

## Audi A3 Sportback

### WhatCar? verdict



#### For:

The A3 offers a classy cabin, strong residuals and composed handling. There are some fine engines, too.

#### Against:

It's expensive and poorly equipped, and the steering is short of feel. The 1.6 petrol and 1.9 diesel are noisy.



### On the road verdict

#### Performance



Only the entry petrol and diesel units disappoint. A3 buyers can choose from five petrol engines, but the basic 101bhp 1.6 needs to be worked hard. The 123bhp 1.4 turbo is a better bet, while the 158bhp 1.8 and 197bhp 2.0-litre turbo versions are properly quick. For the speed-crazed, there's the 261bhp 2.0 S3. A dated 104bhp 1.9 diesel is also available, or there are two strong 2.0-litre diesels developing 138bhp and 168bhp.

#### Ride and handling



Competent, but the steering is overly light. The A3 is competent, rather than entertaining, to drive. Body control and grip are strong, but the light steering is short of feel. On base and SE versions, the ride is firm without being uncomfortable, but models fitted with sports suspension jolt too much over bumps.

#### Refinement



1.6 petrol and 1.9 diesel are too noisy. The 1.9 diesel is a rattly old thing, and the 1.6 petrol sounds throaty at high revs, but you'll have little to complain about with the other engines. Some wind and road noise are present on the motorway, but it's not excessive. Unfortunately, sometimes you can't make clean gearchanges - there can be stiff resistance to the change.

### In the cabin verdict

#### Behind the wheel



Good driving position; dash could be clearer. The seats are supportive and there's a wide range of adjustment to help the driver get comfortable. However, taller people may find that the strut on the centre console digs into their left knee. The dashboard layout is a bit fussy, too, so it's tricky to tell some of the

### Ownership verdict

#### Buying



Expensive to buy, but holds its value well. The A3 is marketed as a prestige hatch, but it's hard to justify the price premium over the closely related Volkswagen Golf; the five-door Sportback costs more again. On the positive side, strong desirability means residual values are solid, and running costs are competitive.

#### Quality



Classy cabin and should prove reliable. Audi applies the same high standards of build to the A3 as it does to its more expensive models. There's a well-crafted feel throughout, and the A3 has consistently received high ratings in JD Power customer satisfaction surveys. The engines should all give years of trouble-free service.

#### Safety and security



Strong on both fronts. Twin front, side and curtain airbags are standard, and rear side airbags are available as an option. Electronic stability control and electronic brakeforce distribution are also fitted to all cars. Every A3 has deadlocks, central locking and an alarm to deter theft.

buttons apart at a glance.

### Space and practicality



Plenty of space in the front; not so good in rear  
The three-door A3 offers loads of space for the driver and front passenger, but those over six-feet tall won't relish long journeys in the back. The boot is a good size and shape with the seats in place, but folding down the rear seat backs leaves a stepped load platform. The five-door Sportback is spacious for four occupants and has a larger boot than the three-door model.

### Equipment



Disappointing given the high price  
Five trims are available, with the standard model getting alloy wheels, electric windows, air-conditioning and a CD player. However, you have to upgrade to SE for a multifunction steering wheel. Sport adds sports suspension, front sports seats, an MP3 input socket and climate control, while S line cars feature larger alloy wheels, a muscular bodykit, part-leather upholstery and sporty interior trim. S3 gets full leather trim, four-wheel drive, firmer suspension and xenon headlights.