

# Ford foundation by Joe Sage

For years, Taurus was Ford's top seller (a mid-size when introduced 30 years ago, a full-size later, as cars and categories both evolved). Taurus died in 2007, after the full-size Five Hundred and midsize Fusion had arrived in 2005. Five Hundred was then given the Taurus name within a year of Taurus's short death, but the midsize Fusion had already found a spot and would continue to capitalize on it. Fusion sales approached 150,000 each of its first few years, rocketed past 200,000 by 2010 and above 300,000 for the past two years,

with record market share for the past three years.

Ford has its eye on the gold medal. While sales of Toyota Camry and Honda Accord have dropped, Fusion's have grown, narrowing their leads to five percent and just two percent, respectively.

Fusion is arguably a foundation for the full Ford lineup, as midsize sedans are the number one starting point for consumers' brand awareness. Fusion styling is continually influencing other Ford models, while its volume guarantees it will gain quick inclusion of new technology and features.

Ford Fusion has also become the foundation for its own very complete lineup. There are all-wheel-drive models, four gasoline drivetrains, and hybrid and plug-in hybrid drivetrains. Trim levels start at \$22,120 and reach up to premium Platinum with AWD at just under \$40 grand, or a plug-in Energi Platinum PHEV also just under \$40 grand.

Engines include 1.5L and 2.0L EcoBoost fours, a 2.7L twin-turbo EcoBoost V6 (see Fusion Sport sidebar) and a non-turbo 2.5L Duratec in base trim. Electrified models include both hybrid and plug-in hybrid options (see Fusion Energi sidebar).

Much like the 2017 Ford Escape, covered in our previous issue, the 2017 Ford Fusion is largely a refresh. Chief engineer Bill Strickland told us, "We avoided change for change's sake. The new Fusion's refinements enhance what our customers

have consistently said is a winning design."

A new interior has controls in handier positions, more connectivity and storage (increased 40 percent), a space-saving electric parking brake, and a rotary shifter, one of the smoothest we've used (though it could benefit from firmer detents in its positions). The Platinum trim level tackles the premium segment, with quilted leather seats (heated and cooled) and leather throughout, plus moonroof. Electronic driving and safety systems all advance, as the lines between your driving and autonomous systems continue to blend (e.g. for lane-keeping, you choose a warning, active aid or both).

Despite its familiar face, advancements are so comprehensive throughout that we have to remind ourselves of one feature that really turns the

page for 2017—the integration of SYNC 3, Ford's much more user-friendly third-generation infotainment and communications system now working its way through the whole Ford lineup, replacing MyFord Touch. In addition to a much cleaner and easier interface, Apple- and Android-friendly SYNC 3 brings Siri EyesFree functions, as well as a suite of SYNC Connect services (free for five years) that let you remotely start your car, schedule future starts, or lock and unlock the car using your smartphone. The technology provides vehicle location information, as well as tire pressure, battery and fuel levels. SYNC Connect comes with complimentary activation for five years.

Plug in your smartphone. If so inclined, plug in the whole car. And fire up a new Fusion. ■

## 2017 FORD FUSION GASOLINE MODELS

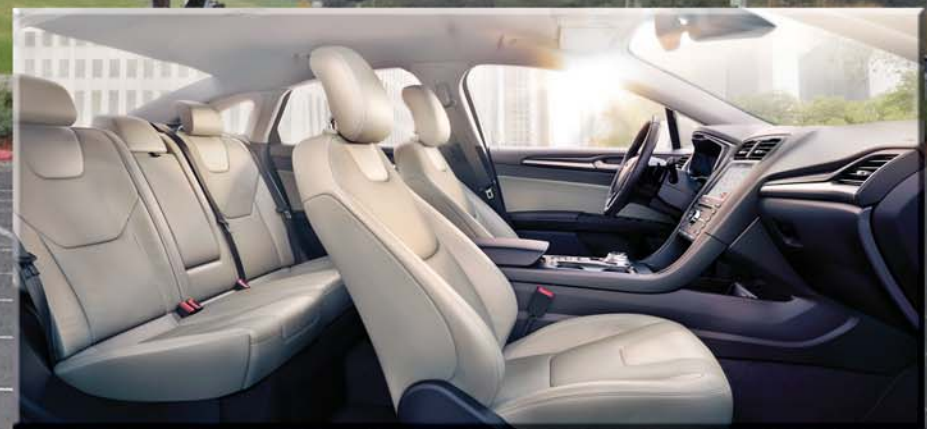
(all are base MSRP)	FWD	AWD
Fusion S	\$22,120	---
Fusion SE	23,120	---
Fusion Titanium	30,120	\$32,120
Fusion Platinum	37,245	39,245
Fusion Sport	---	\$33,475

(destination charge or any incentive plans not included)

## 2017 FUSION ELECTRIFIED MODELS

(all are base MSRP)	FWD	AWD
Fusion Hybrid S	\$25,185	---
Fusion Hybrid SE	25,990	---
Fusion Hybrid Titanium	30,520	---
Fusion Hybrid Platinum	37,020	---
Fusion Energi SE PHEV	\$31,120	---
Fusion Energi Titanium PHEV	32,120	---
Fusion Energi Platinum PHEV	39,120	---

(destination charge or any incentive plans not included)



## FUSION ENERGI PLUG-IN HYBRID

A study shows most drivers think the longest plug-in hybrid (PHEV) range is just 261 miles. Ford has news for them: the Fusion Energi PHEV already achieves 550 miles in the 2016 model, and with updated powertrain software and regenerative braking has an estimated 610-mile range for 2017, highest in the US and nearly triple that of the upcoming Tesla Model 3, projected by Tesla at 215 miles.

The Fusion Energi is engineered for about 21 miles in all-electric battery mode, then one combined battery-engine mile, then 588 gasoline miles.

A PHEV is great if you don't have EV charging at work, or if you take trips beyond current EV infrastructure.

With six electrified vehicles, Ford is number one in PHEVs (for 2015 and to date 2016). They are investing \$4.5 billion to add 13 new electrified vehicles by 2020, projecting over 40 percent electrified by the end of this decade.

Fusion Energi sales have hit almost 30,000 since 2013. The 2017 model is rated 43/41/42 MPG (city/hwy/comb), has a 14-gallon tank and 21-mile all-electric range—and is on sale now. ■

## FUSION SPORT

Since the prior Fusion launched in 2012, buyers and dealers have been asking for a performance version.

Following the formula of Explorer Sport and Edge Sport, Ford introduces an all-new Fusion Sport, with a 325-hp 2.7L twin-turbo EcoBoost V6, 380 lb-ft of torque and all-wheel drive standard—"an all-out assault on more expensive German sport sedans."

Ford hopes to attract shoppers looking at V6 Honda or Toyota, but also seeks to displace cars costing "a five-figure premium" above Fusion Sport. One in five buyers of Explorer Sport has been a conquest from Audi, BMW or Mercedes-Benz.

While Explorer sales rose 24 percent from 2013 to 2015, Explorer Sport more than doubled, at 103 percent. Edge sales were close to flat over that same period (during model changeover), but Edge Sport jumped 62 percent.

The 2017 Ford Fusion Sport starts at a very un-German sports sedan price of \$33,475—with all-wheel drive. ■