

No stigma, no limitations and 50 MPG

We first drove the Honda Accord Hybrid in 2005, when most of the buzz was going to Prius and Insight (and to the Civic Hybrid). As we cruised a Valley freeway, we thought, “why doesn’t everybody do this?” They’ve delivered cutting edge technology in a regular mainstream sedan, with mostly routine instruments—not a hypermiler’s bragging-board science project. Nice.

Since then, there have been others—Ford Fusion, Hyundai Sonata and Lexus ES hybrids, for example. But Honda has an extensive track record. The new Hybrid is the final model in their ninth generation Accord lineup (which also included a new Plug-In Hybrid a year and a half ago). We welcome the new Accord Hybrid, as a benchmark lesson in effective simplicity—its hybrid powertrain delivers a nearly invisible layer

of extraordinary fuel economy, with plenty of punch behind it. Acceleration is strong—beyond what its numbers might suggest—and power is delivered with no vestige of front-drive torque steer. Its EV mode lets you cruise the neighborhood for a couple of miles on electric power only.

We found the car’s performance above average—in aggressive traffic, we rated power, handling, steering and tight cornering as impressive.

This is a highly competitive segment, and we like a lot of the competition. The Accord is one of the more expensive, though fully equipped—no options particularly needed. Then again, if you are on a budget, the full features are unavoidable. Then again, the Honda Accord Hybrid rates 50 MPG. Don’t miss this car, when shopping this group. It’s a strong contender. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE.....	2.0L DOHC 16v i-VTEC
	4-cylinder Earth Dreams Engine
POWER.....	141/122/196 hp/torque/total power
TRANSMISSION	Electric CVT
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
MPG.....	50/45/47 (city/hwy/comb)
INCLUDED:	4-wheel discs, electric power rack-and-pinion steering, front/rear stabilizer bars, ECO Assist, theft immobilizer, voice nav, rear camera, leather-trimmed seats and wheel, 360-watt 7-speaker touchscreen audio, XM satellite, Honda-Link, Bluetooth, SMS text, keyless start, dual-zone climate, rear vents, 10-way power driver’s seat and 4-way passenger, heated seats, power windows/locks with auto up/down, adaptive cruise, one-touch power moonroof, heated power mirrors, rear spoiler.
BASE PRICE.....	\$34,905
DESTINATION CHARGE:.....	790
TOTAL	\$35,695

Eco Assist System (P.422)

Ambient Meter
 • Changes color to reflect your driving style.
 Green: Fuel efficient driving
 Blue green: Moderate acceleration/ deceleration
 Blue: Aggressive acceleration/ deceleration
 • The ambient meter color changes in accordance with your brake or accelerator pedal operation.

ECON Button (P.422)
 Helps maximize fuel economy.

ECON Mode Indicator (P.422)
 Comes on when the ECON button is pressed.

The message is displayed for a few seconds when the ECON button is pressed.

When you fire up the Accord Hybrid, the instrument readout says “ready to drive.” And indeed it is very much so.

LOGBOOK NOTES

The car has an Econ (not eco) mode via a button to the lower left of the steering wheel. Indicators in the binnacle include a leafy green logo to congratulate fuel frugality.

We rated the audio as superb at one point, but came back to downgrade it to above average, depending upon music content.

With the right turn signal on, a side mirror-mounted camera fully displays your blind side. This is a great innovation, beating the pants off a typical beep or yellow triangle.

Headlights seemed weak. We even double-checked to see whether they were on.

The otherwise routine grille has an almost holographic ripple effect—a neat detail.

As with Acura, the lefthand side mirror has a hairline seam separating its wide view, providing not a bubble but a confusingly distorted double image at times. We would replace this with a flat pane and a bubble.

