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We first met Hyundai's terrific new Elantra Sport sedan during the 2017 model year. With its awesome turbo engine and trick independent multilink rear suspension, it impressed on all levels. But many of us yearned for the Sport trim in a hatchback. And here it is. You can now get all these treats in the 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT, which is longer, wider, and lower than the model it replaces. Those juicy exhaust tips aren't just for show. Hyundai touts the all-new sheet metal as a "timeless" design. I think that's a bit rich, as it's not a very thrilling styling exercise. I would say the previous-generation Elantra GT was actually more interesting to look at. With that said, the new one has a clean, coherent design language and it will age gracefully, even though it won't turn many heads. It features Hyundai's new Cascading Grille, which looks really great. It's the new corporate snout, so expect to see it on other Hyundai models. The front end also features highly visible vertical LED running lights and LED headlights (which were somewhat disappointing in terms of performance). A character line runs down the side, clearly connecting the trailing edge of the large headlight pods to the expressive LED taillights. The rear end features a clean roof spoiler and a set of meaty twin exhaust tips, and nice 18-inch rims (shod with 225/40s) fill the wheel wells to complete the package. It's not exciting, but it does look good. The Elantra GT cabin feels spacious and offers a good amount of headroom up front. I found the simple, straightforward styling worked well visually and ergonomically. The materials are decent, and very typical for this category – a split between textured hard and soft plastics. I really like the splashes of colour in my review car – the red seatbelts, piping, and stitching on the seats and trim pieces around the climate controls and air vents were great little aesthetic treats! The heated steering wheel is outstanding. I loved the small diameter, the grippiness and the perforated leather segments – it looks and works really well. The heated leather sport seats are very good too; I found them comfortable and very well bolstered – the driver's side is power-adjustable. And while I'm gushing, how about that shift knob? It's a thing of beauty – feels perfect in hand and looks stunning with the shift pattern set deep into a red background under a transparent "lens". Hyundai's 8-inch touchscreen is easy to use – it controls the car's phone and sound system (the base one sounds fine), and features Apple CarPlay and Android Auto for added functionality. There's a dual-zone climate control system and some limited driver-assistance tech – blind-spot monitoring, rear cross-traffic alert and a back-up camera. Opt for the Sport Ultimate trim and you'll get all the bells and whistles. I really liked the huge panoramic sunroof overhead. It's nice up front, but makes a huge difference in how roomy and airy the rear passenger area feels. Let's talk storage space for a minute. I really liked the large, rubberized compartment under a flip-up lid at the bottom of the centre stack. It features plenty of plugs – 12V, USB, and auxiliary – as well as a Qi wireless charging mat for your smartphone. The centre console houses a nice little bin next to the driver and a scrolling lid that covers two cupholders when you're not using them. There's a small bin under the armrest, where you'll find another 12V plug as well. There are three rear seats, but the middle one is very tight. Legroom and headroom were only adequate for me. I'm 5'10" tall and had about one inch to spare either way. It's not very spacious, to be sure. Our three kids were relatively comfortable back there, and there are two sets of LATCH anchors if you need to secure child seats. There are no conveniences for rear passengers beyond the adjustable air vents and the middle seatback that folds down to become an armrest with cupholders. The large 705 L trunk has a nice load-floor height. Other than a 12V plug and a hard parcel shelf that flips up when you open the hatch, there's not much else going on back there. The back seats flip down in a 60/40 split, making for a substantial increase to the cargo space. The biggest news is under the hood. The Sport trim gets Hyundai's excellent 1.6L turbo four-cylinder. It spins out 201 hp at 6,000 rpm and 195 lb-ft of torque at just 1,500 rpm. Thankfully, Hyundai sets the front-wheel driver up with a six-speed manual transmission, although you can also opt for a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission. The Elantra GT Sport is rated at 10.7 L/100 km in the city and 8.1 L/100 km on the highway. We averaged 9.4 L/100 km during a slow week of Edmonton commuting, slogging through plenty of fresh snowfalls. The engine does not require premium fuel. I truly enjoyed the dual-character nature of the Elantra GT Sport. It's docile and a wonderful, tractable car around town. It rides nicely, and is easy to drive. But step on it and it has a lot of jam which comes on very quickly, particularly from standstill and at lower speeds. It pulls hard and the power is delivered in a very linear fashion nearly up to the redline. The transmission is well done. Shifts are smooth but notchy enough to let you know you've hit your selected gear. It's a nice balance between precision, daily comfort, and driving ease. The clutch is very friendly and has a pretty gentle take-up. It's sporty enough to bang through the gears if you're picking up the pace, but easy enough to drive in bumper-to-bumper commuting too. The suspension is very well sorted. As mentioned, it rides nicely but it's firm enough to instill a ton of confidence as you throw it into corners. The turn-in is sharp, and the car happily plays along and that rear multi-link set-up is simply outstanding. I loved how the rear end comes around perfectly during spirited driving. Sure, the GT eventually understeers but it is a lot of fun to drive fast. Unfortunately I had little time to discover its abilities as my review sample arrived as we received our first wintery blessings of snow – and it was equipped with the standard performance-oriented all-season tires. With those tires, the car is terrible in Canadian winter conditions. I always recommend winter rubber, but this car is one of those where it is an absolute requirement. It had a hard time getting any traction off the line and well into the first few gears in the snow and even on cold, wet pavement. The engine makes a lovely set of noises under throttle, but otherwise the car is reasonably quiet in terms of road and wind noise. Of note, Hyundai lets some of that noise make it to the surrounding environment too, and several people on my street told me that the GT Sport sounded great as I made my way through the gears. It's nice to see that those juicy exhaust tips aren't just for show. The Sport trim gets larger front and rear brakes and they always felt powerful. They are a bit grabby at lower speeds but easy to modulate. Visibility out of the GT is quite good – the rear headrests intrude into your line of sight a bit, but it's not bad. WAF (Wife Approval Factor) was middling. While she is a big hatchback fan, she doesn't drive manuals and doesn't seem to understand the appeal of sporty hatchbacks. She said it felt practical and looked fine though. Hyundai has taken the best of the Elantra line (its Sport trim) and grafted it to a modern new GT hatchback model. The result is a fun-to-drive, nice-to-look-at and easy-to-live-with car. And that's right up my alley. I feel that the price is competitive for the balance between performance and utility. Particularly in this lower Sport trim, rather than the loaded Sport Ultimate – which incidentally requires you to give up the manual transmission. I wouldn't hesitate putting this little rocket on my own shopping list. Specifications Engine Displacement 1.6L Engine Cylinders 4 Peak Horsepower 201 hp @ 6,000 rpm Peak Torque 195 lb-ft @ 1,500 rpm Fuel Economy 10.7/8.1/9.6 L/100 km city/hwy/cmb Cargo Space 705 L/1,560 L seats down Model Tested 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport Base Price \$26,999 A/C Tax \$100 Destination Fee \$1,705 Price as Tested \$28,804 Optional Equipment None Tom Sedens is an Edmonton-based automobile journalist and driving enthusiast, an accredited member of AJAC, husband, and dad. He is also a part-time pie evangelist. This advertisement has not loaded yet, but your article continues below. 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport If the 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport could get up on a soapbox, it would declare: "Friends, Bro-mans, GTI fans, lend me your ears." On paper, this Hyundai hatchback – a rebadged, European 130 – presents itself as worthy foe to the Volkswagen Golf GTI and Honda Civic Si. This advertisement has not loaded yet, but your article continues below. Beneath its crisp bodywork, penned under the watchful gaze of ex-Audi man and now Hyundai star Peter Schreyer, we find a 1.6-litre turbocharged four-cylinder kicking out 201 ponies and 195 lb.-ft. of torque from 1,500 rpm. A six-speed manual transmission is standard, upgradable to a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic with paddle shifters. The GT Sport also gets a multi-link rear suspension, replacing the standard Elantra GT's less sophisticated torsion-beam setup. Other goodies include 18-inch alloy wheels and bigger brakes, plus retuned steering, springs and dampers. So indeed, the hardware looks to be in place for a respectable hot-hatch throwdown. 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport You may use a different browser or device to view this in full screen. This advertisement has not loaded yet, but your article continues below. The 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport starts at \$26,999 for the manual-equipped car. Add \$1,500 for the seven-speed DCT. Tested here is the full-zoot \$30,499 Sport Ultimate that, along with the DCT, gets a full compliment of luxury and safety kit – a heated steering wheel, heated and ventilated front seats, adaptive cruise control with stop and go, blind-spot warning, lane-keep assist, rear cross-traffic alert, autonomous emergency braking with pedestrian detection, GPS navigation, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity, and more. As the Koreans are want to do, you're getting slapped silly with value here. A fully-kitted GTI crests \$39,000, and you still won't get a heated steering wheel or ventilated seats. Ah, but in this hot-hatch world, there are those who will argue that such first-world frivolities are not what a pocket-rocket make. It's all about the driving. This advertisement has not loaded yet, but your article continues below. Hop in the Elantra GT Sport and first impressions are good. The leather chairs are terrific – plenty of bolstering yet supremely comfortable. When simple seats get it so right, you have to wonder why some that are adjustable 22 ways from Sunday just aren't that good. And kudos to Hyundai for not turning its interiors into glorified iPhones. Here we find real, hard buttons and rotary controllers for most HVAC and infotainment functions, all logically placed and marked. The eight-inch touchscreen perched atop the centre console has pin-sharp graphics and an easy to navigate menu structure. The leather wheel feels good in the hands too, and outward visibility is fine. Time to press the start button and head out. This advertisement has not loaded yet, but your article continues below. The turbo-four is a willing partner that delivers its goods in a surprisingly linear fashion. You'd be hard-pressed to know this is a desaturated four, as there is no perceptible turbo lag or mid-range torque kick. When caned, it sails to the redline in each gear, kicking out a meaningful snarl as the tach needle swings right. The seven-speed DCT does its best to keep the revs down (and fuel economy up) when just putting around, but a switch to Sport mode largely remedies that. The DCT responds quickly to the paddle-shifters, although not quite with the urgency of the GTI's six-speed dual-clutch DSG gearbox. 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport 2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport You may use a different browser or device to view this in full screen. This advertisement has not loaded yet, but your article continues below. So, is the Elantra GT Sport a bargain-priced GTI? Not quite. On my secret back-road thrash loop, the GT was surely entertaining and it set a good pace, but it can't match the poise, fluidity and general excellence of the benchmark GTI. There's more body lean, the ride quality isn't as refined, the steering not quite so locked-in, and without a front-limited-slip differential like the GTI, the Hyundai's front wheels scramble for grip when hammering out of corners. Granted, I was on snow tires, and granted, the GTI is a considerably more expensive and more powerful proposition – 220 horses and 258 lb.-ft. of torque from its 2.0L turbo-four. So let's get out from the GTI's shadow and look at the Hyundai Elantra Sport GT in its own light. It's a well-built, stylish hatchback that offers exceptional value, high levels of comfort, driving fun and plenty of utility. It really is an excellent day-to-day driver. Behind the rear seats, you'll find a bit more hatch space than in the GTI, and there's also a clever dual-level floor that, when flush with the hatch lip, allows for a hidden compartment. The rear seats are nicely padded and comfortable for two adults. As long as you don't plan on challenging any GTIs to a backroad boogie, the Elantra GT Sport is a mighty agreeable warmed-over hatch. And yes, it's perfectly okay to taunt those GTI owners with your heated steering wheel and ventilated front seats.





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