

TRUCKS 2021



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Reintroducing the Ram Dakota

Since its controversial split from Dodge in the model year 2010, Ram trucks have held their own in the light- and heavy-duty markets. With aggressive designs, powerful drivetrains and luxurious cabins, the pickups have become successful options.

In 2021, the brand is expected to revive a nameplate that has been on hiatus for 10 years. The Ram Dakota will throw the automaker into the mid-size mix that competes with trucks like the Ford Ranger and GM's Colorado/Canyon.

The Dakota proved to be a successful model for the Dodge brand, running from 1986 up to 2011. While it was smaller than its half-ton counterparts, the mid-size vehicle hit the mark for truck enthusiasts who sought a daily driver.

The pickup was also the first in its class to offer an optional V8 engine. Its discontinuation occurred on Aug. 23, 2011, when the last unit exited the assembly factory. Now, with the surge of mid-size popularity, Ram finds itself in a unique position to resurrect a classic and propel itself into



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another competitive automotive market.

While little is known about the Dakota's concrete details, Car and Driver's experts offer vital insight into what to expect.

RUMORS

The Ram Dakota is expected to be closely based on its mid-size Chrysler cousin, the

Jeep Gladiator. Based on a suspected prototype, the pickup features roll-over bars, causing speculators to presume that off-road capabilities are coming. Also notable is a shorter bed, which is similar to the Gladiator model.

DRIVETRAIN EXPECTATIONS

The engineers behind Ram

trucks are expected to equip the refreshed mid-size pickup with its familiar 3.6-liter V-6 that is commonly found across Fiat Chrysler's inventory. Experts are also hoping for an optional 3.0-liter, V-6, eco-diesel. The engine is already prominent in the brand's light-duty lineup, boasting 260 horsepower and 442 lb.-ft of torque.

INTERIOR DESIGN

Like most trucks offered by Ram, expect the Dakota to be equipped with luxurious features, comfortable interiors and cutting-edge technology. Look for luxury options like heated seats and steering wheels, massive infotainment centers and wireless charging.

2021 Ford F-150

The Ford F-150 has been the number one selling pickup in America since 1981.

In 2019, about 900,000 F-series trucks were purchased from dealerships in the United States. From seamless working capabilities to stellar daily drivers, the automaker understands what entices pickup enthusiasts. For the 2021 model year, the truck receives a welcome facelift, new advanced features and an onboard generator. Check out what to expect from the new and improved Ford F-150.

DRIVETRAIN

Like last year's model, the F-150 will be equipped with familiar and trusted engines, including:

- 3.3-liter, V-6;
- 5.0-liter, V-8;
- Twin-turbocharged 2.7-liter, V-6;
- Twin-turbocharged 3.5-liter, V-6; and
- 3.0-liter, V-6, diesel.

New to the lineup is the first-ever F-150 hybrid motor, paired with a 10-speed automatic transmission. Ford claims the twin-turbo 3.5-liter V-6 offers 430 horsepower, 570 lb.-ft of torque and can travel up to 700 miles on a single tank. It will be interesting to see how accurate the automaker's claims prove to be once the official specs are released.



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SAFETY UPDATES

New vehicles are loaded with cutting-edge features that make traveling safer for both drivers and pedestrians. Ford is working out the kinks on a semi-autonomous system called Active Drive Assist. Trucks are equipped with numerous sensors and pre-loaded with over 100,000 miles of mapped highways across America to achieve a hands-free experience.

The automaker is hopeful that the software will be available on the 2021 F-150. Here are more innovative features that are available in certain

trim levels.

- Automated emergency braking with pedestrian detection.
- Lane departure warning and lane-keeping assist.
- Adaptive cruise control.

A NEW LOOK

The truck's exterior receives upgrades to the head- and tail-light system, an updated grille and redesigned body panels.

New for 2021 are enhanced features found in the pickup's bed. For instance, each tailgate is equipped with integrated rulers and clamp pockets to hold materials when perform-



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ing precision work. The bed area is also the home to a Pro Power Onboard generator to assist owners on worksites, camping trips and everyday life when power is required.

The bells and whistles are obvious after peeking into the interior of the new F-150. The most noticeable change is the optional 12-inch infotain-

ment center.

While it's the same size as Ram trucks' popular screen, Ford's is orientated horizontally for a more traditional appearance. Ford provides workspace in its cabin by offering a folding shift lever that rests in the center console to create a flat platform for laptops or paperwork.



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New GM Towing Functions

While the 2021 GM trucks' body style won't see any significant updates, the Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra pickups will receive upgrades in their functionality.

From advanced towing features to an improved tailgate, General Motors drivers will have plenty to look forward to within the new lineup.

SILVERADO UPDATES

One of the most notable advancements to the Chevrolet Silverado is provided by an available Multi-Flex Tailgate.

Available on all trim levels of the pickup, the functional tailgate adjusts to achieve multiple positions to assist in different situations. In addition to a traditional opening, the gate offers a full-width step, a foldable inner gate, a primary gate stop and an inner gate work surface. This feature was previously only available on some trim levels for the GMC Sierra.

Towing capabilities are also improved for two of the popular engines that are used on the full-size trucks. Here are a few of the configurations as reported by Chevrolet.

- The 2.7L Turbo increases towing loads by 2,500 pounds on the Crew Cab Short Box models, with an overall max capacity of 9,300 pounds, in 2WD. On the Regular Cab Long Box pickups, tow ratings increase to 9,600 pounds, with a max payload of 2,280

pounds in 2WD.

- The 3.0L Duramax turbodiesel adds about 1,900 pounds of trailer capacity to most truck configurations, maximizing its power at 9,500 pounds in 2WD. GM is also offering the optional engine at a \$1,500 MSRP price reduction for 2021 models. Drivers can save on the industry-leading fuel economy drivetrain that achieves an estimated 33 mpg on highways.

SIERRA UPDATES

The GMC Sierra, which is often thought of as the Silverado's more luxurious brother, receives advanced upgrades to its towing system. Two of the most exciting advancements are the included trailer-length indicator and jack-knife alert. Here's how they work.

TRAILER-LENGTH INDICATOR

When towing a trailer, blind spots can put operators and other drivers at risk during a lane change. GMC trucks activate the center console screen with the trailer-length indicator enabled once a turn signal is activated. It displays a red overlay that represents a distance twice the length of the towing trailer. Drivers receive a view of impending traffic from their side to determine if it's safe to make a move.

JACK-KNIFE ALERT

This advancement tracks the position of a towing trailer in relation to the pickup. Suppose the trailer reaches the rear of the vehicle. In that case, a system alerts the driver to adjust and avoid a jack-knife position.

Toyota Tundra

The Toyota Tundra has long been a favorite pickup offered by the Japanese automaker. The truck will roll onto dealer lots with special editions for the 2021 model year. Check out what's to come.

The new Tundra trucks are powered by a 5.7L i-Force V8 engine, which provides up to 10,200 pounds of towing capacity. With a maximum payload of 1,730 pounds, the pickup can seamlessly accompany operators on the worksite or navigating on a family road trip. Available cabins include both Double Cab and CrewMax four-door cab styles.

TRD PRO

The TRD Pro trim level is eliminating the Army Green color option in the 2021 lineup. Instead, the off-road legend comes with the fresh design, Lunar Rock. The light green and greyish combination are a unique pallet that's also featured on the Toyota Rav4. The TRD Pro is known for its bold color designs with former options including Inferno Orange, Voodoo Blue and Cement paint jobs.

TUNDRA TRAIL SPECIAL EDITION

Tundra enthusiasts may find it challenging to find a



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Trail Special Edition. Toyota estimates that it will only produce 5,000 units. It is based on the SR5 CrewMax pickup and is offered in both rear- and four-wheel-drive configurations. The exclusive vehicle will feature durable all-terrain tires, the unique grill found

on the Tacoma and specialized locking storage compartments in the cargo bed.

NIGHTSHADE

In 2021, Toyota will update the Tundra with a new aggressive trim level— the Nightshade Special Edition.

The luxurious pickup is based on the automaker's Limited grade, packed with premium features and luxury components like black leather-seats and blacked-out trim.

The exclusive package offers an elegant and sleek appearance by including

black shades on its wheels, exhaust tip, door handles and mirror caps. Buyers will also notice the darkened chrome grill that ties the entire design together. The Nightshade pickup includes both two- and four-wheel drive power-trains.

Ram 1500 TRX

Pickups with off-road capabilities are popular choices for thrill-seeking truck owners who also need a vehicle for a daily driver and weekend adventures.

Ram took notice of the Ford F-150 Raptor's success and the Toyota Tundra TRD Pro and will enter their prominent half-ton truck into the mix. The 2021 Ram 1500 TRX offers a heavy-duty frame, relocated axles and a game-changing suspension system.

ENTER HELLCAT

You probably remember the famous Dodge slogan, "Yeah, it's got a Hemi." The powerful 5.7L V-8 became a staple and badge of honor for numerous Chrysler automobiles. While today, the Hemi is undoubtedly a player in trucks and sedans, the automaker equips its most aggressive models with the Hellcat 6.2-liter, supercharged V-8.

The Ram 1500 TRX will boast an aggressive 702 horsepower and achieve 650 lb.-ft of torque. A hood scoop and grille are strategically placed above the iconic logo featured on the truck's grill. The Hellcat is paired with a burly eight-speed automatic transmission and operates with a full-time four-wheel-drive system.



The automotive outlet Motortrend says that in test drives, the TRX is the fastest pickup it's found since its inception in 1949. It reached zero to 60 in just over four seconds.

DOMINANT OFF-ROADING

According to Ram, the TRX

is built with an exclusive Bilstein Black Hawk shock system. The heavy-duty suspension components are designed with extreme performance to protect the pickup under rigorous off-roading excursions. The smart shocks use a Bilstein Algorithm to enhance numerous driving conditions, like:

- Monitoring vehicle sensors and adapting speed control.
- Throttle position.
- Braking torque.
- Steering angles.

Each shock is fueled by pressurized nitrogen gas that is fed from an independent reservoir. This strategy allows more room in the compo-

nents to enhance piston rod travel and promote suspension articulation.

The Ram TRX is equipped with a switch bank that allows drivers to fine-tune their experience. The truck can distribute pre-set torque splits to adapt in conditions like snow, mud/sand, rock climbing and dune driving.

Redesigned Honda Ridgeline

The new Honda Ridgeline will receive physical and functional upgrades, including a more rugged appearance, new cosmetic options and minor interior changes.

One factor that isn't changing is its tried-and-true drivetrain configuration. The Ridgeline is still powered by a 3.5-liter V6 and a nine-speed automatic transmission.

The midsize option from Honda can safely tow up to 5,000 pounds with a maximum payload of 1,580. While it can't compete with some competitors' towing capacities in its class, the truck does make an excellent option for those looking for a pickup without requiring extraordinary power.

The vehicle is built with unibody construction and features fully independent suspension to achieve more efficient handling.

EXTERIOR UPGRADE

The most noticeable changes in the Honda Ridgeline are cosmetic body enhancements. The newer model will sport an upgraded squared-off nose to give it more of a truck appearance instead of its previous crossover aesthetic.

The pickup's front-end gets an updated hood with noticeable bulges, reimagined fenders,



and an upright grille.

Honda is also offering the Ridgeline with varying trim levels. The Honda Performance Development Package (HPD) includes exclusive badges, a more aggressive grille treatment, black fender flares and bronze 18-inch wheels. Other packages include the Utility, Function and Function +.

INTERIOR CHANGES

Ridgeline drivers, rejoice. The automaker is finally including a volume knob to change media volume inside. While the addition may seem minor, previous models' touchscreen controls are often criticized for underperforming or becoming unresponsive. Other more significant changes

include a new infotainment display, next-level graphics and styling accents that will vary between trim levels.

SAFETY FEATURES

The 2020 Honda Ridgeline earned a perfect five-star rating from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The new model is expected to come with these innovative features as standard equipment:

- Collision mitigation braking system.
- Forward collision warning.
- Lane keeping assist system.
- Road departure mitigation.
- Lane departure warning.
- Adaptive cruise control.

The Upcoming Hummer

During the latter months of 2021, General Motors is expected to begin production on the electric GMC Hummer.

The latest innovation is a significant milestone in GM's mission to achieve an all-electric future. Price points for the GMC Hummer EV Edition One are slated to start around \$113,000, with more inexpensive versions debuting in the near future.

GMC is working on three additional models to carry the Hummer badge. A vehicle that is due in the second half of 2022 is \$99,995. In 2023, the manufacturer plans an \$89,995 version, and in 2024, the standard Hummer EV will be available for \$79,995.

It will be riveting to watch GMC go toe-to-toe with electric vehicle companies like Rivian, Bollinger and the widely anticipated debut of the Tesla Cybertruck. Check out some of the features available on the new Hummer EV Edition One.

POWERTRAIN

The new Hummer is powered by three electric motors, which create an estimated 1,000 horsepower and race from 0-60 in just three seconds. GM also claims that the truck will travel up to 350 miles on a single charge. When the vehicle requires charging, the auto-maker says some trims will see



charging times of 10 minutes per 100 miles.

PERFORMANCE

The Hummer EV Edition One is most definitely a truck that's intended for roughhousing on unbeaten paths. With 35-inch tires, the vehicle can navigate rocky terrains, snow-covered trails and sandy dunes.

Unlike any pickup in its segment, the new truck utilizes a setting that GM has titled CrabWalk. When it's engaged, the rear wheels pivot up to 10-degrees, allowing the driver to steer in a diagonal direction, making traveling tight trails more possible.

Below the truck are (up to) 18 available waterproof camer-

as that are built into the underbody. They are significant assets to analyze how the vehicle performs when navigating uneven terrain, helping drivers adjust by choosing a better path.

CUTTING-EDGE FEATURES

Front-and-center in the

cabin rests a massive 13.4-inch infotainment center and a 12.3-inch diagonal driver information screen. General Motors plans to include its Super Cruise technology with the Hummer. The innovative program allows for hands-free driving assistance on over 200,000 miles of compatible roadways.