

LIKES	DISLIKES
Ride/Handling Interior space Value for money	Narrow front seats Heavy rear hatch



Appearing in local showrooms in 2002, the first series Focus attracted lots of comment with its cutting edge look. Now there's an all new second generation, and while it retains some of the original's design cues its styling is definitely more restrained. Buyers will have a choice between five door hatch and four door sedan, the three door not coming our way this time. Major improvements include a more powerful 2.0litre Duratec engine fitted to all models plus additional standard safety features. Across the board price reductions over the LR series will give buyers some added incentive to check out the newcomer.

VALUE FOR MONEY:

PRICING

Prices start at \$20,990 for the CL hatch and sedan, while the LX versions come in at \$24,990. The Zetec (hatch only) is \$27,490. Add another \$2,000 to each for the "Sportshift" automatic transmission. Topping the range is the Ghia sedan (auto only) at \$30,990.

STANDARD FEATURES

Standard items on our Zetec test car included air-conditioning, electric power steering, remote central locking, power windows, cruise control, single CD player, 17" alloy wheels, sports bodykit and 10mm lower sports suspension.

DESIGN & FUNCTION

SPACE & PRACTICALITY

"Roomy" is an easy tag to apply to the Focus. Substantially wider and longer than the previous model, there is excellent space front and rear. In fact the car makes you question what is a small car these days? In a practical departure from most new cars the glovebox can take a full size street directory and have room left over. This makes up for the narrow front door pockets and small centre armrest compartment. While there aren't any rear door pockets, small moulded trays next to the seat look after your knick knacks. Large and heavy, the rear hatch opens quite high, in fact you need to be a bit careful with it. Once open it can require a bit of muscle to get back down. The good thing is it gives great access to the large boot area. Another plus is the 60:40 split rear seat which folds completely flat for big loads, and you can do it without removing the rear head restraints. Great when you're in a hurry.

COMFORT

For all of its interior space the firm front seats are quite narrow in the cushion, and there's quite a gap between the seat and door. They're certainly comfortable enough, especially over longer stints, but offer little in the way of lateral support. Even set at its lowest position the driver's seat is reasonably high; fortunately there is plenty of headroom for taller people. The steering wheel has a broad range of adjustment for both tilt and reach. A 25mm longer wheelbase translates into excellent rear legroom, and with its wider, taller body, both head and shoulder room aren't an issue. As usual the rear seat only provides real comfort for two. It's nicely shaped, a centre armrest making longer trips painless.

ERGONOMICS

Unlike the original's fussy design the new dashboard is a more mainstream affair. There's no missing the instruments, the speedo and tachometer seem oversized. Easy to use rotary switches in the centre dash look after ventilation and air-conditioning. Column mounted stalks handle the usual functions but the wiper switch needs some learning. A button on the end works the wash-wipe function, pulling the switch towards you turns on the rear wiper. Remote audio controls are housed in a "block" on the left of the column. It looks clumsy but works well.

Vision all round is very good. Reversing doesn't present any major issues, the d-pillar glass and low rear head restraints helping enormously.

SAFETY

In Euro-NCAP testing the Focus gained a full five star rating. On our Zetec test car's passive safety items included dual front airbags and front side airbags. Front seatbelts are equipped with pre-tensioners, the outer rear belts featuring automatic locking retractors. Centre rear passengers have an inertia reel lap-sash belt. ABS brakes with Electronic Brake Distribution are standard. Buyers of the entry level CL can option a safety pack which adds ABS brakes and side front airbags to the standard dual airbags.

BUILD QUALITY & FINISH

Overall the Focus is a nicely assembled car. The interior uses quality materials and has a typically "European" feel. Externally the metallic paint looked consistent in its depth and application but lacked a high gloss finish.

SECURITY

As tested by NRMA Insurance the Focus scores 61/120. This puts it towards the top

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Type..... Alloy DOHC 4 cyl
Capacity in litres.....1.999
Induction..... Multi-point fuel injection
Fuel recommendation91-98RON
Claimed max. power..... 107kW @ 6000rpm
Claimed max. torque..... 185Nm @ 4500rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type.....5 speed manual
Driving wheelsFront

WHEELS Alloy 17" x 6.5"
Tyres Goodyear NCT -5 205/50R17 93W
SpareSpace saver

STEERING

Type..... Power rack & pinion
Turns lock to lock.....2.9
Turning circle (measured).....10.9

DIMENSIONS

Mass.....1294kg
Length.....4341mm
Width.....1840mm
Height1443mm
Seating capacity.....5
Fuel tank capacity..... 55litres

TOWING

Max. towed mass (trailer plus load).....750kg

NRMA THEFT RATING

Data supplied by NRMA Insurance
Points on 0-120 scale (high score best).....61

WARRANTY 3yr / 100,000km

MANUFACTURED IN South Africa

TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

50 - 80 km/h (in 3rd)..... 5.3sec
60 - 100 km/h (in 3rd)..... 6.8sec
0 - 80 km/h..... 6.5sec
0 - 100 km/h..... 10.8sec
0 - 400 metres 17.3sec

FUEL CONSUMPTION (litres/100 km)

Average(ADR81/01).....7.1

BRAKING

Distance to stop from 80 km/h..... 24.9metres

NOISE

Interior at constant 80 km/h..... 67.6dB(A)

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third of cars in the small-medium category. An engine immobiliser is standard fitment.

ON THE ROAD

FUEL

Returning 7.1l/100km under ADR81/01 testing, the Zetec's economy puts it towards the top of the class.

PERFORMANCE

All models are powered by a new all alloy 2.0 Duratec engine. The previous car's tardy performance is now just a memory. With 107kW and strong mid range urge the Zetec's performance is a highlight of the package. Open up the throttle and there's no hesitation, the engine never sounding stressed as the revs rise. The gearbox has a notchy direct feel, the light clutch making city driving easy work. While there seems to be a noticeable gap between third and fourth, the Duratec's torque keeps things moving along and it certainly doesn't struggle in fifth on the freeway.

RIDE

Even with the Zetec version's sportier suspension settings the ride quality and comfort is excellent. Large bumps remain

insulated from the cabin, especially handy over second rate suburban and country roads.

HANDLING & STEERING

Ford has always been proud of the original Focus' dynamic ability, the "Crossblade" rear suspension being a key factor. Naturally the system is retained, with some "tweaking", while the front end has received larger changes to the crossmember and wishbones. Increasing track width 40mm all round helps with the car's direct nature and impressive grip levels. At higher speeds across patchy tarmac it maintains its line, although the body seems to dance around slightly on its bushings. Feel through the electric assist steering is a little less communicative than before, but still nice and direct. The chassis strikes an excellent balance between comfort and agility.

BRAKING

Standard four wheel discs (vented on the front) with ABS provided consistently good braking performance. The pedal needs only a light touch to produce plenty of braking power.

SMOOTHNESS & QUIETNESS

Combining a supple ride with a fuss free drivetrain the Focus is a comfortable way to get from a to b. Even at higher rpm the engine

doesn't become intrusive. Working against this was a creak in the test car's rear suspension. Luckily it only made its presence felt across driveways.

SUMMARY:

Overall the new Focus is an excellent package. Yes it has grown substantially, but with significantly better performance, safety equipment and at a cheaper price, you definitely get more for your money.