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## 2016 Lexus ES

### Overview

The Lexus ES is a mid-size front-wheel-drive luxury sedan built on the Toyota Avalon platform. Its emphasis is comfort over sport. Two drivetrains are available.

The Lexus ES 350 comes with a strong 3.5-liter V6 and 6-speed automatic transmission. The 268-horsepower V6 is EPA-rated at 21/31 mpg City/Highway.

The Lexus ES 300h features a hybrid gas-electric powerplant that is surprisingly quick and responsive. The ES 300h uses a 2.5-liter Atkinson-cycle four-cylinder engine with an electric motor and generator. The vivid hybrid delivers an EPA-estimated 40/39 mpg City/Highway. The hybrid offers three driving modes: Eco, Power, and EV, which runs all-electric for short distances at slower speed.

This seventh-generation ES was launched as a 2013 model. For 2016, the styling has been revised and new features have been added.

The 2016 Lexus ES leaves some of its subdued styling behind, with a new nose that shows off a signature spindle grille that's bigger and more aggressive, and flaunts flashy LED headlamps. The front fascia is bold too. The taillights are shaped like the letter L, and the exhaust tips are trapezoids. There are new wheels for 2016 Lexus ES models, as well.

Inside, the environment is airy and sophisticated. The information display screen increases in size from 3.5 to 4.2 inches for 2016. Also, the 2016 Lexus ES has an optional safety package with pre-collision, lane departure alert with steering assist, automatic high/low beams, and adaptive cruise control. A blind spot monitor and rear cross traffic alert are also available.

### Model Lineup

The 2016 Lexus ES 350 (\$38,000) comes with a 3.5-liter V6 and 6-speed automatic along with excellent faux leather upholstery, Bluetooth, XM HD radio, eight-speaker audio, and a sunroof.

The Lexus ES 300h (\$40,920) features a hybrid gas-electric powerplant. (Prices are MSRP, can change at any time without notice, and do not include destination charge.)

### Exterior

The larger grille on 2016 Lexus ES models adds chrome trim in an attempt to give it more visual excitement. The pinched waist of its sharp hourglass is on the bumper, so it flows outward (upward and downward) into the hood and low air dam. The new front fascia matches the aggression. The LED headlamps aren't just flashy, they're beautiful.

The profile is contemporary with sculpted sheetmetal that gives it a formal look, in a good way.

### Interior

The dash is shelf-like, but the Lexus ES gets away with it by staying true to horizontal lines, with a curving instrument panel and corners that rise up and outward. It gives off a feeling of space,

even with the available seven-inch navigation screen prominently up there. Too much metallic trim here for our taste.

It feels refined inside the cabin, especially when it's moving because it's so quiet, no wind or road noise.

That sense of space becomes reality in the back seat. The ES has a long wheelbase for its mid-size, which translates to more legroom in the rear. Three adults actually can fit back there. When cargo capacity is needed, the rear seatback flops and opens to the trunk. But not the hybrid, which has a smaller trunk to make room for batteries, with no pass-through to the cabin, either.

Beyond the standard equipment, available interior luxuries include Mark Levinson audio, upgraded leather and trim, and Lexus Enform with all its apps. But the remote touch control, mouse-like with a pointer on the screen, is awkward. Two buttons have been added for 2016 in an attempt to make it simpler.

### **Driving Impressions**

The demeanor is relaxed but the performance is athletic, or at least can be. The ride is firm without tipping the comfort south. It's not quite nimble, but it tracks true and the steering is quick enough. However the brake pedal in the ES 350 feels spongy.

In the ES 300h, which uses regenerative braking, the brake pedal isn't smooth. The hybrid drivetrain is otherwise quite smooth around town, and it's generally quite quick, but on curvy roads with hills, or when merging on the freeway with your foot down, the engine feels stressed.

The 3.5-liter V6 with its 268 horsepower makes the ES 350 quicker than the ES 300h hybrid, but a bigger difference might be its smoothness. The ES 350's V6 revs through the transmission's six gears seamlessly; in fact it happens so quietly and effortlessly that you find yourself going fast before you're aware of it. It's an exceptionally responsive and refined powertrain.

### **Final Word**

The Lexus ES offers a comfortable ride, good handling and a stylish interior. The ES 350 features a super-smooth V6, while the ES 300h boasts a high-mileage hybrid powerplant.

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