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BMW 5 Series first drive: BMW 5 Series initial verdict

With close to five million models sold over a lifespan that's already encompassed 38 years, and chart topping sales in its sector for the past four consecutive years, there's no doubt the 5 Series is the executive saloon of many company car drivers' dreams.



Bigger grille and more contoured styling create a handsome machine

On paper, the latest version does appear to maintain the legacy created by the first 5. It offers more power and efficiency, improved spec and highly advanced driver assistance and [safety](#) systems. And there's plenty of choice, starting with the frugal, [stop-start](#) equipped 520d (available from July 2010), and rising to the monstrously powerful twin-turbocharged 550i.

From our first drive, though, it seems that not all models will possess the spirit of the original. Although massively competent and refined, the 530d didn't encourage enthusiastic driving as much as our other test car, the 535i. And with diesel models expected to account for 90% of sales, this means many drivers could miss out on the unique magic of the 5.

BMW is top for reliability



All 5 Series models have the latest iDrive information system

However, the 5 stacks up impressively well on performance and refinement against current rivals, including the Mercedes E-class and ageing Audi A6. It also beats them both on reliability and owner satisfaction, according to the [2009 Which? Car survey](#).

So we've no doubt that corporate car parks will continue to be filled with rows of BMW's 5 Series for now at least. Whether Audi will trounce its German rival when it replaces the ageing A6 in the near future remains to be seen.

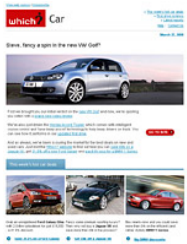
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