

SmartMoney

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL MAG

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**SMARTMONEY
BEST NEW-CAR
VALUE WINNER**

CAR BUYERS GUIDE | 2005-2006

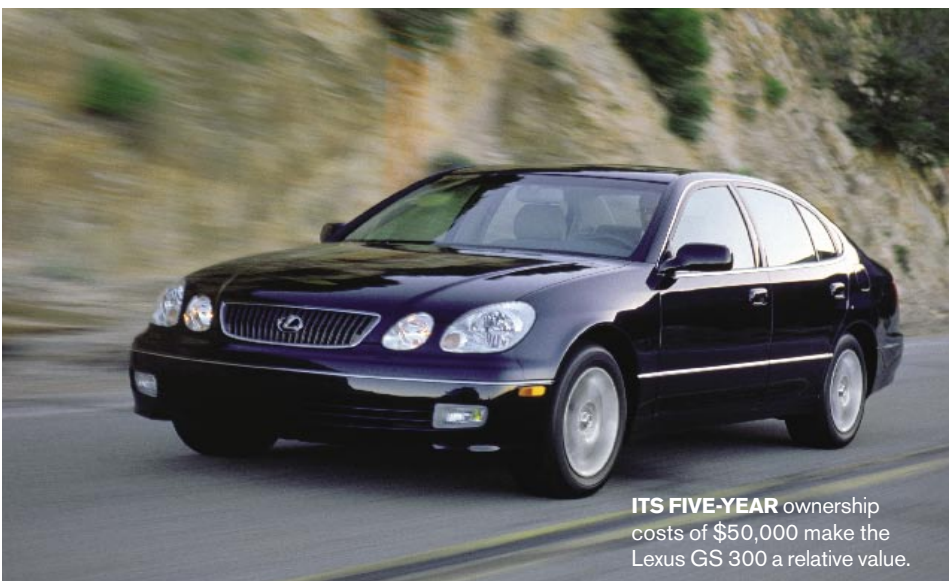
THE REAL DEALS

The frenzied auto marketplace has made it more difficult than ever to find value. We did it for you: Looking at more than 100 new models, we sorted through features, price, satisfaction and ownership costs to find the best car for your money.

The following is excerpted:

LUXURY SEDAN **Lexus GS 300**

When Howard Grandier headed to a Lexus dealership earlier this year to test-drive the maker's entry-level ES sedan, the pricier GS caught his eye. "I never thought I'd spend that much on a car," says the Washington, D.C., information technology manager. "But as soon as I saw it, I was like, 'Wow, that looks sexy.'" "Sexy" isn't a word you often hear applied to any sedans, let alone Lexus sedans, and until this year, the middle-child GS—wedged between the ES and the top-of-the-line LS in price—was perhaps the dowdiest of the bunch. That's all changed thanks to a redesign that gives it a sleek new exterior, a 245-horsepower V-6 engine and a six-speed automatic transmission. This year the GS also borrows several high-tech options from the LS for the first time, like laser-adaptive cruise control, which maintains a constant distance from the car in front of you; headlights that swivel as you round a curve; and a precollision system that tightens seat belts, adjusts the throttle and brakes when it senses an impending crash. And even with these extras, the GS 300's \$45,000 sticker price is still roughly \$2,500 less than that of the second-place BMW 530i. After five years the difference in ownership costs is even higher—nearly \$8,000.



ITS FIVE-YEAR ownership costs of \$50,000 make the Lexus GS 300 a relative value.

Category/Finalists Luxury Sedan
Sticker Price* 45,000
Five-year Ownership Costs \$49,400
Total Quality Index 885
Engine 3.3 liter, 6-cylinder, 245 hp
Fuel Economy 21/27

HOW WE RANKED THEM

The Total Quality Index (TQI) from Strategic Vision, a 1 to 1,000 rating of new owners' overall satisfaction.

Cost of ownership: what the car will cost you over five years in fuel, maintenance, repairs, finance and depreciation.

Substance: features, extras and our own impressions from test-drives.