



Honda Civic

A perfect ten?

Review | Honda introduces the tenth generation of the Civic. Over time the Civic has clearly developed and evolved, but each time the carmaker chose a different direction. Also, the compact Honda differed per continent, which meant a Civic wasn't the same car everywhere. With the latest generation, Honda says it reinvented itself. Is the tenth Civic a perfect ten?

With the tenth generation of the Civic, Honda wanted to address two problems. The car had to be the same all around the globe to cut (production) costs. Also, Honda wanted to go back to its roots. The original Civic owed its success to superior technology and that's how the new Civic wants to differentiate itself once more.

To design a Civic that appeals to audiences all over the world, Europe was leading. That's because European cars are appreciated everywhere! In Japan, for example, European products are highly desirable and that's why even the Civic for the Japanese market is being built in Europe. In this way even a Honda is now an exciting European import product!



Space

To raise handling to a higher level, the Civic had to be lower (lower centre of gravity) and wider (more stable) than before. This wasn't without consequence. To give the car a harmonious design and to offer enough cabin space, the car had to grow in length as well. Consequently, the Civic didn't just grow in length, the sedan is even regarded as a possible successor of the Accord.

Yet, the wheelbase isn't longer than average. To offer enough space underneath the low roof and within the short wheelbase, Honda no longer offers the so-called "Magic Seats". By moving the fuel tank underneath the front seats a huge space was created in the rear, but according to Honda this was rarely used.



After getting into the car, one notices the very low seating position. More than that, the occupants "lay down" rather than sit up, as if this was a sports car. The space in the rear is good. Also, the boot is rather large (420 litres) and easily accessible. A smart detail is the tonneau cover, which moves sideways. This saves a lot of space and weight, because the huge spring-loaded mechanism isn't necessary any more.

Handling

Honda in general, and the Civic in particular, distinguishes itself with advanced technology. However, technology itself isn't a goal. It has to serve a purpose! Honda utilises technology to improve handling. This starts with the bodywork, which is constructed like a sports car with a rolling cage. This means the Civic is more rigid, and so it isn't the bodywork, but rather the suspension, that defines the ride quality.



The evenly advanced suspension is connected to so-called "progressive steering", which increases response as the steering wheel is turned further. On top of that, the Civic uses the same steering rack as the NSX, for a quicker response to the driver's input.

The result of all this technology isn't apparent immediately. When calmly trotting along with traffic, the Civic doesn't handle significantly better or worse than other cars. That's because the Civic doesn't do things better, but it lacks the problems other cars have. A simple example is that the hands of the driver can almost always stay at a perfect ten-to-two position.



Another thing that isn't noticeable at first: handling is immaculately good. Even when cornering at breakneck speeds, the underpinning doesn't move a muscle and the set course is simply followed. Understeer (sliding straight forward while steering) can only be forced

when driving at almost suicidal speeds.



Engines

The Civic doesn't just use advanced technology to improve handling, the engines are highly advanced as well. However, an electric version of hybrid will appear as late as 2020. So, modern technology doesn't serve the environment but only the fun factor.

Examples of the new technology are an electric thermostat and a variable oil pump, which warm up the engine as quickly as possible after a cold start. Once at operating temperature, compression is exceptionally high to improve both performance and efficiency. Because this means a greater risk of overheating, the exhaust manifold is actively being cooled resulting in a 100 degree reduction. Even more special is the exhaust valve that is also actively cooled to yet again improve performance and efficiency.



Again, at first, one hardly notices the result of all this technology. The 1.5 litre engine actually disappoints a little: despite the promised output of 182 PS / 240 Nm, it's downright tame. It's only at very low engine speeds that this power train is more forgiving than usual; while at high revs the VTEC-turbo engine gets a second breath for an even bigger punch.

Still, it's the 1.0 litre three-cylinder engine that really manages to charm. Despite promises of extra sound insulation, it is the loudest three-cylinder in its segment. But that's the only downside! The small 1.0 litre engine is more lively than the bigger one, it's responsive from very low revs and ends up being pleasantly spritely.



Automatic

Honda explicitly suggested a test drive with the automatic gearbox and it soon became clear why. Honda doesn't offer a traditional automatic gearbox, but opted for a continuous variable transmission (CVT).

The good thing is that Honda's CVT doesn't suffer from any of the problems this kind of transmission is known for. In city traffic the automatic gearbox adds refinement to the car. On the open road, performance is excellent and the CVT responds quickly and alertly without any of the whining noises other brands make. That's why the 1.0 litre combined with the CVT transmission is the recommendable combination.

Conclusion

Is the tenth generation of the Honda Civic a perfect ten? The answer to that question is a matter of opinion. Honda did everything it technically could to make the Civic the best handling car in its segment and this road test proves Honda succeeded. However, it is up to the driver to decide if that's the most important aspect of a car.

When using the Civic as a family car, one hardly notices the superior handling. Then the above average cabin space, the smart ergonomics, high safety levels and modern equipment count. The engines are good, but for now a hybrid or electric version is lacking. That's why the Civic is a great family car, but the difference with its competitors is merely in the details.

Car lovers who want to enjoy every single mile, will appreciate the Civic the most. When provoking the car, the Civic is more capable and / or doesn't suffer from the same problems (limitations) other cars do. This means the new Civic went back to its roots, making the tenth Civic a perfect ten. ■



Specifications

Honda Civic 1.0 i-VTEC EX

Size and weight



Length x width x height	452 x 180 x 143 cm
Wheelbase	270 cm
Kerb weight	1.275 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	46 l
Luggage space	478/1245 l
Tyre size	235/45R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	unknown
Cylinders / valves	3/4
Max power	129 PS @ 5500 rpm
Max torque	180 Nm @ 1700 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	10.9 secs
Top speed	unknown
Average mileage	5.1 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.4 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.4 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	117 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 23,040
Price base model	Â£ 18,335