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Special pullout section

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Fusion Hybrid delivers fuel savings without sacrifice

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Let's begin this Ford Fusion review with a few words about its big brother.

I've always liked the full-size Taurus, in particular the asphalt-ripping SHO model, but when the all-new Fusion launched in the fall of 2012, I was smitten.

Ford took the wraps off a redesigned mid-size sedan that, inside, is slightly roomier than the Taurus and on the outside, even more fetching.

The Fusion's new, sleeker silhouette, sweeping character lines and thin roof pillars create an athletic profile. And its slit projector headlamps and wide grille with horizontal chrome strakes is a welcome nod to Aston Martin – one the Fusion wears well.

Fast forward to this summer.

Having just handed back the keys from both these vehicles following a week with each, I'm scratching my head as to why I'd choose a Taurus over a Fusion. Unless there's a pressing need for the Taurus's 569 litre, golf-bag-swallowing trunk, I can't think of it.

My purpose here, however, is not a shootout between both vehicles, but simply to note that Fusion has checked all the right boxes in providing comfortable and fuel-efficient five-passenger transport. The lineup begins with an entry model in the low \$20K range, and can climb close to \$40K depending on your need for performance, fuel economy, amenities and driver tech.

There are many ways to order a Fu-



With a wide stance and sweeping profile, not to mention its "Aston Martin" grille, the 2013 Ford Fusion Hybrid looks more an athlete than an eco-warrior. Other than badging, there are few cues that it's a hybrid model.

sion, combining three trim levels (S, SE and Titanium) and numerous engine options: a 2.5-litre normally aspirated four cylinder, 1.6-litre turbo four, 2.0-litre turbo four, 2.0-litre regular hybrid, and plug-in hybrid.

My tester for the week was the SE Hybrid, which at \$29,999 is nearly five grand more than the mid-pack SE, minus the battery. That may seem a big jump in price when the difference between the Titanium Hybrid and Titanium non-hybrid is only \$1,400. But the latter comes with all-wheel-drive and is powered by the 2.0-litre Ecoboost,

which is a step up from the SE's 2.5-litre engine.

Other than receiving dual-zone climate control and eco-friendly cloth seating, the SE Hybrid is similarly equipped to its gas-only sibling. Standard features include power windows and locks, 10-way power driver's seat, tilt/telescopic steering with cruise and audio controls, three 12-volt powerpoints, automatic headlamps, solar tinted windows, 17-inch aluminum wheels, six-speaker AM/FM/CD audio system, SYNC voice-activated communications and infotainment system and a dual

LCD "SmartGauge."

This twin display is noteworthy in providing a user-friendly way to let you know when you're being naughty or nice. To the left is the Brake Coach, which measures braking efficiency each time you apply the binders. Hit them hard and you'll get a failing grade; apply them gently and gradually, and you'll score in the nineties.

Use the same discretion with the go pedal, and you'll also be rewarded – with "efficiency leaves." This display of

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