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The BMW 3 Series

Introduction

When an industry segment is named after one car, the domination of that car is clear. 'The 3 Series segment', as it has become known, clearly defines the dimensions and performance of the smaller executive car class. The model range was launched in 1975 to replace the already legendary BMW 02, and since then the BMW 3 Series has been the undisputed market-leading model. Today, as the all-new seventh generation G20 BMW 3 Series makes its debut, purchasing a BMW 3 Series represents an expression of joy in sporty, agile handling, enthusiasm for innovative technology and appreciation of premium quality.

First unveiled at the 1975 International Motor Show (IAA) in Frankfurt, the BMW 3 Series has since developed into both the brand's most successful model range and an international bestseller. Again and again, the introduction of trailblazing technological innovations in the BMW 3 Series has broken new ground in the mid-size class. Moreover, for more than four decades the BMW 3 Series has led the way with new vehicle concepts that have expanded the brand's model line-up and injected fresh ideas into the segment as a whole.

The underlying character of the BMW 3 Series endures from generation to generation, complemented by the addition of new technological advances. Its design has likewise been shaped by a characteristic BMW sense of continuity and evolution. Indeed, throughout the model range's history, its striking front end with twin circular headlights and familiar BMW kidney grille, the dynamic lines of the car's flanks and the powerful rear end have always been quick to catch the eye. As for the interior, the unmistakable driver-focused cockpit design already established itself as a key element in the first generation model. The 3 Series' exceptional run of victories in race competition has also contributed to the car's status as a byword for sports performance.

The first generation of the mid-size saloon delighted customers with a level of sporty handling never before offered in this segment, while also impressing with its super-economical engines. Thanks to the performance and sporty, commanding character of

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those engines, the transfer of power to the rear wheels and the resulting driving pleasure, the BMW 3 Series continues to rise above its rivals to this day.

In 1977, two years after the launch of the new model range, the BMW 3 Series became the first car in its class to be available with six-cylinder engines. Further innovations were to follow, including revolutionary injection and engine management systems, ultra-sporty diesel engines and weight minimisation through the use of aluminium and magnesium.

Today, the new generation of BMW Group engines and class-leading plug-in hybrid technology in the BMW 3 Series lies at the heart of BMW EfficientDynamics. The continued improvement in engine performance and driving attributes, coupled with reductions in fuel consumption and emissions, has been a decisive factor in securing the pioneering status of the BMW 3 Series.

Powerful engines and rear-wheel drive have been combined with finely balanced weight distribution and advanced chassis construction from day one of the BMW 3 Series. Back in 1975, drivers of a BMW 3 Series were already guaranteed handling that was sportier than any of its rivals and assured in any situation, thanks to technically sophisticated suspension, extremely precise steering uncorrupted by torque steer and powerful brakes. It is a standard that has been maintained through to each new generation of the car. Each and every component of the chassis may have undergone an impressive process of development over the course of four decades and seven generations, but the basic concept underpinning Sheer Driving Pleasure endures. Boasting the most advanced chassis in its segment, the BMW 3 Series continues to set the benchmark for sports performance and handling agility.

The BMW 3 Series' ascent to the top of the tree in terms of agility and safety has also been aided by another innovation. In 1985 the BMW 3 Series became the brand's first series-produced car to channel its power to the road through all four wheels. And today the BMW 3 Series continues this tradition with the BMW xDrive intelligent all-wheel-drive system in the 320d xDrive.

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Growth and changes within the model line-up have since broadened the appeal of BMW 3 Series range through entirely new variants. The sixth model generation (F30) further extended this attractive selection of distinctive body variants during the earlier stages of its launch, which are now split between two model ranges: the BMW 3 Series Saloon and BMW 3 Series Touring have been joined by the BMW 3 Series Gran Turismo, and the mid-size model portfolio now also includes the BMW 4 Series Coupe, BMW 4 Series Convertible and BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé.

BMW 02 Series

Although BMW has produced compact-sized cars since the 3/15 Dixi of 1928, the bloodline of the 3 Series can be traced back to 1966, with the launch of the BMW 1600-2. BMW was buoyed by the success of the larger BMW 1500 in 1961 (the model that secured BMW's path to success after near bankruptcy in 1959) and the later 1600, 1800 and 2000 four-door saloons. Moving on 11 years and these models had grown into the mid-sized executive level 5 Series. With this development, BMW engineers had the opportunity of designing a new 'small' BMW. The result was the BMW 1600-2.

The BMW 1600-2 (the last digit denoting two doors) was a revelation at its launch in 1966. Its sleek body offered ample space for four adults yet its 85bhp four-cylinder engine delivered a top speed of just over 100mph and 0 to 62mph acceleration in 13 seconds. Gone were the days when drivers had to buy an uninvolved car to carry out family duties. At last a car was available which combined the response and excitement of a sports car with practicality too.

The 02 Series was built from May 1966 until July 1976 with 861,940 examples leaving the Munich plant's production lines. The model variants ranged from the 1600-2 through the 90bhp 1802, 100bhp 2002, 105bhp in the 1602ti, 120bhp in 2002ti and 130bhp in 2002tii all the way to 170bhp in the 2002 turbo. Incidentally, the 2002 turbo was the first European production turbocharged car and bore the now politically incorrect reversed 'turbo' decals on its front spoiler. In addition, there were model variations such as the Touring (not an estate car as Touring models are today but one of the first hatchbacks), a Convertible and a Targa all built in relatively small production runs.

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The 2002, in particular, etched its place as a classic both on road and track. A very strong owners club following confirms the 02's durable popularity whilst drivers of the calibre of Hans Stuck and Dieter Quester cut their competitive teeth on even more modified 2002s.

E21 – The first generation

Although the BMW 02 models were the predecessors of the 3 Series, the first model carrying the 3 Series moniker was launched to the worldwide press at the Olympic Stadium in Munich in July 1975. Using the engineering number E21, the 'new' two-door saloon BMW 3 Series measured 4,355mm in length, 1,610mm wide and 1,380mm tall. With its long wheelbase of 2,563mm and consequent short overhangs, the first 3 Series shared its overall proportions with all subsequent generations. The four-cylinder range started with the 316 that delivered 98bhp but weighed only 1,010kgs and consequently ensured excellent performance from the entry model. The range also included the 318, 320 and the halo model, the 320i. With its 125bhp, the 320i offered near-sports car performance with a top speed of 112mph, aided by an independent spring strut suspension at the front and rear to deliver a truly revolutionary sporting drive.

The design of the body followed the new approach already applied to the BMW 5 Series by head designer Paul Bracq and was distinguished by a clear use of forms. The front end was dominated by the striking BMW kidney grille and circular lights, the latter featured in twin-headlight form in the top-of-the-line models with 2.0-litre engine. Other distinctive elements included the coupe-like side window graphic including the Hofmeister kink at its trailing edge and the "power dome" contouring of the bonnet.

The interior of the BMW 3 Series witnessed the debut of the now familiar driver-focused cockpit design. The vertically stacked controls in the centre of the dashboard were angled clearly towards the driver, making them easier to reach and read. This new development helped to optimise ergonomics and remains a signature feature of BMW models to this day.

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The official presentation of the BMW 3 Series – on the day before the opening of the 1975 International Motor Show (IAA) in Frankfurt – saw the Chairman of the BMW AG Board of Management draw particular attention to the BMW 320i. “In our eyes this car is the worthy modern successor to the fabled BMW 2002tii,” noted Eberhard von Kuenheim. With a helping hand from fuel injection technology, the four-cylinder engine under the bonnet of the BMW 320i produced 125hp. In the year following its debut, readers of Europe’s biggest-selling motoring magazine voted the flagship 3 Series model “the world’s best sedan” in the class up to two litres displacement.

The model range also included the BMW 316, BMW 318 and BMW 320 variants from launch. Their model designations were derived from the size of their engine capacities: 1,573cc, 1,766cc and 1,990cc respectively. The sophisticated four-cylinder carburettor engines combined sporting performance characteristics with very reasonable fuel economy. Even the 90hp entry-level engine in the BMW 316, which weighed just 1,010 kg, allowed customers to experience a top speed of 99mph.

In 1977, the 3 Series range welcomed the arrival of six-cylinder engines for the first time. The 2.0-litre engine for the BMW 320 and 2.3-litre unit bestowed on the BMW 323i were designed especially for the BMW 3 Series. The straight-six powering the BMW 323i included features such as electronically controlled engine management and transistor ignition, generated 105 kW/143hp and accelerated the two-door car from 0 to 62 in just 9.0 seconds.

The engine’s task of fast-tracking the 3 Series to sporting eminence in the mid-size segment was shared by independent suspension featuring control arms and spring struts at the front axle and semi-trailing arms/spring struts at the rear. The front axle control arms had a MacPherson construction using anti-roll bars, creating the perfect platform for excellent steering precision. The 3 Series also gave an all-new design feature its BMW premiere: elastically mounted rack-and-pinion steering. The first-generation car became the best-selling car in the company’s history and earned itself a reputation for outstanding driving dynamics and agility that remains resoundingly intact in the latest model to wear the 3 Series badge.

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The BMW 315, powered by a 1.6-litre engine developing 75hp, joined the fray in 1981 as the new entry-level model in the line-up. The same year, BMW 3 Series sales reached the one-million mark. That meant the new model range had outstripped the figure recorded by its predecessor after just six years in production to become the most successful model in the company's history. Customer satisfaction levels were also exceptionally high. In a survey conducted in 1980, 80 per cent of BMW 3 Series drivers said there was "nothing they could improve" about their car.

A total of 1,364,039 units of the BMW 3 Series were sold up to 1983, of which 4,595 were in "Topcabriolet" trim. This take on the 3 Series recipe was the work of Stuttgart-based coachbuilder Baur, whom customers could commission to turn any version of the 3 Series into an open-top four-seater with a suitably burly rollover bar.

This innovative combination of handling and performance in a compact car had clearly struck a chord with buyers. This is highlighted by a customer survey from 1980 suggesting that 77 per cent of purchasers bought the 3 Series because of its superior performance, 65 per cent because of its handling and 64 per cent due to the looks of the car. With this success, after only one year of production, sales of the new 3 Series has outperformed the aspirations of even the most optimistic planners, prompting the then Chairman of the Board of BMW Management, Eberhard von Kuenheim to suggest a "level of success far beyond our own expectations".

E30 – The second generation

The next generation 3 Series, the E30, made its introduction in 1982. Having been thoroughly revised and updated, the slightly larger second-generation car offered four centimetres more interior space inside and a 35mm wider track, whilst being an average of 30kg lighter than its predecessor.

In autumn 1983, after one year and 233,781 units of two-door saloon production, a four-door 3 Series model was launched for the first time and in its eight-year life, the E30 3

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Series also became a full Convertible (the E21 3 Series offered only a Baur Cabriolet conversion) and a Touring – this time as a convenient small estate variant.

The new car's lines were significantly tauter and smoother than those of its predecessor, and its drag coefficient had been reduced by almost 15 per cent. All model variants, regardless of engine size, were now fitted with twin circular headlights as standard. Although the second-generation 3 Series offered four centimetres of extra legroom inside, its body was actually three centimetres shorter than the previous model. The front indicator lights were relocated from the wing tip into the bumper. The characteristic side view was given a fresh interpretation, while a broader B-pillar painted matt black provided a stronger-looking centre. The 35mm-wider track, meanwhile, gave the new car a muscular appearance. To top it all, the BMW development engineers had shaved around 30 kg off the car's weight – despite its more generous equipment levels.

Advanced engine technology made the BMW 3 Series a sportier and more efficient proposition. The new BMW 3 Series lined up with further developed four- and six-cylinder engines. For example, the BMW 316 – which produced 90hp and now had an electronically controlled carburettor – boasted a top speed of 109mph. Developing 105hp from its four-cylinder engine with mechanical injection, the BMW 318i powered to a maximum 114mph.

The six-cylinder models already featured an electronic injection system. The 139hp BMW 323i, for example, recorded a top speed of 126mph, its five-speed gearbox with overdrive allowing it to post average fuel consumption of just 31.7mpg.

A new engine concept designed squarely with torque and economy improvements in mind was introduced in 1984, pushing efficiency to even greater heights. The six-cylinder in-line eta engine developed 122hp from its 2.7-litre displacement and enabled average fuel consumption of 33.6mpg in the BMW 325e. This was also the first BMW 3 Series model to be available exclusively with a catalytic converter. In the 1980s the BMW 3 Series featured the widest selection of variants fitted with a catalytic converter in its class. Another new development was introduced into series production in the BMW 325e and, a

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year later, the BMW 325i with six-cylinder 171hp engine; digital engine electronics optimised fuel injection and mixture preparation.

Another engine variant presented at virtually the same time as the BMW 325i majored on economical driving. This was the first time BMW had fitted a diesel engine in its compact Saloon. The BMW 324d featured a six-cylinder in-line unit developing 86hp and hit a top speed of 103mph. It recorded average fuel consumption of 40.9mpg.

In 1987 the original diesel variant was joined by the BMW 324td. Its new straight-six turbo diesel engine impressed with output raised to 115hp, lower fuel consumption and emissions, and lower levels of noise and vibrations. The key factor in this leap forward, along with the use of a turbocharger, were Digital Diesel Electronics (DDE). This technology brought more sophisticated injection – adjusted to the situation at hand – to diesel engines as well.

By the end of its first year in production, over 230,000 units of the second-generation BMW 3 Series had been sold – and the introduction of a second body variant was about to increase demand even further. The first BMW 3 Series with four doors was unveiled in autumn 1983 and offered principally functional benefits, notably more comfortable access to the rear compartment. The desire for open-air driving pleasure was likewise soon to be fulfilled. The BMW 3 Series Convertible presented in 1985 earned itself an instant fan club with its elegant silhouette, low and horizontal shoulder line and a seating position which made interaction with the outside world a particularly intense experience.

The BMW 3 Series Touring revealed in 1987 represented a whole new way of combining driving pleasure and functionality. Sporty, agile and visually appealing, the first BMW 3 Series with a generously-sized rear compartment offered something different from the existing norm in this breed of car. And that set it apart as something of a trendsetter. The variety of BMW 3 Series models now available to customers played a major role in ensuring the second-generation car notched up 2,339,251 units in sales, outperforming its predecessor by almost a million cars in the process.

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As with all BMWs at that time, this 3 Series generation was only offered in the UK as a rear-wheel-drive car, but on the continent, a four-wheel-drive 325iX was available. The history of this generation of the 3 Series also spans a raft of special editions and a pioneering role in the field of electric mobility. In 1987 eight BMW 325iX models were converted to electric front-wheel drive. The battery that would provide the requisite energy could be charged from a conventional power supply. This variant of the BMW 3 Series was the brand's first electric car to complete a practical trial under everyday conditions.

The E30 M3 model, developed expressly for use on the race track, soon found favour among fans of the sporty 3 Series. Initially 5,000 examples were due to be built to satisfy homologation requirements but by the end of production in 1991 over 17,000 M3 models had been manufactured, including a limited run of M3 Convertible models.

The M3 was substantially changed from its more 'normal' 3 Series relations and was instantly identified by its blistered wheel arches and extended front and rear spoilers. It featured a four-cylinder 2.3-litre engine with twin overhead camshafts and a 16-valve cylinder head – both firsts for the 3 Series. With outputs of between 195 and 238hp it was a truly special car and has subsequently become one of the true automotive icons of the 20th century and remains to this day as the most successful Touring Car ever made, notching up World and European Touring Car titles along with a plethora of national championships and innumerable 24-hour race victories.

E36 – The third generation

Launched at Miramas in the South of France, the third generation 3 Series range, codenamed E36, was offered for the first time as a four-door saloon at its launch in 1990, reflecting the growing popularity of four door variants in the E30 range. The body had grown significantly in terms of exterior dimensions to create an even more comfortable and safer passenger compartment, and it offered occupants noticeably more space. Those in the rear, for example, could look forward to 30mm of extra knee room. Despite its increase in size, the car's basic form also displayed an undeniably sporty edge. The

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long wheelbase, short overhangs, 1,418mm front track and 1,431mm rear track gave a strong hint of the new 3 Series' outstanding driving attributes.

Also instantly catching the eye alongside the new car's slender silhouette was its smooth front end, with each set of twin circular headlight units positioned behind a single glass cover. One of the benefits of this front-end construction, which remains the norm today, is optimised pedestrian protection. Safety was a big priority overall, and all variants of the new BMW 3 Series included new door strengthening elements for improved side impact protection.

The initial saloon version was followed in 1992 by a new model variant: the former two-door was now renamed Coupé for the first time to reflect its subtle, yet extensive, design differences. The 3 Series Coupé was followed by the Convertible, Touring and, a new model, the Compact.

The engines available from launch all developed at least 100hp. The entry-level 1.6-litre unit in the new BMW 316i, for example, produced 100hp while the BMW 318i had 113hp. The two innovative straight-six engines in the line-up both now featured twin camshafts and four valves per cylinder. The BMW 320i developed 150hp and the BMW 325i was good for 192hp. Innovative technology designed to boost performance and reduce fuel consumption also came in the form of VANOS variable camshaft timing. It was first introduced in 1992 in the 286hp six-cylinder engine powering the second-generation BMW M3 and subsequently made the jump into the other six-cylinder models.

The inevitable rise of the sporty diesel engine continued with the arrival of the 2.5-litre, 115hp unit in the BMW 325td. And more was to come in 1993, a new turbocharged six-cylinder diesel engine with charge air cooling putting 143hp and peak torque of 260Nm at the disposal of the BMW 325tds. It powered the new Saloon from zero to 62mph in 10.4 seconds, but had average fuel consumption of just 42.2mpg. A year later, the BMW 318tds was added to the range as the new entry-level diesel model. Its four-cylinder turbodiesel unit with charge air cooling and 90hp boasted impressive average fuel economy of just 47.9mpg.

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The new generation of six-cylinder in-line petrol engines which followed in 1995 were significantly lighter than those they replaced, thanks to their aluminium crankcase. They were also more powerful and more efficient. The displacement of the flagship engine increased from 2.5- to 2.8-litres, and the new range-topping model was given the BMW 328i badge, developing 193hp and peak torque of 280Nm.

The third generation of the BMW 3 Series employed a single-joint strut suspension with anti-roll bars at the front axle. At the rear, meanwhile, a new central control arm with two lateral control arms, one above the other, now ensured optimised directional stability (especially under high cornering speeds), harmonious roll characteristics and increased suspension comfort. Both the front and rear axle featured twin-tube gas-filled shock absorbers. And for the first time, the engineers had made the car's track wider at the rear than at the front. This arrangement remained a fixture of the 3 Series' design in the model generations that followed.

Power assistance for the latest development of BMW's rack-and-pinion steering system now came as standard in the BMW 318i, and the effectiveness of the brakes was also enhanced once again. The Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) was included as standard on all variants from 1992, and Automatic Stability Control (ASC) was now also offered as an option. The anti-slip control system, meanwhile, capped the generation of engine power to levels that could be transferred to the driven wheels before they threatened to start spinning – regardless of how heavily the driver was pressing the accelerator. From 1997 this technology was offered in extended form – as ASC+T – with additional brake intervention to stabilise the car.

The third generation of the BMW 3 Series was also offered with a selection of body variants developed to appeal to additional customer groups. However, the launch order adopted by its predecessor was reversed. The four-door became the default variant for this segment, and the two-door – introduced at the start of 1992 – was no longer a saloon, but an extremely elegant coupé. Although the similarity between the two- and

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four-door variants was clear, the two variants only shared a handful of parts. The first BMW 3 Series Coupé was a resolutely standalone car.

It was also the model on which the BMW M3 was based, it rode three centimetres closer to the road surface and cut an imposing figure with its suitably sporty front end. The classically elegant flank line was the product of an eight-centimetre-longer front end, lower bonnet, almost three-centimetre-shorter roof, wider doors with frameless windows, and a shorter and lower boot lid.

The BMW 3 Series Convertible was the next model to hit the road in 1993. The open-top 3 Series once again featured a distinctively low shoulder line. It offered space for four people and unbeatable all-year weather protection courtesy of an outstandingly well-insulated soft-top roof. A hardtop could also be fitted as an option.

It wasn't long before BMW was unveiling another concept innovation. Launched in 1994, this new body variant offered a sporting character wrapped in particularly compact packaging. It was a combination reflected in its name: the BMW 3 Series Compact measured a mere 4.21m in length, had two doors and a steeply rising rear end (including a large boot lid) and offered space for four to five people.

In 1995 BMW presented the new edition of another mould-creating car. The new BMW 3 Series Touring now showcased the dynamic qualities of the 3 Series range and practical virtues of its body concept even more convincingly. The new five-door model came with largely the same equipment levels as the Sedan, combined with the exclusive upholstery options and interior colours available for the Coupé. Versatility with style was what the BMW 3 Series Touring was all about.

With its range of no less than 31 different models, this 3 Series range, comprising Saloon, Coupé, Convertible, Touring and Compact models reached a grand total of 2,745,773 – 69,794 of which were M3 variants.

E46 – The fourth generation

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1998 saw the introduction of the new most recent 3 Series, codenamed E46. Initially only available as a Saloon, the E46 followed the pattern set by its predecessor in additionally offering Coupé, Convertible, Touring and Compact variants. The Saloon version again grew in size by four centimetres and, when compared to the original 3 Series of 1975, was 12cm longer. Rear seat passengers also enjoyed a further 10mm of legroom over the outgoing E36 model.

The selection of available body variants expanded more quickly than in the previous model generation. The new BMW 3 Series Coupe, which was 17mm longer, 18mm wider and 46mm lower to the road than its four-door sibling, took to the stage as early as April 1999. It also offered occupants significantly more space than its predecessor. The combination of the car's distinctive proportions and a shallower windscreen angle produced a noticeably stretched, elegantly slender side view.

The third variant of the BMW 3 Series – the Touring – joined the line-up later that year, the BMW development engineers continuing to drive forward the idea of the dynamic, elegant and classy five-door car. The new Touring embodied the character of the 3 Series with undoubted clarity, but also displayed its own distinctive talents. It was 46mm longer than its predecessor, 16mm wider and 29mm taller.

A Convertible variant was also developed for the fourth generation of the BMW 3 Series model range. The open-top four-seater made its debut in spring 2000. It was identical to the Coupé from front bumper to A-pillar, but the prominent beltline and muscular rear end gave it a character very much its own. On the inside, the Convertible was the first model in this class to feature front seats with integral seat belts as standard. Standard rollover protection, consisting of a rollover bar in the windscreen frame and two bars which extended automatically from the rear head restraints as required, maximised occupant protection even in extreme situations

The new BMW M3 also celebrated its world premiere that year at the Geneva Motor Show. The contouring of its bonnet alone provided an indication of the power lurking beneath. The eye-catching bulge in the centre of the bonnet – the so-called “power

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dome” – created space for the new six-cylinder in-line engine with displacement of precisely 3,246cc had an output of 343hp. In spring 2001 the line-up was expanded further to include the open-top variant of the high-performance sports car – the BMW M3 Convertible.

Early 2001 saw the arrival of a replacement for the BMW 3 Series Compact. A new interpretation of the signature BMW twin headlights gave the BMW 3 Series Compact a highly recognisable front end. It was also 53 mm longer and wider than its predecessor. All this extra space was used to enhance passenger comfort.

The E46 generation marked the first time that diesel-engined 3 Series cars were brought by UK customers in large numbers. In the previous E36 generation, the 325td and 325tds models were offered with limited success. The E46 320d changed that, delivering 136bhp and a top speed of 128mph. However, with the obvious benefits of diesel engines, the car delivered 49.6mpg on the combined cycle. Although UK customers were, at the time, relatively slow to appreciate the benefits of diesel technology, word soon spread and in 2003, the 320d overtook the 318i as the UK's single largest selling model in the BMW range.

The larger diesel-engined 330d was launched in 2000 in Touring guise, delivering 184bhp but more importantly 390Nm of torque. Achieving a top speed of 140mph yet still delivering 40.3mpg, this represented the first opportunity UK drivers had of buying a diesel-engined sports car – something that would have been considered unthinkable only a few years previously. Featuring four-valve technology, direct injection, a turbocharger with variable turbine geometry and charge air cooling, the design principle of the 330d's six-cylinder engine largely mirrored that of the four-cylinder unit in the BMW 320d. There was, however, one key difference: a common-rail injection system took over fuel supply duties from the distributor-type fuel injection pump previously employed. BMW was therefore an early adopter of technology which remains the favoured option today in terms of both power delivery and smooth running.

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The 2.0-litre and 3.0-litre diesel engines subsequently made their way into Coupé and Convertible models, too.

The final addition to the 3 Series range was the E46 3 Series Compact. Launched in 2001, the smaller dimensions of the car (same wheelbase as other E46 models but with an overall length 21cm shorter) and the large-opening hatchback boot lid appealed to those who wanted a 'compact' car but needed to retain 3 Series levels of practicality. But the 3 Series Compact also marked a landmark for the BMW Group in the UK. The 1.6-litre and 1.8-litre four-cylinder engines in the Compact featured VALVETRONIC variable valve lift technology for the first time, and were built at BMW's manufacturing plant at Hams Hall, Warwickshire.

VALVETRONIC provided further evidence of BMW's talent for engineering innovation by developing technology aimed at enhancing driving dynamics while at the same time optimising fuel economy. BMW developed VALVETRONIC as an alternative to the first generation of petrol direct injection systems, whose potential for fuel savings could not be exploited to sufficient effect in day-to-day driving at that time. Also described as a throttle-free load control system, VALVETRONIC enabled a reduction in fuel consumption of up to ten per cent. While the VALVETRONIC engines made their debut in the Compact models they were soon added to the rest of the 3 Series range.

BMW developed a new lightweight chassis and innovative driving stability systems for the fourth generation of the BMW 3 Series model range. Its basic construction and a raft of technical highlights elevated the chassis to a level previously only explored by some luxury cars. Aluminium now accounted for around 20 per cent of the chassis' weight, while the targeted use of high-strength steel in the front and rear axle carriers shaved off a few more kilos.

The ASC+T traction control system was included in the standard specification of the BMW 3 Series once again. A new addition, meanwhile, was Dynamic Stability Control (DSC), which intervened as required to counteract understeer or understeer through

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dynamically taken corners. Initially available as an option for the BMW 328i, in 2001 it became a standard feature of all BMW 3 Series models.

From 2000 both the Saloon and Touring versions of the BMW 3 Series were offered with the new version of BMW's all-wheel-drive system, although these models were not sold in the UK. This permanent transfer of power to all four wheels was now linked up with the Dynamic Stability Control system.

By the end of 1999 the success of the fourth-generation BMW 3 Series could also be found on record in the statistical data compiled by the Federal Motor Vehicle Office in Flensburg, Germany. The BMW 3 Series ended the year in third place in Germany's registration statistics – a level of success never before achieved by a representative of this market segment. By the time production of the fourth model generation had come to an end, total sales had climbed to a historical peak for the BMW 3 Series of 3,266,885 units.

E90 – 30 years after its introduction, the fifth generation of 3 Series

The fifth generation of the BMW 3 Series celebrated its world premiere at the 2005 Geneva International Motor Show. In what was now the regular running order for model range launches, the four-door Saloon was the first model variant to be introduced. Its striking appearance, with short body overhangs, dynamic lines and a progressive design language, imbued it with an unmistakable character from day one. The new symbiosis of powerful and efficient engines, dynamic yet refined driving characteristics, eye-catching design (with the familiar BMW use of forms), a spacious body with impressive torsional rigidity and innovative equipment features met with enthusiastic approval around the world. In its first year post-launch, the new BMW 3 Series was awarded the title "World Car of the Year" in New York.

The far more imposing and powerful aura of the new BMW 3 Series Saloon compared to its predecessor was the result of a more striking design and larger dimensions. Indeed, the new car added 49mm in length, 78mm in width and 10mm in height. This all-round growth was used to the benefit of occupant comfort and safety. However, intelligent

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lightweight design meant that, despite the car's extra size and equipment, it was no heavier on the scales.

All the variants of the fifth-generation BMW 3 Series offered an unsurpassed combination of space, comfort, safety, dynamics and efficiency – regardless of their body type. The new BMW 3 Series Touring stood apart from its predecessor and surged to the top of its segment on the back of significant increases in many areas (aside from weight), as well as featuring an upper-case initial in its model designation for the first time. The five-door Touring, also presented during the course of 2005, was 42mm longer, 78mm wider and 9mm taller than its predecessor. Occupant comfort and load capacity were among the winners here, and the car's driving characteristics were also enhanced, as the 35mm longer wheelbase helped to reduce vehicle vibrations.

The BMW 3 Series Coupé (E92) introduced in 2006 was also more distinctive than ever. Its standalone character was marked out instantly by the stretched, sporty lines of a body which had been newly designed down to individual details. The new BMW 3 Series Coupé also offered more interior space than its predecessor. The Coupé was the first ever BMW model to offer a twin-turbocharged engine and High Precision Direct Injection technology. Launched initially with 306hp 335i and the 218hp 325i engines other derivatives soon followed including the 320d which was destined to be the biggest selling model.

Later in that same year the Convertible (E93) came to market with its own industry firsts. The 325i Convertible and 335i Convertible were the first ever BMW open-top cars to feature an electronically controlled retractable hard-top roof and the first convertible in the world with the option of a through-load luggage storage option. The new Convertible also had a world first with Sun-Reflective leather upholstery that allowed the surface of the seats and other areas to remain at a constant temperature despite harsh direct sunlight.

The new BMW M3 was also presented in 2007. The high-performance sports car, based on the BMW 3 Series Coupé, boasted a distinctive design exuding high-level athleticism and was powered by a newly developed V8 engine with 420hp. It was a combination that

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secured the latest M3 a stand-out position in the exclusive ranks of top-class premium sports cars. The introduction of a selection of other body variants in Spring 2008 provided even greater scope for individuality. A trio of distinctive characters were now ready for action – the BMW M3 Coupé, BMW M3 Convertible and BMW M3 Saloon.

The range of engines developed for the fifth generation of the BMW 3 Series included a wealth of innovations focused on enhancing driving pleasure and efficiency in equal measure. The four-cylinder diesel engine powering the BMW 320d used second-generation common-rail injection and a turbocharger with variable turbine geometry to deliver 163hp and peak torque of 340Nm. The two six-cylinder petrol engines, like the 150hp four-cylinder petrol unit, were equipped with VALVETRONIC throttle-free load control. Developing 258hp from a 3.0-litre capacity in the BMW 330i and 218hp from 2.5-litre displacement in the BMW 325i, they offered the majestic dynamics for which BMW's six-cylinder engines are renowned, plus a choice of two output options. They also showcased another exclusive new feature: these were the first volume-produced engines to be equipped with a magnesium-aluminium composite crankcase.

The launch of the new BMW 3 Series Coupé was accompanied by the next engine innovation to set tongues wagging. The world's first six-cylinder in-line engine with BMW TwinTurbo technology, High Precision Injection and an all-aluminium crankcase generated a maximum output of 306hp from its 3.0-litre capacity and powered the BMW 335i Coupé into a new dimension of dynamic excellence, combined with a level of efficiency unsurpassed in this output class.

The following year, the BMW 335d with its 3.0-litre engine, took over as the flagship variant of this diesel engine family. Its unique combination of variable TwinTurbo technology and third-generation common-rail direct injection produced maximum output of 286hp and peak torque of 580Nm.

A new generation of engines and the extensive application of BMW EfficientDynamics technology also gave four-cylinder models of the fifth-generation BMW 3 Series a balance between performance and fuel consumption unmatched by its rivals. The new

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four-cylinder models came with features such as Brake Energy Regeneration, the Auto Start Stop function, an Optimum Gearshift Indicator and on-demand operation of ancillary units. The introduction of BMW EfficientDynamics technology into BMW's most important model series (when measured by new registrations) made an extremely effective contribution to reducing fuel consumptions and emissions.

In the development of the fifth-generation BMW 3 Series, the engineers also pulled off the trick of taking chassis technology another significant step forwards as part of a close alliance with the engine and body. For drivers, this resulted in a noticeable gain in agility and driving pleasure. The construction of the front axle was again inspired by technology developed for luxury-class cars. The construction concept behind the double-joint tiebar spring-strut axle replicated the principle used in the BMW 5 Series. The torque struts, control arms, swivel bearings and front axle carrier were made entirely from aluminium. The five-link rear axle of the BMW 3 Series was also all-new. Its unique construction provided the perfect platform for extremely dynamic handling.

The Dynamic Stability Control system for the fifth-generation BMW 3 Series had significantly greater functionality. For the first time, the special Dynamic Traction Control (DTC) mode could be selected at the touch of a button. Added to which, Cornering Brake Control (CBC), a Start-Off Assistant, Brake Standby, Fading Compensation and a Dry Braking function were also included in the system. The fifth-generation BMW 3 Series achieved impressive popularity around the world. Sales of the Saloon, Touring, Coupé and Convertible reached a combined total of 3,102,345 units.

The F30 – The sixth generation

Introduced in 2012, the new F30 BMW 3 Series increased in length by 93mm compared to its predecessor and featured a stiffer body and all-new chassis based on a longer wheelbase, (2,810mm in length, an increase of 50mm on the previous model) and wider tracks (by 37mm at the front and 47mm at the rear). This provided clear advantages when it came to interior space. With 18mm more foot entry freedom, 15mm more knee room and 8mm more headroom in the rear, while the height of the rear door and its opening angle were increased to make entry and exit easier. None of this was at the expense of

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luggage space, which increased by 20 litres to 480 litres.

Improved proportions, pronounced wheel arches, headlamp units which blended into the double-kidney grille to form a continuous band across the front of the car and air inlets beneath the headlights visually stretched the width and made the new 3 Series Saloon look low, wide and sporty.

During its lifetime the F30 generation of BMW 3 Series would introduce a host of innovations not previously seen on the 3 Series models. It was the first 3 Series to be offered in the UK with xDrive intelligent four-wheel drive and was the first 3 Series to feature hybrid technology, culminating with the arrival of the plug-in electric hybrid (PHEV) 330e model in 2016. Further innovations and debuts included the fitment of satellite navigation as standard equipment for the first time on the 3 Series as well as being the first BMW 3 Series to be offered with a three-cylinder engine.

The engine range for the sixth generation 3 Series had been further developed and now included a new four-cylinder 2.0-litre petrol unit, developing 245hp and 350Nm of torque, in the 328i. It replaced the six-cylinder 3.0-litre engines in the previous 325i and 330i, with inherent advantages for weight and fuel consumption, yet with a 0-62mph time of 5.9 seconds in manual form.

Efficiency was also significantly improved with both manual and automatic versions of the 328i achieving a fuel economy of more than 44mpg and CO2 emissions below 150g/km. The new unit featured High-Precision Direct Injection, BMW's new TwinScroll turbocharging, Double-VANOS variable camshaft timing and VALVETRONIC variable valve opening technology.

Less than a month after launch, three further engines were added. The 316d and 318d diesels, powered respectively by 116hp and 143hp variants of the 2.0-litre diesel engine, plus another version of the 2.0-litre turbocharged petrol engine for the 320i.

The EfficientDynamics technologies which gave the previous BMW 3 Series Saloon such

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a competitive advantage remained very much in place, and were supplemented with new ones. Auto Stop-Start was fitted to all versions, manual and automatic, along with Brake Energy Regeneration, on-demand control of engine ancillary components and tyres with less rolling resistance.

Weight had also been reduced by up to 50kg compared with the previous model, while the drag coefficient (Cd) was down to as low as 0.26 thanks to optimised aerodynamics. The F30 featured a streamlined underside, covers which created a diffuser effect at the rear and Aero Curtain air channels in the front apron which reduced the turbulence created by the revolution of the front wheels in their arches.

As with previous generations the BMW 3 Series Touring model made its debut shortly after the Saloon and the Touring went on sale in the UK in September 2012. The new model was 97mm longer than the previous generation Touring with a 50mm longer wheelbase which endowed it with considerably more leg room than before. At the same time it was even more practical with a luggage capacity that had increased by 35 litres over the previous model and now featured a 40:20:40 split-folding rear seat for even greater versatility.

The Touring wasn't the last of the new body styles for the F30 generation of 3 Series as for the first time a Gran Turismo model joined the range, offering a finely judged combination of driver appeal and practicality. At 4,824mm long (200mm longer than the saloon), and with a 2,920mm wheelbase (110mm longer than the saloon), the new BMW 3 Series Gran Turismo was notably larger all round than the Saloon and Touring and offered a 520-litre boot capacity.

For the first time, all versions of the sixth generation 3 Series Saloon and Touring models featured Drive Performance Control as standard – a switch which allows the driver to swap between up to four driving modes, varying from sporty to extremely economical. The four modes included ECO PRO, Comfort, Sport, and Sport +.

As with every generation of 3 Series updates and revisions were made to the sixth

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generation during its model cycle. For the first time in the UK the 3 Series was available with xDrive intelligent four-wheel drive with several different engines and the first hybrid 3 Series, the ActiveHybrid3, also made its debut. This was very much a fusion of performance and economy and would be the springboard for the introduction of the 330e PHEV in 2016. The 330e developed a combined output from its four-cylinder engine and electric motor of 252hp and it recorded economy and emissions figures under NEDC guidelines of 134.5mpg and 49g/km. It was a real gamechanger for the 3 Series.

But it wasn't just the hybrid model that demonstrated BMW's excellence in the field of performance with economy as the 320d EfficientDynamics Plus model was capable of achieving 72.4mpg with sub-100g/km CO2 emissions. Throughout the F30 generation's lifecycle BMW's new modular EfficientDynamics family of engines were introduced equipped with the latest BMW TwinPower Turbo technology, which combined exceptional performance with excellent fuel efficiency. One such model was the 318i, introduced in 2015, with a three-cylinder 1.5-litre engine that developed an impressive 136hp for a sub-nine second 0-62mph time but was also capable of up to 54.3mpg.

Further enhancements to the 3 Series range that made their debut on the sixth generation included the inclusion of an eight-speed automatic transmission for the first time while satellite navigation was fitted as part of the 3 Series' standard specification for the first time in 2015. At the same time enhancements to BMW's ConnectedDrive offered pioneering new technology to further enhance safety, comfort and infotainment.

The new 2019 BMW 3 Series Saloon.

With the debut of the new seventh generation 3 Series Saloon BMW again sets the standard for the premium midsize segment. For this all-new incarnation of the iconic model there are unprecedented improvements in all areas over the outgoing model. With revised styling, a thoroughly redesigned interior, superior driving dynamics, extraordinary refinement, exceptional efficiency and innovative features, this latest iteration opens an exciting new chapter in 3 Series progression. The new BMW 3 Series saloon made its debut at the Paris Motor Show in October 2018 and this will be followed by the global market launch of the car from 9 March 2019.

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Exterior design

Precision, clean lines and bold contours are the hallmarks of the new 3 Series Saloon, which has had its proportions radically revised. The new car is 85 millimetres longer than its predecessor (at 4,709mm), 16 millimetres wider (1,827mm) and just 1 mm taller (1,442 millimetres). Added to that, its wheelbase has been extended by 41 millimetres to 2,851mm, as has its track widths (front: by 43mm, and rear by 21mm).

At the front, the large BMW kidney grille elements are framed by a single surround and split up by wide bars and link to the headlight units. The customary BMW twin headlights feature the familiar two-way split that is further emphasised by an eye-catching notch in the front apron that rises into the headlight contour.

The bonnet has four contour lines leading to the BMW kidney grille. At its leading edge, it sits flush with the upper edge of the headlights and kidney grille. Both the front foglights and the Air Curtains are integrated into the outer air intakes, which are inserted into the front apron in a horizontal T shape on SE and Sport models. This design was originally developed by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) for the intake air in jet engines and later became a feature of classical racing cars.

A pair of character lines rise to the rear of the car at door-handle level and a contour line near the side skirts guides the eye to the sculpted rear wheel arches. Another feature is the 'Hofmeister kink' – the familiar counter-swing at the trailing edge of the side window graphic. A BMW hallmark, this element of the window frame is now integrated into the C-pillar, giving the rear doors a "freestanding" glass edge.

Surface contours lead into the rear apron from the side skirts and extend in an upwards movement via the rear lights up to the spoiler lip on the boot lid. At the rear slim, darkened light units house L-shaped taillights.

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From launch, customers can choose from two non-metallic colours and ten metallic shades including the brand new Portimao Blue metallic which is unique to the top-selling M Sport model.

Interior

The interior is designed to accentuate the spaciousness of the cabin and the driver-focused cockpit. The instrument panel has a modern, light look with horizontal lines, high-quality electroplated trim strips and contours that extend into the doors.

The newly-designed instrument cluster and Control Display form a large surfaced screen grouping, while the controls not included in these units are arranged into clearly structured function panels.

Displays and buttons for the air conditioning are at the centre of the instrument panel while the light functions are operated via a panel of buttons next to the steering wheel. The start/stop button for the engine is now positioned in a control panel in the centre console that houses the gearshift lever or newly designed selector lever, the iDrive Controller, electromechanical parking brake and the buttons for the Driving Experience Control switch unit.

The range of standard and optional interior trim elements available for the instrument panel and centre console is almost entirely new. As well as open-pore fine wood options, customers can choose from a variety of aluminium trims including a new Aluminium “mesh effect” interior trim.

Increased standard equipment

The entry level SE model features substantially increased standard specification. It includes Adaptive LED headlights with cornering light and eyebrow indicators, BMW Welcome Light Carpet, Interior Ambient Lighting with up to 11 colour settings, Parking Assistant with reversing camera and latest generation reversing assistant, Electric folding mirrors, Three-zone air conditioning and enhanced Acoustic glazing. All 3 Series models benefit from 40:20:40 split folding rear seats and folding rear headrests as standard. The

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entry model features a leather Sport steering wheel and BMW Live Cockpit plus, with its 8.8-inch central instrument cluster.

The SE models get line-specific front and rear bumper design, and they also come with exclusive 17-inch light-alloy wheels or optional 18-inch wheels, bespoke door sill strips and LED front foglights.

The Sport model adds exterior features including BMW Individual high-gloss Shadow Line trim for the side window surrounds, plus kidney grille slats and trim elements for the air intakes and rear apron in High-gloss Black. The Sport model's interior features an interior trim in High-gloss Black and Sports seats for the driver and front passenger. The Sport model also comes equipped with 18-inch alloy wheels, Vernasca leather seats and Front heated seats.

The top-selling M Sport model features particularly large air intakes as well as a different design for the front bumper, side skirts and rear apron. It also includes BMW Individual high-gloss Shadow Line trim, Kidney grille slats in High-gloss Black, air intake trim in High-gloss Black and a rear diffuser in Dark Shadow. Inside there are Sports seats, an M leather steering wheel, an anthracite-coloured BMW Individual headliner and an interior trim in Aluminium Tetragon, new Vernasca leather seats trims and heated front seats. The M Sport model will also feature as standard the new BMW Live Cockpit Professional with a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, 10.3-inch central instrument cluster and BMWs brand new Operating System 7.0 with the Intelligent Personal Assistant.

Engines and powertrain

The upgraded four-cylinder engines from the BMW Group's Efficient Dynamics family are used in the BMW 330i and the BMW 320d. The 3 Series Saloon will feature a new-generation six-speed manual gearbox and the eight-speed Steptronic transmission. As an alternative to rear-wheel drive, the BMW xDrive all-wheel-drive system will also be available for the new BMW 320d at launch.

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Systematic upgrades have been made to the BMW TwinPower Turbo technology for the two-litre, four-cylinder diesel engines in the BMW 320d and BMW 320d xDrive models. It now includes multi-stage turbocharging, which brings increased efficiency across all engine speeds. The revised diesel has a maximum output of 190hp and a peak torque of 400Nm enabling the BMW 320d to accelerate from zero to 62 mph in 7.1 seconds (automatic: 6.8 seconds) while the BMW 320d xDrive can get from zero to 62mph in 6.9 seconds. Average fuel consumption is 56.5mpg (automatic: 55.4mpg) for the 320d and 52.3mpg for the 320d xDrive. The 320d's CO2 emissions are 115g/km (automatic: 110 g/km) while the 320d xDrive's CO2 emissions are 118g/km.

Model	Power output (hp)	Peak Torque (NM)	Acceleration 0-62mph	Top Speed (mph)	Fuel consumption combined (mpg)	CO2 emissions (g/km)	Price from
BMW 318d	150	320	8.4 (8.3)	140 (139)	58.9 (55.4)	113 (109)	£32,450
BMW 320d	190	400	7.1 (6.8)	149	56.5 (55.4)	115 (110)	£33,610
BMW 320d xDrive	190	400	(6.9)	(145)	(52.3)	(118)	£36,800
BMW 330d	265	500	(5.5)	(155)*	(47.9)	(133)	£39,630
BMW 320i	184	300	(7.1)	(149)	(43.5)	(129)	£32,220
BMW 330i	258	400	(5.8)	(155)*	(41.5)	(134)	£37,660
BMW 330e	252 (293 with XtraBoost)	420	6.0	143	138	39	TBC

*Electronically limited

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Further models, the 320i, 318d and 330d, will make their debuts in April 2019 while the plug-in electric hybrid 330e and M Performance M340i xDrive will go on sale in July 2019. The 320i has a four-cylinder engine developing 184hp and 300Nm of torque and equipped as standard with an eight-speed automatic transmission its average fuel consumption is 43.5mpg with CO2 emissions of 126g/km. The 318d with its four-cylinder 2.0-litre diesel engine that produces 150hp and 320Nm of torque will be available with either a six-speed manual or eight-speed automatic gearbox. Average fuel consumption is 58.9mpg (automatic: 55.4mpg) with CO2 emissions of 113 and 109g/km respectively.

The 330d's 3.0-litre straight-six develops an impressive 265hp and 580Nm of torque for a 0-62mph time of 5.5 seconds. As standard it features an eight-speed automatic transmission and has an average economy of 47.9mpg and CO2 emissions of 133g/km.

The M Performance model in the 3 Series line up, the M340i xDrive, will feature a 3.0-litre straight-six turbocharged engine and with xDrive intelligent four-wheel drive and an eight-speed automatic transmission it will accelerate from 0-62mph in just 4.4 seconds. When it goes on sale in July 2019 it will be joined by the 330e PHEV. The 330e has a four-cylinder petrol engine teamed with an electric motor for a combined peak output of 252hp and 420Nm of torque and an all-electric range of over 35 miles.

Chassis technology

To maximise the handling capabilities of the new 3 Series Saloon BMW has increased the front and rear track, camber values for the front wheels and stiffened the body and suspension mountings. Used for the first time in a BMW model, the lift-related dampers are part of the car's standard chassis to balance comfort and agility. An addition, overall body rigidity is up by some 25 per cent, rising to as much as 50 per cent in certain areas, while the suspension spring rate is up by 20 per cent over the previous-generation.

Overall, the new BMW 3 Series Saloon weighs up to 55kg less than its predecessor. The body itself is 20kg lighter, while aluminium front spring struts and engine subframe have

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cut 7.5kg from the overall weight. A further weight saving of almost 15kg is due to the use of aluminium for the bonnet and front side panels.

Aerodynamic improvements have also been applied. The drag coefficient (Cd) of the BMW 320d, for example, has been reduced from 0.26 to 0.23 thanks to an almost completely sealed underbody, aerodynamically optimised wheels, the use of Air Curtains at the front and the latest generation of active air flap control, which extends across the BMW kidney grille and lower air intake. M Sport models which feature the M Sport suspension as standard, including all the all-wheel-drive versions, have a 10mm lowering of the car's ride height.

Adaptive M suspension with electronically controlled dampers

For M Sport models, as an alternative to the M Sport suspension customers can specify Adaptive M suspension that now results in a perceptible variation in the damping characteristics when switching between the driving modes using the Driving Experience Control switch. Drivers can select COMFORT mode for relaxed driving, SPORT mode for a dynamic driving style, while ADAPTIVE mode automatically adjusts to the driving style and, depending on the equipment specified, to the route itself. The Adaptive M suspension can be purchased as part of the M Sport Plus package.

Both the BMW 320d and BMW 320d xDrive SE models are equipped as standard with 17-inch light-alloy wheels while the Sport and M Sport models feature unique 18-inch wheel designs and optional 19-inch light-alloy wheels are available – as are high performance tyres on the 330i and 330d M Sport models.

The 320d and 320d xDrive M sport models can be specified, as part of the M Sport Plus package, with uprated M Sport brakes. These lightweight model-specific brake discs have a grey cast iron friction ring with an aluminium brake disc chamber, while the blue-painted callipers feature the M logo to give the car a sporty look. The M Sport brakes are included as standard on 330i and 330d M Sport models.

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The new 3 Series Saloon also includes Dynamic Stability Control (DSC) which features anti-lock braking (ABS) and Dynamic Traction Control (DTC), but also a variety of stabilising functions and the Start-Off Assistant. The Performance Control function is also standard. This system improves agility by varying the drive torque through the rear wheels depending on conditions.

The M Sport differential for the rear axle is available as an option for the BMW 330i and BMW 330d models in combination with the M Sport Plus package. The electronically controlled, fully variable locking function in the rear differential helps to enhance traction, agility and cornering in dynamic and challenging road situations.

Interior and equipment

The cabin has been improved to maximise driver focus while offering more space and increased comfort. Shoulder room in the front of the cabin has also increased, and passengers in the rear benefit from more legroom. The distance between the front and rear seats has been extended by 11 millimetres, and all occupants have more headroom.

Getting in and out of the car is easier for the rear passengers because the door aperture height has been increased. The rear compartment can accommodate a row of three child seats, two of which can be locked into place using ISOFIX anchor points. Standard 40:20:40 split-folding backrests on the rear seats give maximum flexibility.

Newly designed standard seats in SE models offer greater long-distance comfort while the sports seats equipped in the Sport and M Sport models feature a broader range of adjustment. Seat heating is standard on Sport and M Sport models, but available within the SE Plus package on SE models. Both the standard seats and sports seats can be specified with electric adjustment including memory. The new Vernasca leather upholstery is a standard feature on Sport and M Sport models and comes in a choice of four colours with special decorative quilting and seam patterns, which vary according to the model line.

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The new BMW 3 Series Saloon features a restyled leather sports steering wheel with multifunction buttons, thumb rests and electroplated applications. The M Sport models benefit from their own unique M leather steering wheel. Also optional is an electric glass sunroof, which has been increased in length by 100 millimetres. The interior liner has a motorised opening and closing action, just like the glass roof itself.

Boot capacity is 480 litres, and its new partitioning into primary luggage compartment and separate storage compartments has created an additional 36 litres of space. Automatic Tailgate operation and an electrically retractable towbar are also optional. If the Comfort Access option is specified, the car can automatically unlock when the radio remote control is detected in its immediate vicinity and lock again when it moves out of range. This also includes hands-free opening and closing of the boot lid and is available as part of the Comfort package. For added security, a new movement sensor in the key permanently monitors whether the key is being carried (and therefore is always transmitting) or has been put down on a table, for example, allowing it to switch into standby mode removing the risk of the key signal being picked up by transmitter devices.

Adaptive LED headlights and LED foglights are standard, LED headlights with extended features include a dynamic cornering light function. Optionally available for the first time on a BMW 3 Series, BMW Laserlight features adaptive functionality, high beam assistant and selective beam and has a non-dazzling high-beam that extends to over 500 metres, almost double that of the full-LED headlights. These are selected with the Visibility Package and cost £1500 on all models.

Standard-fit equipment includes rain sensor, automatic headlight activation, a Bluetooth hands-free phone facility, automatic climate control (including three zones with independent controls for the driver, front passenger and rear passengers) and acoustic glass for the windscreen, driver and passenger side windows which dramatically reduces cabin noise.

DAB radio comes as standard on the BMW 3 Series Saloon. This audio system features six speakers with an output of 100 watts. The optional 464-watt Harman Kardon surround

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sound system with 16 speakers and a digital seven-channel amplifier is available as part of the Technology package.

Package and Option Simplification

The package and option structure for the new 3 Series has been dramatically simplified, with a package and option list reduced to 6 main packages and around 10 single options. The packages group together options which share similar functionality or customer benefit, and will ease the ordering process while still allowing for a wide degree of personalisation.

The M Sport Plus package combines a 19-inch wheel, M Sport brakes (18d, 20i, 20d and 20d xDrive) Adaptive M Suspension, Sun Protection Glazing, M Seat belts, Black kidney grills, M Rear spoiler. The 330i models with M Sport Plus also gain the electronic M differential.

A new Technology package combines the Harman Kardon speakers, Head Up Display, Extended Bluetooth with Wireless Charging and Gesture Control. The Comfort package combines the Heated Steering Wheel, Comfort Access, Automated Tailgate and Storage Compartment package. The Premium package includes Electric Seats with memory, Lumbar Support and the Electric Glass Sunroof.

Safety systems

The car features as standard with Active Guard Plus which includes speed limit information, lane departure warning and Collision and Pedestrian Warning with City Braking function along with Cruise Control with braking function.

Customers can also order the Driving Assistant Professional package that includes the Driving Assistant as well as Active Cruise Control with Stop & Go, Steering and Lane Control Assistant, Lane Keeping Assistant with active side collision protection, Priority Warning and Wrong-way warning systems and Cross-Traffic Alert.

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The latest generation of BMW's Head-Up Display is optional and available as part of a Technology package. This has a projection area 70 per cent larger than in the outgoing version. It also has enhanced graphics, additional display readings as well a distance warning that flashes up a graphic icon to alert the driver when they get too close to the vehicle in front.

Parking Assistant features front and rear PDC, a reverse camera and has a parallel parking function and is fitted as standard. Another new feature of the Parking Assistant is the Reversing Assistant. This system offers automated reversing in confined spaces where the driver does not have a clear view, such as multi-storey car parks or entrances to courtyards. The system can reverse the vehicle for distances of up to 50 metres by steering it along the same line it has just taken when moving forward: all the driver has to do is operate the accelerator and brake pedals.

Customers can choose to upgrade to Park Assistant Plus which includes the Park View, Panorama View and 3D Top View features. These can create a 360 degree image of the vehicle and its surroundings – from different perspectives – in the Control Display. This introduces Remote 3D View function gives drivers the ability to call up a three-dimensional live image of their vehicle and its immediate vicinity on their smartphone.

BMW Intelligent Personal Assistant

New for the BMW 3 Series Saloon, drivers and passengers will be joined by the BMW Intelligent Personal Assistant, an intelligent, digital character that responds to the prompt “Hey BMW”. This will mark the start of a new era for the BMW Group in which drivers will increasingly be able to operate their car and access its functions and information simply by speaking.

BMW's Intelligent Personal Assistant learns routines and habits, and is subsequently able to apply them in the appropriate context. The system helps the driver, learns their preferences and is familiar with their favoured settings – e.g. for the seat heating or the places they drive to frequently using the navigation system (“Take me home”). One unique feature over other digital assistants is that drivers can give the Intelligent Personal

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Assistant a name (for example, “Charlie” or “Joy”) to create even greater individuality and personality. Not only does the Intelligent Personal Assistant await the driver’s every command, it is always there to assist them and even provide casual conversation (“Hey BMW, what’s the meaning of life?”). Familiarisation with the vehicle’s functions will be learnt and the ability to operate them as required. Saying “Hey BMW, I’m cold” will prompt the BMW Intelligent Personal Assistant to adjust the temperature inside the car accordingly.

The arrival of the BMW Intelligent Personal Assistant ensures there is always a genuine BMW professional on board. This gives the ability to explain all sorts of different functions (“How does the High Beam Assistant work?”), provide current status information (“Is the oil level okay?”) and help answer questions (“What messages do I have?”).

The Intelligent Personal Assistant is, the ideal co-driver and comes in particularly useful during every day driving (“Hey BMW, look for the nearest fuel station on our route”). To make navigation particularly easy, drivers can allow access to their calendar and contacts, which will enable the assistant to find parking spaces at the destination, provide information on traffic jams along the route and remind the driver when they need to set off.

The assistant will benefit from constant technical upgrades and be able to learn more and more preferences and favoured settings. The assistant takes further strides forward with every command given, every question asked and every setting made.

BMW Digital Key: turning the smartphone into a car key

The BMW Digital Key employs Near Field Communication (NFC) technology to allow the new BMW 3 Series Saloon to be locked and unlocked from a smartphone. Holding the smartphone up to the door handle opens the car and, once inside, the engine can be started as soon as the phone has been placed in the wireless charging or smartphone tray. Accessible via the BMW Connected app, the Digital Key offers unrivalled flexibility as the driver can share it with up to five other people. The BMW Digital Key is available for NFC-capable Samsung Galaxy smartphones running Android 8.1 and above.

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Connected Navigation

Connected Navigation offers a range of digital services to make route planning both in the car and away from it, much easier. With this new technology drivers can send destinations from various apps straight to their car's navigation system and the most important destinations will be stored meaning important addresses can be accessed from any device at any time. A new feature is the Parking Space Assistant, which proposes various parking options to the driver in good time before the destination is reached. This service includes providing information on the nearest multi-storey car park as well as proposing routes offering a good chance of finding a parking spot close to the destination. The existing On-Street Parking Information has also been incorporated into the scope of functions that form Connected Navigation.

The BMW Operating System 7.0 display and control concept

The all-new instrument cluster and Control Display takes intuitive operation to the next level and is designed to help drivers concentrate on the road ahead. The BMW Live Cockpit Plus is standard on SE and Sport models and adds features such as a Touch Controller, a navigation system, two USB ports for data transfer and a WiFi interface. The control display is 8.8-inch and features a touchscreen, whilst the instrument cluster has a 5.7-inch colour display.

As part of BMW Live Cockpit Plus the new BMW 3 Series includes a host of connected Services as standard, Emergency Call, Teleservices, Over the air and USB map updates, BMW App connectivity and Intelligent Voice assistants. In addition to this we see the introduction of the BMW Connected Package Plus as standard. This features elements drivers are accustomed to, such as Remote Services, Real Time Traffic Information, but with the addition of Concierge Services and Apple CarPlay Preparation.

Apple CarPlay Preparation will now be standard on all new BMW 3 Series models. This service will be included for one year from build, but then renewable via the BMW ConnectedDrive portal thereafter, at either one year, three years or lifetime subscriptions.

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The BMW Live Cockpit Professional is standard on M Sport models and includes an instrument cluster behind the steering wheel with a screen diagonal of 12.3 inches and a 10.25-inch Control Display. This equipment package also features an adaptive navigation system and a hard-drive-based multimedia system.

On the BMW Live Cockpit Professional the standard connectivity increases further, with the standard inclusion of BMW Connected Package Professional. This builds on the services offered in the BMW Connected Package and includes additional functionality including, BMW Intelligent Personal Assistant, On-Street Parking Information, Connected Navigation and Intelligent Vehicle Functionality, which learns drivers habits and learns rules.

BMW Live Cockpit Professional drivers get all the benefits of the new BMW Operating System 7.0. It is customisable to give personalised displays. In the main menu on the Control Display, the driver can configure up to ten pages, each showing two to four tiles with live content. Both the content and the graphics are personalised to an even greater degree – even the vehicle mock-up matches the actual model colour and equipment line. The Control Display graphics adapt depending on the operating method and the voice control system (based on natural language understanding) is better than ever before. The optional BMW gesture control now works with two extra gestures, bringing the total to seven.

The BMW 3 Series is on sale from 9 March 2019 with OTR prices starting from £33,610.

BMW Group Company

Postal Address
BMW (UK) Ltd.
Summit One
Summit Avenue
Farnborough
GU14 0FB

Telephone
01252 920000

Fax
01252 920001

Internet
www.bmw.co.uk

Ends

The BMW Group

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 30 production and assembly facilities in 14 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

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In 2017, the BMW Group sold over 2,463,500 passenger vehicles and more than 164,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2017 was € 10.655 billion on revenues amounting to € 98.678 billion. As of 31 December 2017, the BMW Group had a workforce of 129,932 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

Facebook: BMW UK
Twitter: @BMW_UK
Instagram: BMWUK
LinkedIn: BMW Group UK Limited
YouTube: BMW UK

For further information please contact:

Lauren Prema BMW Media Relations Executive
Tel: 07815 370746
Email: Lauren.Prema@bmw.co.uk

Piers Scott General Manager, Product and Internal Communications
Tel: 01252 921265
Email: Piers.Scott@bmw.co.uk

Graham Biggs Corporate Communications Director
Tel: 01252 921256
Email: Graham.Biggs@bmw.co.uk