

instrument panel with easily readable and requisite gauges. Let's see, what did we forget? Ah, yes, the centered-in-dash ventilation/heating controls. They're big, plainly marked and understandable, provided you read the owner's manual to decipher their symbols. Once you have and give them a twist, you'll find out how well the system works. So well that even the basic 900 whose standard equipment does not include air conditioning can help you keep your cool merely with flow-through ventilation.

If the 900's interior has all of those features, what doesn't it have? The top-of-the-dash mapbox, for one thing. And fancy stuff like tufted velvet seat covering, matching side panel upholstery and cushy carpeting. The 900's seat material is rather bland and "looks like old mohair overstuffed furniture," according to one staffer. It's Seats, not ~aks, but then so is the price. And price is one of the things that makes the 900 so attractive. The other is that it's a Saab and Saabs are fun-not to mention practical and rugged. That trusty inline 4-cylinder starts easily, is responsive and has good driveability although its 13.8sec 0-60 and 19.3 sec quarter-mile times are not exactly meteoric. But the overall responsiveness and flexibility of the engine and 5-speed makeup for any lack of wide-open-throttle performance, which is further enhanced by the car's handling and ride. As a result, the 900 is nimble on the highway and in city traffic. Its power-assisted

steering makes it "any person's car." Furthermore, the 900 has a precise, taut feel that along with the car's excellent brakes produces a fine balance of steering, braking and handling that makes a downhill run from the mountains great fun. Yet, through it all, the car makes you feel delightfully secure, just as you'd expect to feel in a Saab.

Some basic observations about the 900's handling: The car leans a lot because it is tall. Also, we suspect that the 900's softer suspension and conventional rather than gas-over-oil shocks are responsible not just for the leaning but for the wheel tramp that occurs under hard acceleration. On the skidpad the car understeers until you lift off the throttle. Then it tucks in. This gives experienced drivers options for car placement, once they know what the car will do. A word to the wise: The 900 gets fussy about liftoff in the faster twisty bits such as a slalom. Here trailing throttle (or no throttle) breaks loose the tail and necessitates a bit of correction at the helm to straighten the car out.

Of course, that's handling taken to the extreme and most drivers will seldom find themselves in such straits-by choice or by chance. You see, the 900 is not really that kind of a car. It's a practical, less expensive automobile with many of the characteristics of a true sports sedan such as the Saab Turbo. It's the Saab 900, a fun-damental family sedan.

PRICE

List price, all POE	\$10,400
Price as tested	\$10,635
Price as tested includes std equip (power-assisted steering, outside mirrors, rear-window heater, clock), AM/FM stereo (\$235)	

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb/kg	2590/1176
Test weight	2850/1294
Weight dist (with driver), fr, %	60/40
Wheelbase, in./mm	99.4/2525
Track, front/rear	55.9/56.3/1420/1430
Length	187.6/4765
Width	66.5/1689
Height	55.9/1420
Trunk space, cu ft/liters	14.1 + 11.6/399 + 328
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal./liters	14.5/55

ENGINE

Type	sohc inline-4	
Bore x stroke, in./mm	3.54 x 3.07	90.0 x 78.0
Displacement, cu in./cc	12L	1983
Compression ratio	9.3:1	
Bhp @ rpm, SA-net/kW	110/82	@ 5250
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft/Nm	119/161	@ 3500
Fuel injection	Bosch K-Jetronic	
Fuel requirement	unleaded, 91-oct	

DRYTRAIN

Transmission	5-sp manual
Gear ratios: 5th (0.78)	3.03:1
4th (0.97)	3.77:1
3rd (1.34)	5.21:1
2nd (2.00)	7.78:1
1st (3.53)	13.73:1
Final drive ratio	3.89:1

CHASSIS & BODY

Layout	front engine/front drive
Body/frame	unit steel
Brake system	1.0-in. (279'0101) discs front, 10.6-in. (269'0101) discs rear; vacuum assisted
Wheels	steel disc, 15 x 5J
Tires	Michelin XU, 165/78SR-15
Steering type	rack & pinion, power assisted
Turns, lock-to-lock	3.6
Suspension, front/rear	unequal length A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks/beam axle, trailing arms, Panhard rod, coil springs, tube shocks

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test weight)	25.9
Mph/1000 rpm (5th gear)	24.0
Engine revs/1/4 mi (60 mph)	2500
R&T steering index	1.22
Brake swept area, sq in./ton	2.75

ROAD TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:	
0-100 ft	3.8
0-500 ft	10.3
0-1320 ft (1/4 mi)	19.3
Speed at end of 1/4 mi, mph	70.0
Time to speed, sec:	
0-30 mph	3.9
0-50 mph	9.5
0-60 mph	13.8
0-70 mph	19.4
0-80 mph	29.4

SPEEDS IN GEARS

5th gear (4300 rpm)	105
4th (5200)	105
3rd (6000)	84
2nd (6000)	58
1st (6000)	32

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving, mpg	22.0
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BRAKES

Minimum stopping distances, ft:	
From 60 mph	159
From 80 mph	286
Control in panic stop	good
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb	27
Fade: percent increase in pedal effort to maintain 0.5g deceleration in stops from 60 mph	nil
Overall brake rating	very good

HANDLING

Lateral accel, 100-ft radius, g	0.724
Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph	58.0

INTERIOR NOISE

Constant 30 mph	64
50 mph	69
70 mph	74

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated is actually	31.0
60 mph	61.0

ACCELERATION

