



The 2019 BMW M2 Competition Doesn't Perform Any Better, but We're Still Enthralled

Munich's updated coupe can't beat its predecessor's numbers, but we love it regardless.

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This story has been updated with test results.

Carved into the mountains of southern Spain, east of the historic city of Ronda, resides the fast and technical 3.4-mile Circuito Ascari. The racetrack flows smoothly yet is mentally demanding. Linking the chicanes and off-camber sections of its 26 corners requires a sniper's patience and precision. The straights aren't so straight and necessitate convincing the brain to go full send. Ascari is a driver's track, and a course this pure requires a vehicle equal in execution. It's here that we first sampled [the 2019 BMW M2 Competition](#), which supersedes the regular M2 and comes armed with more of everything.

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New Turbocharged Engine

BMW could have spent wads of cash revising the previous turbocharged N55 inline-six to meet tighter emissions standards. Instead, it snatched a powerplant already in the arsenal, the potent S55 twin-turbo inline-six from [the M4](#). In deference to the M hierarchy, boost is reduced in the M2's version, lowering the output from 425 horsepower to 405. Torque, however, is undiminished at 406 lb-ft.

Dialing back the S55's power doesn't just preserve the M family pecking order; it also addresses a cooling issue. Although the M2 Competition's fascia is revised and the cooling system is derived from that of the M4 Competition, the smaller car doesn't flow as much air through its front end, and less airflow means less cooling. But even detuned to 405 horsepower, the S55's output represents a substantial increase over the outgoing M2's 365 horses and 369 lb-ft. The M2 Competition rockets down the straights, and the sweet inline-six barks through a new exhaust system, pulling strongly all the way to the redline.



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At our test track in Michigan, though, the additional power did not produce much of a gain in straight-line acceleration. An M2 Competition with the optional DCT automatic transmission we tested couldn't improve on [its predecessor's zero-to-60-mph time](#) of 4.0 seconds flat and barely beat it in the quarter-mile, returning a 12.4-second pass at 116 mph, improvements of 0.1 second and 3 mph.

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It'll Drift If You Want

Assisting with deployment of the newfound power is BMW's Active M rear differential. The electronically controlled limited-slip rear diff controls the locking effect to evenly distribute torque across the rear axle in all corners, no matter how wide or sharp. The unit has been fine-tuned to work methodically with the new M Dynamic mode, in which the stability-control intervention is dialed back to be less intrusive, but it remains present should things get out of hand. We found the limits to be well within reason, as the pocket-size M2 allows more throttle application during corner exit, carrying graceful slides while at the same time powering out of corners like no M2 has done before.

Thankfully, a six-speed manual remains the standard gearbox. The shifter travels through the gates with precision, even though it retains that characteristic BMW slight rubberiness in its motions. The clutch takeup is spot on, and the transmission automatically rev-matches for you on downshifts. Disabling the rev-matching system requires the complete commitment of also fully deactivating the stability control, but the pedals are spaced perfectly for heel-and-toe downshifts. The other transmission choice, tested here, is BMW's

quick-shifting seven-speed dual-clutch automatic, a \$2900 option. Launch control is specific to the automatic, which also now incorporates BMW's three-mode Drivelogic, allowing adjustability of the transmission's shift programming at the push of a button.

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The brakes fill nearly every bit of real estate within the new forged 19-inch wheels. The brakes are massive iron rotors—15.7 inches in front and 15.0 in the rear—clamped by six-piston fixed calipers in the front and four-piston fixed calipers in the rear. Even after a day of track abuse, the brake pedal remained firm and the modulation linear. We measured its stopping distance at 155 feet, again matching a previous M2 we tested in 2016.

BMW says the suspension calibration is unchanged from the previous non-Competition M2, and it still delivers a firm ride. But after experiencing the M2 Competition on pockmarked Michigan roads, we wonder if there might be some slight retuning at play. The new car doesn't have the same impact harshness we remember from our long-term example, and it bounces around less on bumpy corners. We enjoyed the M2 Competition so much on our particularly challenging 10Best loop that it [earned back its spot on our 10Best Cars roster for 2019](#) after dropping off the list the previous year.

The staggered 245/35R-19 front and 265/35R-19 rear Michelin Pilot Super Sport tires also are carryovers from the outgoing M2, although more track-friendly M2-spec Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 rubber will be available from the accessories catalog or through aftermarket suppliers. At the limit, lateral grip remains abundant at 0.99 g, and understeer is easily managed with the throttle. Through the twists and turns of Puerto del Viento, a public road near the racetrack in Spain, the chassis feels more eager to turn in than was the previous M2, in part due to the new carbon-fiber front strut-tower brace, which is another item plucked from the M4. BMW has recalibrated the electrically assisted power steering to play better with the fortified front structure. Unfortunately, any feel from the surface below is still absent.

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M Logos Everywhere

The cockpit is decked out with even more M2 logos, including on the doorsills and illuminated in the seatbacks of the new and more supportive M Sport buckets. The seatbelts are embroidered with tricolor M stripes, and there's a red engine-start button. There's also a new steering wheel with two programmable buttons that can be set to toggle quickly among driving modes. On the outside, new side mirrors, black kidney grilles and badges, and redesigned fascias distinguish the M2 Competition from the former M2.

Sticking to the purist theme, the list of available options is minimal. A sunroof can be had for \$1050, and the Executive package adds a heated steering wheel, full LED headlights with automatic high-beams, wireless device charging, and a Wi-Fi hotspot for an additional \$1200. The \$2500 M Driver's package raises the top speed to 174 mph and buys a ticket to a course at BMW's performance driving school.

Starting at \$59,895 and on sale now, the 2019 M2 Competition represents a \$4400 premium over the 2018 M2. Our test car stickered at \$64,545 with the Executive package, the automatic transmission, and the eye-catching extra-cost Sunset Orange Metallic color. Given all the hardware, equipment, and performance bundled into this refreshed bite-size coupe, the upcharge seems worth it, but the fact that the Competition model doesn't perform measurably better than before is disappointing. Still, if you look beyond the numbers, the M2 remains the most exciting vehicle from a driver-involvement standpoint within the BMW lineup, and that's worth celebrating.

Specifications

VEHICLE TYPE

front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe

PRICE AS TESTED

\$64,545 (base price: \$59,895)

ENGINE TYPE

twin-turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 24-valve inline-6, aluminum block and head, direct fuel injection

Displacement:

182 cu in, 2979 cc

Power:

405 hp @ 7000 rpm

Torque:

406 lb-ft @ 2350 rpm

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