

Evolving relativity by Joe Sage

BMW doesn't state size classifications quite like most, calling the 3 Series a compact, as does EPA; but while the feds call both 5 and 7 Series large cars, BMW uses executive and luxury, respectively (touching on the usual debate of premium versus luxury). They don't want to market two large cars, nor would they want 5 Series thought of as midsize—relatively pricey yet outselling 7 Series about three to one in the US (while the 3 Series sells almost double the 5). Executive works well for the 5 Series, as it long has, though as the car evolves, large is starting to fit better, too.

The 5 Series of twenty years ago was more of a niche sports sedan for a sporty niche executive. As the wealthy executive class has grown, the 5 Series has grown, too: 6.6 inches in length over 20 years, now just 1.4 inches shy of a 1997 7 Series, though the 5 Series' base price in 2017 dollars has dropped almost 14 percent (though this does not compare base inclusions, and our sample here

climbs by 39 percent, once it is optioned up).

The modern 5 Series has added not only girth but technology that adds a layer between driver and sport. We were reminded that the car is boss about 10 seconds into each drive, as the seatbelt oddly auto-tightened considerably, then let off. Acceleration is strong and smooth, with a precise, light growl from the turbo four, though a bit of a lag from a standstill feels less commanding. The transmission is better than average, with a typical set of variables to adjust to your taste. Handling seems less sports-sedan-like and more large-car-like—the 530i's length is about three inches shy of a big Buick LaCrosse, but its wheelbase about three inches longer. Looked at as a large executive sedan, the 5 Series still starts some \$32,000 lower than 7 Series, defining its sweet spot. For more sportiness, there's the 3 Series, \$18,000 less expensive—and on a wheelbase just 0.8" shorter than that 5 Series of 20 years ago. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.0L TwinPower turbo 16v 4-cyl w/ variable valve control & high-precision direct injection
HP/TORQUE	248 hp / 258 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	8-spd sport auto w/sport & manual modes, paddle shifters and launch control
DRIVETRAIN	RWD (xDrive AWD available)
BRAKES	F: 4-piston fixed-caliper vented disc; R: single-piston floating-caliper vented disc
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	6 sec / 130 mph (155 opt)
STEERING	electromechanical power
SUSPENSION	F: alum double track control arm axle w/ separate lower track arm level, small steering roll radius, traverse force distrib compensation, anti-dive; R: five-link axle in alum lightweight construction
WHEELS / TIRES	8x18 / 245/45R18
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	194.6 in / 117.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	39.5 ft (AWD 40.1 ft)
TRUNK CAPACITY	18.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIBUTION	3746 lb / 51.5/48.5
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY	91 octane prem / 18 gal
MPG	24/34/27 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$51,200
EFFICIENT DYNAMICS (INCL):	Brake energy regen; auto start/stop; Eco Pro mode; coasting function; intelligent lightweight construction; optimized aero; on-demand ancillary units; map-regulated oil pump; optimized warm-up differential; reduced rolling resistance tires.
OPTIONS:	Cashmere silver metallic (700); ivory white Nappa leather (1000); cold weather pkg (800); driving assistance pkg (1800); driving assistance plus (1400); driving assistance plus II (1700); lighting pkg (1050); luxury seating pkg (1600); premium pkg (2300); M Sport brakes (650); 19" light alloy wheels (600); integral active steering (1150); dynamic damper control (1000); power trunk lid (500); self-close auto doors (600); SensaTec dashboard (500); ceramic controls (650); power rear sunshade (575); Apple CarPlay (300); gesture control (190); Harman Kardon surround sound (875).
DESTINATION CHARGE	995
TOTAL	\$72,135