

Deciding to buy a midsize Toyota Tacoma is easy. Deciding which one can be harder, and they've just made the process trickier still.

Pickup lineups are notoriously complex, especially big sellers, and the Toyota Tacoma is certainly no exception. Among fundamentals, there are six trim levels, two engines, two transmissions, two cabs, two bed lengths, and 4x4 or rear-wheel drive (see upper sidebar at far right). That could multiply out to 192 possible builds, if every combination were available, but this varies. Nonetheless, there are no fewer than 32 basic Tacoma models before packages or options (see chart at near right).

Choosing one starts out with your purpose. Then comes that model comparison. Working one end is your budget. From the other end, you'll compare all those available combinations. (For some, items like manual shift or the smaller engine will narrow things down quickly.)

Basic configurations stairstep and overlap as features and prices increase, simplifying the process for some and complicating it for others. Some may be left wishing for one of those 160 combinations that does not get built.

On top of all those, you can now add the new SR5 Trail Special Edition—a package, not a 33rd model, per se—the truck we're driving here. This takes a simpler model and adds bigger all-terrain tires and smaller wheels, while increasing suspension height 1.1 inches up front and half an inch in the rear, and also bearing its own special fabric interior, badging and other identifying points.

Traditionally, more serious off-roaders head right to the TRD lineup, specifically two of its three subsets—TRD Off-Road or TRD Pro models. Price kicks in quickly here, with TRD Pro nearing a \$50 grand base price, while TRD Off-Road can keep you under 40 (and offers an Access Cab, if you prefer).

Toyota defines the SR5 Trail Edition's difference as offering "an emphasis on storage, styling, value and a focus on off-road performance."

Point by point, styling is subjective—all models offer one flavor or another. And TRD Off-Road and TRD Pro are already masters of off-roading.

Storage boxes built into the bed are indeed special features of the SR5 Trail Edition. The combination of these and off-roading suggest to us perhaps more of a camper's or fisherman's weekend off-pavement duties than the TRD off-roaders.

A lower end trim level, SR5, boosted up a bit for off-roading, sounds like a compelling formula. But while SR5 starts at \$28,940, the Trail Edition package is only available on the V6 Double Cab Short Bed build at \$36,305 base. Trail Edition brings the price to \$40,070—higher than any TRD Off-Road.

Broken out, that's \$1550 more to move from an SR5 Double Cab V6 Short Bed to a TRD Off-Road

of the same build. Or \$3765 to add the Trail Edition package to the SR5. Is there a compelling reason?

The SR5 Trail Edition does have those storage boxes, along with available 120v power outlets. And the SR5 Trail Edition does have undercarriage skid plates straight from the TRD Off-Road. Surprisingly, in fact, the SR5 Trail Edition's front fascia, lift and skid plate implementation combine to offer higher approach, departure and breakover angles.

TRD (and Limited) models, though, have other features that the SR5, even with the Trail Edition build, does not—such as keyless entry and start, power seats, wireless charging, inclinometer and roll/pitch instrumentation for that off-roading, and available dual-zone climate. And for some, those storage boxes may even be points off, as maximum open bed volume is a more pressing need.

We took the SR5 Trail Edition on a serious off-roading (but not rock-crawling) run, and it performed magnificently. It's a handsome, capable and compelling build. But when all priced out, we remain a bit stumped on that final decision. ■

2022 TOYOTA TACOMA LINEUP

TRIM	DRIVE	4x4
SR		
Access Cab LB	4-cyl	\$27,150 / 30,225
Access Cab V6 LB		29,410 / 32,875
Double Cab SB	4-cyl	27,980 / --
Double Cab V6 SB		-- / 33,415
SR5		
Access Cab LB	4-cyl	28,940 / 32,015
Access Cab V6 LB		32,085 / 35,395
Double Cab SB	4-cyl	29,830 / --
Double Cab V6 SB		33,230 / 36,305
Double Cab B6 SB Trail Edition		+3,765 / 40,070
Double Cab V6 LB		33,730 / 36,805
TRD Sport		
Access Cab V6 LB		34,060 / 35,835
Double Cab V6 SB		35,315 / 38,280
Double Cab V6 LB		35,815 / 38,890
Double Cab V6 SB	MT	-- / 36,450
TRD Off-Road		
Double Cab V6 SB		35,340 / 37,855
Double Cab V6 SB	MT	-- / 36,475
Access Cab V6 LB		-- / 37,370
Double Cab V6 LB		-- / 38,915
Limited		
Nightshade Double Cab V6 SB		-- / 43,480
Double Cab V6 SB		39,905 / 42,980
TRD Pro		
Double Cab V6 SB	MT	-- / 46,585
Double Cab V6 AT SB		-- / 49,290

TACOMA MAJOR BUILD VARIABLES

There are six trim levels, two engines, two transmissions, two cabs, two bed lengths, in various combinations (but not every possible combination), for a total of 32 builds (plus the Trail Edition package for SR5 makes 33).

TRIM LEVELS :

- SR, SR5, TRD Sport, TRD Off-Road, Limited, TRD Pro / Trail Edition available on SR5

ENGINES :

- 278-hp 3.5L V6
- 159-hp 2.7L inline 4-cyl (on just a few)

TRANSMISSIONS:

- 6-speed automatic
- 6-speed manual (on just a few, V6 only)

CABS, SEATS / REAR LEGROOM:

- Access Cab, 4 seats / 24.6 in rear legroom
- Double Cab, 5 seats / 32.6 in rear legroom

BED LENGTH:

- Short Bed (SB) 5-ft nominal (60.5 in)
- Long Bed (LB) 6-ft nominal (73.7 in)

SPECIFICATIONS ON OURS

ASSEMBLY	Baja California, Mexico
CAB	Double Cab (seats 5)
BED LENGTH	Short Bed (SB) 5 ft (60.5 in)
ENGINE	3.5-liter V6 D-4S (direct & port) EFI injection Atkinson Cycle w VVT-iV intake & VVT-i exhaust
HP/TORQUE	278 hp / 265 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.8:1
TRANSMISSION	6-spd ECT auto
DRIVETRAIN	4x4
DIFFERENTIAL	(w V6 auto) 3.909
TRANSFER CASE	1.00:1 / 2.57:1
SUSPENSION	F: coils, dbl wishbone, stblzr bar, 1.1-in lift on Trail Edition; R: leaf springs w staggered outboard-mounted gas shocks, 0.5-in lift on Trail Ed.
STEERING	rack & pinion pwr steering
BRAKES	F: 10.75 vented, R: 10.0 drum
WHEELS	16-inch bronze finish
TIRES	265/70R16 112T Goodyear Wrangler Territory AT w Kevlar
LENGTH / WB	(Dbl Cab, SB) 212.3 / 127.4 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	(9.4 standard) +bump from lifts front & rear, new spec un stated
APPR / DEPART / BRKVR	34 / 23.6 / 26.4°
TURNING CIRCLE	(Dbl Cab 4x4) 44.1 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.7 / 38.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.9 / 32.6 in
BED LENGTH	60.5 in inside (nominal 5-ft)
WEIGHT	(V6 auto Dbl Cab 4x4) 4550 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	87 reg or higher / 21.1 gal
MPG	18/22/20 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE ***\$35,655**

DN: parking sonar, premium audio, 8-in touch-screen w nav	1710
TRAIL EDITION: 16-in bronze wheels, Goodyear Wrangler Territory AT w Kevlar tires, heritage grille w bronze lettering, Trail badge, locking rear differential, front/rear suspension lift, TRD Off-Road skid plates, lockable bed storage incl cooler insulation on one, black fabric seats w tan stitching, all weather floor liners, 120V outlet in bed	3765
TECHNOLOGY PKG: blind spot monitor w rear cross traffic alert	600
DOOR EDGE GUARD	140
DOOR SILL PROTECTOR	79
DESTINATION CHARGE	1215

TOTAL **\$43,164**

*Prices have increased since our sticker.

NEW CONUNDRUM

New SR5 package adds off-road chops and on-the-go activity features

BY JOE SAGE

