

IS A3 A 10?

by Joe Sage

The moment we hopped in the new Audi A3 and sat down, we were struck by how big it is, for how small it is. Intended to be new for 2021, but with that year skipped due to global conditions, the A3 is now all new for 2022. Styling evolves with the brand, always seeming to move cautiously till you look back and realize they constantly modernize very well. Body work on the new A3 is dramatic beyond its new grille. Strong boxed wheel wells and deep side contours evoke everything from RS models to classic rally quattros that have come before. The car's stance is wider and bolder, with benefits for styling, handling and the overall feeling that you're driving something better.

The Audi sedan lineup, with one of the most

longstanding alphanumeric in the biz, starts out straightforwardly enough—A3, A4, A6, A8. (There are also off-numbered variants and there has been an A2 in some parts of the world.) The sequence is simple. Categorizing them, less so. A variety of sources (including Audi themselves) variously identify A3 as subcompact or compact, A4 as compact or midsize, A6 as midsize, executive or nothing at all, and A8 as full-size or nothing at all.

This is not surprising in the wider world, where lineups of, say, five or six crossovers from any one brand have to conjure up new terms for new sizes (with many different ones applied in recent years).

And perhaps it shouldn't be surprising here, as this smallest Audi sedan has now overtaken earlier A4s in size (see chart). With fit, finish and family resemblance fairly uniform throughout the range, as well as growing popularity of smaller vehicles,

and equipped with a high level of technologies, it becomes increasingly possible that the A3 is the only Audi many people will look at.

Even as it grows in size and heft, the A3 has grown considerably more fuel-frugal with this generation—24 percent more, in fact—now highway rated at 38 MPG with front-wheel drive, tops in the segment (or 36 with quattro as on ours). Achieving this, even with decent power and torque, both over 200, is in part due to its new 48-volt mild-hybrid (MHEV) system, which can automatically shut off the engine and coast in certain driving situations.

We probably did not encounter too many such situations, as we took our A3 quattro for a significantly active cruise on the mountain two-lanes. On the twisties, we popped it into sport mode and relied on the manumatic, a highly satisfying combination. We pushed it, in fact, to the point that we

	A3: 2006 2015 2022			A4: 1999 2015 2022		
LENGTH (in)	168.7	175.4	176.9	178.0	185.1	187.5
WHEELBASE (in)	101.5	103.8	103.5	102.6	110.6	111.0
WIDTH (in)	69.5	70.7	71.5	68.2	71.9	72.7
HEIGHT (in)	56.0	55.7	56.2	55.8	56.2	56.2
CARGO (cu.ft)	(hatch)	10.0	10.9	13.7	12.4	12.0
TURN CIRCLE (ft)	35.1	36.1	36.4	36.4	37.7	38.1
WEIGHT (lb)	3263-3660	3175-3362	3329-3494	2998-3384	3516-3693	3417-3627

Growing closer for awhile, the new A3 now meets or exceeds earlier A4 sizes other than length (close!) and cargo capacity (note A3 is headed up, A4 down). Earliest year for each represents the first generation available in the US.

realized we were treating it like a hardcore S-car, thus finding our limits a little sooner than our spirit may have sought, but well beyond what you'd expect from this price and powertrain. Impressive.

We're also seldom nav-dependent, yet enjoyed a huge doublewide aerial 3D view of our location in the generous adaptable binnacle screens.

Glances at our readouts indicated fuel economy of about 23 MPG for everything we did, combined.

Starting at just \$34,800, the premium Audi A3 lineup is broadly appealing. There's nothing about this smallest model that would send you away,

other than any specific interior or cargo volume needs. We of course would always choose the quattro, which adds \$2000 to any, and (at least on our test trim) we'd be likely to force ourselves into the packages ours had added, to get keyless entry and the B&O sound system, if nothing else. It does add up fast this way, but that's the case with the larger models, too. It's still a lot for the money.

Is the new Audi A3 a "ten"? Darn close. Just of course bear in mind that they do have other models—whether larger ones, or S3 and RS3 variants of this one—that go to eleven. You can't lose. ■

We had many long notes about the user interface—some attributable to the new Audi MIB3 system's differences from the more familiar MMI (itself partly evolution but also varying by some models, A3 being one of them), others attributable to its user-guest profile setup, largely an accommodation to ever more frequent smartphone updates.



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Ingolstadt, Germany
ENGINE / TRANSMISSION	Hungary / Germany
PARTS CONTENT	57% Germany
EPA CLASS / SEATING	subcompact sedan / 5
ENGINE	2.0L TFSI 16v alum/alum 4-cyl w Audi valvelift and VVT
HP/TORQUE	201 hp / 221 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	12.2:1
TRANSMISSION	7-spd S tronic auto
DRIVETRAIN	quattro AWD
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut; R: four-link
STEERING	speed-dependent pwr asst electromechanical
BRAKES	F: 12.0 x26mm vented; R: 10.7 x10mm solid disc
WHEELS	(opt) 18 x 8.0
TIRES	(opt) 225/40 R18 all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	176.9 / 103.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	36.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	36.8 / 36.6 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.2 / 35.2 in
CARGO CAPACITY	10.9 cu.ft
CURB WEIGHT	3494 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 14.5 gal
MPG	28/36/31 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$35,900
PAINT: Manhattan Gray metallic	595
PREMIUM PLUS PKG: driver's seat memory, alarm w motion sensor, advanced key, auto-dim mirror w compass, auto-dim power-fold mirrors, LED headlights, Homelink garage door opener, leatherette armrests, SiriusXM w 360L (trial), wireless phone charge, adaptive cruise, active lane assist w emerg, side assist w rear cross traffic, park system plus w assist	3300
TECHNOLOGY PKG: MMI navigation plus, virtual cockpit plus w 12.3-in screen, Bang & Olufsen 3D sound audio, traffic sign recognition, Audi connect Plus (trial)	2250
18-IN WHEEL PKG: 18-in 5-Y-spoke bi-color finish, all-season tires	800
INTERIOR STYLE PKG: Agate gray fine grain birch wood inlays, LED interior lighting	550
DESTINATION CHARGE	1045
TOTAL	\$44,440

(Note: prices have increased; see below.)

2022 AUDI A3-S3-RS3 LINEUP

A3 40 TFSI	
201 hp ...FWD	Premium\$34,800
"	Premium Plus.....38,100
"	Prestige.....42,100
.....quattro	Premium36,800
"	Premium Plus ...▼40,100
"	Prestige.....44,100
S3	
306 hp ...quattro	Premium45,800
"	Premium Plus.....48,600
"	Prestige.....52,400
RS3	
401 hp ...quattro	58,900