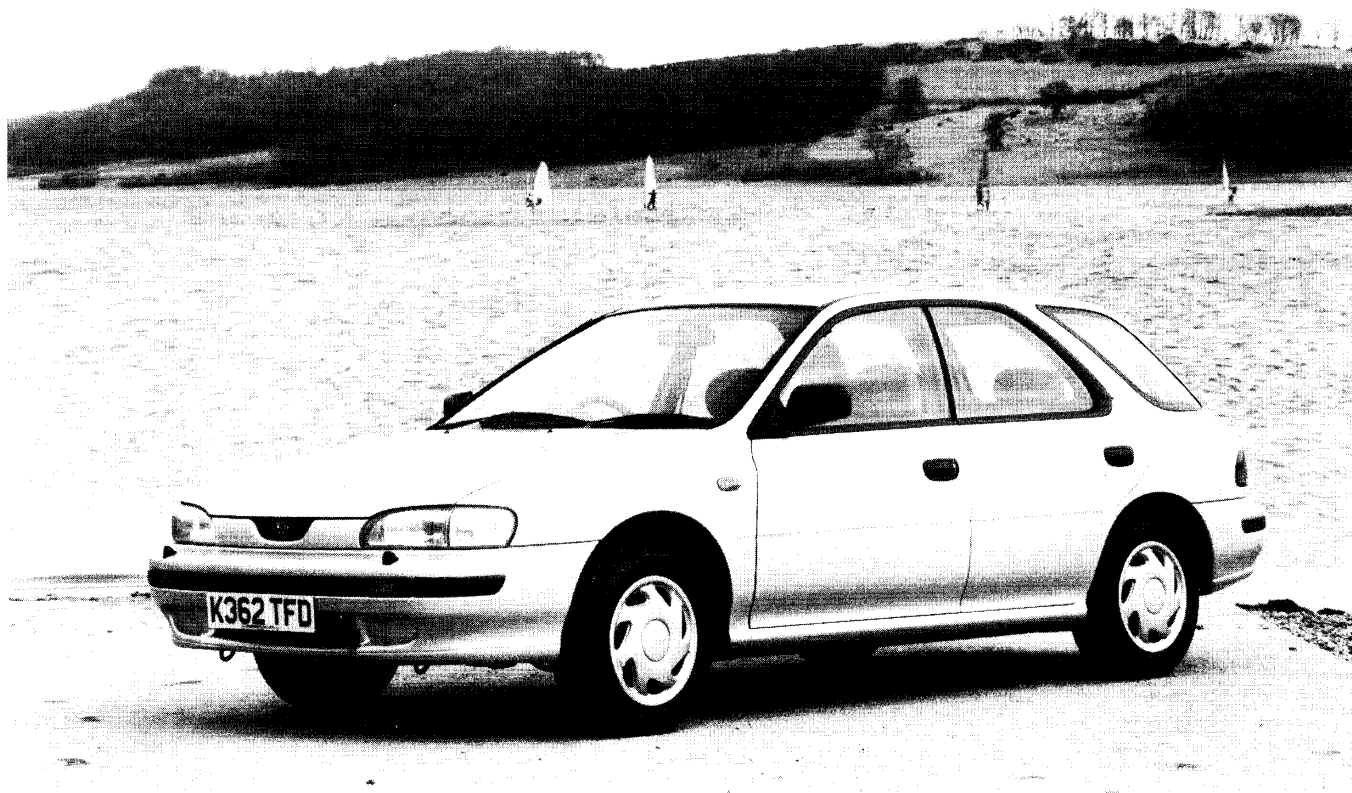


## Subaru Impreza

Featuring 1.8GL Automatic



**T**HE NAME SUBARU IS VIRTUALLY synonymous with four-wheel drive. But despite offering the supermini Justy, the impressive Legacy saloons and estates, a tiny 700cc Vivio microcar and even a stylish looking 4x4 coupé, there was a gaping hole in the company's line-up.

The staid L-Series saloons, estates and pick-ups had, admittedly, proved loyal servants to farmers, vets and the like for many years, but there was a growing need for a stylish, more modern contender in the important lower-medium sector. Enter the Impreza – Subaru's latest addition, which effectively takes over from the old L-Series models.

The curvy, Escort-sized newcomer is available as either a conventional saloon or this five-door hatchback that's cunningly disguised to look like an estate. Subaru's hallmark, the flat-four "boxer" engine, comes in 1.6- and 1.8-litre sizes, producing 89 and 102bhp, respectively. The Impreza's permanent four-wheel drive can also be specified with the convenience of an automatic gearbox on the 1.8.

Power steering, light, easy controls and the optional automatic gearbox we sampled give the driver

an easy time at the wheel. There are also adjustments to the driver's seat height and the steering wheel tilt. Apart from providing a bright, airy interior, large rear quarter windows prove a boon at angled junctions and when reversing.

The 1.8's 102bhp promises lively acceleration, but the combination of a hefty kerb weight, four-wheel drive transmission and the automatic gearbox, make quite a dent in the performance – as a modest 101mph maximum speed and 30 to 70mph acceleration in an unimpressive 14½sec demonstrate. For the record, Subaru claims that the manual version has a top speed of 108mph and will dash off 0 to 62mph in 12sec. Fuel consumption on the automatic worked out to a disappointing 27½mpg overall. Thirty is possible if you take it easy.

It's not all bad news, though. The Impreza's all-alloy engine feels and sounds very smooth and refined, almost to the point of disappointment for anyone who enjoys the unusual off-beat note often associated with this cylinder layout.

The all-independent suspension may not quite outpoise a Peugeot for general ride comfort, but it

## PERFORMANCE

### Acceleration time in seconds

STANDING START	0-30mph	4.8	0-60mph	13.7	1/4 mile	19.9
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mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS	2.2	5.3	8.9	14.5	

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
SPEED RANGES USING KICKDOWN	4.0	5.3	6.7	9.2	

### Maximum speeds

using accelerator kickdown

REVS PER MINUTE	1st/2nd	3rd	4th	mph
	6000	6330	4530	
	4	3	2	1
	97	101	63	36

## FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests: unleaded Premium, 95 octane

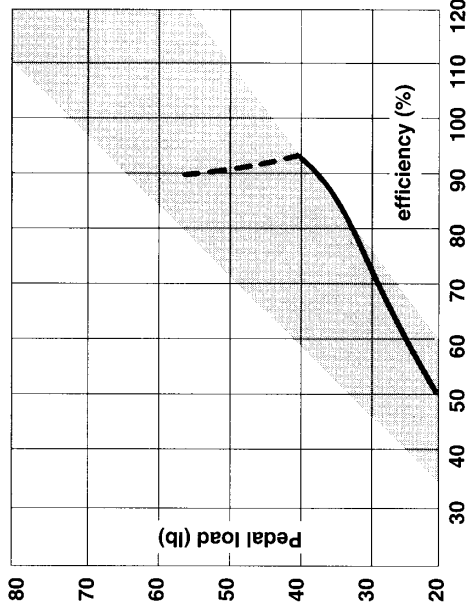
<b>Normal range</b>	mpg	24
Hard driving, heavy traffic		
Short journeys in the suburbs		21 1/2
Motorway - 70mph cruising		31
Brisk driving, mixed roads		26 1/2
Gentle driving - rural roads		29 1/2
<b>Typical mpg overall</b>		<b>27 1/2</b>
Realistic tank range*		45 litres/270 miles

\* based on fuel gauge and filling station experience

## SAFETY

### Brakes (without ABS)

How pedal loads affect braking



Braking efficiency shown as a percentage of gravity (ie 100% = 1.0g). Ideally the braking curve should be a gentle sweep and lie within the shaded zone of this graph. If it's above, the brakes are too heavy; if it's below, they are too light - although this is more acceptable on cars with ABS. When the curve becomes broken, the wheels are skidding.

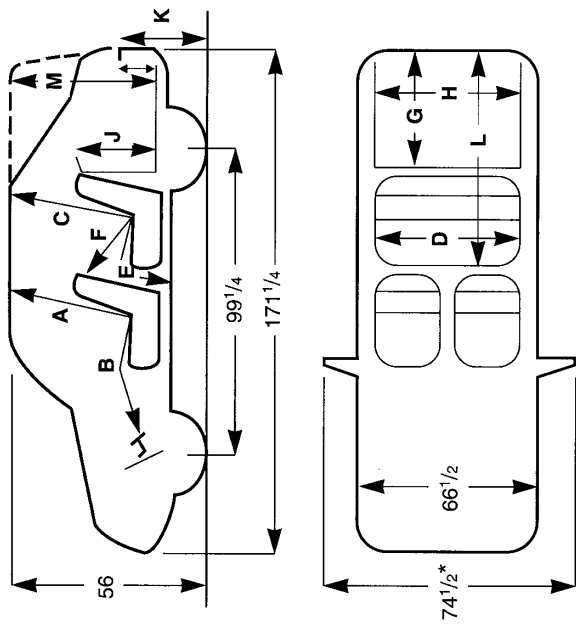
<b>50-0mph best stop</b>	92 1/2 / 90 1/2ft
<b>Handbrake only</b>	39%
<b>Fade test</b> How hard use affects braking (Ideal brakes show no change)	
<b>Pedal load needed for 75% stop (lb)</b>	
At start of test	36
After constant use	28
After severe use	32

### Safety check list

<b>Steering</b>	true 'feel' of the road?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Brakes</b>	powerful?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	sensible effort?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	fade resistant?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Seatbelts</b>	front - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	convenient?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	rears - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	convenient?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Head restraints</b>	front - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	rear - effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Interior</b>	thoroughly padded?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Fuel</b>	shielded filler?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	protected tank?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## MEASUREMENTS

### Dimensions for 5-door model (inches)



\* 65 1/2 with mirrors folded

### Inside (inches)

<b>A</b> Front headroom (without sunroof)	38 1/2-39 3/4	<b>G</b> Load length	34 3/4
<b>B</b> Front legroom (min - max)	33 1/2-41 1/2	<b>H</b> Load floor width (min - max)	38-50 3/4
<b>C</b> Rear headroom	36 1/2	<b>J</b> Load height	14
<b>D</b> Back seat width (between armrests)	50 1/4	<b>K</b> Sill height (inner/outer)	7/26
<b>E</b> Typical rear * legroom	37	<b>L</b> Load length	57 1/2
<b>F</b> Typical rear * kneeroom	25 1/2	<b>M</b> Load height (to tailgate hinge)	30 1/2

\* "Typical" represents the mean measurement behind the driver's seat set at 39in legroom and the passenger's seat set at 41in

provides impressively unruffled passage over the bumps, while taut, nicely weighted power steering and the four-wheel drive provide reassuring year-round grip, whatever the surface.

Moving inside, the Impreza presents neat and clear instruments, conveniently sited switches and rotary heater dials in a modern, curved fascia. A hint of colour attempts to break up the rather drab light grey look to it all.

Standard equipment includes central locking, electric windows and door mirrors, a tachometer, headlamp load-levelling and split/folding back seats. There are also rear footwell heater ducts, but an electric tilt-and-slide sunroof is an £800 dealer-fitted option; there's no airbag (not yet, anyway) and no rear centre armrest. All told, a bit mean considering the Impreza's steepish price tag.

Without the sunroof, there's ample space for tall people up front, but the tape measure reveals meagre room in the back seat and, to a lesser extent, in the luggage area, too. This is a bit of a con, really, considering that the Impreza appears to be a roomy hatchback-cum-cargo carrier. A roller-blind load cover is rather cheap and cheerful at this price, too. A space-saver spare wheel is fine – until you have to use it.

There's nothing wrong with the way the Impreza's built, even though things look a bit haphazard and untidy under the bonnet. Everything fits together and

works with customary Japanese precision, with shiny paintwork, neat shut lines and a generally reassuring fit and finish.

In this case, the four-wheel drive is intended primarily for peace of mind on the road, rather than for cross-country excursions. Nevertheless, despite lacking the high ground clearance and the big, chunky tyres of more dedicated off-roaders, the Impreza is by no means averse to, or incapable of, a bit of mud wrestling should the need arise.

Parts prices are dearer than for home-grown rivals, while insurance, at a Group 11 rating, is about the same. Subaru's 7500-mile servicing intervals look quite onerous, however.

#### VERDICT

**The eye-catching Impreza looks different, is different and, thanks to its sophisticated four-wheel drive, offers the rarity of year-round mobility without the bulk or expense of an out-and-out off-road vehicle. It's also refined, rides well and is superbly put together.**

Ultimately, though, because of its high price, failure to deliver the promised spaciousness and – in 1.8 automatic form, at least – mediocre performance and economy, it's at a disadvantage compared with more conventional front-wheel drive rivals.



**HOW THEY COMPARE**

	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Max speed (mph)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (% g/lb)	Maximum legroom – front (in)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (in)	Steering turns/circle (ft)	Overall length (in)
Subaru Impreza 1.8GL Auto (5 door)	1820/102	101	14.5	NA (auto)	27½	94/40	41½	37/25½	3.2/34½ (p)	171¼
Ford Escort 1.6i Ghia Estate (5 door)	1597/87	109	12.3	34.4/23.0	35	103/75*	42	38¼/27	3.0/34 (p)	168
Ford Mondeo 1.8i GLX (5 door)	1796/115	122	10.7	26.3/17.2	36½	101/35*	43	40/28	3.0/34 (p)	176½
Honda Concerto 1.6i (5 door)	1590/110	113	9.5	25.3/18.5	31½	80/40*	42½	39¼/28¼	3.4/34½ (p)	168
Peugeot 405 1.8GR (4 door)	1761/102	114	11.1	29.2/18.5	36½	86/40	42½	39¼/28½	3.2/35½ (p)	173½
Vauxhall Astra 1.6i GLS Estate (5 door)	1598/100	108	12.0	38.6/25.3	41½	102/35	42¼	37/27	3.5/32½ (p)	168½
Rivals shown here were tested in manual form						* with ABS		(p) power assisted		

**TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION****ENGINE**

**Type and size** front-mounted, longitudinal, horizontally opposed 4 cylinder; water-cooled. 87.9mm bore x 75.0mm stroke = 1820cc. Alloy block and heads; 5 main bearings

**Compression ratio** 9.5:1

**Valve gear** single belt-driven overhead camshaft per bank, actuating four valves per cylinder via rockers and hydraulic tappets

**Fuel system** Subaru/Hitachi electronic multi-point fuel injection, three-way regulated catalyser and lambda sensor. 50-litre (11-gallon) tank, no low-fuel warning lamp.

Fuel required: unleaded only, 90 octane minimum

**Ignition system** fully programmed electronic, integral with fuel injection, via distributorless twin coils

**Maximum power** 102bhp at 5600rpm

**Maximum torque** 108 lb ft at 4400rpm

**TRANSMISSION**

**Gearbox** 5-speed manual (all synchromesh) and reverse standard. "Dual mode" electronically controlled 4-speed automatic with hydrokinetic torque converter on test car.

Ratios: first 2.78, second 1.54, third 1.00, top 0.69 and reverse 2.27:1

**Final drive** 4.11:1, permanent four-wheel drive with viscous coupling centre differential

**Mph per 1000rpm** 24.2 in top, 16.8 in 3rd (theoretical) (21.4 in top, 16.3 in 4th on 5-speed manual)

**Rpm at 70mph** 3270 in top gear (observed)

**CHASSIS**

**Suspension** front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, lower arms and an anti-roll bar. Rear: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, trailing arms and twin transverse links and an anti-roll bar. Dampers: telescopic all round

**Steering** power-assisted (engine speed-sensitive) rack and pinion with 3.3 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 34½ft between kerbs, with 53ft circle for one turn of the wheel

**Wheels** 5Jx14 steel, with 175/70R14 84H tyres (Semperit Top Speed on test car). Space-saver spare (Bridgestone Tracompa 3 on 4Jx16 steel rim)

**Brakes** 10.2in ventilated discs front, 9.0in drums rear, with vacuum servo. Anti-lock control not available