

Lexus IS Icons: 2001 Lexus IS

February 10, 2021



Twenty years before the introduction of the 2021 Lexus IS last summer, the iconic rear-wheel-drive compact luxury sedan blazed a trail for the power of performance. This is the car that initiated Toyota President and master driver, Akio Toyoda, into the exhilaration of performance driving, and tapped into the desire for an emotional feel behind the wheel. In balancing a sports car with a sedan, the IS created an ideal synergy for a new kind of Lexus guest.

The IS may have evolved in shape, size, efficiency and power, but it has stayed true to its stimulating heritage, retained the craftsmanship expected from Lexus, and created a culture of style and expression all its own.

Now, the IS launches the newest chapter in its story of innovation at Lexus as the first of the lineup to feature the Lexus Driving Signature approach to design. To chart the course of this groundbreaking driving experience, here is a look back at major milestones for the model that shook up luxury and forged a time-tested bond between driver and machine.

Lexus IS Icons: A Star is Born



It was a star from the start.

At its debut, the Lexus IS staked its turf as a driver's car. Announced in 1999 and debuted for sale in 2000 for the model year 2001, the Lexus IS announced a defining moment for the sports luxury sedan market. With its front-engine rear-wheel-drive (FR) layout, the IS also set the stage for future Lexus sedans, which would lean into the delectable dynamism of FR. Style also moved into new territory thanks to a pioneering look to the taillights, which quickly became a signature feature and popularized the style for the next decade. Encasing the internal lamps of the taillights with clear (or tinted) acrylic glass was just one fresh idea in the creation of the classic model.

Throwback Facts:

- “IS” is short for “intelligent sport,” a nod to the mechanically dynamic design of the new luxury sport sedan that would electrify the segment.
- The IS 300 featured the naturally aspirated version of the 2JZ-GTE found in the MKIV Supra.
- The IS was the brainchild of Chief Engineer Nobuaki Katayama, the creator of Toyota's high-revving FR classic, the AE86, a hero of the early days of drifting and central to the lore of a Japanese manga and anime series well known to enthusiasts.

The Lexus IS sedan continues to evolve, with the ultimate goal of delivering a new generation of Lexus vehicles that is more balanced, refined in control, and confident than ever before. Check out the next icon in the making,

the new 2021 Lexus IS, [here](#).