

Short version

The new Audi S4

Faster, further, more agile, the new Audi S4 is a well-trained athlete. The new 3.0 TFSI engine combines the power of 245 kW (333 hp) with an astonishingly low fuel consumption of 9.4 litres per 100 km. The quattro permanent four-wheel drive system ensures practically loss-free transfer of this power to the road and sports suspension and a high-performance braking system control it reliably. The dynamic look outside and in, together with the generous range of standard equipment, underline the exclusive character of the new S4.

The S4 is extending its lead even further with a comprehensive package of the latest performance technologies. The seven-speed S tronic changes gears with lightning speed without any interruption in the power flow and the new sport differential distributes the torque as needed between the rear wheels. With Audi drive select the driver can alter the working mode of the engine, S tronic and the sport differential as desired, while dynamic steering and adaptive damper control round off the system.

The 3.0 TFSI - the heart of the new S4 - is the youngest member of the Audi V-engine family, and is an outstanding example of how the brand with the four rings blends performance and efficiency. The V6 generates its power from a displacement of 2,995 cc, is equipped with a supercharger, and delivers 245 kW. The sedan sprints to 100 km/h in just 5.3 seconds and has an electronically governed top speed of 250 km/h.

Equally impressive is the mighty pulling power of the 3.0 TFSI – its maximum torque of 440 Nm is available between 2,900 and 5,300 rpm. The supercharged V6 responds spontaneously and directly to the throttle in every situation. Despite its concentrated power it proves to be incredibly frugal – the sedan requires on average just 9.4 litres of fuel per 100 km.

The V6 channels its power through a state-of-the-art dual-clutch transmission. The seven-speed S tronic is extremely dynamic and highly efficient. S4 drivers have the option of driving in fully automatic mode or selecting the gears with paddles on the steering wheel or directly with the shift lever – all of which provide impressively quick gearshifts. The gearshift feel is dynamic, comfortable and very precise – typically Audi.

quattro permanent four-wheel drive transfers this enormous power to the road with no loss.

Under normal driving conditions it sends 40 percent of the torque to the front and 60 percent to the rear wheels and if necessary it can vary distribution within fractions of a second. The quattro drive system ensures safe self-steering characteristics, high stability and excellent traction in comparison with rear-wheel-drive competitors.

Customised torque distribution: the sport differential

The sport differential is the ideal complement, lending the quattro drive even greater fascination. The innovative control system distributes torque between the rear wheels in continuously variable proportions, according to the driving situation. This controlled torque intervention enables the S4 to take corners even more spontaneously and directly and to retain directional stability for even longer.

The S4's five-link front axle and the self-tracking trapezoidal-link rear axle are of a highly sophisticated design, and thanks to several aluminium components, are particularly light in weight. The low-mounted steering gear transmits the steering forces to the wheels without any lag time and gives the driver a precise and sensitive road feel.

The spontaneity of the S4 is engaging - it possesses the smooth, precise reactions of a thoroughbred sports car. In the drivetrain, the differential is positioned in front of the clutch, which allowed the front axle to be moved 154 mm towards the rear compared with the predecessor model. This layout perfectly evens out the axle loads, and in addition, affords the long wheelbase of 2,811 mm exceptional stability.

The chassis has been given stiffer axle bearings, and the sporty tuning with firm shock absorbers puts the body 20 mm closer to the road compared with the A4. Behind the 18-inch cast aluminium wheels - 19-inch wheels are available on request - sit the large-dimensioned brakes. The black-painted brake calipers - at the front with the S4 logo - grip the ventilated disks with newly developed brake pads.

Another high-end feature in the new S4 is the Audi drive select dynamic driving system. It influences the throttle response characteristics, the shift points for the seven-speed S tronic dual-clutch transmission and supports the speed-dependent servotronic steering. With the push of a button, the driver decides if these components are to operate in a comfortable, medium, or dynamic mode. If the vehicle is equipped with the large version of the navigation system and the accompanying MMI operating system, a fourth mode is available, which the driver can set up according to his or her individual preferences.

Audi drive select can only be ordered in conjunction with the choice of two additional technology packages – with adaptive dampers, or with a combination of the sport differential, adaptive damper control for the shock absorbers and dynamic steering. For the latter option, a superpositioned gear varies the ratio by almost 100 percent and in terms of driving safety, it reduces the load on the ESP stabilisation program as it stabilises the car through lightning-fast steering interventions when cornering at the handling limits.

The standard-specification tyre pressure monitoring system alerts the driver as soon as the pressure drops in one or several tyres and thus provides additional safety.

Athletic look: the design

The Audi S4 looks both athletic and muscular on the road. Some of the most striking modifications to the exterior design are the special aprons, the aluminium-look exterior mirrors, the 18-inch light-alloy wheels in the S design, the sill trims, the restrained spoiler at the rear and the quadruple exhaust system. The xenon plus headlights with LED daytime running lights and LED rear lights are further distinctive features.

The interior also underscores the sporty expertise that is the hallmark of this new S model. The sports seats in Silk Nappa leather is standard with electrical adjustment. The leather sports steering wheel, the key and the instrument cluster – featuring gray dials and white needles – bear the S4 logo. The interior is in black, with matt brushed aluminium inlays. Carbon and birch wood inlays are also available, as is a new stainless steel mesh inlay.

Optional assistance systems provide the driver with even greater control on the road. Adaptive cruise control (ACC) maintains the distance to the vehicle in front. The Audi side assist makes changing lanes safer and the Audi parking system advanced makes backing into a parking space easier. With regard to multimedia, Audi offers an attractive technology package.

The communications and entertainment technologies portfolio includes the unrivalled MMI operating system, high end radio and sound systems all the way up to the top-most solution from Bang & Olufsen, Audi Navigation Plus system, an iPod interface, and a highly convenient Bluetooth car phone.

At a glance

The Audi S4

Engine

- Newly developed 3.0 TFSI delivering 245 kW (333 hp) and 440 Nm of torque, mechanical supercharging for powerful performance and superior efficiency
- Dynamic performance: from zero to 100 km/h in 5.3 seconds, top speed of 250 km/h (governed)
- Fuel consumption 9.4 l/100 km, 24 percent lower than predecessor model

Power transmission

- Seven-speed S tronic gearbox for lightning-fast gear shifts
- quattro permanent four-wheel drive with slightly rear-biased characteristics
- Optional sport differential for variable distribution of propulsive power to the rear wheels

Chassis

- Sports suspension with firm settings, optional Audi drive select dynamic driving system with adaptive damper control and dynamic steering
- High-performance brake system with large disks and black calipers
- Wheels 18 inches in diameter, or optionally 19-inch wheels

Body

- Length 4,717 millimetres, width 1,826 millimetres, height 1,406 millimetres, large luggage capacity of 490 litres
- Dynamic proportions, sporty and elegant design details

Interior and equipment

- High-quality materials with an exclusive look
- Instrument cluster with special S design
- Xenon plus headlights with LED daytime running lights and LED rear lights
- State-of-the-art assistance and communications systems available

Long version

The new Audi S4

The new Audi S4 is a top-class athlete. It's new 3.0 TFSI engine delivers 245 kW yet consumes only 9.4 litres of fuel per 100 km. quattro permanent four-wheel drive, sports suspension and a high-performance brake system control the power reliably. The seven-speed S tronic, the new sport differential and the Audi drive select dynamic driving system sees this top A4 model from Audi extending its lead even further.

Engine

It takes just two figures to comprehend the dynamic potential of the new S4 - 5.3 seconds for the sprint from zero to 100 km/h and only 4.6 seconds for the intermediate sprint from 80 to 120 km/h in fourth gear. Behind these figures there is a fascinating driving experience, marked by the sonorous sound of the new mechanically supercharged V6 engine, its mighty propulsive power, its free-revving character and its sharp, spontaneous response to the throttle.

The 3.0 TFSI is the new range-topping unit in Audi's V6 engine family. It develops 245 kW and delivers a powerful 440 Nm of torque to the crankshaft between 2,900 and 5,300 rpm. The 3.0 TFSI combines two state-of-the-art technologies – gasoline direct injection and mechanical supercharging. These technologies make it a prime example of Audi's downsizing philosophy for greater efficiency, i.e. engine capacity is replaced by a supercharger.

The brand with the four rings has a long tradition of supercharged engines. The legendary Grand Prix racing cars built by Auto Union back in the 1930s already featured mechanical superchargers, which coaxed as much as 440 kW (around 600 hp) out of the mighty 16-cylinder and 12-cylinder engines. From the late 1970s on, Audi focused its attention on the exhaust turbocharger, which helped it to a succession of noteworthy triumphs in the world of motor sport. The turbo engines also began to enjoy resounding success in the market.

Now the supercharger is staging a comeback – the T in the engine description no longer stands for the turbocharger alone. Extensive comparative tests revealed the mechanical supercharger to be superior to a biturbo concept for the big V6 engine. In conjunction with direct injection this concept has clear advantages in terms of the prioritised features of packaging, starting performance and responsiveness.

The supercharger is so compact that it is easily accommodated in the 90-degree V of the cylinder banks, in place of the intake manifold. The engine-driven Poly-V belt that powers the mechanical turbocharger provides full thrust right from idling speed. The 3.0 TFSI delivers its maximum 440 Nm at only 2,900 rpm and maintains this constantly until 5,300 rpm. The intermediate sprint from 80 to 120 km/h is completed in fourth gear in 4.6 seconds; even in sixth gear it takes a mere 7.3 seconds.

The gas paths after the supercharger are very short which is why the 3.0 TFSI builds up torque extremely quickly when accelerating, even more dynamically than a naturally aspirated engine of the same displacement. The 3.0 TFSI responds directly to the throttle in true sporty fashion, is agile and sprightly, revving up to the maximum of 7,000 rpm with playful ease.

24 percent decrease in consumption

In terms of fuel consumption, the new S4 3.0 TFSI scores top marks – using only 9.4 litres per 100 km. This new generation outdoes its predecessor by a remarkable 3.0 litres - or as much as 24 percent. The Audi technology of gasoline direct injection according to the FSI principle was what made this trailblazing efficiency possible in the first place. Unlike conventional solutions, the supercharger is located behind the throttle valve. At loads below supercharging level and when coasting, i.e. when the throttle valve is closed, it lies in a vacuum: due to the low density its rotors are free-running and the amount of power required to drive them is low.

The supercharger is a so-called Roots blower. Inside it, two four-vane rotary pistons counter-rotate at a speed of up to 23,000 rpm, with the air gap between them measuring just a few thousandths of a millimetre. The rotors can deliver 1,000 kilograms of air per hour and force it into the combustion chambers at a boost pressure of up to 0.8 bar. Two intercoolers made of aluminium, connected to a separate coolant circuit, are integrated into the housing in a particularly efficient way. Here, the compressed and thus heated intake air is cooled down again in order to increase the volume of air required for the combustion process.

The three-litre V6 engine itself belongs to Audi's family of ultramodern V engines. In addition to the standard cylinder angle of 90 degrees, their attributes include systematic lightweight construction – the three-litre's crankcase, which is made from cast aluminium/silicon, tips the scales at just 33 kilograms. The entire engine, including the supercharger, weighs 189 kilograms. The bore measures 84.5 millimetres and the stroke 89.0 millimetres, producing a swept volume of 2,995 cc.

Audi has included a whole array of refined high-tech features on the 3.0 TFSI. The crankcase has been adapted to the higher prevailing pressures and all components are frictionally optimised. The intake camshafts can be adjusted through a 42-degree crankshaft angle. In the intake ports, tumble flaps aid mixture preparation.

The injection system is a fundamentally new design. A common rail system with six-hole injectors injects the fuel directly into the combustion chambers at a pressure of up to 150 bar. The injectors' highly dynamic response permits up to three fuel injections per operating cycle across an extensive range of the characteristic map. The high compression ratio of 10.3:1 also contributes to optimum combustion and therefore superior efficiency. The direct injection principle is once again the key, because the intensively swirled fuel cools the combustion chamber, reducing the tendency to knock.

Transmission

Dynamic and efficient: the seven-speed S tronic

The new S4 comes standard with the seven-speed S tronic transmission, which is exceptionally dynamic and at the same time remarkably efficient. The innovative dual-clutch transmission can be used in various ways. The fully automatic mode features the D (Drive) and S (Sport) programs. The gears can also be manually switched with the shift selector lever or with the paddles on the steering wheel – an amazingly fast process. The gearshift feel is dynamic, comfortable and very precise – typically Audi.

The seven-speed S tronic consists of two separate transmissions and uses two multi-plate clutches that control the various gears. The large outer K1 clutch transmits the power through a solid shaft to the gear wheels for gears 1, 3, 5 and 7; they are located at the rear of the aluminium transmission housing. A hollow shaft rotates around the solid shaft. It is connected to the compact K2 clutch, which is integrated into the inside of its larger sibling, and which controls the gear wheels for gears 2, 4 and 6, as well as reverse gear. All gear wheels are arranged one behind the other on both output shafts, in the order 4, 6, 2, R, 1, 3, 7 and 5.

Both transmission structures are continuously active, but only one is powered at a time by the engine. For example, when the driver accelerates in third gear, the fourth gear is already engaged in the second transmission structure. The shifting process takes place as the clutch changes – K1 opens and K2 closes with lightning

speed. The gear change takes only a few hundredths of a second and is completed without interrupting traction. It is so fluid and smooth that the driver hardly notices it.

Every component of the new seven-gear S tronic points to Audi's innovative approach and the company's uncompromising quality standards. Carbon-coated synchroniser rings guarantee synchronisation of unsurpassed quality and stability. The gears one through three and reverse are also designed as three-cone synchronisations. Both multi-plate clutches are managed with supreme precision when driving off and shifting between gears thanks to the compact pressure cylinders, electronically controlled speed compensation and optimised coil spring packages.

Mechatronics – the command centre

The command centre of the transmission is a mechatronic module, a compact unit containing control units and hydraulic actuators. It can vary the speed of the gear change across an extensive range and controls the power required for the process with extreme precision. An efficient gear-driven oil pump builds up the control pressure; when the car is driven off, it helps a suction jet pump to cool the dual clutch. This almost doubles the oil delivery volume without any increase in drive power.

A further special feature of the seven-speed S tronic is the use of two separate oil supplies. While the dual clutch, mechatronic module and oil pump are supplied by their own oil circuit with seven litres of automatic transmission fluid (ATF) oil, the wheel sets and the centre and front-axle differential are lubricated with about 4.5 litres of hypoid gear oil. This separation allowed the development engineers to position all of the components ideally, without being forced to compromise by using a single lubricant.

Audi has designed the new seven-speed S tronic to provide both exhilarating driving and maximum economy. It operates with very high efficiency and its intelligent control system maximises fuel economy in automatic mode (only 9.4 litres/100 km). The transmission-ratio spread of 6.0:1 allows a sporty, close transmission ratio for the first gear as well as an rpm-sinking, wide ratio for the last gear. The seven-speed S tronic easily exploits the tremendous power and superior torque of the 3.0 TFSI to the full.

quattro drive and the sport differential

Since 1980, quattro has been a synonym for cars with outstanding driving dynamics. In its basic setting, the torque-sensing centre differential delivers 40 percent of the tractive force from the engine to the front axle and 60 percent to the rear axle. Since the latest Audi RS 4 was introduced in 2005, this degree of rearward bias has been standard on all new Audi models; it guarantees a high level of driving pleasure. The torque-sensing differential redistributes engine output without delay if road surface conditions change, and is thus the most advanced technical principle on the market.

This exceptionally good traction puts the quattro system at an extremely high level as far as dynamics in a forward direction are concerned. But quattro technology also has distinct advantages in terms of lateral dynamics. By distributing traction among all four wheels, each wheel has greater potential to resist lateral forces, and tyre grip is maintained for significantly longer. The action of the electronic differential lock (EDL) and the typical Audi settings adopted for the ESP electronic stabilization system also add to driving pleasure and a high level of stability.

Lateral dynamics redefined

Both when the steering wheel is turned and when accelerating in a corner, vehicles with conventional drive to the axles tend to understeer for as long as the tyres have adequate grip. The laws of physics cause a moving body to resist any change of direction initially. When a vehicle's steering is turned away from a straight line, the tyres and suspension pivots absorb some of the initial movement before the direction changes. When accelerating in a corner, the front axle load is reduced and therefore less lateral force can be transmitted to the tyres, as a result the vehicle understeers and is forced out onto a larger-radius curve.

With its active sport differential, Audi elevates the road dynamics of cars with quattro permanent four-wheel drive to a new level. The innovative control system distributes the drive torque in continuously variable proportions between the rear wheels – if necessary, it diverts virtually all the power to just one of the two wheels – thereby achieving a substantial increase in agility, driving pleasure and active driving safety. This targeted control of the power flow causes the vehicle to turn even more spontaneously and directly into bends, as well as endowing it with much longer-lasting directional stability. The sport differential is not only effective under load but also when the car is coasting. Even when the clutch is depressed, agility-enhancing torque distribution is active.

As if on rails

With the active sport differential driving the rear wheels, the car quite literally takes every corner as if on rails. Depending on the steering angle, lateral acceleration, yaw angle, road speed and other signals, the control unit calculates the most suitable distribution of torque to the wheels for every driving situation. When the steering wheel is turned, for example, or the car accelerated in a corner, power is redirected in a controlled manner to the outer rear wheel. This has the effect of “forcing” the car into the corner so that the angle of the front wheels is followed accurately. The difference in tractive force between the left and right wheels also exerts a steering effect, so that the usual corrections by the driver at the steering wheel are no longer needed. Understeer, that is to say the tendency for the car to run wide at the front, is completely eliminated.

When driven briskly along a typical country road, the car follows the successive bends in a manner similar to the precise track formed by carving skis in the snow. The sport differential redistributes the power input continually with great rapidity and counteracts any tendency for the car to understeer or oversteer before either of these effects can build up. For the driver, this means reduced effort at the steering wheel and higher maximum lateral acceleration.

A notable safety bonus

Close to the car’s handling limits, the sport differential acts like ESP, but with the principle reversed. Corrective movements are not initiated solely by altering the engine settings or applying the brakes, but also by controlled redistribution of tractive force. The car’s progress is distinctly smoother and free-flowing, its actual road dynamics and those sensed subjectively by the driver are both enhanced, and driving pleasure benefits too, since ESP comes into action much less frequently. Since its reaction time is extremely short – less than 100 milliseconds – the sport differential takes effect even more rapidly than ESP. Furthermore, ESP can only react to a discrepancy between the car’s steering angle and its actual body rotation, whereas the sport differential influences the car’s dynamic behavior before any such discrepancies occur.

Active torque distribution is based on an entirely new design principle for the rear-axle differential. So that the new high-tech unit can also divert torque to the outer wheel on the axle, which revolves faster than the inner wheel when cornering, the classic rear-axle differential has superimposed stages at the left and right, and a multi-plate clutch running in an oil bath. The clutches are activated by an electro-hydraulic actuator.

Superimposed stages for acceleration

The superimposed output stage rotates ten percent faster than the half-shaft that normally drives the wheel. The two drivelines can be connected together by the multi-plate clutch. If the clutch is engaged, the wheel is accelerated by the superimposed stage that is running at a higher speed, and thus receives an additional torque input. The differential reduces the tractive force reaching the opposite wheel accordingly. In most driving situations, almost the complete input torque can be diverted to one rear wheel in this way. The maximum difference in torque between the wheels is 1,800 Newton-metres.

The sport differential is even capable of completely eliminating the classic load-reversal reactions when the accelerator is lifted or the brakes applied suddenly while cornering; the driver can specify this function by selecting 'comfort' mode. If the accelerator pedal is released, torque distribution between the wheels is adjusted almost instantaneously.

Unlike other systems, the Audi sport differential is just as effective when the engine is driving the wheels as it is on the overrun or when the car is coasting freely. In simplified terms, here too one wheel is braked and the other accelerated with the aid of the superimposed drive stages. This diverts the torque to the wheels and the vehicle is given a precisely calculated impulse in the required direction.

A technically superior solution

The task of distributing a high level of torque with minimum losses by way of a transmission that is compact and light in weight was an extremely challenging one. The solution arrived at by Audi's engineers is as ingenious as it is innovative. A new transmission stage, consisting of two sun wheels and a ring gear, performs the task in a very simple fashion. The ingenuity lies in the fact that the ring gear is displaced in relation to the sun wheels. The resulting generous gear tooth overlap enables torque transfer to take place using a minimum number of components. This is the first time that this principle has been used in a road-vehicle driveline.

The system needs no maintenance throughout its life, and operates at a high level of efficiency. The additional fuel consumption needed for the active sport differential is so small that it is hardly measurable. The device takes effect extremely quickly and has a very high level of control accuracy.

Thanks to its control unit, the sport differential is an intelligent unit. Audi developed the necessary software, which uses a unique operating principle, in-house. The computer obtains the information it needs from the steering angle, wheel speed, lateral acceleration and yaw-rate sensors and from current engine data. Twin yaw-rate and lateral acceleration sensors are installed for the sport differential. This explains the system's extremely high reaction speed: data from both sensors are continuously compared in the control unit, which means that reliable results are available more rapidly.

Audi drive select – the unique high-tech package

The quattro driveline with active sport differential is part of Audi drive select, the innovative dynamic driving system premiered on the new Audi A4. As part of an optimal combination with Audi dynamic steering and electronic shock absorber control, the permanent four-wheel driveline and the sport differential demonstrate their immense capabilities with regard to driving dynamics.

Audi drive select integrates the technical components that determine the quality of the driving experience - that is engine, transmission, steering, shock absorbers and the sport differential. Drivers can adjust the characteristics of these systems at any time to suit their personal preferences. Audi drive select is a successful synthesis of comfort and convenience with dynamic sportiness at a previously unattained level.

Buttons on the centre console enable drivers to vary the operation of Audi drive select in three stages ranging from comfortable to sporty, or to put together a profile that suits their personal preferences. The engine's throttle response characteristic can be determined first, followed by that of the servotronic speed-dependent power steering and, if the car has automatic transmission, its shift points.

Three operating modes for the sport differential

The functions of the sport differential can also be varied to suit the driver's individual wishes. In the 'comfort' mode, driving safety and the car's stability have absolute priority, with optimal damping of load reversals. In the 'auto' mode the program achieves a harmonious balance between all the functions. Finally, the 'dynamic' mode emphasises the functions contributing towards agility, so that the dynamic effect of the sport differential is most easily felt. In this case, response to load reversals is both agile and easily controllable.

Audi dynamic steering

Audi drive select becomes the ultimate dynamic driving system in conjunction with Audi dynamic steering. It is the perfect partner for the quattro driveline with sport differential. Its effect when combined with damping control and dynamic steering opens up a whole new dimension in safe, sporty driving.

The dynamic steering system uses a superimposed zero-play transmission to vary the effective steering ratio according to road speed. It is integrated into the steering column and combined with an electric motor. Here again, the Audi engineers have come up with a brilliant solution: the innovative axial transmission is extremely compact, light in weight and torsionally rigid. It operates without any play and is therefore extremely precise, with low friction. It can transmit very high torques and operates at a high level of efficiency.

Broader operating range: up to twice the ratio

In accordance with the vehicle's road speed and the chosen Audi drive select mode, the dynamic steering system can vary its ratio by almost 100 percent. When the car is being parked, the steering is extremely direct, whereas when driving in a straight line at high motorway speeds a more indirect steering ratio and reduced power assistance help to maintain the car's outstanding directional stability.

The dynamic steering system can also correct a small to moderate angle of float as rapidly and effectively as a rally driver could ever react, by automatically turning the wheels slightly in the opposite direction. Brake applications are normally only needed if the angle is greater, and then in most cases only to exert a damping effect.

Dynamic steering furthermore intervenes in the event of understeering – when the vehicle runs towards the outer edge of the corner. The steering ratio is made more indirect for a short time, meaning that the driver is unlikely to turn the wheel beyond the limit of good tyre grip.

With regard to road dynamics and safety, the dynamic steering system, damping control and sport differential work closely together with the ESP. They reduce the burden on the stabilisation program because the corrections take place considerably earlier via the input torque, the damping force or the steering angle. These rapid, efficient interventions avoid the need for brake applications in many cases, so that the car can be driven more dynamically and smoothly.

Braking on surfaces with different friction coefficients, so-called μ -split braking, is generally a situation that is particularly difficult to master – the side with more grip pulls the vehicle in its direction. The dynamic steering system resolves this problem – largely on its own. Just about all the driver needs to do is turn the steering wheel in the desired direction of travel.

Electronic damper control

Audi drive select with the sport differential can be combined with electronic damping control. The gas-filled hydraulic shock absorbers have an additional valve with a continuous opening action. The control unit computes the optimal damping force at a cycle frequency of 1,000 per second.

The electromagnetically controlled valve selects a damping characteristic to match the current driving situation at any given moment. Higher damping force may be needed to resist body movement when cornering rapidly or braking, whereas a lower damping force will be appropriate on potholed roads and a moderate setting on poor country roads.

14 sensors, 1,000 calculations per second

The central element in electronic damper control is the new high-performance control unit. It has the imposing data spread of 32 bits and operates at high speed. The computer analyses the signals from 14 sensors continuously, and calculates the current for the electrically controlled shock absorbers at each individual wheel a thousand times a second.

The so-called CDC shock absorbers (CDC = continuous damping control) are gas-filled hydraulic units based on the twin-tube principle, featuring an additional external valve and a connecting pipe.

An electromagnetically energised proportional-action valve opens against the force exerted by a spring and regulates the flow of hydraulic fluid between the inner and outer shock-absorber tubes. A smaller flow cross-section makes the damping characteristic firmer, a larger one makes it softer. The control unit applies adaptive operating characteristics within the mode the driver has chosen via Audi drive select. Even from the comfort mode, the shock absorbers switch to a firmer setting at lightning speed if required. The control unit sets the optimum damping power for every driving style and for every type of road.

Dynamic suspension

The dynamic suspension of the new Audi S4 is based on the layout that has made the A4 the sportiest car in the midsize class. Numerous suspension components made of aluminium reduce unsprung masses. The five-link front suspension can handle longitudinal and lateral forces separately; a firmly mounted subframe ensures exceptional rigidity for the front section. The springs and shock absorbers of the self-tracking trapezoidal rear suspension, which permits a wide luggage compartment thanks to its compact design, are aligned separately to improve response.

In keeping with the dynamic performance of the S4, the suspension has been retuned. Stiffer bearings for the control arms guarantee elastokinematics for a sporty performance; lateral and camber rigidity are clearly enhanced. The minimal body movements lend the S4 maximum stability, even when braking. The shock absorbers have firmer settings and the body has been lowered by 20 millimetres.

Handling precision – without compromise

All these measures lend the S4 the driving dynamics of a sports car – their reactions are smooth, almost reflex-like; handling precision knows no compromise. The steering connects the driver with the road to provide sensitive, well-differentiated feedback.

The low-mounted steering gear transmits the steering forces via the track rods to the wheels over the shortest distance, its ratio of 16.5:1 is sporty and direct. The regulated vane-type pump, which supplies the system with hydraulic energy, always delivers only as much oil as is needed; in this way it too contributes towards high consumption efficiency. As a servotronic system, it bases the amount of assistance on road speed.

The new Audi S4 is fitted with impressive alloys, which carry size 245/40 tyres on 8J x 18 rims. The large wheels provide space for a 17-inch brake system developed for maximum performance. All four disks are ventilated, the front having a diameter of 345 millimetres, the rear 330 millimetres. An innovative concept, which dispenses with the conventional cooling ducts, ensures impressive power and stability: the two halves of the disk are connected by hundreds of small metal cubes, between which a high volume of heated air can flow in a very short time. This design also lowers the weight – here too, drivers will experience the reduction in unsprung masses in the form of enhanced driving dynamics.

The black-painted brake calipers – sporting the S4 logo at the front – are of a composite design based on the floating caliper principle. The areas subject to high loads are made of nodular cast iron; the bolted-on piston housing made of aluminium conducts the heat effectively, and the calipers are extremely rigid despite being light in weight. Compared with the predecessor model, the surface of the brake pads has increased by 25 percent at the front, and as much as 60 percent at the rear. New materials increase the amount of friction.

The brakes on the S4 set new standards in terms of power and precision, not to mention accurate feedback provided to the driver. The electronic stabilization program ESP also uses high-precision hydraulic valves, which control pressure build-up with great accuracy. It intervenes at a later stage and is more subtle. The ESP can be switched off completely: the driver can deactivate the traction control function separately at a speed below 70 km/h.

Design

The very design of the front section alludes to the power of the new S4. The LED daytime driving lights in the standard-specification xenon plus headlights can be seen from afar. The single-frame grille, in platinum gray, has the typical look of the S models from Audi – its vertical double struts bear chromed inserts and the S4 badge. Two ribs define the lower trapezoidal air vents and chrome rings encase the front fog lights. An aluminium-look “blade” forms the centrepiece of the striking bumper.

The side view also reflects the athletic character of the S4. Sill trims painted in the body color emphasise the width of the body; the aluminium-look exterior mirror housings gleam. This new midsize athlete has a powerful stance on the road with its 18-inch wheels, the rim spokes allow the black-painted brake calipers to shine through. The so-called high-gloss package adds elegant touches all round the side windows with aluminium strips and black trims.

At the rear, too, the new S4 is unmistakable – thanks to the badge on the trunk lid, the LED lights and the quadruple oval tailpipes. The rear bumper, incorporating a diffuser, has also been redesigned, its blade likewise in aluminium look. The spoiler on the trunk lid of the sedan separates the airflow in a clean, defined way, further enhancing driving stability at high speeds.

Audi offers its midsize athlete in four solid colors – Ibis White, Brilliant Red, Brilliant Black and Imola Yellow – and in seven metallic and pearl effect finishes.

These are Ice Silver, metallic, Quartz Gray, metallic, Meteor Gray, pearl effect, Phantom Black, pearl effect, Deep Sea Blue, pearl effect, Sprint Blue, pearl effect and Garnet Red, pearl effect. Imola Yellow and Sprint Blue are reserved exclusively for the S models.

The S4 is a large midsize car with a high level of everyday suitability. It's length is 4,717 millimetres, with a wheelbase of 2,811 millimetres. It is 1,826 millimetres in width and 1,406 millimetres in height with a luggage compartment capacity of 480 litres.

Interior

Dynamic, elegant, sophisticated – this is the interior of the new S4. The ergonomics are exemplary, the amount of space generous; the electromechanical parking brakes leaves room on the centre tunnel. The interior in cool black – the roof lining is optionally available in silver – creates an atmosphere of sporty and technical expertise, underlined by the uncompromising craftsmanship so typical of Audi.

The many meticulously thought-out details are another characteristic of the brand. The S4 logos are found on the door sill trims, the leather multifunction sports steering wheel, the remote control key and on the instruments, the dials of which are gray, the needles white. Understated aluminium-look inlays provide subtle highlights and thanks to the standard seven-speed S tronic, the S4 sports aluminium-look shift paddles, mounted behind the steering wheel.

The electric sports seats feature lumbar supports and pull-out thigh supports and are upholstered in Milano leather as a standard specification. Silk Nappa leather, with the option of a bi-color look with contrasting stitching, is available as an option with the strongly contoured S sports seat with integrated head restraints. A sliding front centre armrest including two 12-volt sockets comes as standard with all seat versions.

The inlays in the new S4 also have a sporty and individual look. Matt brushed aluminium is standard. Carbon, fine gray birch wood and genuine stainless steel mesh are optionally available. The filigree structure, consisting of numerous steel threads, feels slightly rough, but is fascinating to the touch.

Equipment and trim

Please refer to the Australian specification brochure on your memory stick or on the Audi website www.audi.com.au for standard equipment and options pricing.

The S models in the midsize class

Audi adopted the letter S directly from the world of motor sport. In 1985, it appeared on a competition car from the World Rally Championship – the legendary S1. The Coupé, the last evolution stage of the Sport quattro, was a high-tech unit driven to the outer limits, which mustered up around 370 kW (approx. 500 hp) of power for its drivers.

In 1990 the letter S made its way into series production – in the S2 Coupé, whose turbocharged five-cylinder engine delivered 162 kW (220 hp). The small S family grew rapidly; its members had quattro drive and a visually understated appearance in common. At the end of 1992, Audi added an S2 Avant; one year later the sedan followed. 9,488 units of these three body variants were built up until 1995.

The first Audi A4, which was launched in 1994, also generated two S models, starting in 1997. The five-cylinder turbo made way for a newly developed twin-turbo V6; the 2.7-litre was derived from the V8 with a displacement of 3.6 litres. With five-valve cylinder heads and one turbocharger per cylinder bank it produced 195 kW (265 hp) and 400 Nm of torque, which was available from as low as 1,850 rpm. Produced up until 2001, some 30,500 units of the first-generation S4 were built.

At the beginning of 2003 Audi switched its S models in the midsize class to naturally aspirated engines. The 4.2-litre V8 developed 253 kW (344 hp) and delivered 410 Nm to the crankshaft at 3,500 rpm. The V8, which could also be combined with a six-speed-tiptronic, was introduced in the sedan, the Avant and the Cabriolet. Up until the model change, more than 38,000 units had come off the assembly line.