



## 2013 HONDA ACCORD SPORT

# BIGGER, SMALLER, BETTER

MSRP: \$21,680 (BASE) \$24,190 (SPORT)  
\$24,980 (AS TESTED)

**T**he 2013 Honda Accord is bigger than the model it replaces. And smaller.

To be specific, the all-new, 9th generation Accords have a slightly shorter wheelbase (-.9 inches), and the car's overall length is even more so (-3.5 inches). It's also a skosh lower (-.4 inches), and lighter (-24 lb.) than the outgoing model. At the same time, shoulder room, rear seat legroom and trunk space have increased. It all adds up to a smaller footprint, a bigger interior, and a better, midsize sedan.

Accord Sedan is offered in LX, Sport, EX, EX-L, EX-L V-6 and Touring trim levels. A two door coupe is also available, and a plug-in hybrid sedan will join the lineup early next year. The starting price for the various trims range from \$21,680-33,430.

My test car was a Sport level sedan, with an as-tested sticker of \$24,980. In addition to the standard equipment on base, LX models, Sport Accords add a rear spoiler, dual exhaust, 18-inch rims, fog lamps, a leather-wrapped steering wheel with shift paddles, and an 8-way power seat with lumbar support.

The drivetrain pairs Honda's all-new, 2.4 liter four-cylinder engine with a six-speed manual or Continuously Variable Transmission (mine had the optional CVT). This is the first Honda engine to employ direct fuel injection in the North American market. The four delivers 185 horsepower @ 6,400 rpm, and 182 lb. ft. of torque @ 3,900 rpm. Both numbers are marginally higher in Sport models than other Accords.

The new driveline provides a refined driving experience. The four can make the trip from 0-60 mph in about 7½ seconds. It's quick from a stop, with



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sufficient power to pass. While you'll hear the engine under hard acceleration, it's agreeably quiet when cruising. The EPA estimates that the sport will return 26 miles per gallon in the city and 35 on the highway. In my

week of mixed, city/country driving, I was always averaging 30-something mpg's – very respectable numbers. Honda offers a V-6 as well, but unless you have to have the surplus of power that a 278 h.p motor can provide, there's really no need for it in Accord.

Honda has replaced its former double wishbone suspension with a new, MacPherson strut front/multilink rear setup. Particularly with its beefier tread, Accord in Sport trim feels light on its feet, while maintaining a very comfortable ride. I found

that the seat side bolsters a little too soft in hard cornering, but that's an issue that's not likely to come up very often in normal driving. The rack and pinion steering has an electronic power assist, and it strikes a nice balance.

The car responds to small inputs through the wheel, but never crosses the line between sensitive and twitchy. And, the amount of boost is appropriate to vehicle speed.

A big reason why people have always gravitated towards midsize cars is their family-friendly interiors. Gen. 9 Accord delivers on this promise with room for adults in both rows. Headroom, legroom and door openings are all sized to accommodate. Slide inside the front cabin and Accord provides a functional, stylish, well finished space. The controls in the Sport trim Accord were uncluttered and easy to reach. My car didn't have a navigation

system, so I can't say what (if any) impact that would have on the switchgear. The standard audio system has an AM/FM/CD/MP3 head unit, four speakers, a Bluetooth link, USB audio and Pandora internet interfaces. The list of available equipment on Accord includes a trio of safety-related, new-for-2013, features: blind spot monitoring, lane departure alert and forward collision alert.

Accord's trunk measures 15.8 cubic feet. It's big enough to hold a good amount of gear, though the wide rear space narrows at the wheel wells. The rear seatback folds forward, but it's one piece. Therefore, there's no option of splitting that space between passengers and cargo, as there would be with a split, rear seatback design. Also, the shape of the opening for the pass-through will limit the type of oversize items that you can carry.

Driver visibility is quite good in all directions. The fat roof pillars and big headrest/small backlight combination often found in today's cars are happily absent in Accord.

A standard, rearview camera eliminates guesswork when backing up. From eyes to ears: Active Noise Control, Sound Control and additional insulation help make this sedan a quiet place to travel.

With competitors like Camry, Altima, Passat, Malibu and Fusion, there's no shortage of quality choices in the Accord's class. Across the board improvements, wrapped in crisp, new styling assure that it will keep its seat in the front row of midsize sedan segment.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for the past 20 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 135 calendars. Read Dan's recent reviews on line anytime at [www.timesunion.com/cars](http://www.timesunion.com/cars).

