

SPECIAL REPORT

INTRODUCING THE NEW BMW 3 SERIES

Latest incarnation drives as good as it looks



In association with





New BMW 3 Series proves well worth the wait

After three years in development, newcomer is lighter, brighter and more agile

"It's been my baby for three years," explains James Thompson, BMW's 3 Series product manager. "It's always exciting to get the car out there. People get how important this car is, to us and to customers. It's like my third child."

Revealed at the Paris Motor Show, the seventh-generation BMW 3 Series takes the established dynamic and purposeful lines and reimagines them in a bold, clean and precise form. It's longer and wider than before, but keeps the traditional BMW design cues buyers appreciate.

That large BMW kidney grille is framed by twin headlights featuring a two-way split highlighted by an eye-catching notch. The grille then sweeps back, flowing into four contour lines that slice along the length of the bonnet. Function follows form, with the front fog lights and special air curtains being integrated into the outer air intakes.

Those intakes, appearing on the SE and Sport models, are inspired by classical racing cars featuring the NACA intake designed originally for jet engines.

The famous 'Hofmeister kink' remains, the BMW hallmark now integrated into the C-pillar, giving the rear doors a lighter look. These top contours that lead to the rear of the car, visually elongating the surfaces and culminating in a pair of darkened, L-shaped LED tail lights.

Step inside the wide-opening doors and you'll find an interior that accentuates the space in the cabin, tempered with a driver-focused cockpit. The horizontal lines of the instrument panel give a sensation of width, while the instrument binnacle itself houses a digital panel offering lightning fast responses.

Physical buttons for the climate control and audio systems are grouped thoughtfully, but most interactions will be



"If you're a car nut, I can promise that you'll be really pleased"

James Thompson,
BMW 3 Series
product manager

completed using the iDrive infotainment screen that sits proud at the top of the centre stack. Controlled by a redesigned iDrive controller that sits by the newly designed gear selector and relocated start button, it gives quick and easy access to BMW's operating system and the impressive Intelligent Personal Assistant, where equipped.

It's all housed in materials of the very highest quality, with new options available to make the new 3 Series truly yours. As well as open-pore fine wood options, customers can choose from a variety of aluminium trims including a new mesh-effect one.

Impressive levels of standard equipment adorn the new BMW 3 Series, with the SE models coming fitted with LED headlights, interior ambient lighting in 11 colours, a reversing camera with reversing assistant, three-zone climate control and acoustic glazing to filter out exterior distractions. The rear seat also splits and folds, ensuring it's a practical proposition for families and the adventurous.

Step up to the Sport model and the wheels increase from 17- to 18-inch, lending a more sporting stance to the car. Visual tweaks extend to a darkened high-gloss trim for the side window surrounds, plus kidney grille bars and trim elements for the air intakes and rear apron in a high-gloss black. The style continues inside, with black gloss trim highlights complementing heated sports seats trimmed in Vernasca leather. As with the SE, there's an 8.8-inch central instrument screen.

The athletic M Sport models takes the 3 Series' dynamic design and boosts it with a unique front bumper, side skirts and rear apron, and an M Sport leather steering wheel. The rest of the interior is highlighted with aluminium tetragon strips, updated Vernasca leather sport seats, and the new

Four contour lines slice along the length of the new 3 Series bonnet

Customers can choose from a variety of aluminium and open-pore fine wood trims



BMW Live Cockpit Professional with a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster alongside a 10.3-inch central instrument cluster that houses BMW's latest ID7 operating system.

Of course, all the equipment, comfort and style in the world would count for little if the car didn't drive like a 3 Series should. Fortunately, there's been a surprising amount of work to make the new model the most dynamically engaging generation to date.

Reducing the mass of the car was important, despite it growing slightly in size. "There's weight savings of up to 55kg," says Thompson. "Most of that is through greater use of aluminium. The body itself is about 20kg lighter, the subframe and springs are down about 7.5kg, and the bonnet and side panels are aluminium which is another 15kg."

"You really do feel that in the car. Because the chassis has also been made quite a bit stiffer, it's able to transfer its weight much more effectively."

Stiffer springs have been fitted thanks to innovative dampers that react to varying driving styles in different ways, allowing the 3 Series to behave as a sports saloon one moment, before providing a cossetting ride the next.

"You get the best of both worlds so when you're driving a little bit hard, you feel the input you're putting in is being transferred straight to the wheels. It's really rewarding how the car reacts to you."

The wheels sit wider, aiding stability, with MacPherson strut suspension at the front and a multi-link system at the rear, with stiffer suspension mountings. With a body that's 25% more rigid, it provides an excellent base to work with, something the development team did on the roads of Wales.

"The new 3 Series has been driven on Welsh roads a few times during development," says Thompson, "with the

11
colours of interior
ambient lighting

5.8 secs
is the time it takes to hit
62mph in the M Sport

chassis team really refining the work that the engineers do to make the car work in the real world. They're conscious it needs to work on a German autobahn as well as a potholed country road in Wales!

"I jumped in a 320d M Sport and drove around the local roads. I remember getting out of the car after 45 minutes and thinking 'I really enjoyed that'. It was just fun."

While the entry point to 3 Series ownership offers a satisfying dynamic package, buyers can choose to enhance what's there by moving from the SE or Sport trim up to M Sport. This brings further enhancements including adaptive suspension that rides 10mm lower than the other models, and more rigid springs, anti-roll bars and bearings. An M Sport Plus pack adds more driver-focused changes, including lightweight M Sport brakes and the option of an electronic limited slip differential to enhance traction, agility and cornering.

It's all backed by upgraded four-cylinder engines and a new-generation six-speed manual gearbox or eight-speed Steptronic transmission. The EfficientDynamics engine in the 320d has been revised to provide 190hp with peak torque of 400Nm, enough to propel the car from standstill to 62mph as quickly as 6.8 seconds. It's not at the expense of economy though, with a return of as much as 64.2mpg being promised and CO₂ emissions as low as 110g/km. More enthusiastic drivers could opt for the 330i, a petrol unit able to carry the car to 62mph in a rapid 5.8 seconds. BMW's xDrive all-wheel drive system will also be available on both options to ensure all that power is transferred to the tarmac effectively.

"I always thought the BMW 3 Series was the best driving car of its competitors. The Alfa Giulia has challenged that, but this new car is a big jump forward. If you're a car nut, I can promise that you'll be really pleased."



One in five of BMW's UK sales is a 3 Series

It's little wonder the national corporate sales manager describes the 'best in segment' car as 'fundamentally important'

Brian Cox says the UK is the No 1 market for 3 Series Plug-in Hybrids

25
electrified vehicles in the range by 2025

"If the Government continues with its 2040 plans, our expectations are that plug-in hybrid volumes will grow, but I do not see PHEVs overtaking (diesel) in the foreseeable future"

Brian Cox,
national corporate sales manager, BMW

There's no doubting how important the new BMW 3 Series is. Even though the brand's product lineup is growing, 20% of the BMWs sold in the UK are 3 Series, underlining how vital it is to get the car and the customer offer right.

"It's fundamentally important for us," explains Brian Cox, BMW's national corporate sales manager. "It's absolutely the benchmark car in the segment. One in five of all BMWs sold in the UK is a 3 Series as it's the best in segment for technology, comfort and driving assistance features."

Despite the shift towards SUVs, the new BMW 3 Series saloon is expected to do well. "The X3 does well, with it and its premium rivals selling between 10,000 and 14,000 a year, but the 3 Series will do 26,000 in a year. There's still a place for the sedan in the market and it's not going away."

"Within that, the plug-in hybrid has been hugely important," says Cox, although he doesn't see the diesel models losing big ground any time soon. "Diesel still has lower CO₂ emissions than petrol by some margin, and the case for diesel is still quite strong. We're comfortable and confident in terms of WLTP figures and the cleanliness of our diesels."

"If the Government continues with its 2040 plans, our expectations are that plug-in hybrids volumes will grow, but I do not see PHEVs overtaking in the foreseeable future. Diesel is still very prominent for us, and the 320d will outsell the 330e."

Despite that, hybrid sales are expected to be very strong, continuing a trend BMW is already seeing.

"With the BMW 330e, we outsell the US two-to-one, and Germany by 10-to-one, so we're the number one market for the 3 Series Plug-in Hybrid in the world," says Cox.

"Most of our 330e iPerformance sales have been to corporate customers, probably around 98%. The volumes we've been able to build, we've been able to sell to corporate customers straight away, so it's made sense to do that, but I think there opportunities for further growth. We know that the Mini Countryman Plug-in Hybrid does very well on the retail channel, so there's further growth potential for the 3 Series PHEV there."

Cox points out that the future for BMW isn't going to be just 3 Series models with diesel, petrol or plug-in hybrid power,

with the brand investing heavily in alternative power sources.

"By 2025 we will have 25 electrified vehicles in the range, 12 of which will be pure electric. We've already made moves with battery electric vehicles with i3, and there'll be a 3 Series-sized battery electric vehicle option in the forthcoming iX3."

The new 3 Series will be the focus from now on, despite demand for the existing model remaining strong. "The current 3 Series is still doing well," explains Cox, "but we've actually stopped production now and only have what's left in stock, which isn't much. We'll be producing new cars ahead of the March launch date, and those cars will come into the marketplace then."

Those cars will predominantly be going to corporate customers, with leasing companies taking a large share.

"Leasing is north of 80% of cars we sell, so the lease companies play a huge part in everything that we do. We have a team that focuses on the lease companies within the company, and we have a team that looks after the end customer as well. There's also a team of people that look after the big PLCs, and they work hand in hand with the leasing team so we can all benefit from a joint effort. It's just making sure that we're joined up with our end customers as well."

End users are demanding, wanting the latest technology and inspiring driving dynamics, which the 3 Series delivers. The fleet operators want reduced costs, which is attained through residuals that are expected to be higher than the 3 Series' rivals, and lower maintenance costs. Repair bills will also be kept to a minimum, thanks to the latest safety technology.

"The cars have got automatic emergency braking (AEB) as standard to dramatically reduce accidents. Around 80% of accidents are rear end shunts, so the new 3 Series has our highest standard of AEB, called Active Guard Plus. It's standard equipment for all the models in the range."

Those demands come from across the board, and BMW is keen to meet them.

"We look after SMEs, large corporate accounts, and the public sector as well," says Cox. "Every customer is hugely important to us from a retail and corporate perspective."

"There's a model in our range for everyone. The customer is king, and we look after them accordingly."



Every model comes loaded with apps and features

More technology than ever

The new 3 Series introduces cutting-edge features that haven't been seen before, all designed to make driving easier and more productive

Chief among the 3 Series cutting-edge features is BMW's Intelligent Personal Assistant (IPA). Responding to voice activation, a simple "Hey BMW," the assistant is able to help out with all manner of functions, from checking maintenance issues – "Hey BMW, is the oil level okay?" – to offering help and instructions on features of the car – "Hey BMW, how does the High Beam Assistant work?"

It does so much more than answer questions though. Far from being a simple voice-control system for the car, the IPA learns each driver's routines and preferences to proactively assist. On a cold day, it'll set the interior temperature to your preferred setting or, more impressively, work out that you're leaving the office for home and automatically set the navigation and download traffic updates.

Unlike the systems you'll find in your phones, BMW's assistant can be given a name, allowing you to call out "Hey Sandra, where's the nearest fuel station?" or perhaps "Hey Charlie, call home". It's therefore possible to make each 3 Series truly unique, with a personal secretary, BMW specialist and map reader travelling with you at all times.

It's one part of ID7, BMW's latest in-car operating system, that takes intuitive operation to the next level and helps drivers concentrate on the road ahead. Live Cockpit Plus is standard on SE and Sport models and brings a touch controller, navigation system, two USB ports and a WiFi interface to the car, all easily controlled through an 8.8-inch touchscreen. For those wishing to simply mirror their smartphone, Apple CarPlay is included as a service for one year.

M Sport drivers benefit from Live Cockpit Professional which increases the instrument binnacle display from 5.7-inches to a fully digital 12.3-inch display, complemented by a larger 10.25-inch control display on the dashboard. An adaptive navigation system is included, along with a hard-drive-based multimedia system with 20GB of storage. Live

20GB
of storage on the multimedia system

"The IPA learns each driver's routines and preferences to proactively assist"

Cockpit Professional also sees the introduction of the IPA, as well as on-street parking information, and Connected Navigation that allows for destinations to be entered remotely from multiple devices.

Every 3 Series is fully connected though, with teleservices to contact qualified technicians, an automatic emergency call system that contacts the emergency services in the event of an emergency, while all the gadgets and mapping will be kept updated with phone-like over-the-air updates.

And, while every model comes loaded with apps and features, technology is aiding safety as well. BMW's Active Guard Plus includes speed limit recognition, lane departure warning and collision and pedestrian detection, with automatic emergency braking to mitigate any issues. This can be added to with the addition of the Driving Assistant Professional package that includes adaptive cruise control that works right down to a standstill, lane-keeping assist that steers the car gently to keep it in the centre of a lane, and active side collision protection that reduces the forces during a side impact. It'll even alert drivers if they head down a one-way street the wrong way.

All these alerts could be overwhelming, but optional head-up display projects vital information onto the windscreen, the data seemingly floating ahead of the car in a position that allows the driver to keep updated without looking away from the road.

All of this technology can be accessed from a smartphone using a Digital Key. Using near field communications built into the latest Samsung Galaxy phones, opening the door and starting the car can be done without a physical key; you simply hold the phone to the door to unlock it, then slot it onto the wireless charging pad to allow the car to be started. The Digital Key can be shared across multiple devices and users too, allowing for safe and secure access to trusted family members and colleagues alike.



The 330e iPerformance is set to arrive next July

Whatever you require from a car, there will be a 3 Series for you

Saloon or estate, frugal or fast plus a choice of powertrains – it's a diverse offering

While the 320d will take the lion's share of sales, thanks to its impressive balancing of performance and economy, and the 330i will prove popular for those needing a little more poke, there's more to come in the new BMW 3 Series range.

Arriving in July 2019 will be a fleet-friendly plug-in hybrid version of the car that will offer a pure-electric driving range of more than 35 miles.

Called the 330e iPerformance, economy of as much as 166mpg is promised, using NEDC-correlated figures. Final official figures should arrive in the new year, but CO₂ emissions are expected to be less than 40g/km.

Using the latest eDrive technology, the 330e iPerformance sacrifices little in terms of practicality, hiding the lithium-ion battery under the rear seats. Gliding silently along in a relaxed style typical of electric motoring, having earlier pre-heated or cooled the car remotely, it will transform urban driving.

166mpg
is the economy promised
by the 330e iPerformance

251hp
produced by the combined
engine and electric motor

6 secs
is all it will take for the 330e
iPerformance to hit 62mph

Leave the car to its own devices and the advanced on-board computer systems will switch between petrol, electric or hybrid power as it sees fit, extracting the maximum efficiency from the power sources available. However, the iPerformance isn't designed purely for economy. Pushing all the power through an eight-speed Steptronic transmission, the combined engine and electric motor will produce some 251hp, enough to slingshot the car to 62mph in six seconds flat. An exciting new XtraBoost mode frees up another 40hp for a limited time, allowing the driver to access higher levels of performance.

Those needing a little more go will be pleased to hear of the simultaneous arrival of the M340i, a car every bit as hot as the outgoing V8-powered M3. The *de rigueur* 0-62mph sprint will be despatched in a supercar-rivalling 4.4 seconds, with M Sport suspension and chassis changes ensuring the 3 Series can comfortably handle the extra power provided.

Thanks to some innovative engine technology, the M340i will also be able to return strong economy, meaning it's not a case of sacrificing the sensible in return for extra fun.

"It's going to be absolutely brilliant" exclaimed Thompson. "It's not just sticking an M badge on the front and rebranding it. It's got 50 extra horsepower, it's got a limited slip differential, it's got active suspension, and it's got a nice sounding six-cylinder engine that's as fast as the previous M3 V8.

"The car really should take the fight to Audi S4s and Mercedes C43s. I'm really excited it!"

A full-blown M3 will follow in good time, but it's unlikely we'll see that until 2020.

Despite the growing trend for SUVs, something that's catered for by BMW's X range of vehicles from the sporting X1 through to the luxurious X7, there's strong demand for an estate model.

With the addition of a couple of extra engine options through the year, there'll be a 3 Series for everybody, whether it's a diesel, petrol or hybrid, saloon or estate, frugal or fast.



The 330e iPerformance can decide for itself whether to be in petrol, electric or hybrid mode