

1 Is it the right car for you?

– marriage guidance



**Snug by modern standards, but a great driving position, even for tall drivers.
This is a Mk1 cabin in four-door form.**

Tall and short drivers

Plenty of headroom and seat adjustment, even for very tall drivers.

Weight of controls

Escorts are loved for their precise controls – a slick gear change, responsive steering, sharp handling and instant throttle (especially on sporting variants). There's no power-assisted steering, though, and modified cars often use a stiff motorsport clutch.

Will it fit in the garage?

Length: 156.6in (3978mm) to 163.1in (4142mm)

Width: 60.5in (1537mm) to 62.8in (1595mm)

Height: 53.0in (1346mm) to 55.5in (1410mm)

Interior space

Roomy in their day, but pretty cramped by modern standards. Fine for carrying four adults, although bulky RS seats reduce rear legroom.

Luggage capacity

Good, usable load space in all but the Twin Cam, RS1600 and early Mexico, which

4 Relative values

– which model for you?



There's an Escort for every taste and almost any occasion – but not necessarily every budget ...

Thanks to immense rallying success, sporting Escorts are in greatest demand, usually referred to as RS (Rallye Sport) or AVO (Advanced Vehicle Operations) machines, the latter relating only to Mk1s.

Values of Escorts are linked to rarity, heritage and ability. Most expensive and sought-after are the exciting yet complicated twin-camshaft engined Escorts (RS1600, RS1800 and, of course, Twin Cam), with which Ford gained innumerable motorsport victories. Their more-accessible siblings (Mexico, RS Mexico and RS2000) were almost identical but for conventional powerplants, and were built in vastly greater numbers.

It goes almost without saying that AVO/RS Escorts are considerably more costly than their run-of-the-mill counterparts – in some cases worth 20 times as much.

Mainstream Escorts were made in the millions, with Mk1s running from 1967 to 1974, and Mk2s taking over until 1980. The GT and Sport are the most desirable of ordinary Escorts, followed by the luxurious 1300E (Mk1) and Ghia (Mk2).

Bear in mind, though, that any basic two-door bodyshell is worth roughly double that of a four-door. Due to their rarity, vans tend to fetch a little more than four-door Escorts, while in today's market estates are least valuable of all.

All Mk1s and Mk2s are essentially similar underneath, so if you simply want a rear-wheel-drive Escort to use, restore and maybe modify (rather than as a showpiece or investment), any model could be worth a look.

Values – a rough guide based on equality of condition

- Standard four-door – 10%
- Standard two-door – 20%
- GT/Sport/1300E (two-door) – 45%
- Harrier (Sport-based limited edition) – 55%
- Mexico – 90%
- RS2000/RS Mexico – 100%
- Twin Cam – 200%
- RS1600 – 200%
- RS1800 – 225%

Escorts needn't be expensive – the four-door Mk1 bodystyle fetches less than half the price of its fewer-doored stablemates.



RS1800s are the ultimate Mk2 Escorts, but with only 109 built are now extremely sought-after and subject to fakery.



Test drive

At this stage, a brief test drive should be enough to tell you whether an Escort is mechanically sound.

Ask the owner to start the car from cold while you watch the exhaust for smoke and listen for any knocking or rattling from the engine. Ensure it idles without stalling and, as the engine warms up, be aware of on any noises – ticking tappets or mild piston slap should soon disappear.

If you're fully insured, take the car for a drive. Even a small-engined Escort should feel eager, if a little harsh. It should rev easily and pull in any gear. And, unless it's been modified with a race gearbox, paddle clutch and ultra-stiff suspension, everything about the car will feel user-friendly and simple to control.

If you notice poor performance, a misfire, difficulty engaging gears, clutch slip or any unusual noises or vibrations, start asking questions. Remember, though, most Escorts are mechanically cheap and simple, and drivetrain issues are generally less of a worry than bodywork problems.

Talking of which, pay particular attention to whether an Escort drives in a straight line, has positive steering and precise handling. If not, start investigating – it could be due to worn running gear, but may also be evidence of accident damage, bad repairs or serious rot.

Interior

The condition of an Escort's cabin often indicates how well it's been looked after. Torn or inappropriate seats, a fascia chopped out for extra switches, a ripped carpet, holes in the door cards or missing centre console can cost a fortune to put right – especially if you're thinking about buying a show car.

If it's a sporting Mk1 or a Mk2 RS2000, check the dashboard to make sure it's a factory pressing rather than DIY-altered. Remember that virtually all RS models until 1978 had a black headlining rather than putty-coloured.

A clean, unmolested cabin can save thousands if you're planning a restoration.



A brief road test should be enough to check an Escort is mechanically sound.



Water pump impellers also suffer from corrosion, preventing the pump from circulating the coolant efficiently. Alloy thermostat housings, and the alloy unions on water pumps and inlet manifolds can also suffer corrosion.

Exhaust system 4 3 2 1

Standard systems were supplied in two different qualities, neither of which lasted very long. Genuine Ford replacements are expensive, but pattern parts are readily available – often in durable stainless steel, which is a bonus if already fitted.



Remove the radiator cap when cold to check the colour of the coolant.



Genuine RS exhaust manifold, found on Mk2 RS2000s and RS Mexicos.



GT-spec Crossflow engines had a tubular exhaust manifold, prone to cracking on the welds.

Cracked exhaust manifolds are common on sporting Kent-engined Escorts, producing a chuffing noise that increases with engine speed. Repairs are rarely successful, so a new manifold will be needed.

Mk2 RS2000s and RS Mexicos have a special cast iron exhaust manifold, complete with RS logo. If it's not there, start asking questions.

Gearbox 4 3 2 1

Manual gearbox

Most Escorts are equipped with a four-speed manual gearbox in one of three types.

The vast majority (all Kent-engined



Exhaust hanger positions reveal an Escort's identity, this being a stock non-RS Mk2 setup.

15 Problems due to lack of use

– just like their owners, Escorts need exercise!



Cars, like humans, are at their most efficient if they exercise regularly. A run of at least ten miles, once a week, is recommended for any Escort.

Seized components

Pistons in callipers, slave and master cylinders can seize.

The clutch may seize if the plate becomes stuck to the flywheel because of corrosion.

Handbrakes (parking brakes) can seize if the cables and linkages rust. Pistons can seize in the bores due to corrosion.

Fluids

Old, acidic oil can corrode bearings.

Uninhibited coolant can corrode internal waterways.

Lack of antifreeze can cause core plugs to be pushed out, even cracks in the block or head. Silt settling and solidifying can cause overheating.

Brake fluid absorbs water from the atmosphere and should be renewed every two years. Old fluid with a high water content can cause corrosion and pistons/callipers to seize (freeze) and can cause brake failure when the water turns to vapour near hot braking components. Even old petrol can deteriorate, resulting in poor running or failure to start.



Brakes can seize, but careful manipulation may free a sticking drum.



After a long stint of inactivity it's wise to renew brake fluid.

Tyre problems

Tyres that have had the