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The Miata is one of the greatest project cars for all levels, but noobs especially benefit from it. For those craving a canyon carver, the simple layout, near perfect weight distribution, and fun factor make this model an ideal first project car. If you want to get extra crazy, you can build your very own "Monster Miata" by cutting into the firewall and
shoving an 8 cylinder into the engine bay. 203 votesPhoto: Edward Perez PhotographyflickrCC-BY-NC-ND 2.0The good 'ole WRX is a great option for those with an adventurous spirit. The optional wagon body-style and standard all-wheel drive make it an ideal platform for those who live in mountainous areas, crave cross-country driving, or rally or
road-racing. They are reliable, simple to work on, easy to source, and fun as all get-out. Plus, there are a plethora of bolt-on upgrades available from Subaru Tecnica International. 155 votesBimmer fans wax rhapsodic about all three of these models, and endlessly debate over which is the best project car. The E28 is the predecessor of the M5, the E30
revolutionized the 3 Series, and the E34 offers sedan and hatchback body styles as options. Regardless of which one you choose, these legendary BMWs offer user-friendly layouts with large aftermarket support. They are also low maintenance with relatively inexpensive parts, which makes them perfect for greenhorns looking to build their own
ultimate driving machine. 157 votesPhoto: Evo's are scary torquey from the factory, with 291 to 303 horsepower out of the box. They make excellent road racers and canyon carvers capable of leading double lives as family cars or daily drivers. Hey honey, it's got four doors, a roomy backseat, and trunk! It's perfect for us and the kids! 110 votesThe
S2K is another beautiful car that requires very little modification from the factory, but has a huge amount of aftermarket support for those who choose to customize theirs. With 237 stock horsepower and a six-speed manual, this front mid-engine, rear-wheel drive 2-seater has near perfect weight distribution. This makes it an ideal car for drifting or
hitting the canyons. Get fancy with a removable hardtop or convertible option. Upgrade even further with the addition of a carbon fiber trunk, fenders, doors, and all the things. 98 votesPhoto: This is a great project car for those looking for a budget-friendly driftmobile. They are much easier to acquire than the coveted AE86, and lower maintenance
than an RX7. Parts are inexpensive, and there is massive aftermarket support. They have enough room to hold extra tires, and feature low-key cool Japanese styling. A limited amount were even transformed into convertibles by American Sunroof Company - so you can have your drift, and lower your top too. 121 votes For gearheads, ownership is only
a small step on the path towards the acquisition of a dream car. Far more of the process comes down to knowing a vehicle inside and out, replacing parts as needed, and making upgrades as they arise. Sure, buying a car off the lot makes for immediate gratification, but the reality is that it's a fleeting enjoyment at best. However, not everyone is born
with a mechanic's intuition, and intentionally buying a project car can be an intimidating prospect for the uninitiated. In concept, it sounds like a fun, educational experience; in practice, it can make for an overwhelming commitment. For no matter how confident anyone is of their ability, all it takes is one pop of the hood to test their chops. The good
news is that project cars don't have to break the bank. With so many options available on the classifieds, it's not hard to find a buy befitting your budget. But having so much choice can make it difficult to tell an ambitious project from all-out money pit. Moreover, not all cars are intuitive to work on, and you can quickly find yourself in over your head
Rather than whiling away the day, wondering when you'll get around to tackling a build, have a read and see what we've picked for the best budget project. There's no feeling worse than
successfully diagnosing a fix only to discover that the part is out of your price range or no longer produced. Because the longer a problem persists, the more likely it is to go unfixed. Before you know it, you'll be looking to offload your build in order to hop to another project. Even if you can't buy new OEM parts, a transplant from a donor car could be
just what you need to get your ride back on the road. Forum Support: Although insider knowledge was once something exclusive to owner's clubs, the internet has allowed for a thriving online enthusiast community. If you find yourself stumped on how to go about repairing your project, have a look at the forums — chances are good that someone has
asked the same questions you're thinking. And should your particular car present a problem unique unto itself, you'll at least have the backing of fellow wrenchers to advise a plan of attack. Availability: Everyone envisions rolling up to a car meet with a unicorn in tow. While it can be tempting to seek out rare and unloved models in order to
distinguish yourself, it doesn't make for the best budget build. Cars that are more readily available are cheaper up front. What's more, donor cars make for inexpensive fixes — assuming they're in serviceable condition. And in the event you need to do a significant body repair, you'll be far better off dropping in a new panel than you would trying to fab
it on your own. Where There's A Will, There's A Will, There's A Way Tools: Get yourself a solid set of tools. Sure, budget sets will save you money in the short term, but with the potential for improper clearances and poor build quality, they could result in a much bigger problem down the road. Consider your car's need for any specialty tools. Are they easily available?
If not, do you have the mechanical ability to make your own? Knowhow: There's no prerequisite to buying a project car, but it helps to have a solid base to get you going. Whether that's understanding how to turn a wrench or familiarizing yourself with the principles of a powertrain, knowledge is power in any project. Support: Bad days are inevitable
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and abundance of aftermarket parts. Whether you're a die-hard drift fan or a would-be street racer, you can't go wrong with any of these options. Photo: Honda Why It Made The Cut An affordable Japanese sports car with an amazing foundation for tuning. Although a lot of once cheap project cars have seen a considerable rise in their asking prices,
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auction, the Datsun 280Z is comparatively reasonable. In recent years, the market has caught onto their appeal, but with some diligent searching you can easily find one ready to be your next project. If considering a classic Z car, do yourself a favor and check the body panels for rust — anything that's likely to affect the structural integrity should
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stately shuttle wagons. With so many options out there, you can have your pick of the lot when it comes to body style, engine capacity, and interior furnishings. Like any Honda, it's resilient, easy to work on, and can be tuned to your heart's content. Throw on some suspension upgrades and a set of decent tires, and you have yourself a capable
performer. Engine: 1.6L Inline-Four Power: 108HP Average Used Pricing: $9,500 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut A minimalistic, lightweight, pure driver's car with stellar handling, performance, value, & aftermarket part availability. Granted, Miatas have experienced a bit of appreciation in the last decade, but most model years still make for
very affordable project cars. Not only are they incredibly reliable and approachable learner-maintenance cars, but they're also enjoyable to drive and ideal for upgrading. So while you may initially buy it as a budget fix, you'll soon come to find that you won't be able to part ways with this little roadster. Engine: 1.6L Inline-Four Power: 116HP Average
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era muscle car with a quintessential American design. As with most popular muscle cars, later-gen Firebirds are considerably cheaper than their iconic fore-bearers. Sure, they don't offer the same high-octane nostalgia, but they're a great budget gateway to muscle car performance. If possible, shoot for a third or fourth generation model year — the
low overhead cost will give you room in your budget for future upgrades and unanticipated repairs. Engine: 4.9L V8 Power: 150HP Average Used Pricing: $22,200 If your travels take you off the beaten path, it's in your best interest to get a vehicle that's up to the task. Each of these off-road icons makes for an approachable option with upgrade
potential aplenty. Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut A well-built American classic offering fantastic bang for your buck. Cheap and robust, Cheap and robust, Cheap and robust, So there's a lot of parts and support available in the event you run into trouble. It's worth
noting that the older you go, the harder parts will be to find. If possible, stick to second-gen model years — you'll save yourself a lot of headaches in the long run, and it'll be much easier to work on. Engine: 4.0L Six-Cylinder Power: 155HP Average Used Pricing: $14,300 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut An early F Series pickup absolutely
brimming with character and old-school flavor. F-100's are extremely popular buys for classic project trucks. And it's for good reason. There's an abundance of project-ready examples, they're easy to source parts for, and they're relatively inexpensive to come by. What's more, there are plenty of directions you can go with your build. So whether you
prefer to perfectly restore your pickup or want to resto-mod it with modern tech, there's ample opportunity to make it your own. We also recommend looking out for Flareside models, as they tend to come a bit cheaper than their Styleside counterparts. Engine: 3.6L Six-Cylinder Power: 126HP Average Used Pricing: $15,900 Photo: Shutterstock Why
It Made The Cut A big and boxy GMC truck that stands as a poor-man's alternative to a vintage Ford Bronco or International Harvester Scout. While Chevy Blazers have long left the realm of the budget project car, their GMC-badged brethren are still easily had for a cool $10,000 and under — even cheaper if you're willing to start with a basket case
of a donor. They're not the most powerful SUVs or especially fuel-efficient, but they'll promise you years of dependable performance if properly taken care of. Just be wary of driving them on the highway; it's a surefire way to discover any problems that might be lurking. There are also Jimmy models that come with larger V8 powertrains. Engine: 4.0L
Six-Cylinder Power: 130HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Jeep Why It Made The Cut An American-made, turn-of-the-millennium-era SUV with exceptional durability and dependability. Popular amongst beginners and seasoned trail experts alike, XJ Cherokees are nearly-indestructible when properly maintained. Sure, they have their
characteristically American quirks, but they'll go a long way toward teaching you how to perform upkeep on your own car. And while they're quite the rock-bottom affordable offering that they once were, the immense online support and parts availability remain. Engine: 4.0L Straight-Six Power: 190HP Average Used Pricing: $10,100 Photo:
Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A compact yet capable 4×4 offering a markedly more affordable alternative to Toyota's FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors have a such as the Toyota FJ40. With collectors 
yet to be snatched up. It's worth noting that these pocket-sized SUVs aren't known for their power (quite the opposite in fact). With a top speed of just 65mph, it's advisable to spring for an engine swap. Count on these becoming harder and harder to find. Engine: 1.3L Inline-Four Power: 60HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 By their very nature,
European imports require an owner that'll keep up with maintenance. While this can lead to some sad and neglected examples, others can prove quite a find when it comes to budget project potential. Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A sporty Bavarian-built model that served as the basis for the legendary E30 M3. These days, E30 M3's fetch
astronomical prices at auction. But with a bit of patient searching (and some luck), you can easily snag a 325i. With a bulletproof straight-six under the hood, it's a great car for beginners just getting into things or experienced wrenchers looking for a ready-to-tune ride. While 316's and 318i's are all over the classifieds, you should consider the
direction of your build before buying one; if you're looking for performance, you'll quickly outgrow their meager four-cylinders. Engine: 2.5L Straight-Six Power: 168HP Average Used Pricing: $19,600 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A British-built true drivers car with an obtainable price & devoted cult following. If you're a fan of small British
sports cars, it doesn't get much better than the MGB. Available as a roadster and as a GT (pictured here) these cars are extremely popular amongst automotive enthusiasts. As such, there's a wellspring of available knowledge for you to tap into come time to fix up your own. When considering a potential MGB project, be sure to check for rust —
British cars are notorious for the stuff. Engine: 1.8L Inline-Four Power: 92HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Porsche Why It Made The Cut An affordable — and unconventional — front-engined Porsche that's quickly rising in value. For all of its flaws, the 928 has managed to leave the world of budget project cars behind. However, the 944 is
still regularly affordable with reasonably low miles. Obviously, Porsche parts come at a premium, so it's up to the buyer to determine the budget status of this pick. If you have your eye on a 944, get your hands on as complete a record of maintenance as you can. They run like a top when they're properly kept up with, but neglected examples can
become a true can of worms. And, while the S and Turbo models are obviously more sought after, the final-year (1989) 944 is almost certainly the one you want, as it gained a bit of extra displacement and power. Engine: 2.7L Inline Four Power: 160HP Average Used Pricing: $12,000 Photo: Volkswagen Why It Made The Cut A vintage European hot
hatch with loads of potential for upgrading & tuning. Second to the Beetle, the Volkswagen Golf is one of the most prevalent models the German marque produces. So no matter what body style you're considering, they're incredibly affordable project platforms. In GTI form, they make for lightweight little hatchbacks that offer tons of driving fun. Bag
it, boost it, or bring it back to factory condition — the world is your oyster when it comes to the end result. Even a cursory search will show you just how thriving the VW wrencher community is. Engine: 1.7L Inline-Four Power: 112HP Average Used Pricing: $15,300 Photo: Volvo Cars Global Why It Made The Cut A boxy & beloved classic Volvo kicked
along by a bulletproof-reliable four-banger. Older Volvos have tons of qualities that make them ideal platforms for getting your hands dirty. For instance, their spacious engine bays allow for easy access to components come time for maintenance. And when it comes to the ride, they're built like tanks and are generally pretty reliable. Buyer beware —
depending on the fix, some parts can be hard to find (as is the case with most Swedish imports). Engine: 2.1L Inline-Four Power: 98HP Average Used Price: $5,100 Photo: Shutterstock Interested in investing your hard-earned money into classic cars rather than the stock market or CD? Then be sure to head over to our quide to the best investment
cars for a curated list of retro rides with steadily-rising valuations that show no signs of slowing. For gearheads, ownership is only a small step on the path towards the acquisition of a dream car. Far more of the process comes down to knowing a vehicle inside and out, replacing parts as needed, and making upgrades as they arise. Sure, buying a car
off the lot makes for immediate gratification, but the reality is that it's a fleeting enjoyment at best. However, not everyone is born with a mechanic's intuition, and intentionally buying a project car can be an intimidating prospect for the uninitiated. In concept, it sounds like a fun, educational experience; in practice, it can make for an overwhelming
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project from all-out money pit. Moreover, not all cars are intuitive to work on, and you can quickly find yourself in over your head. Rather than whiling away the day, wondering when you'll get around to tackling a build, have a read and see what we've picked for the best budget project cars. Key Characteristics To Consider Parts: First and foremost,
you should consider the availability of aftermarket and replacement parts for your project. There's no feeling worse than successfully diagnosing a fix only to discover that the part is out of your project. There's no feeling worse than successfully diagnosing a fix only to discover that the part is out of your project. There's no feeling worse than successfully diagnosing a fix only to discover that the part is out of your project. There's no feeling worse than successfully diagnosing a fix only to discover that the part is out of your project.
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relatively inexpensive to come by. What's more, there are plenty of directions you can go with your build. So whether you prefer to perfectly restore your own. We also recommend looking out for Flareside models, as they tend to come a bit cheaper than their
Styleside counterparts. Engine: 3.6L Six-Cylinder Power: 126HP Average Used Pricing: $15,900 Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A big and boxy GMC truck that stands as a poor-man's alternative to a vintage Ford Bronco or International Harvester Scout. While Chevy Blazers have long left the realm of the budget project car, their GMC-
badged brethren are still easily had for a cool $10,000 and under — even cheaper if you're willing to start with a basket case of a donor. They're not the most powerful SUVs or especially fuel-efficient, but they'll promise you years of dependable performance if properly taken care of. Just be wary of driving them on the highway; it's a surefire way to
discover any problems that might be lurking. There are also Jimmy models that come with larger V8 powertrains. Engine: 4.0L Six-Cylinder Power: 130HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Jeep Why It Made The Cut An American-made, turn-of-the-millennium-era SUV with exceptional durability and dependability. Popular amongst beginners and
seasoned trail experts alike, XJ Cherokees are nearly-indestructible when properly maintained. Sure, they have their characteristically American quirks, but they're quite the rock-bottom affordable offering that they once were, the immense online support
and parts availability remain. Engine: 4.0L Straight-Six Power: 190HP Average Used Pricing: $10,100 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A compact yet capable 4×4 offering a markedly more affordable alternative to Toyota's FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40,
International Harvester Scout, and Ford Bronco — the Suzuki Samurai stands out as one of the last of such cars yet to be snatched up. It's worth noting that these pocket-sized SUVs aren't known for their power (quite the opposite in fact). With a top speed of just 65mph, it's advisable to spring for an engine swap. Count on these becoming harder and some of the last of such cars yet to be snatched up. It's worth noting that these pocket-sized SUVs aren't known for their power (quite the opposite in fact).
harder to find. Engine: 1.3L Inline-Four Power: 60HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 By their very nature, European imports require an owner that'll keep up with maintenance. While this can lead to some sad and neglected examples, others can prove quite a find when it comes to budget project potential. Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A
sporty Bavarian-built model that served as the basis for the legendary E30 M3. These days, E30 M3's fetch astronomical prices at auction. But with a bil of patient searching (and some luck), you can easily snag a 325i. With a bulletproof straight-six under the hood, it's a great car for beginners just getting into things or experienced wrenchers
looking for a ready-to-tune ride. While 316's are all over the classifieds, you should consider the direction of your build before buying one; if you're looking for performance, you'll quickly outgrow their meager four-cylinders. Engine: 2.5L Straight-Six Power: 168HP Average Used Pricing: $19,600 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A
into come time to fix up your own. When considering a potential MGB project, be sure to check for rust — British cars are notorious for the stuff. Engine: 1.8L Inline-Four Power: 92HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Porsche Why It Made The Cut An affordable — and unconventional — front-engined Porsche that's quickly rising in value. For all
of its flaws, the 928 has managed to leave the world of budget project cars behind. However, the 944 is still regularly affordable with reasonably low miles. Obviously, Porsche parts come at a premium, so it's up to the buyer to determine the budget status of this pick. If you have your eye on a 944, get your hands on as complete a record of
maintenance as you can. They run like a top when they're properly kept up with, but neglected examples can become a true can of worms. And, while the S and Turbo models are obviously more sought after, the final-year (1989) 944 is almost certainly the one you want, as it gained a bit of extra displacement and power. Engine: 2.7L Inline Fourier to the final-year (1989) 944 is almost certainly the one you want, as it gained a bit of extra displacement and power.
Power: 160HP Average Used Pricing: $12,000 Photo: Volkswagen Why It Made The Cut A vintage European hot hatch with loads of potential for upgrading & tuning. Second to the Beetle, the Volkswagen Why It Made The Cut A vintage European hot hatch with loads of potential for upgrading & tuning. Second to the Beetle, the Volkswagen Why It Made The Cut A vintage European hot hatch with loads of potential for upgrading & tuning.
affordable project platforms. In GTI form, they make for lightweight little hatchbacks that offer tons of driving fun. Bag it, boost it, or bring it back to factory condition — the world is your oyster when it comes to the end result. Even a cursory search will show you just how thriving the VW wrencher community is. Engine: 1.7L Inline-Four Power:
112HP Average Used Pricing: $15,300 Photo: Volvo Cars Global Why It Made The Cut A boxy & beloved classic Volvo kicked along by a bulletproof-reliable four-banger. Older Volvos have tons of qualities that make them ideal platforms for getting your hands dirty. For instance, their spacious engine bays allow for easy access to components come
time for maintenance. And when it comes to the ride, they're built like tanks and are generally pretty reliable. Buyer beware — depending on the fix, some parts can be hard to find (as is the case with most Swedish imports). Engine: 2.1L Inline-Four Power: 98HP Average Used Price: $5,100 Photo: Shutterstock Interested in investing your hard-
earned money into classic cars rather than the stock market or CD? Then be sure to head over to our guide to the best investment cars for a curated list of retro rides with steadily-rising valuations that show no signs of slowing. Everyone who is passionate about cars wants a project car at some point, even if it's just hotting up the Corolla you
inherited from your parents as a student. While sending a car to a mechanic to work on it is always an option, many might opt to do it themselves. Whether you want to restore it to its former glorty, improve its performance, or inject some personality by individualizing it, project cars are a way to scratch that itch. There are many options for all prices are a student.
points. Sifting through the overabundance, these are ten affordable project cars that can be bought on the used market for a bargain. The average selling prices are sourced from Classic.com and are subject to change. The cars included in this list have been arranged based on average selling prices, ranging from the most expensive to the least. 10
1988-1991 Honda CRX Mk2 Average selling price: $16,686 1988 Honda CRX Si Specifications Engine 1.5L NA I4 Horsepower 105 hp @ 6,000 rpm Torque 98 lb-ft @ 5,000 rpm 0-60 mph 8.5 seconds Honda CRX elsewhere. The
second generation was in production from 1987 to 1991, and was completely redesigned compared to the first generation. It would see the introduction of a four-cylinder engine instead of the B-Series unit offered in the Japanese
and European markets. Still, the Honda CRX is a wonderful project car, considering its chassis offers good handling, and aftermarket support is well established. The Honda CRX is also easy to find on the used market for a bargain, with some listings selling for $6,600. Engine 3.0L NA I6 Horsepower 215 hp @ 5,800 rpm Torque 218 lb-ft @ 3,800 rpm
0-60 mph 7.4 seconds The Lexus IS300 was introduced in the Lexus IS model range in 2000, and its standout feature was the naturally aspirated 2JZ-GE inline six hiding under its unassuming hood. Following the compact executive formula of its stablemates, the IS300 is a good project car because of the 2JZ engine that powers it, which can be coaxed
to 1,000 hp on a big enough budget. Its availability on the used market for as low as $8300, and the abundance of aftermarket support make it a popular choice. Engine 2.7L NA I6 Horsepower 127 hp @ 4,250 rpm Torque 170 lb-ft @ 3,250 rpm Torque 170 
beloved German sports car was offered in many forms: standard passenger cars and thoroughbred sports cars. For the 1986 model year, BMW introduced another of the many versions of the BMW E30. This derivative was a more fuel-efficient offering with the same performance as other models powered by the M20 2.0-liter inline-six, but with a lot
more torque and a low rev limit of 4,500 rpm. Related If you enjoy piloting vehicles that stand out from the rest, then here are ten eccentric examples that you can pick up for a bargain price. Aside from only being offered in coupe configuration, what made it special was that it featured a sports-tuned suspension system and a handful of interior
elements. Some can be had for as little as $9,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $21,500. You start out with little power, but the potential is there, as this basic 2.7L M20 was also used in high-performance E30s such as the South African 325is, in which it produced as much as $21,500. You start out with little power, but the potential is there, as this basic 2.7L M20 was also used in high-performance E30s such as the South African 325is, in which it produced as much as $21,500. You start out with little power, but the potential is there, as this basic 2.7L M20 was also used in high-performance E30s such as the South African 325is, in which it produced as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sold for as much as $20,000, while lower-mileage examples can be sol
NA V8 Horsepower 260 hp @ 5,250 rpm Torque 302 lb-ft @ 4,000 rpm 0-60 mph 5.5 seconds We're focusing on the facelifted SN-95 Ford Mustang GT, including design changes, changes to the powertrain components, and an increase in the V8
engine's power. The fourth-generation Ford Mustang GT is an attractive project car prospect, considering Ford's widely used 4.6L Modular V8 engine at its core, with impressive performance and aftermarket support. Related One of the original pony cars, the Ford Mustang has endured through seven generations and is now the only American pony.
car left on the market. Still, the most important reason it is a good project car is its availability on the used market and the price at which it's sold. A beat-up example can be sold for as much as $42,000. 2003-2004 Nissan 350Z Specifications Engine
3.5L NA V6 Horsepower 287 hp @ 6,200 rpm Torque 274 lb-ft @ 4,800 rpm 0-60 mph 5.4 seconds Drifting, setting lap times, wheel-to-wheel racing - the Nissan 350Z is a poster child for the sports-car segment and a solid choice as a project car. It is a rear-wheel-drive coupe
powered by a powerful naturally aspirated 3.5-liter V6 engine from Nissan's reliable VQ engine family, sending its power to the rear axle exclusively via a six-speed manual transmission. A five-speed automatic was also offered. Related Nissan cobbled together parts from other models for its 350Z model, which would go on to become one of the
greatest sports cars ever. Aftermarket support for the platform is extensive and caters to a range of budgets. The Nissan 350Z can be had on the used market for as little as $8,800 in its base form with lots of mileage and some work needed, while cleaner, lower-mileage examples can be bought for roughly $10,000. Engine 2.5L NA I6 Horsepower 192
hp @ 5,900 rpm Torque 181 lb-ft @ 4,200 rpm 0-60 mph 7.1 seconds The BMW E36, like the BMW E36, and the Nissan 350Z, is one of the most common cars that has ascended to legend status when talking about project cars. The BMW E36 was the follow-up to the BMW E30, and the 325is was one of the highest-ranking derivatives in the E36 model
range, second only to the BMW E36 M3. Related All of these will have you tearing up an autocross day in no time. The 325is was introduced for the 1992 model year and was powered by the highly capable M50 2.5-liter inline-six engine paired with a five-speed manual transmission, which directed its nearly 200 hp output to the rear wheels. On
Classic.com, listings are few and far between, but the least expensive example sold fetched a mere $5,601, while other lower-mileage examples have sold for $25,985. 1992-1995 Lexus SC was a two-door grand
touring coupe manufactured by Lexus from 1991 to 2010. The first generation production began in 1991, and two derivatives populated this first-generation model range. The Lexus SC300 was the lower-ranking model powered by the reliable naturally aspirated version of the 2JZ engine. 3:12 Related Japan's answer to the General Motors LS was the
UZ-FE - so refined and unstressed that it was the engine of choice for top-shelf luxury cars and more. At the same time, the Lexus SC400 was a grand tourer with relations to the Toyota Supra, and today it's a good project car
that can be found for a bargain on the used market. Engine 1.3L NA twin-rotary Horsepower 212 hp @ 7,500 rpm Torque 159 lb-ft @ 5,500 rpm Torque 159 lb-ft @ 5,50
in 2008, a facelifted model was released. Designed as a two-door coupe powered by a twin-rotor engine, it is a sporty offering from Mazda featuring fun handling and characterized by a twin-rotor engine that offered strong performance when revved - which it did very smoothly. The automatic sucks quite a bit of life out of this engine, so go
for the manual. Related Japanese cars are a great option when looking for a sporty driving experience, and these are easy access points to JDM car culture. It's worth noting that the Mazda RX-8 is fun to drive and is a good choice for a
project car. On the used market, the Mazda RX-8 can be bought for as little as $7,522, while others have been sold for $14,250 with as little as 17,000 miles on their odometers. Engine 1.6L NA I4 Horsepower 115 hp @ 6,500 rpm 0-60 mph 8.6 seconds The Mazda MX-5 Miata is a car of great prestige and steeped in
acclaim. The first generation of the Mazda Miata MX-5 was the NA generation, which is characterized by its pop-up headlights, light weight, and short overhangs. It was the first taste of what would become a car with a cult-like following. While it isn't going to win any awards for power output, the charm of the MX-5 is its handling and driving
experience. Related The Miata has always been one of the best deals on the market. But which generation is the smartest investment? Regardless of its generation, the Mazda MX-5 is celebrated for its fun-to-drive formula, often compared to a go-kart. This, alongside the abundance of the petite convertible on the waste market, makes the Mazda Miata Miata Miata Miata MX-5 is celebrated for its fun-to-drive formula, often compared to a go-kart. This, alongside the abundance of the petite convertible on the waste market.
an appealing option for gearheads looking for an affordable project car. Engine 4.9L NA V8 Horsepower 215 hp @ 4,200 rpm Torque 285 lb-ft @ 3,400 rpm Torque 285 lb-ft @ 3,400 rpm O-60 mph Under 7 seconds The Ford Mustang offshoot was offered as a stripped-down, no-
nonsense version of the fourth-generation Ford Mustang GT. It relied on the same go-faster hardware as the regular Mustang GT same go-faster hardware go-fa
were produced, few appear for auction, but some can be found for a bargain and serve as the perfect foundation for a vintage American muscle car project. Sources: Classic.com, Ford, Nissan, BMW, Mazda, Lexus, Honda, BringATrailer, MotorTrend. Looking to buy a project car? You're in for an exciting journey but it can also be stressful. To find theeperfect foundation for a vintage American muscle car project.
best affordable project cars under $5k, you'll need to strike a balance between motivation and a familiar feel. You're enthusiastic and got the cash; that's great! However, knowing how to modify a car is also essential for any hot-rodding project. With that in mind, we've compiled a list of the top 7 options to help you get started on your dream car
journey. These outstanding project cars looks great, drives well, lasts a long time, is easy to maintain, and offers more value for the money you spend on it. best project cars looks great, drives well, lasts a long time, is easy to maintain, and offers more value for the money you spend on it. best project cars looks great, drives well, lasts a long time, is easy to maintain, and offers more value for the money you spend on it.
car is one that offers a balance between affordability, availability of parts, and ease of modification or restoration. Feasible options for everyone typically involve cars that are popular, have a strong aftermarket support, and are relatively easy to work on. Most of the time, project cars are purchased with the intention of being fixed up and customized
by enthusiasts or hobbyists who enjoy working on cars as a pastime. You can do anything on a project car from basic maintenance and repair work to a complete overhaul of the engine, transmission, suspension, and other major systems. Project cars can be an enjoyable and rewarding hobby, but they require a lot of time, effort, and money from you
but at the end of day you get a more desirable vehicle. Finding a cheap project car under budget can be a challenge, but there are several ways to go about it. Here are several ways to go about it. Here are several ways to go about it. Here are some tips to help you find the car you're looking for: Junkyards often have cars that need work, and you may be able to negotiate a good price for a car that needs some TLC.
However, be prepared to put in some effort to find a car in good enough condition to be a project car. Joining local car clubs or online forums can be a great way to network with other car enthusiasts who may be looking to sell a project car. They may also have insider information on where to find cheap project cars. Sometimes, a car only needs minor
repairs to be roadworthy again. Look for cars that have been neglected or abandoned but have a salvageable engine and body. Many local and online auctions, estate sales, or classic car auctions. Be sure to research the auction before attending and set a budget for
yourself. Be prepared to invest time, money, and effort into restoring the car to its former glory. Good luck with your search! It provides the availability of aftermarket and replacement parts for your project car. The project car be project car. The project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car. The project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car. The project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the project car be provided as a contract of the proje
 incredibly reliable and approachable learner-maintenance cars. Low cost of maintenance. Project cars provide driving reliability and satisfaction. We have compiled a checklist of 7 cheap good project cars that fit your needs! 1996 Nissan 240SX 2001 Ford Mustang GT 1994 Honda Civic 1992 Toyota MR2 1990 Mazda MX-5 Miata 1991 Mitsubishi
3000GT 1995 Lexus SC 400 MSRP: Starting From: $3,729 The Nissan 240SX is a compact sports car introduced by Nissan in the North American market. The 240SX is a capable lightweight chassis with excellent drift management. The Nissan features simplicity
time, and are easy to control. MSRP: Starting From: $2,288 Ford has been leading the domestic automotive industry for over a century. The company has great demand for making cutting-edge cars. Its most popular vehicle, the Mustangs and may have a cheap
entry point. 2001 Ford Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popular Mustang GT may not be among the most popula
the 2001 Mustang GT is that it's worth almost nothing now. MSRP: Starting From: $3,778 The Civic came to the United States in 1973. The Civic remains one of the most popular and successful cars in automobile history. One of the main reasons for the success is that there have been 11 generations of Civics. After that, the low cost and wide
availability of parts make it one of the most widely built project cars. Car modification is the primary requirement for any vehicle to be considered suitable for a project. Therefore, this is the primary requirement for any vehicle to be considered suitable for a project. Therefore, this is the primary requirement for any vehicle to be considered suitable for a project.
auto shop, one can easily find all kinds of spare parts such as air intakes, turbos, wheels, softer suspensions, fenders, and doors. MSRP: Starting From: $3,450. The Toyota MR2 is a two-seat, mid-engined, rear-wheel-drive sports car made in Japan. Toyota
marketed it worldwide from 1984 to 2007 for three generations. The MR2 Toyota design project is fun to drive and still delivers good fuel economy. Toyota MR2 mid-engined, rear-wheel-drive sports car Tastefully modified Japanese sports cars can start to excellent effect.
Toyota offered a 2.0-liter turbocharged inline-4 engine for the USA market. The 3S-GTE produces 200 hp at 6,000 rpm and 200 lb-ft of torque at 3,200 RPM. The Mazda MX-5 Miata is one of the best choices for a cheap
project vehicle. It is the perfect project car because it looks great, drives well, lasts long, is easy to maintain, and offers so much value for the money you spend on it. Mazda MX-5 Miata The MX-5 has a substantial chassis and a forgiving motor that can handle a significantly higher load than others. With an excellent track record of reliability, and
extensive aftermarket services. MSRP: Starting From: $4,000 Are you looking for a vehicle that is easy to work on? Mitsubishi 3000GT is one of the most unforgettable and iconic fun-to-drive mid-range project cars. 1991 Mitsubishi 3000GT The GTO's engines were either naturally
aspirated or twin-turbocharged and were also functional with active aerodynamics and adaptive suspension. The Japanese sports coupe comes with naturally aspirated 3.0-liter V6 cylinders that develop 222 hp at 6,000 rpm, gain 0-60mph in 5.9 seconds, 26.4 mpg fuel consumption, and 203 lb-ft of torque at 4,500 RPM. MSRP: Starting From: $3,625
The Lexus SC 400 debuted on 1 June 1991 in the United States as a 1992 model. The engine sits behind the front mid-engine, rear-wheel-drive vehicle. SC 400 was voted Import Car of the Year by Motor Trend in 1992. Lexus SC400 is relatively rare and super reliable. 1995 Lexus SC400 The Lexus SC400 offers 250 horsepower
from a 4.0L V8 engine, making it the most capable project car. Notable SC400 configurations like 4-speed automatic transmission, 260 lb-ft torque capacity, 105.9-inch wheelbase, and 18 city MPEG. Starting From: $4,495 The 2003 Chevrolet S-10 Pickup, stands as a versatile and budget-friendly choice for project car enthusiasts. This compact truck
offers a sturdy platform for customization, catering to a diverse range of preferences. With its robust chassis and available V6 and V8 engine options, the S-10's compact size and durable construction make it an ideal candidate for creating capable off-road machines. 2003
Chevrolet S-10 Base Lift kits, larger tires, and enhanced suspension components can transform the S-10 into a formidable off-roader. On the other hand, street truck enthusiasts can lower the S-10 for a sleek and aggressive appearance. The availability of aftermarket parts makes it easy to customize the truck's exterior, from body kits to stylish
wheels. Starting From: $4,200 Renowned for its German engineering, balanced handling, and classic design, the 2010 BMW 3 Series offers a dynamic driving experience. With rear-wheel drive and a variety of engine options, including inline-6 power plants, the 328i serves as a versatile canvas for both performance upgrades and aesthetic
enhancements, 2010 BMW 3 Series 328i Whether you're aiming to improve handling with upgraded suspension components, boost power through engine modifications, the 328i accommodates a wide range of customization options. Beyond its performance credentials, the BMW 3 Series retains a timeless look that has aged gracefully, making it an
selling for prominent money at the TV auctions, it usually costs more to buy and restore most vintage cars than the vehicles are worth at the end of the procedure. Project cars also became much more expensive, in part due to chip shortages that made new vehicles nearly impossible to find. Yes, you can use your project car in automatic mode. For
automated mode driving, you need to follow some simple steps. First, you go to Help and Options, then Control and adjust the Gearing option from Manual to Automatic mode. Project cars have been more popular among lovers for many years. Buying a cheap project car has several advantages. It is famous for its incredible handling and outstanding
gas mileage. The best part is that it can be modified to suit your driving style. Whether you want to make it faster or change the look, choose from many choices. Professional Automotive Content Writer at Auto SeeksDavid Smith is Chicago based automotive content writer. He has been working in the auto industry for a long time. And shares his
thoughts on automobiles, repair and maintenance, top selling cars on Auto Seeks. David Smith likes to ride new vehicles so that he can present a well information to our readers. Beyond cars and vehicle review he also enjoys playing baseball along with teengers. Every gearhead dreams of one day owning the perfect car. Whether it's a
pickup truck that can go anywhere and do anything or a tiny coupe that's perfect for canyon running, the single-car dream never gets too far from the thoughts of everyone who loves driving. Updated January 2022: Whether you're looking for a performance-oriented build or something that will impress everyone else on the road, we have updated this
list with some more excellent project cars that both respond well to tuning and boast amazing aftermarket support when it comes to cheap parts. Many of the cars being produced by today's automotive manufacturing giants are a combination of disappointing, strange-looking, and underpowered, and just about every gearhead has grown up
surrounded by the cars they love from an early age. Those model years that were awesome during formative times often become the focus of automotive dreams. Those dreams usually get put on the back-burner, though, because not everyone has a garage, a lift, a backyard, or the time and knowledge to keep an older car running reliably, much less
well. But the dream of having a project car lives on, regardless. And for those lucky few who are able to take one on, either hoping to perform a restoration to cherry condition or start up a major tuning and modding build, keep scrolling for 25 great cars that are made to be modified and represent the perfect introduction into the project car lifestyle.
25 R53 And R56 Mini Cooper via Vivid Racing The Mini has grown a lot ever since BMW took over, but it has also gained plenty of followers around the world. Being one of the most popular hatchbacks on the market, the Mini has an astonishingly huge aftermarket. Pretty much any upgrade a gearhead could possibly want already exists. This is, of
course, to be expected, as the Mini is as much a style icon and fashion accessory as it is a car. There are the usual basic upgrades, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts, such as wheels and bucket seats, but also more specialist parts are specialist parts.
the Mercedes-Benz C class. It's not a car that's particularly common on the tuning and modifying scene, but that doesn't mean it doesn't mean 
as carbon fiber splitters, trunk lips, and diffusers, fancy rims, and upgraded suspension. However, the beauty of modifying the Benz is that many parts from the AMG are a direct fit, making it possible to create something truly unique by mixing and matching parts. via Reddit The 350Z is the all-around king of affordable Japanese performance cars.
With decent models available well under the $10,000 mark, its 287-hp V6 still delivers a serious punch and offers plenty of room for tuning without changing the internals. The 350Z offers a great balance of aesthetics and performance, with tons of aftermarket support be it for components or external body modifications. It may be a bit cliche, but it's
still among the coolest tuners out there. via Car-from-UK This particular generation of the Firebird is one of the coolest yet most underrated American performance cars of the '90s. Aside from a 5.7L V8 producing 275 horsepower under the hood, the models also have surprisingly responsive handling and tons of aftermarket support. via Pinterest
We'd feel remiss if we failed to include the Civic in this list. These cheap but reliable cars have been the staple of tuner culture for over three decades now and have only gotten better due to the amount of aftermarket support available for them. And while you have over three decades of Civic models to choose from, the cheapest project car option
would probably be the 1989-1990 Civic, which also happens to be the most recognizable, via Chevy Hardcore While plenty of muscle car lovers will instinctively turn to the first generation Camaro is an equally good choice. In fact, with so many crate engines
available from Chevy, and a bit more of an aggressive exterior, a Camaro might be perfect for those gearheads looking for more of a performance-oriented build. That long hood makes wrenching on the engine relatively easy (unlike more modern cars with more complex engine bays) and the iconic style of the Camaro is never a bad thing to see
roaming the streets. via SM Classic Cars The first generation of the Ford Mustang can be a great starting point for either a restoration or performance-focused project. The iconic pony car (often thought of as a muscle car these days) is fairly simple to work on, with extensive support available both online and through any regular parts store. Dropping
in a crate engine might not necessarily be the best thing to do (though it's not a terrible idea) until the Mustang found on Craigslist for cheap can become a fun car to look at and to drive. via Corvette Forum The Corvette is
this country's only factory model that can truly be thought of as a supercar, but as such, the serious performance of the Corvette's later generation) Corvette has arguably the best style of all but the iconic C2 era, and with a long hood that can fit any
number of different sizes of V8, home mechanics can feel pretty confident that they'll be able to make up for the failings that Chevy built into the model from the factory. Plus, they're some of the biggest sports car bargains right now and easy to find. via Engine Swap Depot The Datsun 240Z is the direct predecessor to today's Nissan 370Z—and
anytime a model directly spawns so many generations over so many decades, it's a great sign that the original was something truly special. A unicorn 240Z might cost a pretty penny, but beat-up used examples are great project cars that combine iconic long hood style, neutral balance, and mechanical simplicity. Keep an eye out for rust while
shopping around, but other than that, just about any 240Z is a great place to start for either a restoration job or a seriously sporty build complete with a big V8, fender flares, and a roll cage. via Mustang Forums at StangNet The ridiculously wide rear tires on this Mustang reveal exactly what makes the Fox Body such a great starting point for a home
project: namely, that anything is attainable underneath that classic 1980s exterior. Ford built the third generation of the Mustang with a range of engine options and even modified some examples from the factory in a tough enough spec for use as police cruisers. With up to a 5.0-liter V8 coming stock, this generation of Mustang can be worked up to
some pretty serious power without having to worry too much about the rest of the mechanicals being unable to keep up. Fox Body Mustangs also tend to look amazing when modified. Building or restoring a project car is a fulfilling hobby for car enthusiasts. With a budget of $5,000 or less, finding the right project car is challenging but not impossible
Whether you're looking for a classic to restore or a tuner to modify, there are plenty of options in this price estimates, and what makes each a great option. From iconic sports cars to hidden gems, there's a project cars, including model years, current price estimates, and what makes each a great option. From iconic sports cars to hidden gems, there's a project cars, including model years, current price estimates, and what makes each a great option.
your mechanical skill level or vision for the build. Selecting the right project car within budget requires careful thought. While it might be tempting to purchase the first car that meets your price range, several key factors should guide your decision to ensure you don't end up spending significantly more in the long run. The availability of replacement
and upgrade parts is one of the most critical factors when choosing a project car. Cars like the Honda Civic, Mazda Miata, and Ford Mustang benefit from widespread aftermarket support. The easier it is to find parts, the quicker (and cheaper) your project can progress. If parts are rare or difficult to find, repairs could take longer and be more
expensive. For some older or more obscure models, even basic components can become costly or take weeks to source. Ensure you research the availability of parts for your chosen car before committing to the purchase. While you're buying a car to work on, the initial condition of the vehicle plays a huge role in the total cost of your project. Cars in
better shape may require less initial investment to get them roadworthy, while those that are rusted or have significant engine problems might exceed your $5,000 budget when repairs are factored in. Pay attention to the car's body condition, frame, engine, and suspension when inspecting potential purchases. Surface rust may be manageable, but
structural rust can be a deal-breaker as it can require extensive work. Similarly, engine and transmission issues can add significantly to your project costs. Different purposes. Are you building a track car, a daily driver, a show car, or an off-roader? The intended use of the car should heavily influence your choice. A classic
muscle car like the Ford Mustang is perfect for drag racing or a weekend cruiser, while a Jeep Cherokee XJ might be ideal for off-road adventures. On the other hand, lightweight sports cars like the Mazda Miata are well-suited for autocross or track days. Having a clear goal for your project can help narrow your options and avoid overspending on
unnecessary modifications. The more mechanical experience you have, the easier it will be to take on more ambitious projects. If you're a beginner, starting with a simple, well-documented car like a Honda Civic or Mazda Miata may be the best choice, as they are relatively easy to work on and have a wealth of tutorials available. If you have more
experience or access to specialized tools, you might consider more complex builds such as the mid-engine Toyota MR2 or a BMW E30. Knowing your limitations and skill level will ensure your project car, consider its potential resale value. Some cars appreciate after restoration or
modification, while others may not. Classics like the BMW E30 and Ford Mustang tend to hold or increase in value, especially with tasteful modifications. Be mindful of trends in the automotive world, as certain models might become more desirable over time. A car with a strong enthusiast following is more likely to fetch a good resale price once your
project is complete. Below are some of the most popular and effective ways to hunt for your next project cars in your area or even across the country. These platforms allow you to search for specific makes, models, and price ranges,
making it easier to find the right car for your budget. Online listings often give you a good sense of the car's condition with pictures and detailed descriptions. However, it's essential to inspect any vehicle in person before buying to ensure there are no hidden issues. Craigslist: It has been a go-to source for used cars for years. While you need to be
cautious of scams or misleading listings, it's possible to find good deals on project cars. Facebook Marketplace is another excellent platform for finding affordable project cars locally.eBay Motors: Though often more expensive due to bidding, you can occasionally find a deal
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on eBay Motors, especially for rarer cars. Shipping can be a downside if you're purchasing from a distant location. Local car auctions come from police seizures, government fleets, or repossessions, which means you can often pick up a car for a fraction of its actual

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value. The downside is that you might not have a chance to thoroughly inspect the car before bidding, so there's always a bit of a gamble involved. Nonetheless, if you're prepared to take a risk, car auctions can yield fantastic project opportunities. Police Auctions: Many municipalities auction off seized or abandoned vehicles, and prices are typically fantastic project opportunities.
much lower than the market value. Government Surplus Auctions: Vehicles retired from government fleets, such as police cars or postal trucks, are often sold at low prices. While not glamorous, these cars can be reliable and affordable project vehicles. Car enthusiast forums can also be a valuable resource for finding project cars. Many members of
these forums are passionate about their cars and often sell vehicles to other enthusiasts at reasonable prices. These communities are great for finding specific makes and models, and sellers on forums for specific makes
include: Never underestimate the power of word of mouth. Let your friends, family, and coworkers know you're on the hunt for a project car. You might be surprised by how many people know someone looking to sell an old car sitting in their garage or driveway. These word-of-mouth deals often lead to some of the best bargains since there's no
advertising cost or dealer markup involved. Once you've selected your project car, it's time to plan out your modifications. One of the most common modifications that people make to budget project cars. One of the most exciting aspects of a
project car is improving its performance. Many budget project cars, especially older models, can benefit from engine swaps or other performance upgrades. For example, a popular modification for Honda Civic owners is swapping the stock engine with a more powerful B-series or K-series engine. Similarly, BMW E30 enthusiasts often swap in a large
inline-six engine for more horsepower. Other performance upgrades might include turbocharging or supercharging the engine, installing a cold air intake, or upgrading the exhaust system. Performance modifications can transform a budget project car into a serious performer, but they also require mechanical knowledge and careful planning to avoid
damaging the car. Upgrading your car's suspension is one of the most noticeable improvements you can make, especially for cars intended for track use or spirited driving. Installing coilovers, sway bars, or stiffer shocks can drastically improve the handling and cornering ability of your car. For off-road builds, such as the Jeep Cherokee XJ, lifting the
suspension and installing larger tires can enhance the car's off-road capability. Even for street builds, improving the suspension kits are widely available for popular project cars and can be tailored to your specific driving
needs. Many project cars benefit from exterior modifications that enhance their aesthetic appeal. Exterior modifications can range from subtle changes like a new set of wheels or a custom paint job to more dramatic upgrades like body kits or widebody fenders. For cars like the Nissan 240SX or Toyota MR2, aero kits and spoilers are
popular additions that give the car a more aggressive look. Interior modifications can include new racing seats, a custom steering wheel, or a roll cage for added safety in track-focused builds. Restoring the interior of a classic car, such as the BMW E30, can also significantly increase the car's value and your enjoyment of the project. Upgrading the
brakes is a critical modification for project cars, especially those being tuned for performance. High-performance brake pads, rotors, and calipers ensure that your car can stop as quickly as it accelerates. Additionally, ensuring that the car has up-to-date safety equipment like seat belts or airbags (if applicable) is essential, particularly for older cars
that might lack modern safety features. Model Year: 1990-1997 Price: $3,000-$5,000 The Mazda MX-5 Miata is a beloved roadster known for its lightweight design and excellent handling. This car makes a perfect project vehicle due to its simplicity, availability of parts, and vast aftermarket support. Miatas from the early 1990s are still affordable and
offer a fun, driver-focused experience. You can find plenty of used models, though you might need to invest in a new suspension, bodywork, or engine upgrades depending on the condition. The NA (first-generation) Miata is a favorite because of its pop-up headlights and classic design. It's a great choice for those wanting a sports car to upgrade or
restore. Its reliability and ease of modification make it popular among car enthusiasts, ensuring that parts are relatively easy to find and affordable. Model Year: 1984-1991 Price: $4,000-$5,000 The BMW E30 3 Series is a timeless model that's gained cult status over the years. It's not just a classic car; it's also a great platform for a project build. While
E30 prices have risen in recent years due to their popularity, you can still find examples under budget if you're willing to invest time in restoring or repairing them. Known for its sharp handling, rear-wheel drive, and robust engine, the E30 can be tuned for performance or kept in its stock form as a vintage driver. Parts are still widely available, and
many enthusiasts have built track-ready or performance versions of the E30, making it a versatile choice for anyone looking for a project car. Model Year: 1992-2000Price: $2,000-$4,500The Honda Civic from the 1990s is one of the most popular choices for a project car. Model Year: 1992-2000Price: $2,000-$4,500The Honda Civic from the 1990s is one of the most popular choices for a project car. Model Year: 1992-2000Price: $2,000-$4,500The Honda Civic from the 1990s is one of the most popular choices for a project car. Model Year: 1992-2000Price: $2,000-$4,500The Honda Civic from the 1990s is one of the most popular choices for a project car. Model Year: 1992-2000Price: $2,000-$4,500The Honda Civic from the 1990s is one of the most popular choices for a project car.
its reliability, lightweight chassis, and excellent aftermarket support. Models from 1992-2000 are still relatively cheap and provide a solid foundation for performance upgrades, body modifications, and engine swaps. Civics are easy to work on, and their engines are highly receptive to tuning, making them a favorite in the car community. Whether
you're planning a track car, street racer, or custom build, the Honda Civic is a fantastic option. Model Year: 1994-1998 Ford Mustang is an affordable option for a project car. These Mustangs, especially the GT models, come with V8 engines that are perfect for tuning. While newer
Mustangs can be expensive, models from 1994 to 1998 can still be found within the $5,000 range. Whether you're interested in restoring a classic muscle car or building a drag racer, the Mustang offers plenty of power and aftermarket support. It's also a relatively easy car to work on, and there are countless resources and parts available for
modifications. The sleek design of the SN95 model and its powerful engine make it an excellent starting point for muscle car enthusiasts. Model Year: 1989–1998 price: $3,000-$5,000 The Nissan 240 SX is an iconic Japanese sports car that's popular in the drift community. Known for its rear-wheel-drive layout and balanced handling, the 240 SX is an iconic Japanese sports car that's popular in the drift community. Known for its rear-wheel-drive layout and balanced handling, the 240 SX is an iconic Japanese sports car that's popular in the drift community.
great project car for those interested in building a performance or drift vehicle. The S13 (1989-1994) and S14 (1995-1998) models are especially sought after for their popularity, the 240SX has a large following, and there are plenty of still possible to find one if you're patient. Due to their popularity, the 240SX has a large following, and there are plenty of still possible to find one if you're patient.
aftermarket parts available. Whether you're building a track car or a street machine, the 240SX offers a solid foundation. Model Year: 1984-2001 Price: $2,500-$4,500If off-roading is more your style, the Jeep Cherokee XJ has become
a cult favorite among off-road enthusiasts. Its boxy design and reliable 4.0L inline-six engine make it an ideal platform for a budget build. Parts for the Cherokee XJ are abundant and relatively inexpension for serious trail performance
or simply restore an old XJ for daily use, the Cherokee is an affordable and versatile option. Model Year: 1985-1995 Price: $3,000-$5,000 The Toyota MR2 is a unique project car due to its mid-engine, rear-wheel-drive layout. This compact sports car offers exceptional handling and a fun driving experience, making it a popular choice for enthusiasts. The
first and second-generation MR2s can still be found for under $5,000, though they may require some mechanical or cosmetic restoration. The MR2 is known for being a bit more complex to work on due to its engine placement, but it's a rewarding project for those up to the challenge. Whether you want to restore it to factory condition or modify it for
performance, the MR2 is a standout choice in the project car market. Model Year: 1994-2001 Price: $3,000-$4,500 The Volkswagen Golf GTI is an iconic hot hatch that offers plenty of fun for a relatively low price. Models from the mid-90s to early 2000s are still within the $5,000 range and offer a solid foundation for modifications. The GTI's
turbocharged engines, lightweight design, and agile handling make it a great project car, especially for those interested in building a performance-oriented hatchback. With a strong community of enthusiasts and plenty of aftermarket parts available, the GTI is a versatile project car that can be customized to your liking. Whether you're aiming for a
performance build or a stylish daily driver, the Golf GTI offers excellent value for your money. Model Year: 1993-2001 Price: $2,500-$5,000 The Subaru Impreza is a fantastic project car for those looking to build a rally-inspired vehicle. Known for its all-wheel-drive system and durable engine, the Impreza is a fantastic project car for those looking to build a rally-inspired vehicle.
models from the 1990s are still affordable, and there's a large community of Subaru enthusiasts to help guide your build. The Impreza is a versatile car that can be used for everything from daily driving to track use. With a wide variety of aftermarket parts available, including suspension upgrades and performance modifications, it's a great option for
anyone looking to build a budget-friendly project car. Model Year: 1993-2002 rice: $3,500-$5,000 The Chevrolet Camaro from the 1990s and early 2000s is another great option for muscle car enthusiasts. These fourth-generation Camaros are known for their V8 engines and powerful performance, making them a fantastic platform for a project build.
With models available under $5,000, the Camaro offers a lot of bang for your buck in terms of performance potential. The Camaro's strong aftermarket support and the availability of parts make it a solid choice for those looking to build a muscle car on a budget. Whether you're aiming to restore it to its former glory or create a high-performance
beast, the Camaro is a classic American muscle car that's perfect for a project car under $5,000 might seem daunting, but with the right approach, there are plenty of options out there. Whether you're into JDM tuners, American muscle, or European classics, this price range offers something for everyone. While each of the cars
listed here may require varying degrees of work, they all provide a great starting point for a rewarding build. Be sure to consider factors such as the availability of parts, your mechanical skills, and the car's potential for customization as you search for your next project. For gearheads, ownership is only a small step on the path towards the acquisition
of a dream car. Far more of the process comes down to knowing a vehicle inside and out, replacing parts as needed, and making upgrades as they arise. Sure, buying a car off the lot makes for immediate gratification, but the reality is that it's a fleeting enjoyment at best. However, not everyone is born with a mechanic's intuition, and intentionally
buying a project car can be an intimidating prospect for the uninitiated. In concept, it sounds like a fun, educational experience; in practice, it can make for an overwhelming commitment. For no matter how confident anyone is of their ability, all it takes is one pop of the hood to test their chops. The good news is that project cars don't have to break
the bank. With so many options available on the classifieds, it's not hard to find a buy befitting your budget. But having so much choice can make it difficult to tell an ambitious project from all-out money pit. Moreover, not all cars are intuitive to work on, and you can quickly find yourself in over your head. Rather than whiling away the day, wondering
when you'll get around to tackling a build, have a read and see what we've picked for the best budget project cars. Key Characteristics To Consider Parts: First and foremost, you should consider the availability of aftermarket and replacement parts for your project. There's no feeling worse than successfully diagnosing a fix only to discover that the
part is out of your price range or no longer produced. Because the longer a problem persists, the more likely it is to go unfixed. Before you know it, you'll be looking to offload your build in order to hop to another project. Even if you can't buy new OEM parts, a transplant from a donor car could be just what you need to get your ride back on the road.
Forum Support: Although insider knowledge was once something exclusive to owner's clubs, the internet has allowed for a thriving online enthusiast community. If you find yourself stumped on how to go about repairing your project, have a look at the forums — chances are good that someone has asked the same questions you're thinking. And should
your particular car present a problem unique unto itself, you'll at least have the backing of fellow wrenchers to advise a plan of attack. Availability: Everyone envisions rolling up to a car meet with a unicorn in tow. While it can be tempting to seek out rare and unloved models in order to distinguish yourself, it doesn't make for the best budget build.
Cars that are more readily available are cheaper up front. What's more, donor cars make for inexpensive fixes — assuming they're in serviceable condition. And in the event you need to do a significant body repair, you'll be far better off dropping in a new panel than you would trying to fab it on your own. Where There's A Way Tools:
Get yourself a solid set of tools. Sure, budget sets will save you money in the short term, but with the potential for improper clearances and poor build quality, they could result in a much bigger problem down the road. Consider your car's need for any specialty tools. Are they easily available? If not, do you have the mechanical ability to make your
own? Knowhow: There's no prerequisite to buying a project car, but it helps to have a solid base to get you going. Whether that's understanding how to turn a wrench or familiarizing yourself with the principles of a project car, so it helps to
have the support of those around you to keep you going. If you're fighting to justify your build while you're also fighting to fix it, you'll soon find yourself forced to make a decision — with potentially unwanted consequences. Will: Drive is one thing you can't buy or learn. If all else fails, perseverance will serve you well in your efforts to get your project
running again. Remember why you bought such a car in the first place — to work on it. Editor's Note: All average used pricing based on Hagerty's Valuation Tool in "Good" condition. Japanese imports are ideal project cars because of their unrivaled build quality, intuitive engineering, and abundance of aftermarket parts. Whether you're a die-hard
drift fan or a would-be street racer, you can't go wrong with any of these options. Photo: Honda Why It Made The Cut An affordable Japanese sports car with an amazing foundation for tuning. Although a lot of once cheap project cars have seen a considerable rise in their asking prices, the Acura Integra is still very much affordable. The price of
millennium-era Integras has recently being rising, especially with the GS-R and R Type variants, though this also makes these gray investment cars — even more so if you plan on fixing one up. Couple that with lots of aftermarket parts support and plenty of owner's forums, and you have a bonafide budget project great for beginners and experienced
enthusiasts alike. Engine: 1.8L Inline-Four Power: 170HP Average Used Pricing: $21,400 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut An affordable high-performance 2-door that's often referred to as a poor man's 911. While its predecessors — the 240z and 260z — can fetch a pretty penny at auction, the Datsun 280Z is comparatively reasonable. In
recent years, the market has caught onto their appeal, but with some diligent searching you can easily find one ready to be your next project. If considering a classic Z car, do yourself a favor and check the body panels for rust — anything that's likely to affect the structural integrity should signal a red flag. Engine: 2.8L Straight-Six Power: 149HP
Average Used Pricing: $18,300 Photo: Honda Why It Made The Cut A legendary tuner-car platform with an absolutely massive selection of available aftermarket upgrades. First entering production in 1972, the venerable Honda Civic has seen all sorts of variants, from spritely hot hatches to stately shuttle wagons. With so many options out there, you
can have your pick of the lot when it comes to body style, engine capacity, and interior furnishings. Like any Honda, it's resilient, easy to work on, and can be tuned to your heart's content. Throw on some suspension upgrades and a set of decent tires, and you have yourself a capable performer. Engine: 1.6L Inline-Four Power: 108HP Average Used
Pricing: $9,500 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut A minimalistic, lightweight, pure driver's car with stellar handling, performance, value, & aftermarket part availability. Granted, Miatas have experienced a bit of appreciation in the last decade, but most model years still make for very affordable project cars. Not only are they incredibly reliable.
and approachable learner-maintenance cars, but they're also enjoyable to drive and ideal for upgrading. So while you may initially buy it as a budget fix, you'll soon come to find that you won't be able to part ways with this little roadster. Engine: 1.6L Inline-Four Power: 116HP Average Used Pricing: $8,700 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut An
iconic Japanese tuner car that's highly conducive to tuning & upgrading. These days, unmolested 240SX's are a bit of a tough find; most of them are half-baked drift car projects that have seen better days. That being said, when stock-spec 240SX's crop up now and again, they can be had for as little as $3-4k. While you can spring for one that's been
modded to the moon, you'll save yourself time and money if you don't have to undo all that hard (but questionably executed) work. Engine: 2.4L Inline-Four Power: 140HP Average Used Pricing: $15,600 There's no denying the appeal of domestic classics — they're as American as apple pie and baseball. Simple in build yet powerful in performance, all
of these are good budget buys. Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A bonafide American classic that's highly sought-after across several generations. Later Camaro coupes are a dime-a-dozen, so they make excellent beginner muscle car projects. But if that's not your jam, you can even find some earlier examples on the low, provided you're
willing to put in the work to get it up to shape. With ample aftermarket parts support and a crop of readily available crate engines, there's no shortage of ways in which you can turn a Camaro into the car of your dreams. Engine: 5.0L V8 Power: 155HP Average Used Pricing: $7,800 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A divisive pickup bed-
equipped car that's become increasingly sought-after in recent years. Part of the A-body line, the El Camino features parts compatibility with several other popular models including the Chevrolet Chevelle, Buick Special, Oldsmobile Cutlass, and Pontiac Tempest. As such, it's quite easy to get your hands on replacements for any problem areas that
need addressing. What's more, they're incredibly simple cars, making them approachable options for beginners looking to get their feet wet. Engine: 5.0L V8 Power: 145HP Average Used Pricing: $8,600 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut A boxy mid-century Dodge with great value and a steadily-increasing price. As the oft-quoted aphorism goes
- rising tides raise all ships. In practice, this means that many look-a-likes from the golden age of American muscle have also increased in value, such as the Chevy Vega. However, there are some standouts that can be had for an acceptable sum. The Dodge Dart is a case in point, for though it's not quite as common as some of the other options
featured here, it seems to have staved off its appreciation for just a bit longer. Whether you're going for a full-size first-gen or a mid-size fourth-gen, each makes for a good budget buy. Engine: 4.5L V8 Power: 180HP Average Used Pricing: $9,200 Photo: Ford Why It Made The Cut A legendary American pony car offered across half-a-dozen different
generations. When properly restored, first- and second-generation Mustangs command a pretty hefty sum. And while you can find them pretty reasonably depending on the condition, their iconic status makes them a hard sell as a budget project. Instead, go for a Fox-body or an SN95. Seen as a flop upon their debut, they haven't held their value
over the years nearly as well. What this means for you is that they're both cheap and readily had — you should have no trouble sourcing a car suitable to your tastes. Engine: 5.0L V8 Power: 215HP Average Used Pricing: $9,600 Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut An unapologetically '70s/80s era muscle car with a quintessential American
design. As with most popular muscle cars, later-gen Firebirds are considerably cheaper than their iconic fore-bearers. Sure, they don't offer the same high-octane nostalgia, but they're a great budget gateway to muscle car performance. If possible, shoot for a third or fourth generation model year — the low overhead cost will give you room in your
budget for future upgrades and unanticipated repairs. Engine: 4.9L V8 Power: 150HP Average Used Pricing: $22,200 If your travels take you off the beaten path, it's in your best interest to get a vehicle that's up to the task. Each of these off-road icons makes for an approachable option with upgrade potential aplenty. Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made
The Cut A well-built American classic offering fantastic bang for your buck. Cheap and robust, Cheap and robust, Cheap and robust, worth noting that the older you go, the harder parts will be
to find. If possible, stick to second-gen model years — you'll save yourself a lot of headaches in the long run, and it'll be much easier to work on. Engine: 4.0L Six-Cylinder Power: 155HP Average Used Pricing: $14,300 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut An early F Series pickup absolutely brimming with character and old-school flavor. F-100's
are extremely popular buys for classic project trucks. And it's for good reason. There's an abundance of project-ready examples, they're easy to source parts for, and they're relatively inexpensive to come by. What's more, there are plenty of directions you can go with your build. So whether you prefer to perfectly restore your pickup or want to restore
mod it with modern tech, there's ample opportunity to make it your own. We also recommend looking out for Flareside models, as they tend to come a bit cheaper than their Styleside counterparts. Engine: 3.6L Six-Cylinder Power: 126HP Average Used Pricing: $15,900 Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A big and boxy GMC truck that stands
as a poor-man's alternative to a vintage Ford Bronco or International Harvester Scout. While Chevy Blazers have long left the realm of the budget project car, their GMC-badged brethren are still easily had for a cool $10,000 and under — even cheaper if you're willing to start with a basket case of a donor. They're not the most powerful SUVs or
especially fuel-efficient, but they'll promise you years of dependable performance if properly taken care of. Just be wary of driving them on the highway; it's a surefire way to discover any problems that might be lurking. There are also Jimmy models that come with larger V8 powertrains. Engine: 4.0L Six-Cylinder Power: 130HP Average Used Pricing
$9,300 Photo: Jeep Why It Made The Cut An American-made, turn-of-the-millennium-era SUV with exceptional durability, Popular amongst beginners and seasoned trail experts alike, XJ Cherokees are nearly-indestructible when properly maintained. Sure, they have their characteristically American quirks, but they'll go a long way
toward teaching you how to perform upkeep on your own car. And while they're quite the rock-bottom affordable offering that they once were, the immense online support and parts availability remain. Engine: 4.0L Straight-Six Power: 190HP Average Used Pricing: $10,100 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A compact yet capable 4×4 offering a
markedly more affordable alternative to Toyota's FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40, International Harvester Scout, and Ford Bronco — the Suzuki Samurai stands out as one of the last of such cars yet to be snatched up. It's worth noting that these pocket-sized SUVs
aren't known for their power (quite the opposite in fact). With a top speed of just 65mph, it's advisable to spring for an engine swap. Count on these becoming harder and harder to find. Engine: 1.3L Inline-Four Power: 60HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 By their very nature, European imports require an owner that'll keep up with maintenance.
While this can lead to some sad and neglected examples, others can prove quite a find when it comes to budget project potential. Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A sporty Bavarian-built model that served as the basis for the legendary E30 M3. These days, E30 M3's fetch astronomical prices at auction. But with a bit of patient searching
(and some luck), you can easily snag a 325i. With a bulletproof straight-six under the hood, it's a great car for beginners just getting into things or experienced wrenchers looking for a ready-to-tune ride. While 316's and 318i's are all over the classifieds, you should consider the direction of your build before buying one; if you're looking for
performance, you'll quickly outgrow their meager four-cylinders. Engine: 2.5L Straight-Six Power: 168HP Average Used Pricing: $19,600 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A British-built true drivers car with an obtainable price & devoted cult following. If you're a fan of small British sports cars, it doesn't get much better than the MGE
Available as a roadster and as a GT (pictured here) these cars are extremely popular amongst automotive enthusiasts. As such, there's a wellspring of available knowledge for you to tap into come time to fix up your own. When considering a potential MGB project, be sure to check for rust — British cars are notorious for the stuff. Engine: 1.8L Inline-
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models are obviously more sought after, the final-year (1989) 944 is almost certainly the one you want, as it gained a bit of extra displacement and power. Engine: 2.7L Inline Four Power: 160HP Average Used Pricing: $12,000 Photo: Volkswagen Why It Made The Cut A vintage European hot hatch with loads of potential for upgrading & tuning.
 Second to the Beetle, the Volkswagen Golf is one of the most prevalent models the German marque produces. So no matter what body style you're considering, they're incredibly affordable project platforms. In GTI form, they make for lightweight little hatchbacks that offer tons of driving fun. Bag it, boost it, or bring it back to factory condition — they make for lightweight little hatchbacks that offer tons of driving fun.
world is your oyster when it comes to the end result. Even a cursory search will show you just how thriving the VW wrencher community is. Engine: 1.7L Inline-Four Power: 112HP Average Used Pricing: $15,300 Photo: Volvo Cars Global Why It Made The Cut A boxy & beloved classic Volvo kicked along by a bulletproof-reliable four-banger. Older
Volvos have tons of qualities that make them ideal platforms for getting your hands dirty. For instance, their spacious engine bays allow for easy access to components come time for maintenance. And when it comes to the ride, they're built like tanks and are generally pretty reliable. Buyer beware — depending on the fix, some parts can be hard to
find (as is the case with most Swedish imports). Engine: 2.1L Inline-Four Power: 98HP Average Used Price: $5,100 Photo: Shutterstock Interested in investing your hard-earned money into classic cars rather than the stock market or CD? Then be sure to head over to our guide to the best investment cars for a curated list of retro rides with steadily-
the reality is that it's a fleeting enjoyment at best. However, not everyone is born with a mechanic's intuition, and intentionally buying a project car can be an intimidating prospect for the uninitiated. In concept, it sounds like a fun, educational experience; in practice, it can make for an overwhelming commitment. For no matter how confident anyone.
is of their ability, all it takes is one pop of the hood to test their chops. The good news is that project cars don't have to break the bank. With so many options available on the classifieds, it's not hard to find a buy befitting your budget. But having so much choice can make it difficult to tell an ambitious project from all-out money pit. Moreover, not all
cars are intuitive to work on, and you can quickly find yourself in over your head. Rather than whiling away the day, wondering when you'll get around to tackling a build, have a read and see what we've picked for the best budget project cars. Key Characteristics To Consider Parts: First and foremost, you should consider the availability of
aftermarket and replacement parts for your project. There's no feeling worse than successfully diagnosing a fix only to discover that the part is out of your price range or no longer produced. Because the longer a problem persists, the more likely it is to go unfixed. Before you know it, you'll be looking to offload your build in order to hop to another
project. Even if you can't buy new OEM parts, a transplant from a donor car could be just what you need to get your ride back on the road. Forum Support: Although insider knowledge was once something exclusive to owner's clubs, the internet has allowed for a thriving online enthusiast community. If you find yourself stumped on how to go about
repairing your project, have a look at the forums — chances are good that someone has asked the same questions you're thinking. And should your particular car present a problem unique unto itself, you'll at least have the backing of fellow wrenchers to advise a plan of attack. Availability: Everyone envisions rolling up to a car meet with a unicorn in
tow. While it can be tempting to seek out rare and unloved models in order to distinguish yourself, it doesn't make for the best budget build. Cars that are more readily available are cheaper up front. What's more, donor cars make for inexpensive fixes — assuming they're in serviceable condition. And in the event you need to do a significant body
repair, you'll be far better off dropping in a new panel than you would trying to fab it on your own. Where There's A Will, There's A Will, There's A Way Tools: Get yourself a solid set of tools. Sure, budget sets will save you money in the short term, but with the potential for improper clearances and poor build quality, they could result in a much bigger problem down
the road. Consider your car's need for any specialty tools. Are they easily available? If not, do you have the mechanical ability to make your own? Knowhow: There's no prerequisite to buying a project car, but it helps to have a solid base to get you going. Whether that's understanding how to turn a wrench or familiarizing yourself with the principles
of a powertrain, knowledge is power in any project. Support: Bad days are inevitable throughout the ownership of a project car, so it helps to have the support of those around you to keep you going. If you're fighting to justify your build while you're fighting to justify you're fig
consequences. Will: Drive is one thing you can't buy or learn. If all else fails, perseverance will serve you well in your efforts to get your project running again. Remember why you bought such a car in the first place — to work on it. Editor's Note: All average used pricing based on Hagerty's Valuation Tool in "Good" condition. Japanese imports are
ideal project cars because of their unrivaled build quality, intuitive engineering, and abundance of aftermarket parts. Whether you're a die-hard drift fan or a would-be street racer, you can't go wrong with any of these options. Photo: Honda Why It Made The Cut An affordable Japanese sports car with an amazing foundation for tuning. Although a lot
of once cheap project cars have seen a considerable rise in their asking prices, the Acura Integras has recently being rising, especially with the GS-R and R Type variants, though this also makes these gray investment cars — even more so if you plan on fixing one up. Couple that with
lots of aftermarket parts support and plenty of owner's forums, and you have a bonafide budget project great for beginners and experienced enthusiasts alike. Engine: 1.8L Inline-Four Power: 170HP Average Used Pricing: $21,400 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut An affordable high-performance 2-door that's often referred to as a poor man's
911. While its predecessors — the 240z and 260z — can fetch a pretty penny at auction, the Datsun 280Z is comparatively reasonable. In recent years, the market has caught onto their appeal, but with some diligent searching you can easily find one ready to be your next project. If considering a classic Z car, do yourself a favor and check the body
panels for rust — anything that's likely to affect the structural integrity should signal a red flag. Engine: 2.8L Straight-Six Power: 149HP Average Used Pricing: $18,300 Photo: Honda Why It Made The Cut A legendary tuner-car platform with an absolutely massive selection of available aftermarket upgrades. First entering production in 1972, the
 venerable Honda Civic has seen all sorts of variants, from spritely hot hatches to stately shuttle wagons. With so many options out there, you can have your pick of the lot when it comes to body style, engine capacity, and interior furnishings. Like any Honda, it's resilient, easy to work on, and can be tuned to your heart's content. Throw on some
suspension upgrades and a set of decent tires, and you have yourself a capable performer. Engine: 1.6L Inline-Four Power: 108HP Average Used Pricing: $9,500 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut A minimalistic, lightweight, pure driver's car with stellar handling, performance, value, & aftermarket part availability. Granted, Miatas have
experienced a bit of appreciation in the last decade, but most model years still make for very affordable project cars. Not only are they incredibly reliable and approachable learner-maintenance cars, but they're also enjoyable to drive and ideal for upgrading. So while you may initially buy it as a budget fix, you'll soon come to find that you won't be
able to part ways with this little roadster. Engine: 1.6L Inline-Four Power: 116HP Average Used Pricing: $8,700 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut An iconic Japanese tuner car that's highly conducive to tuning & upgrading. These days, unmolested 240SX's are a bit of a tough find; most of them are half-baked drift car projects that have seen
better days. That being said, when stock-spec 240SX's crop up now and again, they can be had for as little as $3-4k. While you can spring for one that's been modded to the moon, you'll save yourself time and money if you don't have to undo all that hard (but questionably executed) work. Engine: 2.4L Inline-Four Power: 140HP Average Used Pricing:
$15,600 There's no denying the appeal of domestic classics — they're as American as apple pie and baseball. Simple in build yet powerful in performance, all of these are good budget buys. Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A bonafide American classic that's highly sought-after across several generations. Later Camaro coupes are a dime-a-
dozen, so they make excellent beginner muscle car projects. But if that's not your jam, you can even find some earlier examples on the low, provided you're willing to put in the work to get it up to shape. With ample aftermarket parts support and a crop of readily available crate engines, there's no shortage of ways in which you can turn a Camaro into
the car of your dreams. Engine: 5.0L V8 Power: 155HP Average Used Pricing: $7,800 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A divisive pickup bed-equipped car that's become increasingly sought-after in recent years. Part of the A-body line, the El Camino features parts compatibility with several other popular models including the Chevrolet
Chevelle, Buick Special, Oldsmobile Cutlass, and Pontiac Tempest. As such, it's quite easy to get your hands on replacements for any problem areas that need addressing. What's more, they're incredibly simple cars, making them approachable options for beginners looking to get their feet wet. Engine: 5.0L V8 Power: 145HP Average Used Pricing
$8,600 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut A boxy mid-century Dodge with great value and a steadily-increasing price. As the oft-quoted aphorism goes — rising tides raise all ships. In practice, this means that many look-a-likes from the golden age of American muscle have also increased in value, such as the Chevy Vega. However, there are some
standouts that can be had for an acceptable sum. The Dodge Dart is a case in point, for though it's not quite as common as some of the other options featured here, it seems to have staved off its appreciation for just a bit longer. Whether you're going for a full-size first-gen or a mid-size fourth-gen, each makes for a good budget buy. Engine: 4.5L V8
Power: 180HP Average Used Pricing: $9,200 Photo: Ford Why It Made The Cut A legendary American pony car offered across half-a-dozen different generations. When properly restored, first- and second-generation Mustangs command a pretty hefty sum. And while you can find them pretty reasonably depending on the condition, their iconic status
makes them a hard sell as a budget project. Instead, go for a Fox-body or an SN95. Seen as a flop upon their debut, they haven't held their value over the years nearly as well. What this means for you is that they're both cheap and readily had — you should have no trouble sourcing a car suitable to your tastes. Engine: 5.0L V8 Power: 215HP Average and readily had — you should have no trouble sourcing a car suitable to your tastes.
Used Pricing: $9,600 Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut An unapologetically '70s/80s era muscle car with a quintessential American design. As with most popular muscle cars, later-gen Firebirds are considerably cheaper than their iconic fore-bearers. Sure, they don't offer the same high-octane nostalgia, but they're a great budget gateway to
muscle car performance. If possible, shoot for a third or fourth generation model year — the low overhead cost will give you room in your budget for future upgrades and unanticipated repairs. Engine: 4.9L V8 Power: 150HP Average Used Pricing: $22,200 If your travels take you off the beaten path, it's in your best interest to get a vehicle that's up to
the task. Each of these off-road icons makes for an approachable option with upgrade potential aplenty. Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut A well-built American classic offering fantastic bang for your buck. Cheap and robust, chevy C10 trucks make for great project cars. They're simple to work on and also popular amongst enthusiasts, so
there's a lot of parts and support available in the event you run into trouble. It's worth noting that the older you go, the harder parts will be much easier to work on. Engine: 4.0L Six-Cylinder Power: 155HP Average Used Pricing:
$14,300 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut An early F Series pickup absolutely brimming with character and old-school flavor. F-100's are extremely popular buys for classic project trucks. And it's for good reason. There's an abundance of project-ready examples, they're easy to source parts for, and they're relatively inexpensive to come by.
What's more, there are plenty of directions you can go with your build. So whether you prefer to perfectly restore your pickup or want to resto-mod it with modern tech, there's ample opportunity to make it your own. We also recommend looking out for Flareside models, as they tend to come a bit cheaper than their Styleside counterparts. Engine
3.6L Six-Cylinder Power: 126HP Average Used Pricing: $15,900 Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A big and boxy GMC truck that stands as a poor-man's alternative to a vintage Ford Bronco or International Harvester Scout. While Chevy Blazers have long left the realm of the budget project car, their GMC-badged brethren are still easily had
for a cool $10,000 and under — even cheaper if you're willing to start with a basket case of a donor. They're not the most powerful SUVs or especially fuel-efficient, but they'll promise you years of dependable performance if properly taken care of. Just be wary of driving them on the highway; it's a surefire way to discover any problems that might be
lurking. There are also Jimmy models that come with larger V8 powertrains. Engine: 4.0L Six-Cylinder Power: 130HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Jeep Why It Made The Cut An American-made, turn-of-the-millennium-era SUV with exceptional durability and dependability. Popular amongst beginners and seasoned trail experts alike, XJ
Cherokees are nearly-indestructible when properly maintained. Sure, they have their characteristically American quirks, but they're quite the rock-bottom affordable offering that they once were, the immense online support and parts availability remain.
Engine: 4.0L Straight-Six Power: 190HP Average Used Pricing: $10,100 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A compact yet capable 4×4 offering a markedly more affordable alternative to Toyota's FJ40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40, International Harvester Scout,
and Ford Bronco — the Suzuki Samurai stands out as one of the last of such cars yet to be snatched up. It's worth noting that these pocket-sized SUVs aren't known for their power (quite the opposite in fact). With a top speed of just 65mph, it's advisable to spring for an engine swap. Count on these becoming harder and harder to find. Engine: 1.31
Inline-Four Power: 60HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 By their very nature, European imports require an owner that'll keep up with maintenance. While this can lead to some sad and neglected examples, others can prove quite a find when it comes to budget project potential. Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A sporty Bavarian-built model
that served as the basis for the legendary E30 M3. These days, E30 M3's fetch astronomical prices at auction. But with a bit of patient searching (and some luck), you can easily snag a 325i. With a bulletproof straight-six under the hood, it's a great car for beginners just getting into things or experienced wrenchers looking for a ready-to-tune ride.
While 316's and 318i's are all over the classifieds, you should consider the direction of your build before buying one; if you're looking for performance, you'll quickly outgrow their meager four-cylinders. Engine: 2.5L Straight-Six Power: 168HP Average Used Pricing: $19,600 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A British-built true drivers car with
an obtainable price & devoted cult following. If you're a fan of small British sports cars, it doesn't get much better than the MGB. Available as a roadster and as a GT (pictured here) these cars are extremely popular amongst automotive enthusiasts. As such, there's a wellspring of available knowledge for you to tap into come time to fix up your own.
When considering a potential MGB project, be sure to check for rust — British cars are notorious for the stuff. Engine: 1.8L Inline-Four Power: 92HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Porsche Why It Made The Cut An affordable — and unconventional — front-engined Porsche that's quickly rising in value. For all of its flaws, the 928 has managed
to leave the world of budget project cars behind. However, the 944 is still regularly affordable with reasonably low miles. Obviously, Porsche parts come at a premium, so it's up to the budget status of this pick. If you have your eye on a 944, get your hands on as complete a record of maintenance as you can. They run like a top
when they're properly kept up with, but neglected examples can become a true can of worms. And, while the S and Turbo models are obviously more sought after, the final-year (1989) 944 is almost certainly the one you want, as it gained a bit of extra displacement and power. Engine: 2.7L Inline Four Power: 160HP Average Used Pricing: $12,000
Photo: Volkswagen Why It Made The Cut A vintage European hot hatch with loads of potential for upgrading & tuning. Second to the Beetle, the Volkswagen Golf is one of the most prevalent models the German marque produces. So no matter what body style you're considering, they're incredibly affordable project platforms. In GTI form, they make
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Global Why It Made The Cut A boxy & beloved classic Volvo kicked along by a bulletproof-reliable four-banger. Older Volvos have tons of qualities that make them ideal platforms for getting your hands dirty. For instance, their spacious engine bays allow for easy access to components come time for maintenance. And when it comes to the ride, they're
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Then be sure to head over to our guide to the best investment cars for a curated list of retro rides with steadily-rising valuations that show no signs of slowing. For car enthusiasts, few things rival the thrill of a project build. Tinkering with a machine, turning wrenches, and making it truly yours is an experience that fuels passion like no other. The
perfect project car doesn't have to break the bank, whether for speed, style or just pure fun. If you're just starting, choosing a vehicle that's affordable and packed with potential is key. Today, we're diving into eight standout rides that are ideal for first-time builders, offering endless possibilities without draining your wallet. Why Start with a Budget
Friendly Project Car? Building your first car is all about learning. You're going to make mistakes it's part of the process. Starting with an affordable car takes the financial pressure off, allowing you to focus on gaining skills, experimenting, and having fun. Plus, the sense of accomplishment when you transform a modest vehicle into something head-
turning is unmatched. The best project cars are blank canvases. They have robust aftermarket support, affordable parts, and a community of enthusiasts ready to offer advice. That's what makes the following cars not just cheap but absolute goldmines for aspiring builders. The 8 Affordable Cars to Start Your Project 1. Honda Civic (1990s models) The
Honda Civic from the 1990s is an ideal project car because it's affordable, reliable, and has an enormous aftermarket support network. Known for its lightweight chassis and simple engineering, it's a fantastic platform for both beginners and seasoned tuners. Whether you're upgrading the suspension, adding a turbo, or swapping in a high-revving
VTEC engine, the Civic's versatility allows for endless customization. Parts are easy to find and relatively cheap, and the massive community of enthusiasts ensures you'll always have access to advice and inspiration. 2. Mazda Miata (NA or NB generations) The Mazda Miata (NA or NB generations) is a dream-project car thanks to its lightweight
design, rear-wheel-drive setup, and legendary handling. It's one of the most affordable sports cars available, offering endless fun on both twisty roads and track days. With a simple yet robust 1.6L or 1.8L engine, the Miata is easy to work on and responds brilliantly to modifications like turbocharging, suspension upgrades, or aesthetic tweaks. Its
huge aftermarket support and passionate community make it an ideal choice for anyone looking to build a car that's as thrilling to drive as it is to customize. 3. Ford Mustang SN95 The Ford Mustang SN95 is a fantastic budget-friendly project car for anyone craving American muscle. Produced from 1994 to 2004, it offers a choice of robust V6 and V8
engines, with the 4.6L V8 being particularly popular for performance builds. Its rear-wheel-drive layout and simple design make it easy to work on, and there's a massive aftermarket scene for everything from a weekend cruiser to a
track-ready beast. 4. Chevy Camaro (1990s models) The Chevy Camaro from the 1990s is a prime choice for an affordable project car, blending classic American muscle with modern models, it offers strong performance out of the box and endless
upgrade possibilities. The Camaro's simple design and widespread availability of parts make it beginner-friendly, while its sturdy chassis is perfect for handling power mods. Whether you're building a drag racer or a street machine, this iconic muscle car delivers big results on a budget. 5. BMW E36 3-Series The BMW E36 3-Series is a stellar project
car for enthusiasts looking to blend performance and style on a budget. Produced from 1990 to 1999, it features a rear-wheel-drive layout, near-perfect weight distribution, and a range of reliable inline-six engines that respond well to tuning. Its strong aftermarket support and thriving enthusiast community make it easy to find parts and advice for
upgrades like suspension tweaks, engine enhancements, or aesthetic mods. Whether you're aiming for a track car, drift build, or daily driver with flair, the E36 offers versatility and European engineering at an affordable price. 6. Volkswagen Golf GTI The Volkswagen Golf GTI is an affordable and iconic project car, perfect for enthusiasts looking to
dive into the world of hot hatches. Known for its turbocharged engines, agile handling, and practicality, the GTI is a fun and versatile platform for modifications. With a massive aftermarket scene, you can easily upgrade its performance with ECU tunes, exhaust systems, and suspension kits, while customizing its looks with wheels and body kits.
Reliable and easy to work on, the GTI offers endless potential to build a car that's equally at home on the track or the street. 7. Toyota MR2 (SW20) is an excellent affordable project car, offering a unique mid-engine layout that delivers exceptional handling and a thrilling driving experience. Produced from 1989 to 1999, it's
available with turbocharged engines that provide a solid foundation for performance upgrades. Its lightweight design and robust engine make it perfect for tuning, whether you're enhancing power, improving suspension, or creating a striking aesthetic. With strong aftermarket support and a dedicated community, the SW20 MR2 is a standout choice
for anyone looking to build a distinctive and exciting car. 8. Nissan 240SX. The Nissan 240SX is a legendary choice for an affordable project car, especially for those interested in drifting or tuning. With its rear-wheel-drive layout, balanced chassis, and lightweight design, it offers an ideal platform for performance upgrades. The KA24 engine is
reliable and readily swappable for more powerful options like the SR20DET or LS V8, making it highly versatile. A massive aftermarket and enthusiast community mean you'll find plenty of parts, support, and inspiration to transform the 240SX into a customized masterpiece. Classic Japanese Imports: The Gateway to Modding Japanese cars have a
aftermarket parts. Whether you're slamming it on coilovers or swapping in a VTEC engine, the Civic is a platform that teaches you everything from suspension geometry to engine tuning. Another gem is the Mazda Miata (NA or NB generations). Lightweight, rear-wheel drive, and an absolute joy to drive, the Miata has a cult following for a reason. It's
perfect for someone looking to get into performance builds without going overboard. Want to turbocharge it? No problem. Interested in making it a track monster? Go for it. The possibilities are as wide as its grin-inducing front-end. American muscle cars
might be your calling. The Ford Mustang SN95, produced in the mid-to-late 1990s, offers V8 performance for pennies on the dollar. These Mustangs are simple to work on, with endless options to upgrade everything from the intake manifold to the rear axle. Prefer something a little less mainstream? The Chevy Camaro from the same era is another
solid choice. With LS-based V8 engines readily available, you can dip your toes into the world of high horsepower builds without needing to sell a kidney. European Etyle Meets Practical Performance For those who lean toward European engineering, there are fantastic budget options that blend style and performance. The BMW E36 3-Series, for
instance, is a great starter project. Its rear-wheel-drive layout, balanced handling, and strong inline-six engines make it a dream for both performance upgrades and aesthetic mods. Want to try your hand at drifting? The E36 is your ticket into the scene. Volkswagen's Golf GTI is another stellar option. Affordable, turbocharged, and loaded with mode in the scene.
potential, the GTI brings European hot hatch charm to your driveway. It's the perfect car to explore ECU tuning, exhaust upgrades, and suspension tweaks while staying within a reasonable budget. The Forgotten Heroes of the Project World Sometimes the best project cars are the ones everyone overlooks. The Toyota MR2, especially the second-
generation SW20, is a mid-engine marvel that's surprisingly affordable. With a little know-how, you can unleash its turbocharged potential, turning it into a track weapon or a stunning showpiece. And let's not forget about the Nissan 240SX. Known for its drift-friendly chassis and tunability, the 240SX is a staple in the tuner world. While prices have
climbed recently, patient hunting can still land you one without blowing your budget. Once you've got it, the sky's the limit—engine swaps, suspension setups, and aesthetic makeovers await. What Makes These Cars Special for New Builders? All the cars we've talked about share a few key traits: affordability, community support, and a wealth of
aftermarket parts. As a newcomer, you'll find countless forums, YouTube tutorials, and local car meets full of enthusiasts who've been exactly where you are now. These cars are platforms for learning, experimenting, and falling in love with the art of automotive customization. When choosing your first project car, think about what excites you most.
Are you itching to build a track beast? Do you dream of cruising to car meets in a head-turner? Or maybe you just want to learn the ropes with a simple restoration. Whatever your goal, the right car is out there waiting for you. Tips for First-Time Builders As you embark on this journey, remember to start small. Don't dive into complex engine swaps or
major rebuilds right away. Focus on simple mods like upgrading the intake, exhaust, or suspension. These changes are affordable and provide noticeable improvements while building your confidence. Budget wisely, too. Set aside funds not just for the car and parts but also for tools. Good tools will make your life easier and your builds more enjoyable.
Elevate your ride with the sleek design and premium quality of Giovanna wheels explore the newest styles now at AudioCityUSA. Finally, don't forget to enjoy the process. The joy of working on your car comes not just from the end result but from the journey itself—the late nights in the garage, the thrill of a successful mod, and the pride of creating
something uniquely yours. Conclusion Building your first project car is an adventure like no other. Whether you choose a Japanese tuner, an American muscle machine, or a European hot hatch, the key is to pick a car that inspires you. These eight affordable rides offer the perfect mix of mod potential and budget-friendliness, making them ideal
canvases for your creativity. So, grab your wrenches, join the community, and start building. Your dream project cars that won't make your wrenches, join the community, and start building. Your dream project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars that won't make your wrenches, join the community, and start building. Your dream project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars that won't make your wrenches, join the community, and start building. Your dream project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, and the project cars guide, we will review and compare the best project cars guide, and the proj
Then watch our best project cars roundup You don't have to be going through a midlife crisis to feel the need for a project car. Owning one can be one of the most enjoyable, yet tough, decisions you're likely to make. Whether you just want to strip the car back to a bare shell and start from scratch or create a budget street weapon, this guide will
undoubtedly help with your decision. Wondering whether to go for a turbocharged or supercharged platform for your project car? Our Turbocharger guide was written just for you. Sure, chances are it's probably not going to be the wisest financial choice you've ever made, but you can't put a price tag on the amount of enjoyment you
can get out of cheap project cars. Often, you can sell them for what you paid, in fact, some of our choices are already increasing in value, so it could well be the perfect time to snap one up as a future investment before they continue to escalate further. Initial considerations for best project cars. We highly recommend considering some important
factors before you decide which car you'd like to go with, especially if this is your first project car adventure. First, consider what body style you want. Are you interested in trucks? Or would you rather put affordability first and settle
on a manual gearbox? Will the car be daily driven? Or are you one of those tuners who strictly purchase sports cars just to take them out on track days? In the case of a daily driven, the mods you make will most likely need to be done over the evenings and weekends. On the other hand, you can perform sports car modifications anytime you see fit. If
you're lucky enough to have storage space then this is obviously not a concern and you can leave the car on axle stands for a few days or weeks without worry when carrying out upgrades/maintenance/repairs. Are spares easily available and within your budget? Now, there are heaps of alternative project cars you could potentially go with outside of
our recommendations, but we've already considered the fact that most parts for these cars are available on the used market for relatively reasonable prices. If you're considering something super rare that's likely to break every other week and cost you a fortune in impossible to source parts, it's probably going to end up being more frustrating than
enjoyable. So, we recommend you choose a platform that has good aftermarket support and plenty of aftermarket parts to choose from. Should I look for a high-powered car? Is the engine even running? You'll need to think about which upgrades are planned further down the line and
what potential upgrades and engine swaps are available for that specific car. We've noticed that budgets rarely work with these things, but it's always good to have a rough idea in mind. If drifting is your aim, you're obviously going to need to be looking at the rear-wheel-drive platforms in our guide. It's always easy to want to buy something with
huge power to begin with, but lower powered cars can be heaps of fun too, so they're definitely worth considering. And do not forget, you'll have to spend a fair chunk of money for some suspension upgrades and a heavy-duty set of brakes too! Thankfully, you can enjoy what high-powered cars have to offer without having to spend a penny from the
comfort of your computer with games such as Drift Hunters and Madalin Stunt Cars 3. Think outside the box Sure, you're probably already thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking too, and this is where 'drift' or 'scene' tax comes into play, and you'll probably end up
being screwed over on prices for parts. And of course, the size of your engine bay is the only limiting factor for the endless amount of engine swap options out there. With that being said, it'll undoubtedly be worth it if you have your heart set on a specific selection that you've always dreamed of owning. We've made some pretty questionable choices in
our time but we don't have any regrets! You're on Drifted, so chances are you're set on something for something for your time but we don't have any regrets! You're on Drifted, so chances are you're set on something for your
buck. Before we begin, check out what Donut Media's opinion of the best tuner cars for under $10k to give you some initial ideas! Now, let's take a look at our budget project cars don't have to be the absolute best cars on the market, nor does it have to be what your buddies think is cool. Find something YOU like, pour a
s**tload load of blood, sweat, and tears into it, and it'll soon win over your heart. (Or become your worst enemy, but we'll hope for the best!) Best Project Cars #1 - Nissan 240SX (S13, 180SX) Model year: 1989-1999 Engine size: 2.4L Power output: 1989-1990 - 140 bhp (100 kW) | 1991-1994 - 155 bhp (116 kW) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our
comment: Yeah, you knew it was coming! It's been hugely popular since it rose to fame in the '90s, and the 240SX is certainly no exception now. Due to their cult following and age/drifting taking its toll, the 240SX has undoubtedly risen in price over time. Reasonably priced models can still be had, but be prepared for it to be a little more of a project
than you perhaps planned. If you have a choice, we recommend going with the KA24DE which has more power out of the box, and far more tuning potential. Many owners choose to swap out the engine for an SR20DET, which it actually left the factory with on the JDM equivalent (180SX). If power is your aim, then you may feel a little riskier and want
to opt for a Skyline RB25 or RB26 replacement for something a little different! As you've probably guessed, the 240SX is an incredibly capable lightweight chassis with great handling for drifting and will undoubtedly make a great platform for a project if you've got the cash. If you want to know more about why we recommend 240SX's so highly, make
sure you check out our 'Why the Nissan 240SX is the best drift car' guide. If you feel like the 240SX is the ideal project for you, and maybe have a little more money to splash, we highly recommend checking out S14's! CarThrottle Review: "The chassis, the chassis is where this car shines. Now I am not going to talk about the drift potential of this
vehicle. The internet will tell 1000 times its great for drifting and it will tell you 1000 more times. The car is tossable into corners. It can really carry a lot of speed through sweepers and tight twisties. The steering is fast, transmission is tight, pedals in the perfect spot and a chassis that communicates really makes this a fun car to carve in." "I
genuinely feel like people who buy this JUST for drifting are missing out. Not that doing that is a bad thing but SO many people look at this vehicle like its god given talent was drifting that they miss out on the other great things this car can achieve. You S-chassis owners that don't, try some canyon carving, autocross or track, you guys are really
missing out. This car has plenty more on its resume than its drifting career." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #2 - BMW E36 Model year: 1990-2000 Engine size: 1.8L-2.8L Power output: 73 kW (98 bhp) to 142 kW (190 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: The German legend has arrived. Known throughout America and Europe
as one of the best budget drift cars, the BMW E36 has definitely earned its place on our list. In Europe, E36's generally out-number most other cars at drift days, and with parts easily sourced and common, they're becoming a great alternative to the more expensive JDM cars. Their popularity in the US has also risen quickly in recent years, with
companies such as Pandem modernizing it with their Rocket Bunny kits to keep the stance (and brave drift) scene happy. There are several different models of the E36, but a few basic mods will allow even the lowest power ones to go sideways. We highly recommend these for some cheap, great handling fun! With E46's more affordable than ever,
these are also a fantastic option if you fancy something a little more modern. If you like the old-school look, E30's have to be a sure temptation. We always love M3's, but we also know first hand the cost involved with owning them, so proceed with caution if they tickle your fancy! Motortrend Review: "The E36 generation BMW 3 Series Coupes has a
quite a few highs, the odd low and a whole heap of appeal. There are some rough examples around and buying a well-serviced car that's been kept as close to standard trim as possible is a wise move." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #3 - Nissan Skyline R33 Model year: 1993-1998 Engine size: 2.0L-2.5L Power output: 96 kW (128 bhp) to 1845 been kept as close to standard trim as possible is a wise move." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #3 - Nissan Skyline R33 Model year: 1993-1998 Engine size: 2.0L-2.5L Power output: 96 kW (128 bhp) to 1845 been kept as close to standard trim as possible is a wise move." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #3 - Nissan Skyline R33 Model year: 1993-1998 Engine size: 2.0L-2.5L Power output: 96 kW (128 bhp) to 1845 been kept as close to standard trim as possible is a wise move." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #3 - Nissan Skyline R33 Model year: 1993-1998 Engine size: 2.0L-2.5L Power output: 96 kW (128 bhp) to 1845 been kept as close to standard trim as possible is a wise move." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #3 - Nissan Skyline R33 Model year: 1993-1998 Engine size: 2.0L-2.5L Power output: 96 kW (128 bhp) to 1845 been kept as close to 1845 been kept 
kW (247 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: Nissan Skyline R32 and R34 prices have shot through the roof in recent years, even for the lesser models. Luckily, if you're after a Skyline, the R33 has remained relatively affordable during that time. It's certainly not the cheapest option on our list, but it's a whole lot of car for the money.
We expect that these will eventually creep up in value like their siblings too, even if they are the ugly duckling of the bunch. With up to 250hp available from the RB engine in stock form, they also take extremely well to upgrades with some simple bolt-on modifications to squeeze the extra horses out. Weighing in at 1,360kg, these certainly aren't the
lightest of our choices, but strip out the interior and some handling mods and we have no doubt it'll keep you grinning ear to ear around the track. Autospeed Review: "The RB25DET is undoubtedly one of the best single turbo engines we've ever sat behind. Off-boost torque is strong, but get some load on above about 3000 rpm and she's a real rocket.
Torque holds strong until close to the 7000 rpm redline." "The R33 is quite a large car - but its chassis is very well suited to an urban chuck-about. Tromp it a little early exiting a corner the back end squats, cork-screws a little and then eases to the side oh-so progressively. It's so sublime you don't always realize that it's happening." - Read the full
review Best Project Cars #4 - Mazda RX-8 Model year: 2003-2012 Engine size: 1.3L Power output: 141 kW (189 bhp) to 177 kW (237 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: You're probably upset that we didn't include the RX-7, and believe me, we wanted to. If you can get one reasonably enough, don't even hesitate! However, we can't
ignore that RX-8 prices are plummeting while FC and FD prices rise, so we think it could well be the perfect time to land an RX8 for a project car base. With a chassis that is comparable to the legendary FD, the RX8 provides up to 250hp weighing in at just 1,309kg. On paper, it sounds like the perfect option, however, the reason for these being so
cheap is due to the difficult to maintain rotary engines. Despite being incredible technology, they're definitely not the most reliable engine on the market. Planning on picking up an RX8? Our RX8 tuning guides are written for you. The RX8 exhaust guide will wake up that rotary. If you can get one cheap enough, consider adding something like an
LS1, or take it back to its true heritage with a 13B turbo. This way, you've got an affordable AND reliable lightweight drift car! Although the rotary powerplant can put you off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, there's still nothing else like an RX-8. That low, sleek coupé shape, those
wacky suicide rear doors and two-rotor engine that sounds like a hoover on full chat continue to make it a unique proposition." "The RX-8 feels really well balanced, eager to turn in, gripping more strongly at the front and with power
on. round it comes. And that's in the dry. But it's all well telegraphed and easy to catch." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #5 - Honda Civic Model year: 1991-2000 Engine size: 1.3L-1.6L Power output: 52 kW (70 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: FWD Our comment: No sighing, please, You've probably already realized that
here at Drifted, we don't exactly claim to be Honda Civic experts. That being said, we've been out in some track-prepped ones and we know that these can provide a s**tload of fun for the money! With some models weighing a mere 925kg and capable of up to 125hp before you've done any upgrades, these are great value for money. If you want some
cheap, reliable, high-revving front-wheel-drive fun, these are definitely worth considering! Autocar Review: "Peak horsepower is developed at a lofty 6600 rpm. And there's no serious penalty for turning the VTEC engine so fast, as it stays remarkably smooth right up to the point where its electronic rpm limiter steps in." Best Project Cars #6 - Mazda
Miata (Eunos, MX5) Model year: 1989-2005 Engine size: 1.6L-1.8L Power output: 86 kW (115 bhp), to 99 kW (133 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: Cheap, cheerful and a fantastic base for a daily or a track-car alike. We love the Mazda Miata MX-5 and this throwback to British roadsters really is a unique car to throw sideways with
the wind in your hair. Miatas are certainly not the most powerful, but they're light and can take a good old-fashioned ass-kicking without causing too much of a fuss. Coilovers and an exhaust can really transform these. If you've got some spare cash, you can even go down the supercharger route for maximum potential! Roadandtrack Review: "By
mixing the fun of yesterday's roadsters with the technology of today, it marks a giant leap forward in the evolution of the sports car." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #7 - Lexus SC400 (Toyota Soarer) Model year: 1991-2000 Engine size: 4.0L Power output: 186 kW (250 bhp) to 216 kW (290 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment:
The SC400 was $40,000 worth of car when it was first released, and now they can be had for a steal. The 290hp from the 1UZ-FE V8 isn't to be sniffed at, but they're not the lightest cars out there. Whether you're looking for a drift car, or a VIP/daily, these will fit the bill extremely well. Many owners have gone all-out with 1JZ and 2JZ swaps from the
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Supra for maximum tuning potential. The Truth About Cars Review: "There is nothing quite like it!" Every enthusiast I know has that attitude towards their car. But rarely is it actually true. If you find a well preserved one with less than 150k. Buy it. If you can find an SC300 with an all too rare manual tranny in it. Call me first. I'll buy it and be your
new best friend." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #8 - Lexus IS300 (Toyota Altezza) Model year: 1999-2005 Engine size: 4.0L Power output: 186 kW (250 bhp) to 216 kW (250 bhp) to
potential of plenty of convenient off-the-shelf turbo kits, the 2JZ powerplant has a huge amount of mods available on the market. We've got guides to show you our favorite coilovers and exhausts specifically for the IS300, and believe me, there's certainly no
shortage of selection! RAC Review: "If you can track down a reasonably priced IS300, it makes a very satisfying ownership proposition. The interior is well appointed, the engine is delightfully smooth and the reliability record is second to none. As one of those cars that seems to make a whole lot more sense used than new, the IS300 deserves a little
recognition." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #9 - Nissan 350Z (Z33) Model year: 2003-2008 Engine size: 3.5L Power output: 214 kW (287 bhp) to 228 kW (306 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: The 370Z, chances
are that you'll be able to pick one of these up at a more impressive price than ever. With the reliable, yet underpowered, 3.5L power-lump under the hood and a bombproof gearbox, the 350Z has heaps of tuning potential and we have the perfect guides to help you find the ultimate parts for your build. Some basic mods will make this an extremely
capable drift car with a lot of room to progress if you decide to go down the forced induction route later on. Check out our wide variety of guides for the 350Z, there are simple bolt-on mods such as coilovers, exhausts and cold air intake to get you started. Once you've got the car sitting and sounding nice, you may want to consider the forced
induction route. If so, there's an epic range of tried-and-tested off-the-shelf supercharger and turbo kit options to turn your 350Z into a tire-shredding monster! If you have big bucks to spend and fancy something a little different, the 370z is a fantastic consideration too. Evo Review: "I've become a massive fan of the latest-generation Z-car. I reckonne
it's one of the greatest affordable performance cars of the last ten years." Best Project Cars #10 - Toyota GT86/Subaru BRZ/Scion FR-S Model year: 2012-2021 Engine size: 2.0L Power output: 147kW (197 bhp) to 153 kW (205 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: GT86, BRZ, FR-S, whatever you want to call it! It's undoubtedly one of the
best cars of this decade and prices on the earlier models are now becoming more affordable than ever. Based on the original AE86, this stunning creation really does tick so many boxes. It may not have a huge amount of power from the factory, but the lightweight with skinny-tire combination makes it insanely fun to drive. If you do fancy giving it an
extra kick up the a**, we've got our GT86 turbo and supercharger guides to keep you happy! For those of you that want to keep it simple and do some basic modifications, make sure you check out our exhaust, coilover guides! We highly recommend the AE86 as a project car, but unfortunately, prices are soaring. If you're able to pick one up at a
bargain price, don't even hesitate as it'll undoubtedly be a great investment! Top Gear Review: "The simplest and most exciting Toyota in years to update the GT86, and kept the changes so light when it did. This is a fundamentally great car that may not look or feel
especially modern, but that's sort of the point." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #11 - Honda S2000 Model year: 1999-2009 Engine size: 2.0L Power output: 177kW (237 bhp) to 184 kW (247 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: The S2000 doesn't typically spring to mind when thinking of project cars, but we think it has heaps of
future potential. Prices are starting to get lower and for some of you it will be an affordable consideration Honda created the S2K to mark the company's 50th anniversary, and it was certainly lived up to expectations. Think of it as a high-revving modern-day Miata on steroids. Once again, these have a huge variety of off-the-shelf parts if you feel the
need for more than 247hp! If you have the balls to whack a turbocharger on this lightweight chassis, you'll definitely want to take a look at our turbo and supercharger guides to keep you happy! For those of you that want to keep it simple and do some basic modifications, make sure you check out our coilover and exhaust guides. Top Gear Reviews
"You rev until you think pistons are going to burst through the bonnet, before grabbing the next gear via the utterly, utterly superb manual shift. One of the best I've ever used. Perhaps the bonnet, before grabbing the next gear via the utterly, utterly superb manual shift. One of the best I've ever used. Perhaps the best I've 
(310 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: AWD Our comment: We get it, some of you guys aren't that much into drifting. Well, then let us present you our next choice - a multiple-time WRC championship-winning rally car! From the beginning, Subaru's main goal with the WRX STI was to conquer the world of rallying. And to say that they achieved their
goal would be an understatement. Powered by Subaru's legendary boxer engine, this AWD saloon won the WRC constructors title 3 times. This is one of the most popular tuner car platforms in the world, and you'll find plenty of "Subie" aficionados no matter where you go. Oh, and did we mention that it can comfortably carry your whole family? If you
decide to go for a WRX STI, there are a few well-known reliability issues that you should keep an eye out for. And we have one more request - Please don't start vaping! Car And Driver Review: "The STI is the mightiest and most aggressive WRX, but also the noisiest, stiffest-riding, and rawest." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #13 -
Volkswagen Golf GTI Model year: 1976-Present Engine size: 1.6-2.0L Power output: 82 kW (110 bhp) to 180 kW (241 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: FWD Our comment: Let's take a break from the Japanese stuff and head to Germany for our next entry. The Golf GTI makes a great family car, and an even greater project car if you decide to go crazy
with the modifications. As of 2023, there have been 8 generations of the Golf GTI. You can pick up an early-generation model for cheap, strip out the interior, and have a great, lightweight hatchback to take to the track. If you have some more cash to spend, you can splash out on an R32 or a modern Golf R, which will give sportscar-beating levels of
performance with just a few bolt-ons. CarWow Review: "The Golf GTI is a great all-rounder - fast enough to be great fun, sensible enough to drive every day comfortably. But the Golf R is even faster" - Read the full review Best Project Cars #14 - Volkswagen Beetle Model year: 1938-2003 Engine size: 1.1-1.6L Power output: 16kW (22 bhp) to 84 kW
(115 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: We know your thoughts, but hear us out! Rear engine, RWD, air-cooled - the VW Beetle is effectively a budget Porsche 911. Jokes aside, if you are serious about picking up a project car for the cheap, there are few better options than this venerable "people's car" Although it came with a mind-
blowingly slow motor from the factory, there are plenty of modifications available to give this little car some get up and go. If you are crazy enough, you can do some wild engine bay of this affordable family car. RAC Review: "You'll
either love or hate the 'new' Volkswagen Beetle. Some will celebrate it as an icon brought up to date, whilst others will feel it's a sad pastiche of a best-forgotten relic and a Golf in drag. Whatever way you look at it, the Beetle is here, it's sold rather well and it's great fun to own" - Read the full review Best Project Cars #15 - Ford Mustang Model
year: 1985-Present Engine size: 2.3-5.0L Power output: 220 hp (Foxbody) to 412 hp (Ford Mustang GT) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: When the Ford Mustang isn't busy trying to run over spectators, it can make a pretty damn good project car! Although many of you may have gotten bored of seeing Mustangs over the years and feel
they've somewhat lost their appeal, why not use that to your advantage? Let's face it, the best project cars are those boxes. Although there's no shortage of Mustangs waiting to be transformed into tire-shredding monsters in
the US, you may still be able to pick up a bargain elsewhere. With the early Foxbody versions pushing out 220 hp in stock form, the Mustang GT can also be found with ever-impressive price tags. If possible, we'd be hunting down a 5.0L V8 GT, with a great power-to-value output of 412 hp, and a 0-60 time of 4.6 seconds. With drivers such as Chelsea
DeNofa and Diego Higa keeping Mustang's in the drifting limelight, there's no question that the chassis is more than capable when it comes to being thrown sideways at the track. Although Ford has achieved a whopping 760 hp from the 2020 GT500 in stock form, we doubt you'll be finding one of those on a budget just yet. CarandDriver Review:
 "The Mustang GT accelerates with a sound and fury that imported sports coupes cannot match." - Read the full review We normally decide our winner here... This time, all our choices are winners for different reasons. We've selected these cars from literally thousands of possibilities, and we've tried to give a wide variety of price ranges and choices.
Admittedly, they may be a little drift biased, but what else would you expect from Drifted? We have no doubt that whichever car you select, you're most likely going to have a rollercoaster ride at some point during your ownership, but as long as you see the project through, we have no doubt it'll be worth every minute you put into it. Project cars have
a special place in the hearts of car enthusiasts, and it'll open up a whole realm of possibilities as you begin to build the car, take it to meets and take it to meet an
Drift Cars For Beginners guide. Thank you for reading our best budget project cars guide We hope that you're now confident in choosing the right car to satisfy your inner urges! Photography credits We would like to thank the following sources for the use of their images: If you enjoyed this article then please share it with the buttons at the side and
bottom of your screen. Find this information useful? Please post a link to it on your cars owners club. We really appreciate your support. WhatsAppFacebookTwitter by Joe Terrell Joe is an avid writer and car enthusiast. When he's not cruising the
streets alongside his friends in his Nissan Silvia S15, he's drifting on his VR racing simulator. Joe's passion for cars is always on display. With a keen eye for detail and a deep understanding of the automotive industry, he hopes his writing conveys his excitement and knowledge of cars and games. Joe's work has been featured on many platforms
including drivetribe.com, 180sx.club, carthrottle.com, smartdrivinggames.com, databox.com and ceoblognation.com. When he's not behind the wheel or at his keyboard, he's likely daydreaming of his ultimate ride - the legendary Lexus LFA. Follow Joe on X. (24 votes, average: 3.33 out of 5)You can use this feature to rate this
page. Please be generous, giving a higher rating helps us to create more content like this Thinking of buying a new project cars that won't make your wallet cry out in pain. In a hurry? Then watch our best project cars roundup You don't
 have to be going through a midlife crisis to feel the need for a project car. Owning one can be one of the most enjoyable, yet tough, decisions you're likely to make. Whether you just want to strip the car back to a bare shell and start from scratch or create a budget street weapon, this guide will undoubtedly help with your decision. Wondering whether
to go for a turbocharged or supercharged or supercharged platform for your project car? Our Turbocharger vs Supercharger guide was written just for you. Sure, chances are it's probably not going to be the wisest financial choice you've ever made, but you can't put a price tag on the amount of enjoyment you can get out of cheap project cars. Often, you can sell
them for what you paid, in fact, some of our choices are already increasing in value, so it could well be the perfect time to snap one up as a future investment factors before you decide which car you'd like to go with,
especially if this is your first project car adventure. First, consider what body style you want. Are you interested in trucks? Or would you have a sports coupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sports coupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sport soupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sport soupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sport soupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sport soupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sport soupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sport soupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sport soupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sport soupe instead? Do you want to spend time figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission? Or would you have a sport soupe instead of the figuring out a fancy dual-clutch transmission.
you one of those tuners who strictly purchase sports cars just to take them out on track days? In the case of a daily driver, the mods you make will most likely need to be done over the evenings and weekends. On the other hand, you can perform sports car modifications anytime you see fit. If you're lucky enough to have storage space then this is
obviously not a concern and you can leave the car on axle stands for a few days or weeks without worry when carrying out upgrades/maintenance/repairs. Are spares easily available and within your budget? Now, there are heaps of alternative project cars you could potentially go with outside of our recommendations, but we've already considered the
fact that most parts for these cars are available on the used market for relatively reasonable prices. If you're considering something super rare that's likely to break every other week and cost you a fortune in impossible to source parts, it's probably going to end up being more frustrating than enjoyable. So, we recommend you choose a platform that
has good aftermarket support and plenty of aftermarket parts to choose from. Should I look for a high-powered car? Is the engine even running? You'll need to think about which upgrades are planned further down the line and what potential upgrades and engine swaps are available for
that specific car. We've noticed that budgets rarely work with these things, but it's always good to have a rough idea in mind. If drifting is your aim, you're obviously going to need to be looking at the rear-wheel-drive platforms in our guide. It's always easy to want to buy something with huge power to begin with, but lower powered cars can be heaps
of fun too, so they're definitely worth considering. And do not forget, you'll have to spend a fair chunk of money for some suspension upgrades and a heavy-duty set of brakes too! Thankfully, you can enjoy what high-powered cars have to offer without having to spend a penny from the comfort of your computer with games such as Drift Hunters and
Madalin Stunt Cars 3. Think outside the box Sure, you're probably already thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what others are thinking along the lines of, "Drift car? Simple, I'll get a 240SX!" However, remember that this is what other along the lines of t
your engine bay is the only limiting factor for the endless amount of engine swap options out there. With that being said, it'll undoubtedly be worth it if you have your heart set on a specific selection that you've always dreamed of owning. We've made some pretty questionable choices in our time but we don't have any regrets! You're on Drifted, so
chances are you're set on something Rear Wheel Drive. However, don't completely rule out Front Wheel Drive cars too, these can be heaps of fun, especially if you're looking for something cheap. A great-handling, cheap FWD on a tight and twisty track would provide great bang for your buck. Before we begin, check out what Donut Media's opinion of
the best tuner cars for under $10k to give you some initial ideas! Now, let's take a look at our budget project cars don't have to be what your buddies think is cool. Find something YOU like, pour a s**tload load of blood, sweat, and tears into it, and it'll soon win over
your heart. (Or become your worst enemy, but we'll hope for the best!) Best Project Cars #1 - Nissan 240SX (S13, 180SX) Model year: 1989-1999 Engine size: 2.4L Power output: 1989-1990 - 140 bhp (100 kW) | 1991-1994 - 155 bhp (116 kW) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: Yeah, you knew it was coming! It's been hugely popular since
it rose to fame in the '90s, and the 240SX is certainly no exception now. Due to their cult following and age/drifting taking its toll, the 240SX has undoubtedly risen in price over time. Reasonably priced models can still be had, but be prepared for it to be a little more of a project than you perhaps planned. If you have a choice, we recommend going
with the KA24DE which has more power out of the box, and far more tuning potential. Many owners choose to swap out the engine for an SR20DET, which it actually left the factory with on the JDM equivalent (180SX). If power is your aim, then you may feel a little riskier and want to opt for a Skyline RB25 or RB26 replacement for something a little
different! As you've probably guessed, the 240SX is an incredibly capable lightweight chassis with great handling for drifting and will undoubtedly make a great platform for a project if you've got the cash. If you want to know more about why we recommend 240SX's so highly, make sure you check out our 'Why the Nissan 240SX is the best drift car'
guide. If you feel like the 240SX is the ideal project for you, and maybe have a little more money to splash, we highly recommend checking out S14's! CarThrottle Review: "The chassis, the chassis is where this car shines. Now I am not going to talk about the drift potential of this vehicle. The internet will tell 1000 times its great for drifting and it will
tell you 1000 more times. The car is tossable into corners. It can really carry a lot of speed through sweepers and tight twisties. The steering is fast, transmission is tight, pedals in the perfect spot and a chassis that communicates really makes this a fun car to carve in." "I genuinely feel like people who buy this JUST for drifting are missing out. Not
that doing that is a bad thing but SO many people look at this vehicle like its god given talent was drifting that they miss out on the other great things this car can achieve. You S-chassis owners that don't, try some canyon carving, autocross or track, you guys are really missing out. This car has plenty more on its resume than its drifting career." -
Read the full review Best Project Cars #2 - BMW E36 Model year: 1990-2000 Engine size: 1.8L-2.8L Power output: 73 kW (98 bhp) to 142 kW (190 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: The German legend has arrived. Known throughout America and Europe as one of the best budget drift cars, the BMW E36 has definitely earned its
place on our list. In Europe, E36's generally out-number most other cars at drift days, and with parts easily sourced and common, they're becoming a great alternative to the more expensive JDM cars. Their popularity in the US has also risen quickly in recent years, with companies such as Pandem modernizing it with their Rocket Bunny kits to keep
the stance (and brave drift) scene happy. There are several different models of the E36, but a few basic mode will allow even the lowest power ones to go sideways. We highly recommend these for some cheap, great handling fun! With E46's more affordable than ever, these are also a fantastic option if you fancy something a little more modern. If you
like the old-school look, E30's have to be a sure temptation. We always love M3's, but we also know first hand the cost involved with owning them, so proceed with caution if they tickle your fancy! Motortrend Review: "The E36 generation BMW 3 Series Coupes has a quite a few highs, the odd low and a whole heap of appeal. There are some rough
examples around and buying a well-serviced car that's been kept as close to standard trim as possible is a wise move." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #3 - Nissan Skyline R33 Model year: 1993-1998 Engine size: 2.0L-2.5L Power output: 96 kW (128 bhp) to 184 kW (247 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: Nissan Skyline R32
and R34 prices have shot through the roof in recent years, even for the lesser models. Luckily, if you're after a Skyline, the R33 has remained relatively affordable during that time. It's certainly not the cheapest option on our list, but it's a whole lot of car for the money. We expect that these will eventually creep up in value like their siblings too, even
if they are the ugly duckling of the bunch. With up to 250hp available from the RB engine in stock form, they also take extremely well to upgrades with some simple bolt-on modifications to squeeze the extra horses out. Weighing in at 1,360kg, these certainly aren't the lightest of our choices, but strip out the interior and some handling mods and we
have no doubt it'll keep you grinning ear to ear around the track. Autospeed Review: "The RB25DET is undoubtedly one of the best single turbo engines we've ever sat behind. Off-boost torque is strong, but get some load on above about 3000 rpm and she's a real rocket. Torque holds strong until close to the 7000 rpm redline." "The R33 is quite a
large car - but its chassis is very well suited to an urban chuck-about. Tromp it a little early exiting a corner the back end squats, cork-screws a little and then eases to the side oh-so progressively. It's so sublime you don't always realize that it's happening." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #4 - Mazda RX-8 Model year: 2003-2012 Engine size
1.3L Power output: 141 kW (189 bhp) to 177 kW (237 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: You're probably upset that we didn't include the RX-7, and believe me, we wanted to. If you can get one reasonably enough, don't even hesitate! However, we can't ignore that RX-8 prices are plummeting while FC and FD prices rise, so we think it
could well be the perfect time to land an RX8 for a project car base. With a chassis that is comparable to the legendary FD, the RX8 provides up to 250hp weighing in at just 1,309kg. On paper, it sounds like the perfect option, however, the reason for these being so cheap is due to the difficult to maintain rotary engines. Despite being incredible
technology, they're definitely not the most reliable engine on the market. Planning on picking up an RX8? Our RX8 tuning guides are written for you. The RX8 exhaust guide will wake up that rotary.. If you can get one cheap enough, consider adding something like an LS1, or take it back to its true heritage with a 13B turbo. This way, you've got an
affordable AND reliable lightweight drift car! Although the rotary powerplant can put you off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap! Autocar Review: "First off, these fantstic cars happen to be a great platform for an engine swap in the 
continue to make it a unique proposition." "The RX-8 feels really well balanced, eager to turn in, gripping more strongly at the front and with body roll now much reduced. The back end sticks very well, but switch the DSC off and as you exit a tight bend with power on, round it comes. And that's in the dry. But it's all well telegraphed and easy to
catch." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #5 - Honda Civic Model year: 1991-2000 Engine size: 1.3L-1.6L Power output: 52 kW (70 bhp) to 93 kW (125 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: FWD Our comment: No sighing, please. You've probably already realized that here at Drifted, we don't exactly claim to be Honda Civic experts. That being said,
we've been out in some track-prepped ones and we know that these can provide a s**tload of fun for the money! With some models weighing a mere 925kg and capable of up to 125hp before you've done any upgrades, these are definitely worth
considering! Autocar Review: "Peak horsepower is developed at a lofty 6600 rpm. And there's no serious penalty for turning the VTEC engine so fast, as it stays remarkably smooth right up to the point where its electronic rpm limiter steps in." Best Project Cars #6 - Mazda Miata (Eunos, MX5) Model year: 1989-2005 Engine size: 1.6L-1.8L Power
output: 86 kW (115 bhp), to 99 kW (133 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: Cheap, cheerful and a fantastic base for a daily or a track-car alike. We love the Mazda Miata MX-5 and this throwback to British roadsters really is a unique car to throw sideways with the wind in your hair. Miatas are certainly not the most powerful, but
they're light and can take a good old-fashioned ass-kicking without causing too much of a fuss. Coilovers and an exhaust can really transform these. If you've got some spare cash, you can even go down the supercharger route for maximum potential! Roadandtrack Review: "By mixing the fun of yesterday's roadsters with the technology of today, it
marks a giant leap forward in the evolution of the sports car." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #7 - Lexus SC400 (Toyota Soarer) Model year: 1991-2000 Engine size: 4.0L Power output: 186 kW (250 bhp) to 216 kW (250 bh
now they can be had for a steal. The 290hp from the 1UZ-FE V8 isn't to be sniffed at, but they're not the lightest cars out there. Whether you're looking for a drift car, or a VIP/daily, these will fit the bill extremely well. Many owners have gone all-out with 1JZ and 2JZ swaps from the Supra for maximum tuning potential. The Truth About Cars Reviews
"There is nothing quite like it!" Every enthusiast I know has that attitude towards their car. But rarely is it actually true. If you find a well preserved one with less than 150k. Buy it. If you can find an SC300 with an all too rare manual tranny in it. Call me first. I'll buy it and be your new best friend." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #8 - Lexus
IS300 (Toyota Altezza) Model year: 1999-2005 Engine size: 4.0L Power output: 186 kW (250 bhp) to 216 kW (290 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: The Lexus IS300 is quickly becoming a modern-day legend. With great looks and easy tuning ability alongside the potential of plenty of convenient off-the-shelf turbo kits, the 2JZ
 reasonably priced IS300, it makes a very satisfying ownership proposition. The interior is well appointed, the engine is delightfully smooth and the reliability record is second to none. As one of those cars that seems to make a whole lot more sense used than new, the IS300 deserves a little recognition." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #9
 Nissan 350Z (Z33) Model year: 2003-2008 Engine size: 3.5L Power output: 214 kW (287 bhp) to 228 kW (306 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: The 350Z has been popular for many years in all sorts of motorsport, and with the arrival of its younger brother, the 370Z, chances are that you'll be able to pick one of these up at a more
impressive price than ever. With the reliable, yet underpowered, 3.5L power-lump under the hood and a bombproof gearbox, the 350Z has heaps of tuning potential and we have the perfect quides to help you find the ultimate parts for your build. Some basic mods will make this an extremely capable drift car with a lot of room to progress if you decide
to go down the forced induction route later on. Check out our wide variety of guides for the 350Z, there are simple bolt-on mods such as coilovers, exhausts and cold air intake to get you started. Once you've got the car sitting and sounding nice, you may want to consider the forced induction route. If so, there's an epic range of tried-and-tested off-
 becoming more affordable than ever. Based on the original AE86, this stunning creation really does tick so many boxes. It may not have a huge amount of power from the factory, but the lightweight with skinny-tire combination makes it insanely fun to drive. If you do fancy giving it an extra kick up the a**, we've got our GT86 turbo and supercharges
guides to keep you happy! For those of you that want to keep it simple and do some basic modifications, make sure you check out our exhaust, coilover guides! We highly recommend the AE86 as a project car, but unfortunately, prices are soaring. If you're able to pick one up at a bargain price, don't even hesitate as it'll undoubtedly be a great
investment! Top Gear Review: "The simplest and most exciting Toyota in years is also a real pleasure to drive. It says a lot that Toyota took or feel especially modern, but that's sort of the point." - Read the full review
Best Project Cars #11 - Honda S2000 Model year: 1999-2009 Engine size: 2.0L Power output: 177kW (237 bhp) to 184 kW (247 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: The S2000 doesn't typically spring to mind when thinking of project cars, but we think it has heaps of future potential. Prices are starting to get lower and for some of you
it will be an affordable consideration Honda created the S2K to mark the company's 50th anniversary, and it was certainly lived up to expectations. Think of it as a high-revving modern-day Miata on steroids. Once again, these have a huge variety of off-the-shelf parts if you feel the need for more than 247hp! If you have the balls to whack a
turbocharger on this lightweight chassis, you'll definitely want to take a look at our turbo and supercharger guides to keep you happy! For those of you that want to keep it simple and do some basic modifications, make sure you check out our coilover and exhaust guides. Top Gear Review: "You rev until you think pistons are going to burst through the
bonnet, before grabbing the next gear via the utterly, utterly superb manual shift. One of the best I've ever used. Perhaps the best
 some of you guys aren't that much into drifting. Well, then let us present you our next choice - a multiple-time WRC championship-winning rally car! From the beginning, Subaru's main goal with the WRX STI was to conquer the world of rallying. And to say that they achieved their goal would be an understatement. Powered by Subaru's legendary
boxer engine, this AWD saloon won the WRC constructors title 3 times. This is one of the most popular tuner car platforms in the world, and you'll find plenty of "Subie" aficionados no matter where you go. Oh, and did we mention that it can comfortably carry your whole family? If you decide to go for a WRX STI, there are a few well-known reliability
issues that you should keep an eye out for. And we have one more request - Please don't start vaping! Car And Driver Review: "The STI is the mightiest and most aggressive WRX, but also the noisiest, stiffest-riding, and rawest." - Read the full review Best Project Cars #13 - Volkswagen Golf GTI Model year: 1976-Present Engine size: 1.6-2.0L Power
GTI. You can pick up an early-generation model for cheap, strip out the interior, and have a great, lightweight hatchback to take to the track. If you have some more cash to spend, you can splash out on an R32 or a modern Golf R, which will give sportscar-beating levels of performance with just a few bolt-ons. CarWow Review: "The Golf GTI is a great
all-rounder - fast enough to be great fun, sensible enough to drive every day comfortably. But the Golf R is even faster" - Read the full review Best Project Cars #14 - Volkswagen Beetle Model year: 1938-2003 Engine size: 1.1-1.6L Power output: 16kW (22 bhp) to 84 kW (115 bhp) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: We know your thoughts,
but hear us out! Rear engine, RWD, air-cooled - the VW Beetle is effectively a budget Porsche 911. Jokes aside, if you are serious about picking up a project car for the cheap, there are few better options than this venerable "people's car" Although it came with a mind-blowingly slow motor from the factory, there are plenty of modifications available to
give this little car some get up and go. If you are crazy enough, you can do some wild engine swaps with the Beetle as well. Everything from Subaru EJs to Honda's K-series motors has found its way to the engine bay of this affordable family car. RAC Review: "You'll either love or hate the 'new' Volkswagen Beetle. Some will celebrate it as an icon
brought up to date, whilst others will feel it's a sad pastiche of a best-forgotten relic and a Golf in drag. Whatever way you look at it, the Beetle is here, it's sold rather well and it's great fun to own" - Read the full review Best Project Cars #15 - Ford Mustang Model year: 1985-Present Engine size: 2.3-5.0L Power output: 220 hp (Foxbody) to 412 hp
(Ford Mustang GT) Drivetrain configuration: RWD Our comment: When the Ford Mustang isn't busy trying to run over spectators, it can make a pretty damn good project car! Although many of you may have gotten bored of seeing Mustangs over the years and feel they've somewhat lost their appeal, why not use that to your advantage? Let's face it
the best project cars are those that are easy to source parts for, preferably with adequate power already under the hood, and the Mustangs ticks both of those boxes. Although there's no shortage of Mustangs waiting to be transformed into tire-shredding monsters in the US, you may still be able to pick up a bargain elsewhere. With the early Foxbody
versions pushing out 220 hp in stock form, the Mustang GT can also be found with ever-impressive price tags. If possible, we'd be hunting down a 5.0L V8 GT, with a great power-to-value output of 412 hp, and a 0-60 time of 4.6 seconds. With drivers such as Chelsea DeNofa and Diego Higa keeping Mustang's in the drifting limelight, there's no
question that the chassis is more than capable when it comes to being thrown sideways at the track. Although Ford has achieved a whopping 760 hp from the 2020 GT500 in stock form, we doubt you'll be finding one of those on a budget just yet. CarandDriver Review: "The Mustang GT accelerates with a sound and fury that imported sports coupes
cannot match." - Read the full review We normally decide our winner here... This time, all our choices are winners for different reasons. We've selected these cars from literally thousands of possibilities, and we've tried to give a wide variety of price ranges and choices. Admittedly, they may be a little drift biased, but what else would you expect from
Drifted? We have no doubt that whichever car you select, you're most likely going to have a rollercoaster ride at some point during your ownership, but as long as you see the project through, we have no doubt it'll be worth every minute you put into it. Project cars have a special place in the hearts of car enthusiasts, and it'll open up a whole realm of
possibilities as you begin to build the car, take it to meets and take it to the track. We hope you manage to build the car of your dreams and make new friends that last a lifetime. Why not take a look around our site to give you some more ideas? We recommend our Best Drift Cars For Beginners guide. Thank you for reading our best budget project
cars guide We hope that you're now confident in choosing the right car to satisfy your inner urges! Photography credits We would like to thank the following sources for the use of their images: If you enjoyed this article then please share it with the buttons at the side and bottom of your screen. Find this information useful? Please post a link to it on
your cars owners club. We really appreciate your support. WhatsAppFacebookTwitterPin ItMail Related articles The Best JDM Cars Of The Nineties Best RC Drift Cars Guide For 2024 Written by Joe Terrell Joe is an avid writer and car enthusiast. When he's not cruising the streets alongside his friends in his Nissan Silvia S15, he's drifting on his VR
racing simulator. Joe's passion for cars is always on display. With a keen eye for detail and a deep understanding of the automotive industry, he hopes his writing conveys his excitement and knowledge of cars and games. Joe's work has been featured on many platforms including drivetribe.com, 180sx.club, carthrottle.com, smartdrivinggames.com,
smartbikegames.com, databox.com and ceoblognation.com. When he's not behind the wheel or at his keyboard, he's likely daydreaming of his ultimate ride - the legendary Lexus LFA. Follow Joe on X. (24 votes, average: 3.33 out of 5)You can use this feature to rate this page. Please be generous, giving a higher rating helps us to create more contents.
upgrade and modify. Moreover, unlike a 50-year-old barn find, they can also be driven every day, so you can get to work with the air conditioning on and tinker on the weekends. Plus, they're all post-1996 models with OBD II systems for easier diagnostics and troubleshooting. From sharp-handling sport compacts to punchy V8-powered coupes, here
are five fun projects for less than 10 large. 5) 2000-2005 Toyota MR2 Spyder How do you beat the Mazda Miata at its own game? You put the engine two-seat roadsters are more capable and fun. Their mid-mounted 1.8-liter
four-cylinder 1ZZ-FE is fitted with variable cam timing on the intake side for 138 horsepower. Not a huge number, but these MR2s only weigh about 2,200 pounds and change direction like a neutrino on caffeine. The five-speed manual is the transmission you want. A small number were sold with a sequential manual with an automated clutch, which
was wild tech for the time, but they are slow to launch and change gears leisurely. 4) 2006.5-2014 Volkswagen GTI The quintessential hot hatch since the late 70s, Volkswagen's GTI is a great choice if you want some practicality mixed with your fun. It has never been the quickest car on the road, but it has always been a willing partner on a backroad
Under the hood is a torquey 2.0-liter inline four cylinder, turbocharged of course, and good for 200 hp. A six-speed manual or six-speed dual-clutch DSG (Direct Shift Gearbox) automatic with paddle-shifters were available. The GTI's primary merit is its combination of German engineering in a practical and fun package. Some versions during this era
had non-defeat stability control that could be a buzzkill for drivers seeking to explore the limits. But this is a car that delivers a desirable mix of performance and practicality is the all-wheel drive Subaru WRX. During its first two generations in
America, the WRX was available as a sedan and a hatchback, and these rally-inspired hot rods will put a smile on your face regardless of the road surface or weather conditions. Early cars were powered by a 2.0-liter flat four cylinder good for 227 horsepower. In 2006 Subaru swapped to a 230 horsepower 2.5-liter that swelled to 265 hp in 2009.
These cars are more fun with the five-speed manual, although a four-speed automatic was available through 2008. That year Subaru also added a multi-link rear suspension that's less friendly on rough roads. We prefer the long-travel strut suspension of the first-gen cars. Unfortunately, the more powerful STI models of this vintage are still out of our
imaginary $10,000 budget. 2) 1998-2002 Chevy Camaro Z28/SS and Pontiac Firebird Formula/Trans Am These fourth-generation Camaro and Firebird twins make this list by virtue of their durable and easily modified LS V8, which hit their engine compartments in 1998 and has become the cornerstone of hot rodding over the last 27 years. In the
Camaro (Z28 and SS) and Firebird (Formula and Trans Am) the 5.7-liter LS, which also powered the Corvette, was good for up to 325 horsepower reliably. Coupes, T-tops and convertible bodystyles were available. You will/would probably want the Tremec six-speed manual transmission,
though a four-speed automatic was popular, especially in the ragtops. All V8-powered fourth-gens came with a limited-slip rear differential for big, smoky powerslides. GM's F-bodies were never known as amazing handling machines, but with the right suspension work and wide, sticky rubber they are seriously rapid. 1) 2005-2014 Ford Mustang GT
These retro styled Mustangs reinvigorated America's muscle-car market. Powered initially by Ford's 4.6-liter SOHC V8, known as the mod (for modular) motor, these Mustang GTs pack 300 horsepower reliably, which is
easily achieved with any of several aftermarket supercharger kits. A Tremec five-speed manual or five-speed automatic transmission were available. In 2011, things got really good with the introduction of the 5.0-liter Coyote V8 with dual overhead camshafts, a 7,000 rpm redline and 412 hp. There was also a new six-speed manual and six-speed
automatic. Versions of the Coyote engine still power today's Mustangs and these older examples aren't very easy to find in our price range, but they are out there. If you can afford it, they're worth their price premium over earlier mod motor models. Both coupes and convertibles use a live axle out back and struts up front. But thanks to decades of
development this otherwise rudimentary design is capable of excellent handling, especially on smooth roads. Combine that with all manner of aftermarket support and S197 Mustang GTs are capable of both blistering quick quarter-mile times and hilarious and rapid road-course laps. There you have it, five fun project cars for less than $10,000. Have
fun! Still have questions? Speak to one of our Tinker Experts today! Page 2Looking for an affordable off-road project? America's used-vehicle market is flooded with 4x4 pickups waiting to be rescued by the right DIYer. We're talking about trucks with real four-wheel drive, a two-speed transfer case and other off-road ready hardware right from the
factory. Many with V8 power. And they're out there for less than ten grand. These five rugged trucks represent the best combination of value, capability and fun. Each is supported by the aftermarket with lift kits, dampers, wheels, tires and other parts designed to make each truck even more capable off-road. And each has a thriving network of online
knowledge supporting its transformation from hardware-store errand runner to hardcore rock-crawler. Unfortunately, all these trucks can also all suffer from corrosion, especially in the Snow Belt, so shop around for an example with the least amount of rust. Happy hunting. 5) 1997-2004 Ford F-150 For the 1997 model year, Ford redesigned the F-
150 with a smoother body and a more comfortable interior. More importantly, Ford replaced the crude twin I-beam front suspension with an independent setup that modernized the ride and handling both on and off-road. Two SOHC V8 engines were initially available, a 4.6-liter and a 5.4-liter. Both are powerful and surprisingly fuel efficient, but
shocks, a 3.55 axle ratio and skid plates to the fuel tank, transfer case and front crossmember. Reasons to buy: Onboard diagnostics (OBD II) makes diagnostics (OBD III) makes diagnostics (OBD III) makes diagnostics (OBD III) makes diagn
midsize package, a two-speed transfer case and optional skid plates from the factory. The tough-looking Dakota is a true hot-rod pickup with two V8 engine coupled to a 3.92 axle ratio, this midsize
the same body and chassis for its light-duty pickups between 1972 and 1993. And they've acquired a cult-like following among off-road enthusiasts for their classic looks and solid front axles, which offer more suspension articulation out on the trail than independent front suspension. A two-speed transfer case was standard on four-wheel drive models
however, the four-wheel drive system varied over the years. Early trucks used a full-time system. Then Dodge went to lockable hubs, which offer durable simplicity, plus they're easy to upgrade. Eventually an electronically controlled shift-on-the fly system was employed. Virtually every big Mopar V8 from the era was available in these pickups over
their two-decade long production run. That includes the 5.2-liter, 5.9-liter, 6.6-liter and massive 7.2-liter mills. That's 440 cubic inches. Engines were paired with either a four-speed manual or a three- or four-speed automatic transmission. Reason to buy: Monster size V8s. Only truck on this list with a solid front axle. 2) 1995-2015 Toyota Tacoma At
our suggested price point you'll be getting a very high-mileage first- or second-generation Tacoma may have the best reputation for reliability. Tacomas are also highly capable off road, especially when fitted with the available factory supplied off-road hardware, which included locking or limited-slip rear
differentials and skid plates, depending on the year and trim. All four-wheel drive Tacomas offer a two-speed transfer case in these model years. And Toyota was generous with electronic controls that enhanced traction in off-road situations. Engine options include two four-cylinders (2.4 and 2.7-liters) and two six-cylinders (3.4 and 4.0-liters). A range
of transmissions were available including five- and six-speed manuals, as well as four- and five-speed automatics. Reasons to buy: Legendary reliability. More maneuverable on the trail than a full-size truck. OBD II makes diagnostics easier. 1999-2007 Chevy Silverado 1500/GMC Sierra 1500 It's hard to argue with the reliability and ubiquity of the
first-generation Silverado and Sierra, which are mechanically identical and powered by GM's durable and easily modified LS V8. The LS V8 has become the cornerstone of hot rodding over the last three decades, with many pulled from these pickups and installed in anything and everything from hot rods and '60s muscle cars to Rolls Royces. In these
trucks GM offered both 4.8-liter (270 hp, 285 lb.-ft.) and 5.3-liter (285 hp, 325 lb.-ft.) versions. Four-wheel drive systems were sophisticated for the time, offering a mode that automatically engages the front axle when the rear tires began to spin. The two-speed transfer case also could be manually controlled via dash-mounted buttons. An optional Z71 lb.-ft.)
off-road package added 46mm gas-charged shocks, bump stops, stabilizer bars, skid plates and a high-flow air filter. An optional locking rear differential was also available. Reasons to buy: OBD II makes diagnostics easier. Solid, easy-to-maintain and modify V8 engines. Capable Z71 off-road package. There you have it, five fun off-road pickup projects
for less than $10,000. Also check out 5 Fun Off-Road SUV Projects for less than $10,000 and 5 Fun Project Cars For Less than $10,000. Have fun! Still have questions? Speak to one of our Tinker Experts today! Page 3Along with the popularity of off-roading, overlanding and camping, the prices of fun, off-road SUVs, both new and old, continue to
climb. But a cool and capable SUV with real four-wheel drive, a two-speed transfer case and other off-road ready hardware doesn't have to cost a fortune. These five rugged SUVs offer boundless possibilities for a DIYer looking for a 4x4 project that won't break the bank. They're all available for less than 10 grand, they're all easy to upgrade thanks to
strong aftermarket support and all five have active online communities to help with common issues and solutions. 5) 2000-2015 Nissan Xterra Big mileage Xterras are around for less than $5,000 and they offer solid fundamentals. They share much of their hardware with Nissan's Frontier pickup, including tough body-on-frame construction, double
wishbone front suspension and leaf-sprung rear axle. Early Xterras were available with a 2.4-liter four-cylinder with a five-speed manual transmission or the more desirable 3.3-liter V6 engine, both with a manual or automatic. A limited-slip rear differential was optional. Several skid plates were standard. By the end of the second generation, which
was launched in 2005, every Xterra had Nissan's big 4.0-liter V6 with 261 hp and 281 lb.-ft. of torque backed by a six-speed manual or six-speed manual or six-speed automatic. Second-gen Pro 4X trims came with Bilstein dampers, an electronic locking rear differential and a tougher M226 Dana 44 rear axle, which was also standard on all manual transmission equipped
models. 4) 1994-2004 Land Rover Discovery If you have any doubt about the Land Rover Discovery's off-road chops Google "Camel Trophy 1993-2000". When it comes to off-road hardware, the Disco's merits are many - two solid axles located by radius arms, a two-speed transfer case and, depending on the year, a locking center differential and
brake-based traction control. They also accept suspension lifts and bigger tires safely. The elephant in the room is of course this SUV's reputation of unreliability. It's well earned. But parts are known along with solutions for the DIYer. Head gasket failures are common, especially in 1999
part of its British charm. 3) 1987-2001 Jeep Cherokee As Jeeps go, the XJ Cherokee is as budget friendly as they come. Available with either two- and four-doors, this American utility box was built by the millions, and they're enjoying a resurgence of popularity so prices are climbing. First introduced in 1984, the XJ came with different engines over them.
years. Don't bother with any of them except the torquey 4.0-liter inline six, which hit in 1987. Check for a cracked exhaust manifold, otherwise they're iconic for their durability. The six is paired with a four-speed auto or five-speed manual transmission. Two solid axles underpin all 4x4 Cherokees, the front sprung with coil springs and the rear with
leafs. Axle swaps are a common upgrade, but some XJs from 1987-1991 have a stout Dana 44 rear with 30-spline axles, which is a meaningful upgrade. And beware of rust. These unibody off-roaders are particularly susceptible. 2) 1996-2009 Toyota 4Runner When it comes to Toyota 4Runners, the third and fourth-generation are the sweet spot for cost
and capability. Both came with a coil-sprung rear axles and a double wishbone from a tough ladder-style frame. Both also offered locking or limited-slip center differentials and a locking rear diff. Four, six and eight-cylinder engines were available depending on the year and trim. Third-gens offered a 2.7-liter four cylinder and
3.4-liter V6. A 4.7-liter V8 arrived in fourth-generation 4Runners in 2003 while a 4.0-liter V6 became the base engine. Third-generations for their balance of
durability and ubiquity. Only death, taxes and the rotation of the earth are said to be more reliable than an old 4Runner. With basic maintenance, 300,000 miles is common. So are frame rust and sagging rear springs, so keep an out for those issues. 1) 1986-2017 Jeep Wrangler is the king of off roaders so it's unsurprising to see it at these are springs, so keep an out for those issues.
top of our list. It has always been a body-on-frame SUV with front and rear live-axles and removable roof and doors, giving it timeless desirability. Finding a good Wrangler on this budget isn't easy, but it's possible with some patience. There are three generations of Wranglers that are likely to fall into this price range and any of them will be wildly
 capable. The square-headlight YI started in 1986, the JL, which introduced coil spring suspension in 1997 and the first Rubicon trim, which hit in 2003 with locking differentials front and rear, and a lower final drive. The JK sold from 2007-2018 was available in the traditional two-door configuration or a new four-door version, called the Unlimited
which quickly became extremely popular. The desirable 285-horsepower 3.6-liter V6 was introduced in 2012. Still have questions? Speak to one of our Tinker Experts today! For gearheads, ownership is only a small step on the path towards the acquisition of a dream car. Far more of the process comes down to knowing a vehicle inside and out,
replacing parts as needed, and making upgrades as they arise. Sure, buying a car off the lot makes for immediate gratification, but the reality is that it's a fleeting enjoyment at best. However, not everyone is born with a mechanic's intuition, and intentionally buying a project car can be an intimidating prospect for the uninitiated. In concept, it sounds a making upgrades as they arise.
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Cheap and robust, Chevy C10 trucks make for great project cars. They're simple to work on and also popular amongst enthusiasts, so there's a lot of parts and support available in the event you run into trouble. It's worth noting that the older you go, the harder parts will be to find. If possible, stick to second-gen model years — you'll save yourself a
lot of headaches in the long run, and it'll be much easier to work on. Engine: 4.0L Six-Cylinder Power: 155HP Average Used Pricing: $14,300 Photo: Wikipedia Why It Made The Cut An early F Series pickup absolutely brimming with character and old-school flavor. F-100's are extremely popular buys for classic project trucks. And it's for good reason.
There's an abundance of project-ready examples, they're easy to source parts for, and they're relatively inexpensive to come by. What's more, there are plenty of directions you can go with your build. So whether you prefer to perfectly restore your pickup or want to resto-mod it with modern tech, there's ample opportunity to make it your own. We
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performance if properly taken care of. Just be wary of driving them on the highway; it's a surefire way to discover any problems that might be lurking. There are also Jimmy models that come with larger V8 powertrains. Engine: 4.0L Six-Cylinder Power: 130HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Jeep Why It Made The Cut An American-made, turn-
of-the-millennium-era SUV with exceptional durability and dependability. Popular amongst beginners and seasoned trail experts alike, XJ Cherokees are nearly-indestructible when properly maintained. Sure, they have their characteristically American quirks, but they'll go a long way toward teaching you how to perform upkeep on your own car. And
while they're quite the rock-bottom affordable offering that they once were, the immense online support and parts availability remain. Engine: 4.0L Straight-Six Power: 190HP Average Used Pricing: $10,100 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A compact yet capable 4×4 offering a markedly more affordable alternative to Toyota's FJ40. With
collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FJ40, International Harvester Scout, and Ford Bronco — the Suzuki Samurai stands out as one of the last of such cars yet to be snatched up. It's worth noting that these pocket-sized SUVs aren't known for their power (quite the opposite in fact). With a
top speed of just 65mph, it's advisable to spring for an engine swap. Count on these becoming harder and harder to find. Engine: 1.3L Inline-Four Power: 60HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 By their very nature, European imports require an owner that'll keep up with maintenance. While this can lead to some sad and neglected examples, others can
prove quite a find when it comes to budget project potential. Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A sporty Bavarian-built model that served as the basis for the legendary E30 M3. These days, E30 M3's fetch astronomical prices at auction. But with a bit of patient searching (and some luck), you can easily snag a 325i. With a bulletproof straight
six under the hood, it's a great car for beginners just getting into things or experienced wrenchers looking for a ready-to-tune ride. While 316's and 318i's are all over the classifieds, you should consider the direction of your build before buying one; if you're looking for performance, you'll quickly outgrow their meager four-cylinders. Engine: 2.5L
Straight-Six Power: 168HP Average Used Pricing: $19,600 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A British-built true drivers car with an obtainable price & devoted cult following. If you're a fan of small British sports cars, it doesn't get much better than the MGB. Available as a roadster and as a GT (pictured here) these cars are extremely popular
amongst automotive enthusiasts. As such, there's a wellspring of available knowledge for you to tap into come time to fix up your own. When considering a potential MGB project, be sure to check for rust — British cars are notorious for the stuff. Engine: 1.8L Inline-Four Power: 92HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Porsche Why It Made The Cut
An affordable — and unconventional — front-engined Porsche that's quickly rising in value. For all of its flaws, the 928 has managed to leave the world of budget project cars behind. However, the 944 is still regularly affordable with reasonably low miles. Obviously, Porsche parts come at a premium, so it's up to the buyer to determine the budget
status of this pick. If you have your eye on a 944, get your hands on as complete a record of maintenance as you can. They run like a top when they're properly kept up with, but neglected examples can become a true can of worms. And, while the S and Turbo models are obviously more sought after, the final-year (1989) 944 is almost certainly the one
you want, as it gained a bit of extra displacement and power. Engine: 2.7L Inline Four Power: 160HP Average Used Pricing: $12,000 Photo: Volkswagen Why It Made The Cut A vintage European hot hatch with loads of potential for upgrading & tuning. Second to the Beetle, the Volkswagen Golf is one of the most prevalent models the German
marque produces. So no matter what body style you're considering, they're incredibly affordable project platforms. In GTI form, they make for lightweight little hatchbacks that offer tons of driving fun. Bag it, boost it, or bring it back to factory condition — the world is your oyster when it comes to the end result. Even a cursory search will show you
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just how thriving the VW wrencher community is. Engine: 1.7L Inline-Four Power: 112HP Average Used Pricing: $15,300 Photo: Volvo Cars Global Why It Made The Cut A boxy & beloved classic Volvo kicked along by a bulletproof-reliable four-banger. Older Volvos have tons of qualities that make them ideal platforms for getting your hands dirty. For
 instance, their spacious engine bays allow for easy access to components come time for maintenance. And when it comes to the ride, they're built like tanks and are generally pretty reliable. Buyer beware — depending on the fix, some parts can be hard to find (as is the case with most Swedish imports). Engine: 2.1L Inline-Four Power: 98HP Average
Used Price: $5,100 Photo: Shutterstock Interested in investing your hard-earned money into classic cars rather than the stock market or CD? Then be sure to head over to our guide to the best investment cars for a curated list of retro rides with steadily-rising valuations that show no signs of slowing. For gearheads, ownership is only a small step on
the path towards the acquisition of a dream car. Far more of the process comes down to knowing a vehicle inside and out, replacing parts as needed, and making upgrades as they arise. Sure, buying a car off the lot makes for immediate gratification, but the reality is that it's a fleeting enjoyment at best. However, not everyone is born with a
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of a donor. They're not the most powerful SUVs or especially fuel-efficient, but they'll promise you years of dependable performance if properly taken care of. Just be wary of driving them on the highway; it's a surefire way to discover any problems that might be lurking. There are also Jimmy models that come with larger V8 powertrains. Engine: 4.01
Six-Cylinder Power: 130HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Jeep Why It Made The Cut An American-made, turn-of-the-millennium-era SUV with exceptional durability and dependability. Popular amongst beginners and seasoned trail experts alike, XJ Cherokees are nearly-indestructible when properly maintained. Sure, they have their
characteristically American quirks, but they'll go a long way toward teaching you how to perform upkeep on your own car. And while they're quite the rock-bottom affordable offering that they once were, the immense online support and parts availability remain. Engine: 4.0L Straight-Six Power: 190HP Average Used Pricing: $10,100 Photo:
Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A compact yet capable 4×4 offering a markedly more affordable alternative to Toyota's FI40. With collectors having sufficiently inflated the value of other boxy off-road classics — such as the Toyota FI40. International Harvester Scout, and Ford Bronco — the Suzuki Samurai stands out as one of the last of such cars
yet to be snatched up. It's worth noting that these pocket-sized SUVs aren't known for their power (quite the opposite in fact). With a top speed of just 65mph, it's advisable to spring for an engine swap. Count on these becoming harder and harder to find. Engine: 1.3L Inline-Four Power: 60HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 By their very nature
European imports require an owner that'll keep up with maintenance. While this can lead to some sad and neglected examples, others can prove quite a find when it comes to budget project potential. Photo: Shutterstock Why It Made The Cut A sporty Bavarian-built model that served as the basis for the legendary E30 M3. These days, E30 M3's fetch
astronomical prices at auction. But with a bit of patient searching (and some luck), you can easily snag a 325i. With a bulletproof straight-six under the hood, it's a great car for beginners just getting into things or experienced wrenchers looking for a ready-to-tune ride. While 316's and 318i's are all over the classifieds, you should consider the
direction of your build before buying one; if you're looking for performance, you'll quickly outgrow their meager four-cylinders. Engine: 2.5L Straight-Six Power: 168HP Average Used Pricing: $19,600 Photo: Wikimedia Why It Made The Cut A British-built true drivers car with an obtainable price & devoted cult following. If you're a fan of small British
sports cars, it doesn't get much better than the MGB. Available as a roadster and as a GT (pictured here) these cars are extremely popular amongst automotive enthusiasts. As such, there's a wellspring of available knowledge for you to tap into come time to fix up your own. When considering a potential MGB project, be sure to check for rust —
British cars are notorious for the stuff. Engine: 1.8L Inline-Four Power: 92HP Average Used Pricing: $9,300 Photo: Porsche Why It Made The Cut An affordable — and unconventional — front-engined Porsche that's quickly rising in value. For all of its flaws, the 928 has managed to leave the world of budget project cars behind. However, the 944 is
still regularly affordable with reasonably low miles. Obviously, Porsche parts come at a premium, so it's up to the budget status of this pick. If you have your eye on a 944, get your hands on as complete a record of maintenance as you can. They run like a top when they're properly kept up with, but neglected examples can
become a true can of worms. And, while the S and Turbo models are obviously more sought after, the final-year (1989) 944 is almost certainly the one you want, as it gained a bit of extra displacement and power. Engine: 2.7L Inline Four Power: 160HP Average Used Pricing: $12,000 Photo: Volkswagen Why It Made The Cut A vintage European hot
hatch with loads of potential for upgrading & tuning. Second to the Beetle, the Volkswagen Golf is one of the most prevalent models the German marque produces. So no matter what body style you're considering, they're incredibly affordable project platforms. In GTI form, they make for lightweight little hatchbacks that offer tons of driving fun. Bag
it, boost it, or bring it back to factory condition — the world is your oyster when it comes to the end result. Even a cursory search will show you just how thriving the VW wrencher community is. Engine: 1.7L Inline-Four Power: 112HP Average Used Pricing: $15,300 Photo: Volvo Cars Global Why It Made The Cut A boxy & beloved classic Volvo kicked
along by a bulletproof-reliable four-banger. Older Volvos have tons of qualities that make them ideal platforms for getting your hands dirty. For instance, their spacious engine bays allow for easy access to components come time for maintenance. And when it comes to the ride, they're built like tanks and are generally pretty reliable. Buyer beware —
depending on the fix, some parts can be hard to find (as is the case with most Swedish imports). Engine: 2.1L Inline-Four Power: 98HP Average Used Price: $5,100 Photo: Shutterstock Interested in investing your hard-earned money into classic cars rather than the stock market or CD? Then be sure to head over to our guide to the best investment
cars for a curated list of retro rides with steadily-rising valuations that show no signs of slowing. It's no secret that the used car market has been on a one-way trend upward over the past couple years, in part because of increased demand stemming from the semiconductor shortage. Add in the record levels of nostalgia for certain '80s and '90s cars,
and the result is that a lot of once-affordable project cars are now out of reach for more cash-strapped enthusiasts. Nevertheless, there are still plenty of great cheap cars out there that won't break the bank and are versatile enough for all sorts of projects. It's easy to say that you can buy almost any old enthusiasts' car if you're willing to fish it out of
a barn or take a chance on a sketchy-looking Craigslist ad, but for the purposes of this list, we're only concentrating on models that can be bought in decent running condition for a four-figure price tag. After plenty of digging around on Bring a Trailer, we've put together a selection of 10 of the best cars that will suit almost any type of project,
whether that's restoration, modification, or even just stripping the car out and tearing 'round the track in it. Although plenty of other Japanese sports cars from the '90s have skyrocketed in value over the past few years, the value of the Z32 Nissan 300ZX has remained relatively affordable. The car debuted for the 1990 model year and immediately
impressed critics, with Car and Driver declaring, "We can think of no other car that offers more style and sculptured, buttoned-down beauty for the money." The twin-turbo version is the fastest, but even the cheaper naturally-aspirated cars packed plenty of grunt straight from the factory. There are plenty of issues to watch out for when buying a
cheap 300ZX, but get one in good condition and they're arguably still one of the best performance bargains on the market. Project car builders will also benefit from the large aftermarket surrounding the car, with plenty of off-the-shelf options for both performance and cosmetic improvements available. Anyone looking to buy the cheapest examples
will likely find themselves with plenty of work to do straight away, as cheap 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though, with a manual '96 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though, with a manual '96 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though, with a manual '96 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though, with a manual '96 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though, with a manual '96 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though, with a manual '96 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though, with a manual '96 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though, with a manual '96 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though, with a manual '96 300ZXs tend to be poorly maintained. Scruffy but mechanically-sound examples can still be found within budget though the scruff of the budget though the scruff of the scruff of the budget though the scruff of the scruff of the budget though the scruff of the scruff of
of the car to receive a proper M variant, and although the M3 is now well out of reach for the average enthusiast, lower-spec cars remain under budget. Plenty of aftermarket parts are available for project car builders, with the E30's balanced handling making it perfect for everything from drift car builds to rally car conversions. If you want, you can
always dress your cheap E30 up to look more like an M3, too. It's a controversial idea, but plenty of people do, especially since a real M3 can now cost over six figures. Widebody kits are also easily sourced, in case it's the static look that you're going for. To build any of these projects though, you'll need a car that's in fairly good shape to begin with.
Luckily, they're easy to find, with a January 2023 listing on Bring a Trailer showing a '90 325i selling for $8,600. While a Corvette is hardly the most exotic of project cars, it's readily available on the used market for just a few thousand dollars, yet it's ripe for
restoration and easy to modify should you want to give it some more poke under the hood. It's not unusual to see project C4s packing over 500 horsepower if they've been engine swapped, even if they don't look that different on the outside. Even without turning the car into a tire-shredding sleeper, the C4 can leave plenty of its peers from the era in
the rearview, at least in a straight line. A side-by-side test saw the C4 easily beat a Porsche 911 Carrera 3.2 over a quarter mile, although its 17.06-second time is dwarfed by the capabilities of a modern 'Vette. For less than $10K, though, a C4 might just be all the project car you need, and then some. An '88 example recently sold on Bring a Trailer for
$9,000, and it only showed 64,000 miles on the odometer. Another car that's neither exotic nor particularly original, the NA Miata is a long-standing enthusiast's favorite for good reason. The pint-sized roadster might not be fast by any stretch of the imagination, but it's great fun to drive. Its light curb weight means that it's easy to throw around, and
even relatively modest power increases can make it significantly faster. It's also one of the world's best-selling sports cars of all time (via MotorTrend). Early Miatas are prone to rust, and as a
result, it's not as easy to find a cheap, solid one as it once was. A lot of decent examples will now command prices well out of budget, but there are still some affordable cars about if you wait for the right listing. A one-owner '93 Miata sold for $9,850 on Bring a Trailer in November 2022, and it came with a set of BBS wheels thrown in. There have
been very few cars in history that have become quite as iconic as the classic VW Beetle. For decades after series production first started in 1945, the car became the affordable transportation of choice for drivers across the globe, with 21.5 million examples of the first-generation car sold. That makes it the most popular single-platform passenger car
of all time. The car's enduring popularity ensured that there are thousands of innovative Beetle-based project cars out there, from Baja desert runners to slammed rat rod statics. VW's reinvention of the Beetle in 1999 saw most of its enthusiast appeal lost in the process, and by 2019, the car had been killed off altogether. However, its
sales success in its heyday has meant that there are still plenty of classic examples ready to be snapped up for bargain prices. A lightly-restored '66 example of the car crossed the auction block on Bring a Trailer in January 2023 for $9,000, and historical listing data shows that there are plenty more examples selling for similar prices. The Civic-based
CRX is a typical Honda in that it's practical, affordable, and supremely economical. It was, in fact, the first car to ever break the 50 mpg barrier in the EPA's testing cycle (via Road and Track). However, unlike plenty of other economical Hondas, the CRX was also a blast to drive, with its lightweight and stiffened suspension making it as great for the
backroads as it was for the morning commute. Its Civic underpinnings also meant that modifications were easy for anyone who wanted to spice up their CRX a bit, and rally and hillclimb builds are also popular alongside the usual street-racing builds. Like many Japanese cars of its age, prices for the CRX are rising, but they're still available within
budget for now. A manual California-registered example with 108,000 miles on the clock sold on Bring a Trailer for $8,250 at the end of January 2023. The Mercedes-Benz W123 has built up a rock-solid reputation for reliability in the decades since it was launched, with many examples still running with mostly original components despite having
several hundred thousand miles on the odometer. This was German luxury at its most bulletproof, although years of daily use has meant that there are plenty of examples out there that could do with some TLC. They make the perfect restoration project for someone looking for a daily drivable classic, especially with the car's range of roomy body
styles. Coupes, sedans, and wagons are all easy to find for sale, and many sell for surprisingly low prices. A 280CE coupe with a four-speed manual transmission sold in mid-January 2023 on Bring a Trailer for $6,000, and a 240D sold for $9,100 a few weeks before. Like many of the cars here, good, cheap examples are getting harder to find. As a
result, you may well make good money if you're buying one to restore with a plan to sell it later down the line. Porsche might not be the first manufacturer that comes to mind when thinking of cheap cars, but the 944 can in fact be found relatively easily for under budget. It's also a lot more versatile as a project car than many might assume — owners
have kitted their 944s out as safari-style off-roaders, GT-inspired widebody racers, and even LS-swapped drift machines. Of course, there's also always the option of restoring your car back to factory spec, and enjoying one of Porsche's more underrated sports cars. It might not be that fast in stock form, and it's not as iconic in design as, say, a 911,
but the 944 still ticks all the right boxes for a cheap enthusiasts' car. Manual transmissions are common, examples often appear for sale in good condition, and those pop-up headlights give it a retro appeal that not even a 911 could match. A manual '86 944 went under the hammer in early January 2023 for $8,420, and there are plenty more like it in
Bring a Trailer's historical listings data. Finding a mid-engined car for a four-figure price tag is not an easy task. Arguably the best way of doing it is by opting for a Toyota MR2, the Japanese brand's entry-level sports car that ran across three generations between 1985 and 2005 (via MotorTrend). Any of the three generations make for a great
affordable project, but we've picked the second-gen SW20 MR2 as an example here. Price: Low - High" filter on most auction sites. That's exactly what makes it a great project car though: Anyone who buys one and restores it should see the
value of the car rise along with their work. A '91 MR2 with 171,000 miles fetched $7,300 on Bring a Trailer in mid-2022, and an example with a whopping 421,000 miles sold for $6,521 later in the year. Similarly high mileage cars can be found for cheaper on other auction sites, but be wary of poorly-maintained examples, and as with all old cars, keep
an eye out for hidden rust. The Mitsubishi Delica is a bit of a wildcard entry, as it looks like a minivan — albeit one that's weirdly capable off-road. These odd 4x4s have gained a cult following as great all-terrain campervans, with many owners fitting their Delicas out with beefier tires and lifted suspensions. They were never officially sold in America,
but since many of them are now over 25 years old, the first wave of Delica imports has already hit U.S. shores. Driving one is an unusual experience, as you're sat right over the engine, giving you excellent all-around visibility even if the driving position might take some getting used to. They're not fast, either, since most examples have sluggish-but-
reliable engines making either 86 or 140 horsepower. Even so, the Delica is arguably one of the coolest hidden JDM gems on the market, so it's best to get one quickly before too many other people discover them and the prices go up. Delicas are still relatively rare to come across thanks to their import-only status, but an example sold on Bring a
Trailer in December 2022 for $8,400, and it only had 107,000 miles on the odometer.
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