

Differences between Utility and Sport ATV's

At first glance, it's easy to tell Utility and Sport ATV's apart, and many people will eliminate one class of these quads solely on appearance. However, other than size, there are some important differences between Utility and Sport quads that you might want to take into consideration if you are looking for a new ATV, or the next time you go riding.

If you're looking to do some work, or take a quad deep into uncharted wilderness, a Utility ATV with a winch is probably the best choice for you. Although Utilities are perhaps not as extreme as a Sport quad on level ground, Utility quads can crawl over or through terrain and mud that would swallow a Sport quad alive. Although the additional size, weight, and low end torque, not to mention the optional four wheel drive, give utility quads a huge edge in dicey terrain, there are many other features that allow a Utility get through the really rough stuff. Many Utilities have a locking differential to climb out of deep mud holes and other situations where traction is a problem. The differential will either make all the wheels turn at the same speed or shift torque to the wheels that aren't slipping. Most Utility quads also have independent suspension on all four wheels, allowing it to keep in contact with the ground and keep you in control no matter where you're at. In most utilities, the suspension is tuned to give a soft and predictable ride that insulates riders from bumps in the trail. These features draw many people to Utility quads, especially if they plan on using it for hunting or work around the farm. However, many people overlook Sport quads, even though they may be more suited for their riding style.

If you want to have the power and performance to simply pull away from your buddies on the trail, or carve a corner like you never thought possible, you should try a sport quad. Sport quads are engineered for quick acceleration and bursts of speed. Sport quads are designed to be run hard for optimal performance, and can stand up to hours of high-speed riding. The gearing is aggressive and the suspension is stiff for digging into corners, which is one of the complaints that many people have about Sport quads. However, you can adjust the tension and range of your suspension to give you a stiffer or softer ride, but if you soften the ride you will inevitably get more body lean and less performance. One factor not to be overlooked is the ease of getting a Sport ATV airborne and landing it gracefully. Some people can land jumps that put them over 100 feet in the air or do a back flip with small and maneuverable Sport ATVs. Although you may not feel up to flipping an ATV under any circumstances, hitting jumps is a lot of fun once you get comfortable.

Utility quads were originally designed to be worked, but recent years have seen Utilities get a lot sportier and more suited to recreational riding. Sport quads are also getting more user friendly, which gives them more appeal. Although each category of ATV has its advantages and disadvantages, in 2006 Yamaha made a very successful attempt at bridging the gap between Sport and Utility ATV with their 450 Wolverine, which combines the best features of both classes of ATVs. It is a light ATV with sport-like handling, but it has four-

wheel drive and is balanced for high speed performance, but has the comfort and low-end power for rough terrain.

Essentially, Utility and Sport quads have different angles on how to have fun off-road. Sport bikes are designed for all-out speed and handling, while utilities seem like a Cadillac in comparison-they're bigger, heavier, slower, but much more comfortable to ride. The type of ATV that is best for you will depend on your riding style, and how far you want to push your quad and what kind of obstacles you want to use to test the limits of your quad. However, with the popularity of Yamaha's Wolverine, you can expect to see several crossover ATV's in the next couple years.

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