

Our Third Place pick: Ram 2500

Our third-place pick debuted with all-new tin and a great new interior. Much of the improvements came from the latest half-ton Ram, itself an award-winning design inside and out. Our tester was equipped with the veteran combination of a six-cylinder 6.7-litre Cummins turbo diesel (providing a stout 350 horsepower and 650 lb-ft of torque) and six-speed automatic. Unfortunately veteran is also code for oldest.

What's New in this HD Ram

- Ram offers a Crew cab for the first time in its HD truck (the Mega Cab is also still available)
- Integrated brake controller now standard
- Heated steering wheel along with heated and cooled leather seating.
- Offers HD Snow Plow Prep package (5500 lb)
- Power adjustable pedals
- Second row in-floor storage lockers
- Max 5th wheel tow limit 18,500 lb, conventional towing is estimated at 12,000lb (not listed by Ram)
- Max payload is 5,110 lb
- HD Ram shifter moves to the steering column creating more useable centre console space
- Only HD manufacturer still offering a six-speed manual transmission

Empty Test Loop: The engine and transmission combo in the Ram is proven though it now has the lowest power output among the three. The interior though is the best of the three with excellent soft-touch materials, accents and design. The drive was confident, comfortable – in fact, maybe a little “soft”.

Towing/Loaded: Has the best mirrors in the bunch, they easily flip-up to resemble “west coast mirrors” of old. No power means no failures. Dodge also provides 4 and 7-pin connectors in the bumper – a good protected location. A backup camera is also available. Ram was first to offer a button activated engine exhaust brake – this is still there and works very well while towing. The brake holds the load on grades saving the brakes. Its operation is tied in with the selectable gearing feature on the shifter handle.

Off-Road: The truck has a two-speed transfer case (as do the others) for 4WD HI and 4WD LO that's an electronic shift-on-the-fly setup. Where the Ram falls short is the lack of a rear differential locker. Of the three it's the easiest to get stuck. The other noticeable omission is a traction control system. This truck spins its wheels off-road as well as on if over-torqued. Not a good trait particularly when towing.

Conclusions: Of the three trucks, design-wise, inside and out, I like the Ram best. However it appears that is where the development dollars ran out. While the powertrain is decent, it is also the oldest of the three and the capacities offered are the lowest.