

2010 FORD FUSION



The 2010 Ford Fusion receives a makeover that touches on several components. The front fascia, seats and dash have been redesigned. Suspension, steering and sound isolation have been revised, along with the 3.0-litre V6 engine, which is now more powerful. The displacement of the 4-cylinder increases to 2.5 litres, from 2.3 litres, whereas the new Sport version has a 3.5-litre V6 under its hood. All-wheel drive is offered only with the V6 engines. For the first time, a hybrid version of the Fusion is available.

Interior and trunk

The new front seats are easy to access, and comfortable for most people, thanks among other things to the high seatbacks and, for the driver, adjustable lumbar support. Heavily built individuals will find the seatbacks a bit narrow. Legroom is generous, but the sunroof limits headroom for tall people. The passenger-side seatback folds flat to make room for long items.

The rear bench accommodates two adults but because the cushion is low to the floor, comfort is just average. Though legroom is good, headroom is tight for tall people. The seatback is split 70/30 and folds to reveal an opening to the trunk that lacks height. The seatback does not fold in the Hybrid version.

The trunk is roomy (except in the Hybrid; the batteries for the hybrid system take up a goodly amount of space), and it has a good opening. The seatback releases are easy to reach and practical in that they fold the seatbacks with just a tug. The trunk-lid hinges are mounted on the outside and can't squash down on things in the trunk.

Convenience and safety features

The interior is carefully finished in good-quality materials. Sound dampening is efficient for all but road noise. The many storage spaces are roomy enough to actually be useful.

Instruments and commands are well located, with one exception, the windshield wiper control, which is on the end of the turn signal stalk. To use the MIST function, you have to apply just the right amount of pressure, otherwise you get no reaction or you set the washers off, which is what happens most of the time. The glove compartment and mirror controls are not lighted at night. The heating system is efficient. The radio antenna mounted on the rear part of the roof can get in the way of items carried on the top.

Safety-wise, the Fusion comes equipped with two front, two side and two side-curtain airbags, five adjustable head restraints, and four-wheel antilock disc brakes. Visibility is good all around except to the rear, because of the lack of height of the rear window. The rear-seat head restraints are too low for tall persons. The headlights lack intensity and range, particularly in the low-beam position.

In U.S. government tests, the Fusion earned five stars out of five for driver and front-passenger protection in a frontal or side collision, and four stars for rear-passenger protection in a side crash. For rollover resistance, the 2WD Fusion obtained four stars and the 4WD drive won five. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety awarded the Fusion a Good rating, its highest, for driver protection in a frontal offset impact and for all-occupant protection in a side or rear collision.

Engine and transmission

The new 2.5-litre 4-cylinder engine outputs 175 horsepower and 172 pound-feet of torque. That's 15 horses and 16 pound-feet of torque more than the 2.3-litre it replaces. It delivers decent acceleration and pickup, moving the vehicle along fairly easily, and it is generally well adapted. The 3.5-litre V6 churns out 263 horsepower and 249-pound-feet of torque for livelier acceleration and pickup, but it doesn't turn the Fusion into a sport sedan. The engine also seems to feel the 1,725-kg weight of the all-wheel-drive version when accelerating from a standing start.

Together, the gasoline engine and electric motor of the Hybrid model develop 191 horsepower, providing relatively lively acceleration and pickup—as long as the battery charge is good. Output depends on the electric portion of the hybrid system: the better the charge, and the quicker the system recovers following strong demand, the more it's efficient. In electric mode alone, the Fusion can run at speeds up to 75 km/h, which is much higher than the competition. Similar to the Honda Insight, a screen displays "efficiency leaves" that grow (or don't grow), depending on driving style. The system also displays an energy report when the engine is switched off. Both these elements are not only informative, they also encourage energy-efficient driving. We obtained an average of 6.7 L/100 km during our test drive.

The six-speed manual transmission is easy to use, with good gearing except sixth, which should run the engine 500 rpm lower. The six-speed automatic functions very smoothly, at all times, with well-spaced gears. The Hybrid's continuously variable transmission always functions very smoothly. With the latter two transmissions, the shifter must be unlocked to shift from Drive to Neutral, which is not desirable, particularly in an emergency braking situation when you want to shift quickly to neutral.

The all-wheel-drive system transfers torque to the rear wheels when it detects front-wheel slippage. The system is efficient, and relatively quick.

On the road

The Fusion's fully independent suspension delivers a very smooth ride, and a good mix of suppleness and firmness lets it soak up rough spots with ease and elegance. The midsize Fusion is not a sport sedan, but as long as you respect that, it holds its trajectory well enough for pleasant and close to enthusiastic driving in twisty turns. With the sport suspension, road holding becomes more interesting (though not sporty), without adversely affecting ride comfort.

The well-weighted power steering is steady, precise and relatively quick. It provides a small degree of road feel but the turning circle is a bit wide. The four-wheel disc brakes are powerful and resist well to fade. Hopefully, the discs and pads will be as long lasting as they are expensive to replace.

Inspection

At a CAA-Quebec inspection centre, the Fusion showed to be quite sturdily built underneath. However, rustproofing is skimpy, and several joints are not sealed. Debris can get through a large opening beneath the front bumper and damage the air conditioner condenser. The lower part of the fuel filler pipe is exposed to damage. The overhead camshafts of the engines are chain driven.

Conclusion

Thanks to this year's improvements, the Fusion is more appealing than ever: it's more comfortable, more fun to drive, more refined and offers several versions. The new Hybrid and Sport models will allow Ford to expand its customer base. The Fusion can go head-to-head with the competition at practically every level, including reliability.

PROS: road compartment, seating comfort, large trunk (except Hybrid), choice of versions, roominess, good standard equipment

CONS: windshield wiper control needs work, small trunk (Hybrid), weak headlights, no real MIST setting, rearward visibility, no folding seatback (Hybrid)

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Engine: 16-valve, 2.5-litre 4-cylinder; 24-valve, 3.0-litre V6; 24-valve, 3.5-liter, V6

Horsepower: 175 hp at 6,000 rpm; 240 hp at 6,550 rpm; 263 hp at 6,250 rpm

Torque: 172 lb-ft at 4,500 rpm; 223 lb-ft at 4,300 rpm; 249 lb-ft at 4,500 rpm

Transmission: 6-speed manual; 6-speed automatic

Suspension: independent/independent

Brakes: disc/disc

Wheelbase: 272.8 cm

Length: 484.1 cm

Width: 203.5 cm (with mirrors)

Height: 144.5 cm

Weight: 1,490 to 1,725 kg

Tires: P205/60R16; P225/50R17; P225/45R18

Towing capacity: 454 kg

Air bags: two in front, two side and two curtain airbags

Fuel consumption with 4-cylinder (SE) and manual transmission

Natural Resources Canada rating:

City: 9.4 L/100 km (30 mpg)

Highway: 6.9 L/100 km (41 mpg)

Test results: 8 L/100 km (35 mpg)

Test temperature: 12°C to 23°C

CO₂ emissions: 3,972 kg/20,000 km

Fuel tank Capacity: 66 litres (63 with AWD)

Fuel requirement: regular grade gasoline

Acceleration:

0-100 km/h: 9.5 seconds

60-100 km/h: 7.2 seconds

Competition: Chevrolet Malibu, Chrysler Sebring, Dodge Avenger, Honda Accord, Hyundai Sonata, Kia Magentis, Mazda6, Mitsubishi Galant, Nissan Altima, Subaru Legacy, Toyota Camry, Volkswagen Passat

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 3 years/60,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/60,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited mileage
- Emissions control system: 3 years/60,000 km (full coverage).
8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module, onboard diagnostic system).

Factory replacement parts:

- Rear bumper: \$1,172
- Front brake disc: \$120
- Brake pads: \$160
- Muffler: \$1,211
- Front fender: \$218

Price according to trim line:

- S 2.5: \$21,499
- SE 2.5: \$22,799
- SEL 2.5: \$25,799
- SEL 3.0: \$28,799
- SEL 3.0 AWD: \$30,799
- Hybrid: \$31,999
- Sport 3.5 AWD: \$35,299

Main options:

- Automatic transmission: \$1,200 (S, SE)
- Sunroof: \$1,200 (SE, SEL, Hybrid)
- Navigation system: \$2,100 (SEL, Sport, Hybrid)
- Leather seats: \$1,225 (SEL, Hybrid)
- Vision Group: \$1,400 (SEL, Hybrid)

Price as tested: SE 2.5: \$25,329; Hybrid: \$36,799; Sport: \$37,879

Freight and preparation: \$1,350

Dealers: Quebec: 112 Canada: 443

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