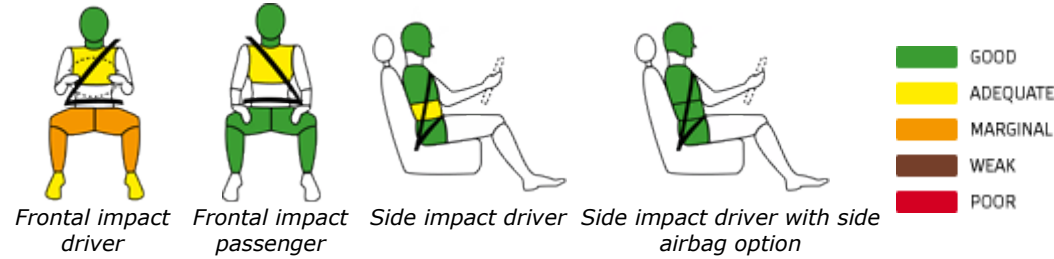


Mercedes Benz A Class



RATING	SCORE	
 ADULT OCCUPANT 	27	Front: 11 Side: 16

Adult occupant protection



Frontal impact driver **Frontal impact passenger** **Side impact driver** **Side impact driver with side airbag option**

Child restraints

18 month old Child	Britax Roemer Prince, forward facing
3 year old Child	Britax Roemer Prince, forward facing

Pedestrian protection

No image car front available

Safety equipment

Front seatbelt pretensioners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Front seatbelt load limiters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Driver frontal airbag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Front passenger frontal airbag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Side body airbags	<input type="checkbox"/>
Side head airbags	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driver knee airbag	<input type="checkbox"/>

Car details

Hand of drive	LHD
Tested model	Mercedes-Benz A140 Classic
Body type	5 door hatchback
Year of publication	1999
Kerb weight	1070

Comments

Despite its one-of-a-kind styling and compact size (it occupies less road space than most superminis, even though it offers cabin space to rival family cars) the A-class performed well. Frontal-impact protection was good but more could be done to safeguard front occupant's legs. Passengers sit higher than is usual and this helps if the A-class is hit from the side. However, the struck-side front and rear doors opened in the side impact. This would have meant failure in the new side-impact regulations if the car had been introduced after October 1998. In the original test, the Mercedes A-class had side airbags: Mercedes had said that they were fitted as standard in all EU markets. The test car was purchased in the Netherlands, where side airbags are standard. Subsequently the A-class was found to be available in Portugal, Spain, France, and Ireland without these airbags. When Mercedes were challenged, they explained that they had made a mistake and they paid for a re-test. This has shown that the first result was too high by 0.14 of one point. The car retains its four-star rating. The re-test also showed that modifications to prevent the doors opening were successful. These changes were introduced from VIN WDB 168 J210000.

Front impact

The driver's head was well protected, although the airbag 'bottomed out' late in the impact, and the passenger's airbag worked well. While the driver's knees did not contact any part of the car that presented particular risks, a driver with longer legs or anyone sitting in a different position could have been injured. The degree of crash intrusion into the passenger compartment was well controlled.

Side impact

Protection for the driver was good even though the side airbag contributed little or nothing and the latches of two doors were activated by the impact, causing them to open. Many A-class models (but not the test car) lock their doors automatically on reaching 8kmh (5mph) and Mercedes says this feature should prevent the doors coming open during a crash. The company says it is modifying the doors to correct this problem.

Child occupant

A passenger airbag is standard and there is a real danger of death for any child if placed in a rear-facing restraint on the front seat. Euro NCAP believes that Mercedes should take this risk more seriously and provide better permanent warnings. The child restraints were compatible with the rear adult belts that, unusually, had pyrotechnic pre-tensioners fitted. But disappointingly, the centre rear seat had only a lap belt many new models now provide a full three-point belt. The restraints prevented the child dummies from being thrown too far forward in the frontal impact and the degree of force they experienced was acceptable. But, the three-year-old was exposed to an increased risk of head injury in the side impact.

Pedestrian

The A-class has a very short bonnet so the most likely contact points for an adult's head are on its windscreen and screen pillars. Because Euro NCAP's assessment system does not account for glazed areas, the A-class cannot be given a star rating at present. However, a windscreen usually gives better protection than a steel panel would and this should favour its score when a rating is possible. That said, its bonnet proved very unforgiving towards a child's head. The car's front also had little or no cushioning for an adult's legs and needless injury could result.