



ON THE ROAD

Performance ★★★★★

The emphasis is on strong pull rather than outright power, and motorway cruising is fine. The petrol line-up comprises a 1.8-litre, a turbocharged 2.0, a 2.2 and a 2.8 V6 turbo, while diesel buyers can choose between two 1.9s and a 3.0-litre. The economical 1.8 is a fine choice, although it can be sluggish, so the 1.9 diesels are better. Keen drivers will prefer the 2.0 Turbo

Ride & handling ★★★★★

The suspension gives a cushy ride on the motorway, but it's not so clever elsewhere. The Vectra feels rather floaty on bumpy roads and it shudders over sharp bumps around town. The steering is direct, but it can weight up suddenly through corners

Refinement ★★★★★

This is probably the Vectra's strongest suit. Wind and road noise are kept to a minimum, and although the diesel engines become a bit noisy when revved, they settle down to a background hum on the motorway. Most of the controls move with precision, but the rubbery, long-throw gearshift is a weak link.

OWNERSHIP

Buying & owning ★★★★★

The Vectra is primarily a fleet car, so resale values suffer due to the high numbers sold. On the positive side, dealers offer big discounts on already reasonable prices. Fuel economy and servicing rates are competitive and company car tax bills undercut many rivals.

Quality & reliability ★★★★★

Swathes of grey plastic and a bland-looking centre console give the cabin a dowdy appearance. It's not all bad news, because most of the materials are sturdy, but the heater dials and steering column stalks feel lightweight and imprecise. Vauxhall's reliability record is no more than average.

Safety & security ★★★★★

Six airbags are standard, as are pedals that fold away from the driver in the even of an accident. There are also anti-whiplash head restraints and up-to-the-minute braking aids. However, stability control is only a cost option on most models. In spite of comprehensive security kit, including a standard alarm, our testers broke in to the cabin in under two minutes in our last security test.



IN THE CABIN

Behind the wheel ★★★★★

The Vectra comes with a two-way adjustable steering wheel and a driver's seat that moves for both height and angle, so anyone should be able to get comfortable. The ventilation controls are nice and simple, but the stereo has too many fiddly, poorly marked buttons.

Space & practicality ★★★★★

The Vectra is big without reaching the proportions of class giants such as the Ford Mondeo. Six-foot passengers will find kneeroom a bit limited in the back and the transmission tunnel makes life uncomfortable for a central rear passenger. Both four- and five-door models have a large boot.

Equipment ★★★★★

Equipment is competitive, with all Vectras getting air-conditioning, cruise control, a CD player and at least two electric windows. Life and Exclusiv models make do with steel wheels, but these wear plastic covers that look like alloys. Range-topping Elite models have sat-nav with a colour screen.