

Pushing the envelope by Joe Sage

Ford offers a remarkably complete and complex range of utilities and crossovers. They clearly have identified demand for them all, can plan and build them all, and they can sell them all. As always, your decision among them will start with a combination of tangibles—purpose, price, features, comfort, operating costs—as well as your own particular intangibles.

Try to recall distant 2006, when the Ford Edge was introduced. It was an unusual vehicle with a new combination of attributes. It wasn't a car, although it appealed to people who liked a car with more height and more volume. It wasn't an SUV, although it

appealed to people who liked SUVs but were not intending any serious off-roading. It wasn't a minivan, although it appealed to people who liked that utility but preferred regular front-hinged doors. You could have called it a crossover, except that term had already settled in as meaning a smaller SUV with a car-based unibody chassis.

What it was was a new kind of vehicle with a high degree of useful comfort in a strong and attractive package. Ford Edge has always offered its own intangible: a segment that defines itself, perhaps without label.

NEW FOR 2015. The 2015 Ford Edge looks like a simple evolution, which is a good thing, given its strong brand equity. But just about everything is new. The all-new Edge is based on Ford's new global midsize platform. This total reinvention required all new sheetmetal, and here exterior design manager Kevin George spotted an opportunity, along with a challenge. The vehicle has such strong

heritage, they would not want to lose that. "Just because you can change everything," George says, "you don't have to." So they anchored the new Edge on key reference points from the prior model, but "futured it up," as he coins a phrase.

The 2015 Ford Edge doesn't just push the envelope—it's packaged in an entirely new envelope.

INSIDE, OUT AND UP. The largely familiar appearance of the new Edge successfully crosses a threshold, intended to nudge the vehicle from simply nice utility to premium utility.

Customer demographics for the Edge are headed upscale, while also indicating a faster-paced and more nimble lifestyle—touchstones that were applied to a faster and more nimble Edge.

The prior slab sides have been "carved out"—a step that saw 60 pounds of clay removed during that design phase. The team set out to make the Edge "look fast when parked." More sculpting of the hood helps with that, while its Edge-trade-mark clamshell shape remains. Down-road graph-

ics (DRG) were strengthened and brand-updated, with a grille that echoes Taurus, and aggressive headlights anchored to that. It also lightly echoes the three-bar grille that had been an Edge identifier throughout the first generation—lasting longer than it had in other parts of the Ford lineup.

The rear is styled to look "technical, functional and sculptural." Encapsulated rear lights with a high-contrast "3D" light bar, boldly framed in black, runs the full width. All rear lights are LED.

Externally, the new Edge is about four inches longer, though its wheelbase is only an inch longer, creating a nose that accommodates European pedestrian safety laws. Width is about the same, but height is up by an inch and a half. Put it all together, and the interior grows by five and a half cubic feet—visualize four suitcases you might otherwise have had to leave behind.

Interior volume has been increased not only through new bodyside dimensions. Interior design manager Hak Soo Ha has created a new cabin he describes as more modern, expressive, sporty and dynamic. Practicality is in play here, too, for example by gaining considerable interior space through the stylish deep-dishing of door panels. Side by side with the old generation, you might think 20 years separated them (or twenty thousand dollars). Rear legroom benefits from increased wheelbase



and from sculpting of front seatbacks. Surfaces are luxurious soft-touch, and previously painted trim parts now have premium plated finishes. No body color shows inside, avoiding a cheap feeling we've seen even in some models from pricier brands. The previous top Limited model is replaced by a Titanium model. SE, SEL and Titanium models share drivetrain basics, working up the trim levels to add style and features as you would expect.



2015 FORD EDGE SPECIFICATIONS

EDGE SE, SEL, TITANIUM
 ENGINE2.0L EcoBoost 4-cylinder
 HORSEPOWER/TORQUE245 hp / 275 lb-ft
 ENGINE PLANTCleveland (Brook Park OH)
 FUEL DELIVERYDirect injection
 DRIVETRAINFWD or AWD
 TOW CAPACITY(w/package) 3500 lb
 MPG(FWD) 20 hwy / 30 city / 24 comb
(AWD) 20 hwy / 28 city / 23 comb

OPTIONAL V6 (SE, SEL, TITANIUM)
 ENGINE3.5L Ti-VCT V6
 HORSEPOWER/TORQUE280 hp / 250 lb-ft
 ENGINE PLANTLima OH
 FUEL DELIVERY ..Sequential multiport injection
 FUEL NOTE:Flex Fuel capable
 DRIVETRAINFWD or AWD
 TOW CAPACITY(w/package) 3500 lb
 MPG(FWD) 18 hwy / 26 city / 21 comb
(AWD) 17 hwy / 25 city / 20 comb

EDGE SPORT
 ENGINE2.7L twin-turbo EcoBoost V6
 HORSEPOWER/TORQUE315 hp / 350 lb-ft
 ENGINE PLANTLima OH
 FUEL DELIVERYDirect injection
 DRIVETRAINFWD or AWD
 TOW CAPACITY[n/a on Sport model]
 MPG(FWD) 18 hwy / 27 city / 21 comb
(AWD) 17 hwy / 24 city / 20 comb

TRANSMISSION6-spd SelecShift auto
 SUSPENSION: FRONT: MacPherson strut and L-shaped lower control arm with isolated subframe and stabilizer bar.
 REAR: integral-link independent, with coil springs and antiroll bar.
 BRAKES: Power-assisted four-wheel discs, 4-channel ABS, 13.6" front, 12.4" rear; AdvanceTrac w Roll Stability Control
 SEATING CAPACITYfive
 WHEELBASE112.2 in
 LENGTH188.1 in
 CARGO VOLUME.....behind 2nd row: 39.2 cu.ft.
behind 1st row: 73.4 cu.ft.
 FINAL ASSEMBLYOakville, Ontario
 TURNING CIRCLE34.8 ft
 WEIGHTFWD 3912 lb / AWD 4078 lb

BASE PRICE: SE\$28,495
 BASE PRICE: SEL\$31,895
 BASE PRICE: TITANIUM\$35,595
 BASE PRICE: SPORT\$38,495
 DESTINATION CHARGE:.....895

2015 Ford Edge Titanium 2.0L EcoBoost AWD





(Above) 2015 Ford Edge Titanium AWD. • Hands-on demonstration of enhanced active park assist's perpendicular parking. • (Below) 2015 Ford Edge Sport AWD.

In a parallel niche, an Edge Sport model comes in about \$2500 higher than Titanium, a premium for its larger engine, plus Sport signatures such as 20-inch polished/painted-pocket wheels, distinctive piano black grille and integrated exhaust.

Use of new materials—stronger yet lighter in weight—has dropped vehicle weight significantly, from a range of 3999 to 4458 pounds in the prior model, to just 3912-4078 in the new one.

NEW POWERTRAINS. For the first time, Ford Edge comes standard with EcoBoost turbo power on all models. Now standard on most models is a 2.0-liter EcoBoost 4, nominally what they offered as an option before, but all new—a Cleveland-built twin-scroll turbo with bumps in horsepower and torque, now powerful enough to have all-wheel drive and to tow 3500 pounds, like the old V6—thus also bringing AWD to the entire Edge lineup. The venerable 3.5L V6 is an option here, partly because it's flex fuel capable and, as a global model, popular in sugar-cane-rich Brazil.

The Sport model's prior normally-aspirated 3.7-liter V6 is replaced by a 2.7L EcoBoost turbo, upping horsepower from 305 to 313, and torque by 70 lb-ft, from 280 to 350. The Sport model, however, has dropped towing from its résumé.

TECH. Technological advancements on the Edge include the science behind the new body, chassis, interior and powertrains. Then there are safety, infotainment and, well, driving features.

Ford's customer research indicates technology can make or break a buying decision, with 84 percent of customers prioritizing safety features over infotainment, their favorites being backup cameras and blind spot detection. Fifty-six percent of shoppers would abandon one brand and move to another for its technology. It's no wonder all manufacturers load up on this lately.

Edge offers familiar adaptive cruise, lane control, auto-brake and other technologies. Add to this one proud new feature: enhanced active park assist. This can do your parallel parking for you—as in some models already—but now offers semi-automated perpendicular parking. We tried this trick in a controlled demonstration in downtown Scottsdale. It's a combination of automation and wakeup calls. It steers the vehicle into place a bit, but warns you when to hit the brakes... and pull forward a little... automatically back up some more... hit the brakes when warned again... until you are ultimately in place. Neat gadgetry, but we urge anyone to just learn to park.

One welcome innovation when it comes to

pulling out of perpendicular parking is a washer on the 180-degree front camera—an A-plus for thinking to add this. Another is acoustic windshield glass in every model (plus acoustic side glass in the Titanium model). Other technologies include remote start, and active grille shutters to enhance aerodynamics.

ON THE ROAD. Ford Edge Sport has stiffer suspension accompanying its bigger EcoBoost engine. (The six-speed SelectShift transmission offers Drive and Sport modes on all models.) For our drive, a long cruise out the Beeline Highway, Bush Highway and beyond, we took the Titanium AWD in one direction and the Sport in the other. Although we normally might gravitate straight toward any Sport model, we think most drivers will be happy with the engine and suspension in the rest of the lineup. With the premium-outfitted Titanium costing less than Sport, perhaps even happier.

Production is now in full swing, and the new Edge will be appearing in dealerships and on our freeways, roads and weekend highways probably as quickly as you read this. It will be sold in 100 countries worldwide, as the rollout continues, including Western Europe for the first time. ■

2015 Ford Edge Sport 2.7L EcoBoost AWD

