

Reports

- Windshield wipers 45
- SUV and pickup tires 46
- Auto batteries 50
- Three-row SUVs 54
- Smart ForTwo 63

Cars

Road tests, auto products, hot topics



NEWS

Good wipers aren't pricey but fade fast

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPEND a lot of money to get good wiper performance, but you might need to replace them every six months or so. In a group of 15 wiper models we tested, three of the top four were among the least expensive. That includes the top-rated Valeo 600 Series, the Anco 31 Series, and the Michelin RainForce.

We also found that all provided very good or excellent performance when new, but most quickly degrade after six to nine months of regular use. The RainX Latitude was the only wiper that began with very good performance and maintained that level through six months. All others dropped in performance after six months.

Depending on the model, that deterio-

ration showed up on the windshield as streaking (leaving lines of water behind), smearing of the water (instead of clearing it), or missed areas of wiping.

We tested the wipers on 185 staffers' cars. About half came to us with wipers that needed replacing, showing that drivers often don't notice the slow degradation and leave wipers on longer than they should.

The tested wipers included six beam-blade models, a relatively new design. Unlike conventional wipers, beam blades have no external frames. As a result, they are promoted as providing more uniform pressure on today's curved windshields and therefore better wiping performance. Beam blades usually cost more than conventional wipers, but overall we didn't see a notable advantage in regular use.

We also evaluated the wipers on ease of installation and removal. All of the cars in our test had a common hook-type mount, in which the old wiper is simply pulled off of the metal wiper arm and the new one is snapped into place. In our test, only the Michelin Optimum, Trico Exact Fit, and Trico Teflon Blade proved somewhat difficult to remove, sometimes requiring tools.

Bottom line. All recommended models deliver good performance. But we advise you replace your wipers every six to twelve months. Check the owner's manual for the correct size and installation method.

Ratings

In performance order.

- CR Best Buy
- Recommended

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

1 Valeo 2 RainX



Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model		Price		Overall score	Test results	
		18-inch	24-inch				Cleaning (new)	Cleaning (6 months)
						0	100	
						P	F G V G E	

WIPERS

Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Cleaning (new)	Cleaning (6 months)
1	Valeo 600 Series	\$9 \$15	72	●	○
2	RainX Latitude [Ⓛ]	17 21	70	●	●
3	Anco 31 Series	7 10	66	●	○
4	Michelin RainForce	7 7	65	●	○
5	Anco Contour [Ⓛ]	18 20	65	●	○
6	Valeo 900 Series [Ⓛ]	20 17	64	●	○
7	PIAA Super Silicone	18 24	62	●	○
8	Bosch Icon [Ⓛ]	18 22	60	●	○
9	RainX Weatherbeater	6 10	60	●	○
10	Trico Exact Fit	10 13	59	●	○
11	Michelin HydroEdge	10 10	56	●	○
12	Michelin Optimum [Ⓛ]	16 16	55	●	○
13	Anco AeroVantage	9 15	53	●	●
14	Trico Teflon Blade	10 16	52	●	●
15	Trico Innovation [Ⓛ]	13 14	47	●	○

[Ⓛ] Beam blade.

Next month

New auto reliability Ratings, luxury SUVs, and GPS navigators.