



MAKING THE GRADE Engineer Jennifer Stockburger (foreground) and technician Ryan Pszczolkowski check load and inflation specifications.

SUV and pickup tires

Our tests show big differences in all-weather performance, tread life, and even fuel economy

NO TIRE DOES IT ALL. That's what we found when we tested 34 all-season and all-terrain tires. So the best choice for your SUV or pickup truck depends on its design and how you use the vehicle.

The General Grabber HTS earned the top spot among all-season tires and the Pirelli Scorpion ATR rated highest among all-terrain tires, based primarily on impressive grip in dry and wet conditions.

We also tested four winter tires, which are designed to give SUVs and pickups extra traction on snowy and icy surfaces but aren't intended for year-round use. Here, the Michelin Latitude X-Ice was top rated, delivering excellent snow traction and very good grip on ice while keeping tire noise low.

All tire models were tested in a size, (P)265/70R17, commonly used on trucks.

We expect our results would be comparable for other sizes of these models. Tests were performed on a 2007 Chevrolet Silverado pickup and a 2007 Chevy Suburban.

The prices we paid for the all-season tires ranged from \$98 to \$165 each; for the all-terrain, from \$96 to \$163; and for the winter tires, from \$80 to \$131. Prices will vary depending on the retailer, location, and the size of tire you need. Also, since we purchased these tires last fall, manufacturers have raised prices 5 to 10 percent or more to offset the higher cost of oil, which affects the raw materials used in the tires and shipping expenses.

All-season vs. all-terrain

All-season tires, like those found on passenger cars, are designed to wear well and to provide good performance under a variety of road and weather conditions. All-

terrain tires generally have a deeper, more open tread pattern than all-season tires for off-road grip.

Most of the all-season tires we tested performed very well in dry braking, handling, and hydroplaning resistance. The tires produced a wide range of tread life and rolling-resistance ratings. But the fact that a number of all-season models with very good tread-life ratings were ranked near the bottom in overall performance shows that it's necessary to look at the big picture when choosing tires.

The top-rated all-season tire, the General Grabber HTS, has excellent handling and braking grip, good snow traction and rolling resistance, and very good ride comfort and noise. Its shortcomings were fair ratings for braking on ice and tread life.

Many all-terrain tires scored lower in

handling and rolling resistance than the all-season models. But they do have impressive hydroplaning resistance. Some all-terrain models are designed with a focus on off-road grip, which can compromise their on-road performance. We rated only on-road performance, however, because most vehicles that use these tires are driven mainly on pavement.

The top all-terrain tire, the Pirelli Scorpion ATR, offers impressive dry and wet braking and hydroplaning resistance and good snow traction. But it has poor rolling resistance and only fair braking on ice.

Real-world tread-life ratings

For the first time, we've included tread-life ratings for all-season and all-terrain truck tires. These indicate a model's wear potential, as evaluated on a 16,000-mile test conducted at an outside lab. Results show that the fastest-wearing models are predicted to wear out at about 40,000 miles; those with the best wear potential will last for almost 90,000 miles.

We also found examples where our real-world results didn't match the manufacturer warranties or the tread-wear ratings on tire sidewalls. Several tires with relatively long tread-wear warranties and high government ratings wore quickly in our tests. And the BFGoodrich Rugged Trail T/A, which had the longest tread life in the all-season group, has the lowest government tread-wear rating and no tread-wear warranty.

Save gas with the right rubber

The tires you choose can affect your vehicle's fuel economy. That's because different models have varying degrees of rolling resistance, which is a measurement of how much energy it takes to roll a tire down a road. According to government estimates, a tire's rolling resistance accounts for about 5 percent of the fuel a vehicle consumes.

CONSUMER REPORTS includes rolling resistance in our tire Ratings charts.

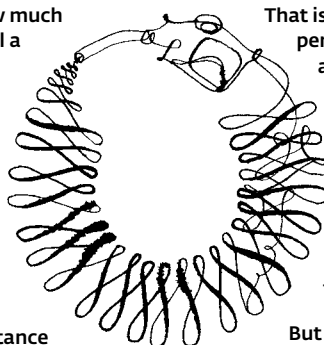
This year's tires ranged from very good to poor. All-season tires generally have lower rolling resistance than all-terrain tires.

To show how rolling resistance affects gas mileage, we used our Chevrolet Silverado test truck to measure the highway fuel economy of the tires with the best and worst rolling resistance.

The Silverado got 2.4 mpg better highway mileage with the Goodyear Wrangler SR-A all-season tire than with the General Grabber AT 2 all-terrain tire.

That is a difference of about \$300 per year, assuming gas costs \$4 a gallon and the car is driven 12,000 miles a year.

To help consumers compare rolling resistance, California is adopting a tire-efficiency standard for tires sold in the state. The federal government is scheduled to follow suit in 2009.



But don't use rolling resistance as your primary consideration in choosing tires. Some compromise wet grip for low rolling resistance, which can affect safety. In our tests, the top tire in rolling resistance, the Wrangler SR-A, rated only fair in wet braking.

We suggest you first look for tire models that provide good overall performance and then use rolling resistance as a tiebreaker.

We recommend you consider a tire's overall performance first and use tread life as a tiebreaker.

Winter tires

Winter tires improve winter traction by incorporating extra sipes (slits) in the tread and by using rubber formulated to

stay flexible in cold weather. However, their extra grip on snow and ice often comes at the expense of dry and wet traction, compared with all-season and all-terrain models.

Two of the winter tires tested, the Michelin Latitude X-Ice and the Bridgestone Blizzak DM-Z3, are designed to provide ex-

Choose the best type for your SUV or pickup



All-season tires

Best for year-round traction on paved roads, long tread wear, and a comfortable ride.

But these usually don't provide as much traction on unpaved surfaces as all-terrain tires or on snowy or icy surfaces as winter tires.

Speed ratings S, T, or H.

Tread-wear warranties None, or 50,000 to 70,000 miles.

Typical wheel sizes 15 to 18 inches.



All-terrain tires

Best for light-duty, off-road use. The slightly chunkier tread provides added grip on snowy and unpaved surfaces.

But handling is generally not as good as with all-season models.

Speed ratings R, S, or T.

Tread-wear warranties None or 40,000 to 70,000 miles.

Typical wheel sizes 15 to 18 inches.



Winter tires

Best for maximum traction on ice and snow, particularly where winters are severe.

But so-so wet and dry traction make them less suitable for general use than all-season or all-terrain tires.

Speed ratings Q or S.

Tread-wear warranties None.

Typical wheel sizes 15 to 18 inches.

tra grip without metal studs.

We also tested two studable winter tires, with and without studs: the Cooper Discoverer M&S and Winterforce M+S. They were priced lower than the others, but we paid an additional \$17 to have studs installed on each tire, which almost evened out the cost.

Without studs, both performed well in the snow and had slightly better grip on dry and wet roads than the Michelin and Bridgestone. But it took them 50 percent longer to stop on ice. With studs installed, ice braking improved significantly, and the Cooper and Winterforce performed almost as well as the studless models. Adding studs did not improve performance in the snow for the Cooper, but it did bring a mild improvement for the Winterforce. Ride comfort and noise were no worse for the studded tires than for studless.

Six states and the District of Columbia prohibit the use of snow tires with metal studs, and their use is restricted in most other states. So check your state laws before buying studded tires.

Always mount winter tires on all four wheels to maintain balanced handling and secure grip. And switch back to regular tires immediately after the snowy season for the best braking and handling in dry and wet conditions.

True winter tires, such as those we tested, have a symbol with a mountain and snowflake on the sidewall. “Mud and snow” or “M&S” is not a designation of a winter tire.

How to choose

Choose a model that excels in the areas that are most important to you.

All-season or all-terrain? Some automakers advise sticking with the tire type the vehicle originally came with. Consult the owner’s manual to see if a specific type is recommended. You can often improve on-road handling by switching from an all-terrain tire to an all-season.

Get the same size. Choose the same size that originally came on your vehicle, with the same speed rating or higher. Also, choose tires with a load-index number at least as high as that listed on the tire information placard usually located inside the driver’s doorjamb. This placard also shows the size and the automaker’s recommended inflation pressure. Maximum load and pressure specs are on the tire sidewall. Key specifications should also be in the owner’s manual.



A1 General



A2 Continental

Ratings SUV and pickup tires

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

In performance order within types.

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price we paid	Overall score	Three-season driving			Winter driving		Comfort		Other	
					Dry braking	Wet braking	Handling	Hydroplaning	Snow traction	Ice braking	Ride comfort	Noise	Rolling resistance
				0									
				100									
					P	F	G	V	G	E			

A ALL-SEASON TIRES Designed to handle a variety of road and weather conditions.

✓	1	General Grabber HTS	\$105	80	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
✓	2	Continental CrossContact LX	108	73	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
✓	3	Kumho Road Venture APT KL51	104	72	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
✓	4	Cooper Discoverer CTS	159	68	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	5	Michelin LTX M/S	165	67	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	6	Yokohama Geolandar H/T-S G051	111	67	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	7	Firestone Destination LE	106	66	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	8	Bridgestone Dueler H/L Alenza	154	66	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	9	Dayton Timberline HT II	99	66	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	10	Pirelli Scorpion STR A	128	65	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	11	Goodyear Wrangler SR-A	133	64	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	12	Dunlop Radial Rover A/T	118	63	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	13	Hankook DynaPro AS RH03	98	63	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	14	Goodyear Fortera TripleTred	162	63	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	15	Toyo Open Country H/T	108	62	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	16	Nitto Dura Grappler Highway Terrain	148	61	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	17	Dunlop Grandtrek AT20	119	58	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	18	Uniroyal Laredo Cross Country	103	55	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	19	BFGoodrich Rugged Trail T/A	127	53	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	20	Falken Ziex S/TZ-04	102	50	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

B ALL-TERRAIN TIRES Designed to provide off-road grip.

✓	1	Pirelli Scorpion ATR	\$163	79	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	2	Yokohama Geolandar A/T-S	118	73	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
✓	3	Bridgestone Dueler A/T Revo	143	71	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	4	Michelin LTX A/T 2	158	68	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	5	Toyo Open Country A/T	111	68	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	6	Kumho Road Venture AT KL78	108	66	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○



B1 Pirelli



B3 Bridgestone



C1 Michelin

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price we paid	Overall score	Three-season driving			Winter driving		Comfort		Other	
					Dry braking	Wet braking	Handling	Hydroplaning	Snow traction	Ice braking	Ride comfort	Noise	Rolling resistance

B ALL-TERRAIN TIRES *continued*

7		Firestone Destination A/T	\$112	66	●	●	○	●	○	○	●	○	○
8		Nitto Terra Grappler All Terrain	106	65	●	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
9		Cooper Discoverer ATR	118	63	○	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
10		Fuzion Xti	96	61	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
11		Kelly Safari Trex	111	58	○	●	○	○	○	●	●	○	○
12		Dayton Timberline AT II	98	55	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
13		Goodyear Wrangler SilentArmor	139	51	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
14		General Grabber AT 2	114	50	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price we paid	Overall score	Winter driving		Three-season driving			Comfort		Other
					Snow traction	Ice braking	Dry braking	Wet braking	Handling	Hydroplaning	Ride comfort	

C WINTER TIRES Designed to provide extra grip on snowy and icy surfaces.

✓	1	Michelin Latitude X-Ice	\$128	70	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
✓	2	Bridgestone Blizzak DM-Z3	131	67	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	3	Cooper Discoverer M&S [Ⓢ]	106	56	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	4	Winterforce M+S [Ⓢ]	80	50	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

[Ⓢ] Studable. Ratings reflect performance without studs.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score emphasizes safety-related tests, including braking, handling, and resistance to hydroplaning. Displayed scores are rounded; models are listed in order of precise overall score. **Dry braking** was from 60 mph, and wet braking was from 40 mph with the antilock brake system engaged. **Handling** includes how well the tires gripped in an avoidance maneuver involving a swerve into the left lane and back into the right lane; wet and dry cornering grip on our skid pad; and subjective steering feel. **Hydroplaning** reflects how quickly we could drive through standing water before the tires began to skim on the surface. **Snow traction** reflects the distance our test car needed to accelerate from 5 to 20 mph on moderately packed snow. We tested **ice braking** on a skating rink from 10 mph with the ABS disengaged. **Rolling resistance**, measured on a dynamometer at an outside laboratory, is a factor in fuel economy. **Ride comfort** and **noise** reflect our on-road judgments. **Tread life** is an indicator of wear potential from CR's 16,000-mile mixed driving test. **Price we paid** is retail for the (P)265/70R17 size tested. Overall scores and Ratings are relative to tire category.

Overview

All-season tires are designed to handle a variety of road conditions, and all-terrain tires are designed for better off-road and snow traction. Winter tires provide extra grip on snowy and icy surfaces. The top-rated models provide the best balance of performance attributes, but you should choose a tire that rates high in areas that are important to you.

Recommended

These are high-performing models that stand out for the reasons below.

Best for all-weather performance:

- A1 General \$105
- A2 Continental \$108
- B1 Pirelli \$163
- B3 Bridgestone \$143

Consider these for longer tread life:

- A2 Continental \$108
- A4 Cooper \$159
- B1 Pirelli \$163

All rate well in three-season driving performance.

Consider these for better fuel economy:

- A1 General \$105
- A2 Continental \$108
- A3 Kumho \$104

All rate well in three-season driving performance.

Best for winter driving:

- C1 Michelin \$128
- C2 Bridgestone \$131