

**SMARTMONEY MAGAZINE** by SmartMoney Magazine Staff (Author Archive)

## SmartMoney's 2010 Car Buying Guide

It may take a leap of faith in the economy to plunk down \$30,000 on a new car or commit to the monthly payments these days. But folks in the market are in a good position to strike a hard bargain. Car sales soared in August with the government's cash-for-clunkers program. But showroom visits are down again in September, according to CNW Market Research, and the industry may soon have to ramp up incentives just to entice shoppers to take a test-drive.

So what models are worth a visit to your local dealership, even if it's just to kick the tires? We tested cars in four categories for our buying guide this year: green machines, family haulers, luxury coupes and value sedans. Our goal was to find the best combinations of comfort, performance and price. Plus a little pizzazz on the side.

### Best Value Sedan: Mazda6

MSRP: \$21,070

Avg. City/Hwy MPG: 24

5-yr. Ownership Cost: \$33,737

Priced around \$21,000, this generation of Mazda's flagship sedan is a more mature creature than its predecessors. Mazda lengthened and widened the body, made the car quieter and spruced up the interior with brushed metallic finishes. The four-cylinder, 170-horsepower model had pep and poise in our tests. Highway mileage tops out at 29 MPG, though, trailing some rivals. Mazda says mileage is less a priority than driving dynamics and style.



Read more: [SmartMoney's 2010 Car Buying Guide \(Page 3 of 5\)](#) at [SmartMoney.com](#)

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