



Ford Focus

Progress, but no innovation

Review | Ford presents the all-new Focus. For this next generation, Ford chose a new approach. In order to create the ideal car, it wasn't the engineers who made the decisions, but the customers themselves. At the same time the designers came up with a whole new look. What does the ideal car according to Ford's customers have to offer?

What is most important when creating a new car? Form of function? Performance or efficiency? Equipment or price? To find the answer to all of these questions Ford simply asked the customers. And it turned out there isn't a single answer and there isn't an average that pleases everyone.



At your service

To solve this, the all-new Focus comes in four "flavours". These are different than the body types (hatchback or estate); the flavours decide the character. The first one is "Titanium", which is meant

for those seeking a modern and functional car. The "ST-Line" has sporty looks and lowered suspension for dynamic handling. The ST-Line isn't any quicker than the other versions, it just looks sporty. The "Active" aims at the adventurous driver seeking a tough car.

For those desiring luxury there's the "Vignale", which has been used for this review. This is the most wealthy and well specced version of all. The Vignale has large, soft seats and classy upholstery. The dashboard is decorated with wood panels, while the top has been upholstered with the same leather-like materials as the seats. Perhaps the most important: the Vignale has extra sound insulation and that really adds to the perceived comfort. It all makes that travelling with the Vignale feel like a privilege and that's a rare thing for an everyday car like the Focus (only the Lexus CT offers a similar "sensation").

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Specs and space

The new Focus sits on a new platform, which is about the same size as that of the previous Focus. However, the wheelbase grew (+53 mm) and that's why the Focus now offers more legroom in the rear. Even with a tall driver in the front, enough space remains in the back for another adult. The dashboard has been moved further to the front, opening up more space compared to the outgoing model. Headroom is above average as well, even when opting for the glass roof.

The centre console has been kept compact, which creates extra room to move about in the front. Thanks to the soft panels on the side of the centre console, tall drivers can comfortably rest their legs. An interesting detail about the versions with an automatic gearbox is the "e-selector". The eight-speed automatic isn't operated by a lever, but rather by an elegant rotating knob.

Thanks to improved positioning of the rear windows, visibility to the rear has been improved. On the other hand, the A-pillar does obstruct the view to the front a little, while the wing mirrors are a bit on the small side as well.

The Focus features a modern infotainment system, including support for Apple Car Play, Android Auto and built-in apps. Optionally the Focus can be fitted with a "4G LTE" connection, which turns the car into a mobile hotspot (up to 10 Wi-Fi devices at a maximum distance of 15 metres).

Autonomous driving

The previous Focus owed its success to the many semi-autonomous driving functions which Ford already offered in its mainstream model when other brands were still proud of a simple cruise control. But now, the competition has caught up. Ford responds by refining various functions. For example, the computer doesn't only recognise pedestrians, but also cyclists. This works very well and the system recognises bicycles from a great distance, so it won't make an emergency stop but instead gradually reduces speed.

While the Focus is very skilled at recognising objects and braking for them, the electronics struggled to keep the car between the lines on the road. Even when the markings were clearly visible, the computer steered so late that the barriers already came close and the driver took over to avoid a collision.

Many cars have headlights that pivot with the steering wheel. Ford takes it one step further by using the camera to predict the pattern of the road and aim the headlights even before the driver turns the steering wheel. Also smart: the speed of the adaptive cruise-control is altered automatically when the

camera recognises a sign indicating a speed limit.



The automatic parking aid is much more than just an assistant. The driver has to push a button and as long as the button is pressed, the computer takes over the throttle, brakes and steering while parking. When reversing, the Focus will brake automatically for oncoming traffic. Finally, the Focus can take over driving in traffic jams (as long as the vehicle doesn't come to a stop for more than 3 seconds).

Engines

Ford offers a lot of smart electronics, but chooses conventional engines. The new platform does leave space for a future hybrid version, but a plug-in hybrid or full electric version aren't planned. Instead, the "EcoBoost" technology, which has so far been used in compact models, has been improved. The EcoBoost engine now has a displacement of 1.5 litres, has less internal friction, has a turbo which responds quicker and now features cylinder deactivation. Depending on the chosen version, the 1.5 EcoBoost engine outputs either 150 or 182 PS.

For the test drive the 150 PS strong version was connected to a "hesitating" automatic gearbox. The test car always needed a bit of persuasion to move from a standstill and had to be provoked to actually perform. The character can be influenced by choosing a comfort or sports mode, but in real life the differences between these settings are minimal. Ford explains this by stating that functions like these aren't used when the settings are too extreme. Also: the stronger the engine, the smaller the differences.

The "modest" automatic gearbox and the many fuel saving technologies are effective: despite a very demanding route with country roads and steep climbs, the average fuel economy was 5.6 litres per 100 km (50 mpg). An economy run resulted in a fuel economy of just 4.9 litres per 100 km (58 mpg), which comes close to the figures of a hybrid car.

Handling

The Focus doesn't just offer varying characters when it comes to look and feel, handling also depends on the chosen version. All luxurious (Vignale), spacious (estate) and strong (120 PS and up) versions have a more advanced rear axle, while the other versions have a standard rear axle. Optionally, "Continuously Controlled Damping" (CCD) is available.



and "drive mode" now offers either even more comfort or even more sportiness. The second distinguishing feature is the fact that the Focus now comes in outspoken flavours: normal, luxurious, sporty and adventurous. In short: no innovation, but certainly a lot of progress. That's what the customer wants, so that's what the customer gets. ■

With the standard suspensions, the Focus handles like one expects from a Ford: steering is light yet exact and the suspension offers a sublime mix of comfort and sportiness. When opting for the CCD suspension, the car offers even more comfort while handling is even better when driving at high speeds. On top of that, the Focus feels even more reassuring and planted on the road. When that reassuring feeling is put to the test, the Focus doesn't disappoint. In fact, handling is so good that braking for corners is almost optional.

Conclusion

Ford introduces the fourth generation of the Focus. Ford built on the strong points of the previous generations, and then took it one step further in every field. This means the Focus isn't innovative, while the previous one was a marvel of modern technology. The Focus simply improves on existing technology but doesn't introduce anything new.

There are two points on which the Focus really distinguishes itself from its rivals. The first is handling. This was and still is the strongest point of every Focus. Ford refined the suspension even more



Specifications

Ford Focus 1.5 EcoBoost (150 PS) Vignale automatic

Size and weight



Length x width x height	438 x 183 x 145 cm
Wheelbase	270 cm
Kerb weight	1.404 kg
Trailer	700 kg
Trailer - braked	1.500 kg
Fuel capacity	52 l
Luggage space	1354 l
Tyre size	215/50R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1497 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	150 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	240 Nm @ 1600 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	8.9 secs
Top speed	208 km/h
Average mileage	6 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	7.7 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	136 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 27,300
Price base model	Â£ 18,300