I'm not a bot

Written By: Mark Marino a Massachusetts Core Applicator License holder and owner/operator of Lawn Phix, If you purchase through one of the links on our site, we may receive a small commission at no extra cost. I've personally used these products and provided an honest opinion. Your support helps maintain our free content, including lawn care guides and calendars. Learn more. I recently purchased a used 22″ Toro Personal Pace lawn mower online. After owning a similar 22″ Recycler (which I sold for a lawn tractor) I knew I wanted another one. The ride on mower does a horrible job on my front yard because it's a bit hilly, causing it to be a little dangerous when riding sideways. It also digs up the lawn when trying to ride uphill. Alas, I needed another push mower. Spin Stop: Something my previous mower did not have. First, you don't need to hold onto the lever to start anything. Just the handle, grip and rip! Second, I have kids and dogs and lots of oak trees, so there's often times that I need to move a toy, dog ball, or twigs/branches from my line of mowing. Now I can just let go of the lever, stop the blade but not the engine. Genius! Mulching: As noted on the machine itself, it is a "Recycler" –thus the design of the undercarriage makes for finely-mulched grass clippings. Recycle/Bag: The blue lever next to the bottom of the bag allows you to easily flip between mulching and bagging. Sometimes clippings do get clogged there, but overall, it's a fast and simple process. Maintenance: Very easy to tune this up. The spark plug is front and center; the blade has a simple ¾" bolts in the middle; oil is easily accessible. Wheels: I don't know why they didn't make these as easily adjustable as the Timemaster… but maybe that's because mine was made in 2010, a Toro serial number 310030781 on this model number 20333. But you have to adjust all 4 wheels individually (versus just 2 on the Timemaster). You also move the pin forward to move the front part of the deck down, and the rear wheel back… so it's easy to end up with an uneven deck. Gas: If you're not careful, then it's easy to get this carburetor clogged up. Of course you need to change and/or clean your air filter often – which is easy to get to with two screws – but there is no gas filter. So any sediment that ends up in your tank will end up in the carb. I snipped the fuel line and added a clear inline filter. Personal Pace: Again, unlike the Timemaster, adjusting the speed of the Personal Pace is harder than it needs to be. Instead of using a plastic wing nut, you actually need a wrench to loosen the cord – which of course allows you to move the cable up/down to make it faster/slower. Overall, I like this machine. Now that it's pushing 10 years old, when it goes I may give a Honda a try next. But for now, I'm a very happy Toro owner. Author's Note: this piece has been updated for accuracy since its first publication on January 25, 2020 When I drive around the beautiful countryside of Pennsylvania in the summer, I notice a lot of local landscaping companies keeping yards trimmed up and looking great. The brand name I see most often on their machines is Toro. It's no doubt that Toro makes a lot of great professional and consumer level mowers trusted by business owners and homeowners alike. Pro Tool Reviews decided to take on a couple of Toro Self-Propelled lawnmower reviews to test out the line. We brought in both the Toro 22″ Personal Pace Recycler Lawnmower (20332) and the all-wheel-drive model, the 20353. Both mowers share the same features save for the self-propelled drive system. The Toro 22" Personal Pace Recycler line brings some innovative features to Toro's self-propelled lawnmowers. These lawn mowers feature a 163cc Briggs & Stratton Engine with 7.25 ft-lbs of torque. That makes them a great choice for small to medium-sized yards. With the implementation of the all-wheel-drive self propel system, yards with moderate to medium slopes are a breeze. The 22″ deck also reduces the number of passes necessary to efficiently cover as much area as possible before moving up to a riding mower. As the name states, the "Guaranteed-to-Start" promise actually proved accurate. Toro's ReadyStart is an auto choke feature, which means you don't have to prime or choke the engine. The Briggs & Stratton EXi 163cc starts after one or two pulls with no problem. In fact, the most I've ever had to pull it was twice and 95% of the time it started on the first pull. Toro also placed the recoil start handle in a comfortable position that I found easy to use. A few years ago when shopping for a new push mower, I had to decide between a standard mower and a self-propelled model. I cared most about weight, gas consumption, and ease-of-maintenance. In the end, I opted for the self-propelled model and never looked back. On the AWD model, Toro's Personal Pace feature gives you three basic options for operation. You can go fully manual, use the fully-automatic self-propelled handle that moves forward as you move forward, or use the traction assisted handle that gives you the ability to control how much assistance you want. I'll admit the fully-automatic handle took some getting used to because it's not a static bar. As you put pressure on the handle, it moves forward—giving you more or less assistance according to how hard you press it. At first, it felt like mowing the lawn with a bungee cord because the gripped handle constantly moves back and forth as you walk. Once I got used to it, Personal Pace became very intuitive and the mower became an extension of my body. I found myself using the traction assist handle in the center of the handle for hills. To control how much assistance you want, you have to hold the mower in the center of the bar—a tad bit awkward. I understand why they had to place the handle in the center, but I'd like to see something on the sides for a more natural pushing position. AWD ModelStandard Personal Pace I like mulching with my mower because I don't want to deal with emptying the bag. Some people, however, prefer only to mow with a bag—particularly those with lots of leaves. Toro includes a quick change lever that easily goes back and forth between recycle mode (which mulches the grass using Toro's Atomic blade lift system) or bagging mode. Even better, you can make the switch while the mower runs. You can't do adequate Toro self-propelled lawnmower reviews without checking how it bags. In some areas of the country—that's a huge deal. In the bag-on-demand mode, I noticed that it would sometimes not throw the clippings to the back of the bag—causing it to clog. When this happened, I had to empty the bag more often. The bag is very easy to get on and off because it sits on a sturdy two-point hinge system. Toro could stand to open up the mouth of the bag a bit more. When dumping the clippings, several times I had to reach in to get them empty—even with dry grass. Also, there were a few times that after dumping the bag, it would leave a trail of clippings once I started mowing again. The cutting heights available range from 1 inch to 4 inches with seven stops/half stops between. Each wheel is independently adjustable which Pros seem to prefer for stiffness over single-lever systems. Another upside is that durability increases as you have less moving parts to break. Like many mowers, the Toro 22" Personal Pace Recycler Lawnmower comes with a washout port for hooking up a hose to clean the blades and deck. Hold the plastic nut securely while spinning it onto your hose. While it does make the deck easier to clean, it doesn't get everything. We recommend (and appreciate) it for those who cannot lift the mower up and hose it off manually. If you can, turning the mower on its side and spraying it down still wins. For me, the wetness of the cut grass determined whether I used the quick wash connector or tilted it up to spray it off. My favorite feature on the Toro 20353 lawn mower is the All Wheel Drive traction assist. The Toro 20332 Personal Pace lawn mower uses only the rear wheels. When mowing on uneven surfaces, you start to lose traction, especially while mowing up or down steep slopes. With All Wheel Drive, the front and rear wheels have a nice aggressive tread and spin independently. This gives you the best traction possible when mowing on inclines. The Toro 20353 AWD mower definitely outperforms standard Personal Pace in this area. The maximum speed on these mowers felt similar—around 4.8 mph. I found that more than enough for fast-paced mowing. The Briggs and Stratton 163cc engine is a beast! I travel for work a lot and often come home to an unruly yard after a week or two of being away. The top-notch cutting power makes it a breeze to get "caught up". Even the non-AWD Personal Pace model packs a punch. The 7.25 ft-lbs of gross torque at 2600 RPM shows itself when pushing the Personal Pace handle down as far as it will go in a thick St. Augustine lawn. The power coupled with the rear-wheel-drive on this model makes for a strong combo. The mower doesn't bog down at all. Rather, it hums right along—even when carrying an increasingly heavy bagger. I didn't experience any hesitation from the engine even while mowing tall and wet grass. It took about one hour to mow a half-acre of St Augustine. Also, the engine runs smooth and sounds surprisingly quiet. I could have a conversation with my Dad from 10 feet away while mowing the lawn. While we always recommend the use of hearing protection, the output of this mower allows for several hours of use without violating OSHA standards. Since I'm a musician and sometimes sing while mowing the lawn, I found out that the tone of the engine runs to the tone of F#/Gb (just in case you happen to write a great song while mowing!) Model: 20353M7.25 ft-lb Gross Torque Briggs & Stratton EXi 163cc w/ReadyStartPersonal Pace All-Wheel Drive Self Propel System3 Year Guaranteed-to-Start Briggs & Stratton EngineEasy Mulch or Bagging SettingsWeight: 78 lbs.2-year Full Coverage WarrantyPrice: $399 Model: 203327.25 ft-lb Gross Torque Briggs & Stratton EXi 163cc w/ReadyStartPersonal Pace Rear-Wheel Drive Self Propel System3 Year Guaranteed-to-Start Briggs & Stratton EngineEasy Mulch or Bagging SettingsWeight: 78 lbs.2-year Full Coverage WarrantyPrice: $369 Once you get used to the Personal Pace function, this mower works very intuitively and has plenty of power to tackle even thick St. Augustine grass (crab crass for northerners!). Bagging could improve, and you may find limited use for the washout port. The collapsibility of this mower makes it easy to store, but if you need to load it in and out of a truck bed, you'll definitely need help. Toro placed all of the serviceable parts in easy-to-access locations—I loved that. Whether your grass needs a short trim or a serious cutting, these Toro mowers seem up for the challenge. If you have lots of inclines, opt for the AWD model—otherwise, either Toro self-propelled lawnmower should leave you with a professional-looking yard.