

2016 Civic EX Without Sensing 1,000 Mile Review

by Rex Ungericht

On May 19, 2016, I bought a 2016 Civic EX Sedan. In Cosmic Blue, if you must ask.

But why the Civic? In 2016, there are [263 different car models sold in the USA](#) (226 existing models and 37 new ones). What was it about the Civic that made it my number one choice?

Well, one contributing factor is that I'm a fan of Honda. Been driving Accords off and on for a long time. And when I decided to replace my 2002 Accord with a new car after fourteen years, inertia could have carried me straight into another Accord.

However, I decided to survey the field and look at new cars with an open mind. So I began researching. Just based on cost and reasonably good reviews, I came up with a list of 23 vehicles I wanted to check out, including the Accord.

Fortunately the [Dallas Auto Show](#) was approaching. And at the show, I was able to inspect 22 of the 23 vehicles on my list.

One of the first things I did with each vehicle is adjust the driver's seat to the appropriate driving position for me, and then get in the back seat behind the driver's seat to see if I fit comfortably. With just that one simple test, I eliminated around half of the vehicles on my list. (And I'm not basketball center tall, I'm 6'0".)

I also just sat in the driver's seat and checked the layout of the controls, and where I would need to reach to access different functions. I eliminated several vehicles simply because they didn't "feel" right to me.

A couple more got crossed off the list because of poor visibility out the side and back. And in the end, I had my list of 23 vehicles down to just seven.

Relatively higher MPGs and lack of Apple CarPlay support knocked off four more, leaving me with the Civic, the Sonata, and the Sentra.

However, even though recent Hyundais are getting [great quality marks](#), the rental Hyundais I've had were [not holding up well](#). So I was already prejudiced against the Sonata.

I liked the looks and layout of the Nissan Sentra, but it [doesn't have a lot of power](#) (130 HP). And my wife has been driving a rental Nissan Versa Note (109 HP), and the engine just drones.

So I started with the Civic. And after test driving, I didn't even bother with the others.

Now, just because it turned out that the 2016 Civic was the right car for me, it doesn't mean that it's the right car for you. It all depends on what you want. So...

What Do I Want In A Car?

A good 80% of my driving is back and forth to and from work, twenty-six miles each way. So just for work commuting, I put 52 miles per day on the car, five days a week. Over the course of a year, taking vacation and holiday time into account, that's almost 12,000 miles. Add in the other 20%, and it's around 14,000 miles (a little under the [average for my age group](#)).

I like to drive a car at least a decade, so that's 140,000 miles, probably more. (I drove my previous car to 180,000+ miles.) So I want a car that's [dependable](#).

I want a car that easily fits in my budget, since (for some reason that's unfathomable to me) I have not yet won the lottery. So I want a car with a [final out-the-door price under \\$25k](#), a [low lifetime cost of maintenance](#), and [good gas mileage](#).

Even though I rarely have passengers, I still want them to be reasonably comfortable when they do ride in my car. So I look for cars where six-foot-tall me can comfortably sit behind six-foot-tall me. And although I don't need a huge trunk, I still want enough room to hold groceries and a couple of golf bags. So I need [enough room](#) for that. I also appreciate a decent amount of [interior storage](#) for the stuff I carry around.

My daily commute is mostly highway driving. And although my afternoon drive is a lot of "slow and go" with some stop-and-go mixed in, my morning drive is at highway speeds. I don't need high-end Performance-with-a-capital-P, but I do need enough [pep](#) to easily merge onto the highway and to pass when needed.

I've wanted antilock brakes for probably 15 years or more now, but my Accord SE didn't have them. I told myself that this time, I was going to get a car with [ABS](#).

My wife has built-in navigation in her car, and I like it. Unfortunately, car manufacturers seem to reserve this feature for their top-end models, which usually have other features I don't want, like leather seats. But some car makers are addressing this by letting you use the navigation features of your phone on the car screen via Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. Since I have an iPhone, I looked for a car that supported [CarPlay](#).

Lower on the list, but still important, are looks. I'm going to be driving this car most every day for a decade or more, and I want to be pleased with its appearance. It's subjective, but I really like [the looks of the 2016 Civic](#).

And one last subjective criteria is [feel](#). Are the controls laid out in a way that feels right to me? Does the type and location of front-seat storage feel right? When I drive the car, does the handling feel right? For me, for the 2016 Civic Sedan, the answers are all yes. (This is probably due in part to the fact that I've spent a lot of years driving Hondas.)

So having settled on the Civic, I then turned my attention to...

Choosing a Civic Model

I live in the USA, so I'll be referring to the models sold here.

Choosing a particular model of a car is, of course, the process of deciding which model is right for you. When it comes to the 2016 Civic, some find the LX perfect for them. Others must have the Touring. But [which model was right for me](#)? The 2016 Civic has three models, or five, depending on how you look at it.

The base model is the [LX](#). It's the low-cost, some frills option. It's also the only 2016 Civic model that can be had with a manual transmission.

The top model is the [Touring](#), with all of the bells and whistles.

[In between the LX and the Touring are three flavors of EX](#): The EX, the EX-T (Turbo), and the EX-L (Leather).

My wife eliminated the LX. She told me I had to have a moonroof and the [LaneWatch](#) camera, which don't come on the LX. And who am I to argue with such a charming lady?

I eliminated the Touring model when I decided not to get the [Honda Sensing](#) suite, which comes standard on the Touring model. (Why did I decide against the sensing suite? Well, first, some folks have reported false readings/unexpected behavior with the features. Second, I felt that I would rarely use it. And third, a lot of folks have reported issues with the infotainment unit, most of which seemed to be software related. I could remove a big chunk of software from the car simply by not getting the sensing features.)

Because I didn't want [leather seats](#), the EX-L was also eliminated.

That left the EX and EX-T. After reviewing the differences, I figured I could be happy with either one. So there was only one way to figure out which one to buy -- test drives.

I headed to the local dealership, and they were more than happy to let me test drive both an EX and an EX-T. And after doing so, although I came away [impressed with the turbo](#), I realized [the base engine was plenty good enough for me](#).

And truth be told, in my purely subjective feel of the cars from the test drives, I enjoyed driving the EX more than the EX-T. I wish I could give you reasons why. I also wish I could explain why I like [Sonny Bryan's onion rings](#) more than [Scotty P's onion rings](#), even though I like them both. It just is what it is.

And so I decided to get an EX. As a bonus (in my mind), doing so would also eliminate even more software from the car and perhaps make the infotainment unit that much more trouble-free. (Now, to be fair, I do expect Honda to address all of the software issues, but I've worked a long time in the software industry - it's going to take time to squash every bug.)

So I knew the car I wanted, and I knew the model I wanted. It was now time for...

The Buying Experience

I used my [Google-Fu](#) to research Honda dealers in my area. I live in the [Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex](#), so [there are several dealerships in the area](#). Based on my research, I hoped to buy my Civic from one of two dealers: one close to home, the other close to work.

The dealer close to home had my desired model - a [Cosmic Blue EX](#) without sensing - in stock; the dealer close to work didn't.

I sent an email to the dealer close to home, attempting to start [negotiations via email](#), but the dealership wouldn't cooperate; they wanted me there in person. I hate that. I just want to tell a dealership, "This is what I will pay. Yes or no?" and get an answer. Why do a lot of dealerships make that impossible? (I know the answer to that question, I'm just venting.)

I also contacted the dealer close to work, and they did give me a price, but it was higher than my target price. So I considered using one of the several [car-buying services](#) I have access to. But I finally decided to go talk to the dealer near home and see the car.

Like many dealers will, they had pre-installed a few accessories (trunk mat, door edge guards, a couple of other things). I told them I didn't want those items and that I wasn't going to pay anything for them. They tried to negotiate, but I told them "Look at it from my point of view. You're asking me to give you money for things I don't want". It's like ordering a hamburger, but they give you a cheeseburger and ask you to pay for the cheese. Didn't ask for it, not gonna pay for it.

They finally told me that they had another Cosmic Blue on order, and when it came in they would sell it to me without any accessories at my price. I was fine with that. (My price was the at-that-time current [KBB fair price](#). Based on the info from [the CivicX forum](#), I'm pretty sure I could have gotten the car for less, but I hate haggling and they were willing to sell at that price).

After a couple of days, they called to tell me they would sell me the Civic currently on their lot for my price. They would remove the accessories. Well, almost. They left the door edge guards on (which I'm guessing are tough to remove). I was ok with that and made an appointment to buy the car.

When my wife and I got there, they went over the car with us, showing us how to work the main functions of the infotainment system, including connecting my phone.

They then turned us over to the paperwork guy. The paperwork was easy enough. They did go through some various upsell protection plans with me, but there was no pressure and they just moved on when I declined. It did take awhile to sign everything; it wasn't as bad as when my wife and I bought our house, but it certainly reminded me of that experience. (As an aside, if you're planning to buy a house, at least in Texas, be prepared to sign forms until your fingers cramp - and beyond.)

Once everything was signed, they handed my wife and I our copies of the paperwork and two key fobs. The Civic was mine. But before I left the dealership, it was time for...

Inspecting the Car

Many people have [reported issues](#) with their 2016 Civics, especially on cars made during the first few months of manufacture. This is not surprising, considering that Honda [completely redesigned](#) the car.

As best as I can discover, there has been one recall and a few Technical Service Bulletins (TSBs) on the car to date. They are:

THE RECALL ([TSB 16-017](#), February 20, 2016): Honda recalled Civics manufactured September 22, 2015, to February 3, 2016 and equipped with 2.0L engines because piston assemblies may have been manufactured without a piston wrist pin circlip or with an incorrectly installed piston wrist pin circlip. A [Q1 2016 report](#) filed with The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows that in the USA, there are 42,129 cars in the recall and 26,285 have been checked. Unfortunately, the report does not say how many of the cars checked actually had the problem (if any).

[TSB 16-001](#), January 8, 2016: No sound from the speakers. The solution is a software update.

[TSB 16-022](#), May 5, 2016: Multiple audio unit problems. The solution is a software update.

[TSB 16-028](#), March 17, 2016: Engine surging or an RPM fluctuation. The solution is a software update.

[TSB 16-036](#), May 27, 2016: Audio unit display blinks or flickers. The solution is to replace the unit. (FYI, the display unit in the Civic is made by Mitsubishi.)

Because of these issues and the other [complaints I was seeing online](#), I waited for more than six months after the initial release of the car to buy one, and I checked the sticker in the driver's doorframe to make sure I got one that was made in the same month that I purchased. Mine was made (and bought) in May 2016, so I was hoping that most of the first-year issues had been addressed.

Even so, once they turned the key fobs over to me, I gave the car a good inspection before leaving the dealership.

Among other things, I:

- took pictures inside and out to have a visual record of the car when new
- checked the fit and positioning of all doors, windows and panels
- checked the operation of the windows and moonroof
- ran the air conditioning and tried all the controls
- ran the radio and tried the controls on the display and the steering wheel
- tried a variety of settings on the display

If there were any problems, I wanted to try and catch them before I left the dealership. But in my case, everything looked fine, and everything worked fine.

The only question was, would everything continue to work fine? Would other issues show up once on the road? The only way to find out was to start...

Driving The Car

I've been driving a [2002 Accord SE](#) for the past 14 years, so that's my point of comparison. The Accord is 3097 pounds, 150HP, 152 ft-lbs. of torque with a 2.3L inline 4. The Civic EX is 2795 pounds, 158HP, 138 ft-lbs. of torque with a 2.0L inline 4.

Getting through the 600-mile break-in period was easy. As far as I can tell, there are only two break in rules: drive at various speeds, and don't redline it. Those requirements fit my normal driving pattern, so I've been driving like I typically do.

For all the time I drove the Accord, the one thing I wanted was better acceleration for highway merging. According to Aurorooster, the Accord goes 0-60 in [9 seconds](#). According to Motor Trend, the Civic does it in [8.6 seconds](#). But I have to say that having driven them both recently, the Civic feels much faster - certainly far faster than a half-second difference. And that's in D (with ECON off). I haven't even tried S yet.

Speaking of [ECON](#), I'm [not sure how much of an effect it has](#) on the type of driving I do. The more I drive the Civic, the more I just leave ECON off.

The Civic showed 5MPG when I got it. With each drive, the number has gone up, and seems to have leveled out right around 35MPH, which is the [EPA estimate](#) for mileage in mixed traffic. In real-world terms for me, it translates to this: in the Accord, my daily commute took three-quarters of a tank for the week. In the Civic, it takes only two-thirds of a tank -- and the Civic's gas tank is 4.7 gallons smaller than the Accord!

This is the first car I've had with disks on all four wheels and [ABS](#). It took me a few drives to get used to how efficient the brakes are, and I was quite glad for them the other day when the van in front of me on the highway slammed on the brakes.

The Civic handles better than my Accord. The steering is more precise. It sits much more flat when cornering. I like it.

There's [not a lot of cabin noise](#), but most of what there is seems to be coming from the tires. Some have said that better tires will reduce even that little bit of noise significantly.

The seating has been comfortable for my commutes. Since I haven't taken the Civic on a long road trip, I do not know how comfortable the seats are over long distances, but for under-30-mile distances I haven't had any issues. However, the seating in the Civic [isn't for everyone](#).

The controls are within reach and I really haven't had any issues once I got used to them. I know a lot of reviewers and owners have complained about the [lack of a volume knob](#), but it hasn't been an issue for me at all.

But all is not perfect in Civicland. There's a lot to love about the car, and some things I don't care for. So to wrap up, here are some...

Final Observations

I don't really care for the [split driver's side mirror](#), but maybe I'll get used to it.

There have been a couple of times when I've walked out to the car to find the fuel door open. The fuel door locks and unlocks with the car, but sometimes it seems to get confused. Some folks have said that this problem can be avoided by leaving the key fob in the car while filling up.

Sometimes when I park the car after a drive there's a whining sound that lasts anywhere from a second to a few seconds. I'm not sure where it's coming from, but it does seem to be happening less frequently as time goes by.

For mumble-mumble years I have changed lanes by checking the side mirror and turning my head to check the lane next to me, then getting over if the way is clear. The LaneWatch camera seems like an unnecessary feature. Also, it takes me a few seconds to fully interpret what the screen is showing me, and during that time my eyes are not up at driving level.

Although the Civic is larger than ever before, it's still a modestly-sized car. And here in Texas, I often find myself parked between VBVs (Vision Blocking Vehicles, my name for vans/trucks/SUVs/other land yachts) and can't tell if a car/pedestrian/whatever is coming when I back out. The rear camera helps some, but maybe a rear cross traffic alert system would be helpful. Or maybe not, after reading [this report](#).

The Honda carpet floor mats came standard with the car. I'll use them until they wear through (which, according to some on the CivicX site, [will be a matter of weeks](#)) and then replace them with [Lloyd carpet mats](#).

I love the fact that I never have to reach into my pocket for a key. With keyless entry, I just put my hand behind the door handle to unlock the car, and I use the button on the door handle to lock it. And it's push button start, so as long as I have the fob in my pocket, I'm good to go.

The interior storage (glove box, center console, door pockets) provide plenty of room for all the things I carry in my car, including a couple of compact umbrellas, the owner's guide, spare eyeglasses, a tire pressure gauge, sunglasses, [a pizza oven](#) (ok not really, but wouldn't it be cool?), a multi-tool, and various other assorted items.

In all of the Hondas I've owned, I've never been impressed with the quality of the audio system. The same is true with the Civic, although I'll be the first to admit I have not yet tried adjusting the sound to best fit my ears. Although it's not really an issue for me since I mostly just listen to [local sports talk](#).

Summary (tl;dr version)

After 1,000 miles, my Civic EX is [MOSTLY AWESOME](#). (Also, thank you early adopters for working through a lot of the first-year issues with Honda so I didn't have to.)