

New cars: what the critics say



VW Polo SE 1.6 TDI 75
Price: £13,200

Auto Express

The new VW Polo is the product of evolution rather than revolution, and the result is a car that is “as conservative as they come”. But that’s not the only concern: start the engine and you’ll hear a “clatter” under the bonnet. The diesel engine is lethargic, the TDI is slow to rev, and even the gearbox is a let-down. The car feels solid enough, but you’d do better with a Ford Fiesta Zetec.

The Times

Unveiled 34 years ago, Polos have been around “longer than Take That”. They are VW’s biggest-selling car after the Golf and yet have always seemed a “less-gifted sibling” – until now. VW has given the car a new, sportier look, and the updated fittings send it “pinging into the 21st century”. Though bigger than the Golf Mark 1, it feels trim and agile and is a joy to sprint around in.

The Guardian

The new Polo is longer, wider and lighter than the previous model, but the drive is no less boring. It accelerates like a “hearse with a lead coffin on board” and the diesel engine sounds like a tractor. On the plus side, it delivers on fuel efficiency and the interior is up to the usual VW standard. All in all, it is a perfectly adequate car – a Golf for “people who want to spend less and go slower”.

The best... sewing machines

The fashionable are joining the thrifty, and increasingly making their own clothes. Here are six machines worth considering



◀ **Elna 2600** This is an easy-to-use mechanical electric machine. It has 22 stitch programmes, twin-needle facility for pin tucks

and top-stitching, and snap-on feet – including zipper and four-step buttonholer attachments. Price: £199. Contact: 08456-049049; www.johnlewis.com.



◀ **Janome Memory Craft 6600P** A semi-professional model, good for furnishings, it sews up to 1,000 stitches a minute, and has 163 stitch options and 14 standard feet. Price: £995.

Contact: 0161-666 6011; www.janome.co.uk.



◀ **Pfaff Expression 2.0** Pfaff machines have a reputation for being able to sew through anything, “from one-ply tissue paper to eight layers of denim”. This model has 104 stitch options, a built-in walking foot and a 25cm long arm. Price: £695. Contact: 0845-430 9824; www.pfaffmachines.co.uk.



◀ **John Lewis JL300C** This is a good-value computerised machine for beginners. It has 30 stitch options,

including five for embroidery, and a one-step buttonhole attachment. It will sew through most fabrics with ease. Price: £299. Contact: John Lewis, as before.



◀ **Brother BC-2100** Easy to use and capable of coping with a range of fabrics, this is a great machine for getting started. It has 40

stitch options, an LED lamp, an automatic buttonholer and fast bobbin winding. Price: £308. Contact: 0207-228 3022; www.thesewingcentre.co.uk.

▶ Bernina Activa 240S

This top-end machine has three alphabets and a 30-stitch memory, which is useful for name tapes. It also has a powerful direct current motor, making it great on tough fabrics. Price: £795. Contact: 020-7549 7849; www.bernina.co.uk.



SOURCE: HOMES & GARDENS

How to... cope if your accelerator gets stuck

In light of the recent Toyota recalls, Stephen Mead of the Institute of Advanced Motorists gave the following advice:

- Don't waste time trying to release the stuck accelerator. But do turn on the hazards.
- Brake normally. As you do, you will feel the engine pulling against the brakes. In a manual, as you apply the brakes, depress the clutch. In an automatic, move the gear lever to neutral.
- The engine will scream; ignore it. As the car starts to slow down in control, indicate and manoeuvre to a position of safety, then hard brake and kill the engine.
- If all else fails, you could turn the engine off when the car is still moving provided you have enough momentum to avoid other traffic. But don't remove the keys as it will lock the steering wheel.
- Don't use the hand brake at speed – it could send you into a fish-tail spin.

SOURCE: THE INDEPENDENT

And for those who have everything...



The Belling Mediachef is an interactive cookbook with 48 “cook-along” video recipes from professional chefs. There is a remote control so you can pause the action or rewind something you've missed. It also doubles up as a photo frame, music player and calendar.

Price: £179.
Contact: 0844-815 3746;
www.belling.co.uk

SOURCE: THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Where to find... the best foodie websites

www.epicurious.com offers an extensive range of recipes as well as tips for first-time cooks on how to bake bread and make good pastry. The website also has its own iPhone app which allows you to download shopping lists straight to your phone.

www.supercook.com is designed to help you cook meals from food you already have at home. Enter the ingredients into the search option and the website will come up with some recipes.

www.rivercottage.net publishes Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall recipes for every month of the year with the emphasis on seasonal produce. You can also watch video tutorials for everything from pig husbandry to where to find edible mushrooms.

www.vfmuk.com is a virtual farmers' market that allows you to “wander” around the 3D marketplace and chat to participating producers.

SOURCE: THE DAILY TELEGRAPH