

Q5 ÷ Q7 = 71.43%

SMALLER AUDI SUV SCORES BIG IN SEVERAL CATEGORIES

By Joe Sage



Audi became the first car company in the US to sell 100% of its gasoline engines with FSI direct injection technology beginning with its 2010 models. Audi FSI direct injection technology was introduced in 2000 at Le Mans and the American Le Mans Series with the R8 FSI prototype race car. It first came to US consumers in late 2004 in the 2005 Audi A6 3.2 FSI, and the list continued to grow. The Audi Q5's 270-hp 3.2 V6 FSI direct injection engine, quattro all-wheel drive and six-speed Tiptronic transmission deliver 243 lb-ft of torque at 3000 rpm; 0-to-60 acceleration time is 6.7 seconds.

Much ink and breath has been devoted to whether some vehicles are small SUVs or crossovers; Audi uses both terms. The Audi Q5 belongs to the IHG (Import High Group) Small SUV segment, which has been forecast to grow dramatically over the next few years as more buyers choose luxury crossovers over luxury sedans.

When the Audi Q7—a stunning combination of power, performance, style and form, which we drove at launch—was introduced, it was a late foray into the SUV market for the Ingolstadt automaker, who had counted on quattro AWD in general and their Audi all-road wagon in particular to fill the gap. By that time, the small SUV market had grown substantially, and the crossover category was coming online. Even at that point, we pressed Audi engineers about a possible Q5, but they were mum. Introduced in 2009, here it is.

Having been thoroughly impressed with the Q7, we were sorry not to be blown away by the Q5, since a smaller size was, in many ways, the one thing the Q7 was lacking for many buyers. We found the body style to be truncated, compared with the Q7's impressive stem-to-stern sweep. That perception probably contributed to what turned out to be our erroneous impression of a short wheelbase while assessing the Q5's handling. It



turns out the Q5 in fact brags about its long wheelbase (and wide body) compared to others in its category—best in class, in fact. Short front and rear overhangs are a key factor in this perceived paradox. What seems stubby from some angles seems a “sporty and muscular stance” from others, to use Audi's own words.

The overall exterior experience is certainly not lacking, with standard 18-inch wheels sporting 235/60 all-season tires, full body monochromatic paint (note the door handles), LED taillights, and aluminum exterior trim.

Competitive Audi bragging points include EPA fuel economy ratings of 18 mpg city / 23 city / 20 combined, a best-in-class 4,400-pound towing capacity (others tow 3,500 lbs or less) and that long wheelbase.

The third generation MMI (multi-media interface), a widely recognize better implementation of the madness that began with BMW's original iDrive) further evolves

AUDI Q5 LOGBOOK NOTES

- Solid Audi look and feel in a very convenient size and package. We still love the Q7.
- Tracking felt a little squirrely for a quattro, perhaps from wide tires and short wheelbase? We change engine/gearbox settings from comfort to dynamic, and steering/suspension from dynamic to comfort. Better immediately, to our taste, and very peppy.
- Backup camera, already about the best in the industry, has a cool new 'ghost' top view of the vehicle that shows what it's beeping about (e.g. the vehicle in the next parking spot), reducing anxiety about the unknown.
- Large glass roof and minimal screen suggest a ceramic tint for any Arizonan.

3D navigation with joystick control, updated graphic clarity, SIRIUS artist/title preview, SIRIUS traffic-based navigation, voice-based input for everything from destination to whether you're hungry, need coffee or need cash, based on which it will point to the nearest options.

Audi Drive Select helps the driver customize engine/throttle mapping, transmission shift characteristics, steering, and suspension (see logbook notes). Four operating modes—Comfort, Automatic, Dynamic and Individual—allow a custom response. The quattro AWD implementation is rear-biased, 40/60. An ESP system even recognizes when the roof rail crossbars are in place and adjusts accordingly handling accordingly.

Interior amenities include 3-zone climate control, a high degree of refinement you're lucky to find in a full-size 7-seater. Seats are leather throughout, the front seats have standard 12-way power, and the rear seats (40/60 split, with a large center pass-through) recline and slide for a host of layouts. The attention to interior storage extends to 1-liter bottle holders in each door.

Blending four cars into one, Audi drive select adapts the dynamics of the Audi Q5 to suit the desired driving experience. The system controls the adaptive suspension, the dynamic steering, the transmission shift characteristics, and the engine response.

The Audi Q5 was named a 2009 Top Safety Pick by Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and earned the highest US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) grades for both front and side impact crash testing, five-star ratings for driver and passenger protection in frontal crash tests, and five-star ratings for front and rear protection in side impact crash tests.

Awards for the Audi Q5 extend beyond safety.

In November, over 100,000 readers of German motoring magazine *Auto Zeitung* voted on 370 models in 27 categories, crowning the Audi Q5 first place in off-road vehicles. (The Europe-only A5 Sportback and R8 Spyder won their categories, as well, and the A3 Cabriolet, Audi S5, Audi R8 and Audi A5 Cabriolet were each runners-up in their categories, with the Audi A6 and A3 garnering third place wins.) Overall, the Audi brand also won the poll's Image Report award, for the sixth time in a row.

In January the "Best Cars of 2010" readers' poll conducted by the *Auto Motor und Sport (ams)* magazine named the Audi Q5 first place in its category. (The Audi A4 and R8 Spyder also took firsts, and the Audi A3, A6 and R8 coupe took seconds in their categories.) This was the 34th time that the magazine had conducted this poll, with almost 100,000 readers casting their votes for 326 models in 10 different categories.

Some 25,000 readers of *Off-Road Magazine* cast their votes for favorites, selecting from 97 models in eight categories. In February, they chose the Q5 as the off-road vehicle of the year in the SUV category. (The Audi Q7 took third place in the luxury SUV category.)

The Audi Q5 is available in three packages: Premium, Premium Plus and Prestige. The base price for the Premium Q5 3.2 quattro is \$37,350. Our test Q5 added the Prestige package for \$11,500 (including panorama sunroof, xenon lights, power features galore, upgraded audio, 19" wheels, advanced key, backup camera, navigation, side assist and more), Audi Drive Select for \$2,950 and the S-line package for \$2,150. With \$825 destination charge, the total came to \$54,775. ■