

To: Candice Esterville
From: Lisa Chaput
Date: October 25, 2023
Subject: Vehicle Choice in New England

Dear Candice,

I am so happy you have moved to New England from San Diego! Although I can't understand why you would leave all that lovely sun and warm weather, I understand your need for a new vehicle in this environment. Two convertible Volkswagen Beetles might not get you where you need to go in the middle of winter.

Below, I created a series of comparisons to consider when buying your next vehicle. Based on these comparisons, my experience, and your desire to have three additional children and ski in the winter, I recommend an all-wheel drive (AWD) minivan. Let me know if you have any questions or want to try our minivan out. Good luck!

Best,

Lisa

Vehicles under consideration

Sedan: Typically, a four-door car with a trunk separate from the passenger space.

Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV): Designed for more rugged terrain but capable on city streets.

Minivan: A vehicle designed to carry passengers with reconfigurable seats in two or three rows.

Comparison Chart

CRITERION	SUV	MINIVAN	SEDAN
HANDLING IN WINTER	Yes, even without AWD, but AWD is best	Best with AWD	Only with AWD
GARAGE SPACE (WILL IT FIT IN YOUR GARAGE?)	Questionable	Most likely	Definitely
EASE OF USE	Bulky and hard to park. Some models require stepping up to get in the seat. Easier to get kids in car seats.	Closer to driving a bus than a sedan and is sometimes awkward to park because of its size. Very easy to get into, especially with auto	Fine for getting in and out of as an adult, but difficult for putting kids in car seats

CRITERION	SUV	MINIVAN	SEDAN
		doors, and very kid-seat friendly.	
SEATS	5 to 8	7 to 8	5
STORAGE	Lots of storage space, though some models sacrifice legroom for storage or vice versa	Can carry as much as a <i>large</i> SUV, sometimes more when the second and third rows are out.	A surprising amount of trunk space, though it can only carry certain items because of its dimensions.
CLEARANCE	High to medium	Medium to low	Medium to low

Recommendation Summaries

Handling in winter: This is a draw because you can get AWD in any type of vehicle. However, if cost is a factor, the heavier the vehicle, the less you will slip, which means an SUV or minivan would be best. AWD vehicles tend to be more expensive and have higher maintenance costs.

Garage space The sedan is the clear winner here, but some SUVs and minivans will fit. Make sure you measure your garage's depth before going shopping.

Ease of use Overall, I'd say the minivan wins here. While the minivan and SUV are bulky and hard to park, these are things you can account for and get used to. But bending yourself out of sorts to put a kid in a car seat? No, thank you. The SUV is good for car seats too, but the minivan wins with its automatic sliding doors and lower deck for climbing in.

Seats The winner here is the minivan. It's built for passengers. Sedans will safely carry five, and SUVs can carry up to eight, but it is usually a much tighter fit than the minivan. With the ability to set the seats in a two-two-three configuration, there is easy access to all seats without anyone needing to be a contortionist.

Storage Another win for the minivan, just edging out the SUV. Most sedans have decent trunk volume but are missing the vertical space you would find in an SUV or minivan. When just looking at the space available when all the seats are being used, minivans and *large* SUVs with three rows of seats are comparable. However, my experience has been that minivans have been designed to make things easier for small families, so moving seats around is way easier in minivans vs SUVs. That being said, I have an older model, so it may be worth looking at how easy it is to move the seats in an SUV.

Clearance The winner here, for me, is a vehicle with medium to low clearance. If you are skiing, having a higher clearance for some mountain roads may be nice. But, the higher clearance also means you have to step up into the vehicle. Some SUVs have slightly lower decks, and some minivans and sedans can have higher than normal decks.

Hopefully, I'm not jinxing myself, but in my Toyota Sienna, I've been on some gnarly mountain roads and been okay—I was cautious. If you know you ride hard and you'll be skiing a lot, medium to high clearance is important so you don't end up with a pierced radiator.

Conclusion

It's the minivan for the win! Honestly, having a working vehicle is key (haha). Though the minivan would be my first choice, an SUV would be a close second. I would stay away from sedans until the kids are in college. Good luck!!