top speed) makes this the 850 for those who prefer life at a gentler, more relaxing pace. In many ways, the performance is still quite impressive for a big, solid two-litre saloon. But once a driver has been spoilt by the 20-valve's livelier responses, its lower-powered sibling feels a shade pedestrian. "Not *quite* enough engine for the car", was one driver's apt summary.

Not surprisingly, given the need to stir the engine and gearshift a little harder, the 10-valve failed to quite match the 30¹/₂mpg overall we managed with the 20-valve. This time, we just failed to crack the 30mpg barrier.

Continued on page 3

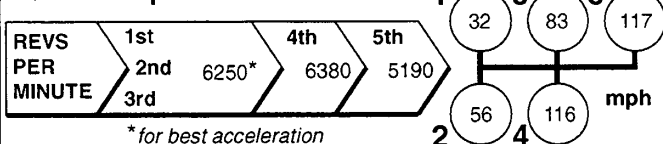
PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.0	4.2	7.2	10.8
IN 5TH GEAR		7.1	14.1	21.4	29.7
IN 4TH GEAR		5.1	10.0	15.3	21.2

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		15.2/10.8		14.3/10.2	
			14.1/10.0		15.6/11.2

Maximum speeds



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Worst/best mpg 22/36

Typical mpg overall 29½

Realistic tank range* 65 litres/420 miles

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

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type transverse five cylinder with alloy block and head; 6 main bearings

Size 81.0mm bore x 77.0mm stroke = 1984cc

Power 126bhp at 6250rpm

Torque 125 lb ft at 4800rpm

Valves twin belt-driven overhead camshafts actuating two valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

Fuel/ignition multi-point fuel injection integrated with fully programmed ignition via coil and distributor. 73-litre fuel tank with low-level warning lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual, front-wheel drive (with traction control on GLT)

Mph per 1000rpm 22.5 in 5th, 18.1 in 4th

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs and lower wishbones. Rear: semi-independent by "Delta link" torsion beam interconnected trailing arms and coil springs. Anti-roll bars and telescopic dampers front and rear

Steering power-assisted rack and pinion with 3.2 turns between locks. Turning circles average 10.9m between kerbs, with 16.4m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 6½J x 16 alloy (standard on 2.0S) with 205/50ZR16 87W tyres (Pirelli P Zero). (6J x 15 steel with 195/60R15 on 2.0 and 2.0SE)

Brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with vacuum servo. ABS standard on all models

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

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

Seatbelts

front ●●●●● rear ●●●●●

Head restraints

front ●●●●○ rear ●●●●○

Interior

safety padding ●●●●●

driver's airbag? ☒ (1)

other airbags? ☒ (3)

side impact protection ●●●●●

Fuel anti-spillage ●●●●○

Door locking

central locking? ☒

remote control? ☒

auto window closure? ☒

deadlocks? ☒

Luggage

secure from interior/hidden

from view ●●●●○

Alarm

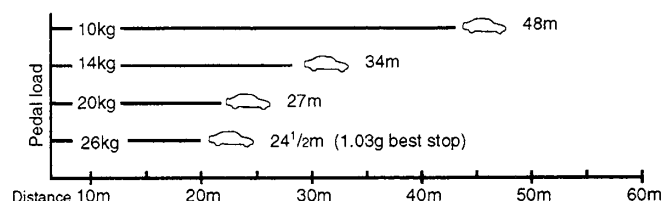
engine immobilised? ☒

☒ standard on test car ☐ factory fitted option ☒ not available

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●○● Behaviour in an emergency ●●●●● Handbrake ●●●●○

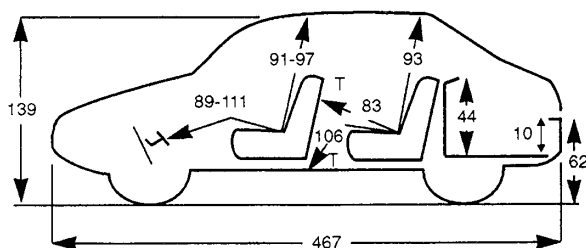
Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with ABS)
(A good-to-average best stop is about 28m at 20-30kg pedal load)



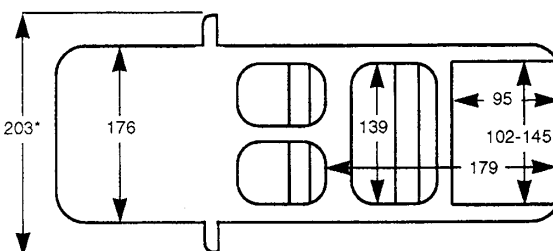
Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop: 14kg at start of test, 16kg at end of test. (Ideal brakes show no change)

DIMENSIONS – 4-door

Centimetres



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



* 178 with mirrors folded

although this sort of economy is still pretty good going from a weighty executive saloon.

Volvo's current 850 line-up and pricing strategy is a bit like ordering a pizza. First pick the body style (saloon or £1000-dearer estate) and power unit (choice of six including the new turbo-diesel), then decide which of six trim-and-equipment "toppings" plus any optional extras you'd like to go with it.

Our two-litre 10-valve saloon came with the S pack. This provides around £2000-worth (if ordered separately) of electric tilt-and-slide glass sunroof, Pursus five-spoke alloy wheels with 205/50-section tyres, a boot-mounted spoiler (incorporating high-level stop light), leather-rimmed steering wheel, plus Volvo's "transformer" rear armrest that turns into an integrated child safety seat, at a saving of around £600.

A worthy little package it is, too, but with one exception. Stylish as they look, the 16in alloys come with Z-rated 205/50R16 tyres. No complaints about their leech-like purchase on the tarmac, but these knobbly, stiff-walled gumballs undermine the 850's otherwise tranquil, compliant ride, particularly on less sportily powered models like this two-litre 10-valve.

To be fair, the price list does say that certain standard items, such as alloy wheels and upholstery, can be exchanged for alternatives. So, unless you're keen to sacrifice ride comfort to achieve that racy, gumball-tyred look, we recommend discussion with the dealer on this point before signing on the dotted line.

Volvo has made a few additions on the safety and security front to keep the 850 bang up to date, with all models equipped with a full remote controlled alarm system and engine immobiliser for 1996.

With the possible exception of Mercedes, few manufacturers work as hard as Volvo on safety. It could almost be the company's trademark! Hardly surprising, then, that Volvo has advanced the state of the art yet another notch, with *side-impact* airbags for front seat occupants now standard on all 850 models. These supplement the already virtually unrivalled reassurance of a driver's airbag, front seatbelt pretensioners, three-point inertia-reel belts for all *five* seats, all-round head restraints plus, of course, Volvo's ultra-conscientious SIPS side-impact protection system.

VERDICT

Thanks to saloons, estates, petrol, high-performance models and, now a parsimonious turbo-diesel, too, the 850 should restore a keener driver's faith in the marque faster than Linford Christie can dash off a 100 metre sprint.

It might not *look* all that different from the models on which Volvo has built its enviable reputation, but apart from the switch to front-wheel drive, the 850 is much the most rewarding Volvo to drive yet.

The only trouble is that, while it's such an enjoyable, safe, reassuring car to drive, the two-litre 10-valve is a little lacking in grunt.

If you're content to forgo the frenetic pace of motoring in the Nineties, the 10-valve has much to commend it. Otherwise, we'd suggest opting for the slightly more basic, but still well-equipped entry level model and spend the money saved on a double helping of valves.

Likes . . . and gripes

- Gorgeous five cylinder engine ● ● Not quite enough power for the car, though
- Solid build and unrivalled safety features ● ● S pack's Z-rated tyres ruin low-speed ride
- Plentiful "welcome aboard" interior lighting ● ● Sensible, though plain-Jane, interior styling
- Roomy interior, versatile seat adjustments ● ● Instruments obscured for taller drivers

HOW THE 850 COMPARES	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/kneeroom – rear (cm)	Steering turns/circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
Volvo 850 2.0S (10-valve)	1984/126	3105	10.8	29.7/21.2	29½	24½/26*	111	106/83	3.2/10.9 (p)	467
Volvo 850 2.0S (20-valve)	1984/143	3120	9.6	26.9/18.7	30½	29½/18*	111	106/83	3.2/10.5 (p)	467
Ford Scorpio 2.0i 16v Executive	1998/134	3450	10.3	26.0/18.7	28½	25½/28*	109	112/87	3.0/10.5 (p)	483
Honda Accord 2.0i ES	1997/130	3200	10.5	26.1/19.2	31½	25½/18*	113	95/72	3.1/11.7 (p)	468
Peugeot 605 2.0SLi	1998/120	3080	10.8	27.6/18.6	29½	28½/14*	109	104/85	3.3/11.2 (p)	472
Rover 820Si	1994/134	3130	9.2	23.3/15.3	32	28/32*	109	104/80	3.2/11.9 (p)	488
Vauxhall Omega 2.0i 16v GLS	1998/134	3220	10.2	27.2/20.4	34	26½/18*	117	102/82	3.1/10.7 (p)	479
* with ABS									(p) = power steering	