

BUYING

WHAT SHOULD I BE PAYING?

With prices starting at £23,150 for a Cooper C and adding £4k for a Cooper S with another 50bhp, the Mini seems reasonable in our inflation-addled world, until you consider the option packs. More on those in a bit.

In terms of rivals, you're looking at a few grand cheaper for a [Fiat 500](#), [Renault Clio](#) and [VW Polo](#), and a couple of hundred quid more for a [Peugeot 208](#) and [Audi A1](#). So which you choose depends on how premium you're feeling, and how far you can stretch your budget. And whether you've got kids, realistically.

LET'S CIRCLE BACK TO THOSE OPTION PACKS, PLEASE...

Going from a Classic to an Exclusive adds £2,200 to the bottom line: Sport is another £1,300. So, a Cooper S Sport looks the part, but costs the wrong side of £30k.

Then you no longer have the ability to pick and choose what optional extras you want: everything's grouped into packs called Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3. Level 1 adds adaptive LED headlights, keyless entry, folding mirrors, heated seats, the vital HUD, the buggy wireless charging pad and an auto-dimming mirror, and comes as standard on all three trim levels in a Cooper S. Fine.

But adding 2 and 3 adds £2k and £4.5k respectively, to unlock goodies like a sunroof, upgraded hi-fi and electric seats. So it's worryingly easy to turn a £24k Mini into a £34k one just by aiming for a few choice extras.

WHAT'S PEAK COOPER?

We reckon you want the Cooper C for the 1.5 3cyl engine over the Cooper S's 2.0 4cyl, then stick with Classic trim and be sparing with the options list to avoid going over £30k. The spoked alloys, Level 1 options pack and a funky colour (standard no cost option is silver) looks a good place to start.

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