



Choosing Safer Vehicles



Road Safety

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CHOOSING A CAR CHECKLIST

When choosing a new (brand new or second-hand) car, lots of factors will influence your choice, such as the purchase price, running costs, type of car, colour, and so on. Many car websites and magazines provide reviews of a wide range of cars to help you decide. Whatever your preferences, it's essential to make sure that the car is in a safe, roadworthy condition.

Think about where you will buy from, an authorised dealership, an independent car trader, a private seller or a car auction. An authorised dealer may be more expensive, but the car will come with a warranty and thorough safety checks. An independent car trader should also provide these, but they may be more limited. Cars bought from a private seller or a car auction are usually cheaper, but are bought "as seen", so it's even more important to have a safety check conducted - motoring organisations provide an independent safety check service.

Newer cars generally have more safety features and better crash protection for people inside and outside the vehicle. Where possible, choose a vehicle with four or five stars in EURO NCAP tests. See "Crash Protection" below.

Find out as much as possible about the vehicle's history, before buying it. Always ask to see the vehicle's documents. Do a Hire Purchase Information (HPI) check to ensure it does not have a fraudulent history and use the online tools to check that it is road legal. See "Before You Buy" below.

Think about the sort of journeys you make most often. For example, a smaller car may be better if you mainly make short, stop/start trips in a town or city.

If you have children, check that your existing child seats will fit in the car, and that the car has Isofix points.

Some people find automatic cars easier to drive than manual ones, although they tend to be more expensive.

Advice for drivers with disabilities, or who may have disabled passengers, is available from Motability (www.motability.co.uk).

When insuring your vehicle, consider taking a telematics-based insurance policy. Telematics monitor the way someone is driving and provides feedback to the driver, usually via a website or app. It can result in less expensive insurance premiums.

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Driver's Position

A good driving position makes driving safer, less tiring and more pleasant.

I can see, comfortably reach and operate all the instrument displays and controls

Yes No

I can adjust the seat so I can fully depress the clutch pedal (unless it is an automatic vehicle in which case my left foot rests flat on the floor)

Yes No

I can raise or lower the seat to make the driving position more comfortable, and obtain a clearer view

Yes No

I can adjust the seat and steering wheel to suit everyone who will drive the car

Yes No

Visibility

Good all-round, unobstructed, visibility through the windows and the mirrors is vital. Air conditioning helps to prevent the inside of a windscreen from misting up and to clear condensation.

I have good all-round, unobstructed, visibility through the windows and the mirrors from your driving position

Yes No

My view is not obstructed by the pillars between the front and side windows (the A-pillar)

Yes No

I can adjust the mirrors to give a good view of the road behind

Yes No

It has air conditioning

Yes No

Crash Protection

Cars are required by law to meet minimum safety standards. Euro NCAP conducts additional tests and cars that score highly in Euro NCAP tests exceed legal minimum standards. Euro NCAP gives cars an overall star rating, and separate ratings for how well they protect adult and child occupants in front and side impacts, minimise injuries to pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users and use advanced safety technology, such as electronic stability control.

Euro NCAP publishes the star ratings of each car it has tested at www.euroncap.com. An overall rating was not used for cars tested before 2009, and as the tests have developed over the years, care needs to be taken when comparing the results between years.

The car's overall Euro NCAP Star Rating is

Stars

The car's Adult Occupant Protection Rating is

%

The car's Child Occupant Protection Rating is

%

The car's Pedestrian Safety Rating is

%

The car's Active Safety Rating is

%

CHOOSING A CAR CHECKLIST

Brakes

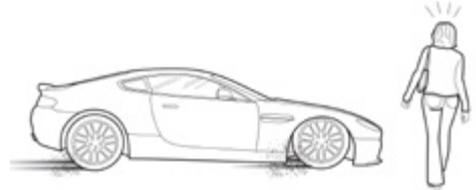
Brakes must be in good working order. Poor brakes increase stopping distances and the risk of a collision.

ABS

Cars manufactured in the EU have had ABS fitted since 2004, ABS prevents a vehicle's wheels locking during heavy braking, which helps the driver to maintain control and steering.

Autonomous Braking Systems (Brake Assist)

Autonomous Braking technology warns the driver if it detects a potential collision, and automatically brakes harder, or does an emergency stop, if the driver does not take action. New cars are increasingly fitted with this technology, which can be very effective at reducing crashes, especially low speed ones. Manufacturers give it different names, but Brake Assist or Emergency Brake Assist are the most common names.



Stop-Start

Stop-Start technology is becoming more common in new cars. Typically, when the car is stationary with the handbrake on and the gears in neutral (for example, in a queue), the engine automatically switches off. It restarts when the clutch is pressed to select a gear to move off. The technology is designed to reduce fuel consumption and emissions

The car has ABS

Yes No

The car has an Autonomous Braking System

Yes No

The car has Stop Start technology

Yes No

Traction Control

Traction control helps to prevent a vehicle's wheels slipping and spinning on slippery surfaces like ice or snow

The car has Traction Control

Yes No

Electronic Stability Control (ESC)

Electronic Stability Control (ESC) helps to prevent skids. If it detects that a car is about to skid, it reduces engine power and brakes individual wheels to prevent it. Manufacturers give it different names, but ESC is the generic term. It significantly reduces the risk of loss of control and skidding, and has been mandatory on all new types of cars in the EU since 2011 and on all new cars since 2014.

The car has Electronic Stability Control (ESC)

Yes No

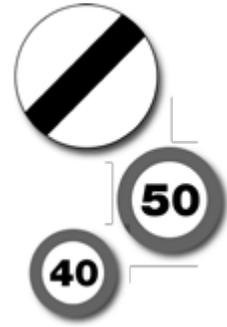


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Speed

Exceeding the speed limit, or driving too fast for the conditions means that drivers have less time to identify and react to what is happening around them, and it takes longer to stop. This makes any crash more severe, causing greater injury to the occupants and any pedestrian or rider they hit.

Many car drivers unintentionally exceed the speed limit, often without realising it, because modern cars are so powerful and comfortable they give drivers little sensation of their speed. Look for features that will help you to be aware of your speed so you can avoid creeping over the limit.



Speed Alert Devices

Speed alert technology gives the driver a visual and/or audible warning if they exceed a pre-set speed. Some systems also show the driver the speed limit of the road they are on. They are often, but not always, incorporated into SatNavs, but some vehicles have built-in technology.

Cruise Control

Once a car reaches a pre-set speed, cruise control maintains its speed at that level until the driver brakes. It is designed for high speed roads rather than town and city driving. However, if a vehicle ahead slows down, or another vehicle pulls in front, the cruise control will continue at its pre-set speed unless the driver brakes. This increases the risk of a rear-end collision if the driver is not concentrating.



Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC)

Adaptive Cruise Control is a more advanced form of cruise control which uses sensors to monitor the distance to the vehicle in front. It reduces the car's speed if the vehicle ahead slows down or the distance to it reduces

I can easily see the speedometer see from my normal driving position

Yes No

The car has speed alert technology

Yes No

The car has cruise control

Yes No

The car has Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC)

Yes No

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Seat Belts

Seatbelts are one of the most important safety features in a car. They significantly reduce the risk of suffering fatal or serious injuries in a crash. Three point (lap and diagonal) seat belts are more effective than lap-only belts, so try to choose a car that has a lap and diagonal seat belt in the middle rear seat, rather than just a lap belt.



Many vehicles are fitted with Seat Belt Reminder systems that sense whether the person sitting in a seat has fastened their seat belt, and if not, alerts them to do so. They can significantly increase seat belt wearing rates, and are most common for the driver's seat, but many now also cover the passenger seats.

A three point (lap and diagonal) seat belt is fitted on every seat

Yes No

The centre rear seat only has a lap belt

Yes No

There are no signs of damage to any of the seat belts, including the webbing

Yes No

The seat belts are fitted with pre-tensioners that tighten the belt in a crash to remove any slack.

Yes No

There is a seat belt reminder system for the driver's seat

Yes No

There is a seat belt reminder system for the passenger seats

Yes No

Head Restraints

Head restraints help to prevent or reduce whiplash, which can occur even in minor impacts. However, their effectiveness is reduced if they are not correctly positioned.

The top of the head restraint should be as high as the top of the head and the head restraint should be as close to the rear of the head as possible.



Head restraints on the front seats

Yes No

Head restraints on the rear seats

Yes No

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Airbags

New cars usually come with multiple airbags, including front driver and passenger airbags, and side airbags in the rear (and sometimes the front). Second hand cars may have fewer airbags, but will usually have a driver's airbag and possibly a front seat passenger airbag, depending on the age of the car.

Airbags protect the occupants from impacts and are designed to be used in addition to seat belts, not instead of them.

Drivers should sit so there is at least 25cm (10 inches) between the steering wheel airbag and their chest, but always follow any specific advice from the car manufacturer. Drivers who sit closer to the steering wheel, should contact the vehicle manufacturer for advice.

It is illegal, and dangerous, to use a rearward facing baby seat where there is an active frontal airbag. Some cars have a switch which enables the airbag to be turned off. Safety advice about older children and airbags is available in the vehicle's handbook, and at www.childcarseats.org.uk.

Other airbags are becoming available; for example, knee airbags underneath the steering wheel to reduce the chances of leg injuries, and 'smart' air bags that detect occupant weight and proximity and tailor air bag deployment accordingly.

Consult the vehicle handbook for specific information on the vehicle's air bags.

There is a driver's airbag

Yes No

There is a front passenger airbag

Yes No

The front passenger airbag can be switched off if there is a rearward-facing baby seat in the front

Yes No

There are side airbags

Yes No

I can sit at least 25 cm (10 inches) from the steering wheel and still reach all the pedals and controls comfortably

Yes No

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Child Restraints

If you have children, or might carry children in the car, check that your child restraints can be securely fitted in the car. Ask the car manufacturer or dealer for a list of the child restraints that will fit the car.

Check the car's Child Occupant Protection Rating at www.euroncap.com.

Check whether the car has Isofix fitting points built into it - look for Isofix labels between the base and back of the car seats, the car's handbook or contact the manufacturer or dealer. An Isofix child seat can be slotted into the fitting points in the car, removing the need to use the car's seat belts to secure it.

New cars may be compatible with i-size child car seats, but check with the manufacturer or the car's handbook to make sure.

For more information about child car seats, visit www.childcarseats.org.uk.

The car's Euro NCAP Child Occupant Protection Rating is

%

The manufacturer can supply a list of child seats that can be securely fitted in the car

Yes No

The car has Isofix points

Yes No

i-size child seats can be securely fitted in the car.

Yes No

My existing child seats can be securely fitted in the car

Yes No

Child Locks

If you have child passengers, child locks on the rear doors may be useful. These can usually be turned off by the driver if only adult passengers are being carried.

There are child locks on the rear doors

Yes No

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Luggage and Loads

Luggage or loads need to be properly secured so they do not come loose and injure the occupants in a crash or an emergency stop. Heavy loads affect the vehicle's handling, and the tyre pressures may need to be adjusted - check the vehicle handbook. Folding rear seats, especially split seats, may be weaker than fixed seats. Some may be unable to restrain heavy loads in severe frontal collisions. Many cars have anchor-points and/or straps in the boot for restraining heavy objects.

The car has split rear seats

Yes No

There are anchor points or straps in the boot to secure loads

Yes No

LIGHTING

Car lights are important for making sure the driver can see, and be seen, in the dark, and the indicator and brake lights let other road users know what you are doing. Lighting technology on new cars is developing rapidly.

Daytime Running Lights

Many cars now have daytime running lights

Automated Lights

Automated lights switch on headlights and rear lights in the dark or low light levels (eg, in a tunnel or multi story car park), but only if the light switch is set in the automatic position.

Adaptive Front Lighting Systems (AFLS)

Some new cars have adaptive front lighting systems that direct the headlight beams to the direction of travel, based on the angle of the steering wheel.

Advanced Adaptive Front Lighting Systems (AAFLS)

Advanced Adaptive Front Light Systems (AAFLS) turn the headlights to boost visibility through bends; some also adjust the light pattern for different road speeds and visibility (eg, narrower beam on motorways), a wider angle when turning corners (especially at junctions), and Auto High beam that automatically switches high beam lights on and off to improve vision, but avoid dazzling oncoming drivers.

All lights in good working order

Yes No

The car has daytime running lights

Yes No

The car has automated lights

Yes No

The car has an Adaptive Front Lighting System (AFLS)

Yes No

The car has an Advanced Adaptive Front Lighting System (AAFLS)

Yes No

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Tyres

Tyres must be in good condition, with sufficient tread depth. 1.6mm is the legal minimum, but stopping distances in the wet increase once tread depth falls below 3mm, so it is better to change tyres when the tread reaches 3mm. Tyres that are in poor condition increase stopping distance and the chances of a 'blow out', all of which increase the risk of crashing.

Tyre Pressure Monitoring Systems

Tyre Pressure Monitoring Systems (TPMS) monitor the pressure of each tyre and warn the driver if one or more is incorrectly inflated. Drivers should understand that they still need to manually check tyre pressures, tread depths and tyre condition regularly.

Further advice on tyre - www.rospa.com/roadsafety/adviceandinformation/vehiclesafety/tyresafety/.

All tyres are in good condition (no cuts or bulges)

Yes No

Tread depth is at least 3mm

Yes No

The car has a Tyre Pressure Monitoring System

Yes No

POSITIONING

Many newer cars have systems to help the driver maintain a good road position, such as Lane Departure Warning Systems, Blind Spot Information Systems or Reversing and Parking Aids. These can be useful, but the driver still needs to use good observation and judgement.

Lane Departure Warning Systems (LDWS)

Lane Departure Warning Systems (LDWS) monitor road markings by the side of the car, and alerts the driver if the vehicle drifts out of the lane. If the driver uses their indicator, the system does not issue an alert.

Blind Spot Information Systems (BLIS)

These systems monitor the area behind, and adjacent to, the car that the mirrors do not cover (blind spots). If it detects movement, it warns the driver so they do not change lanes into the path of a vehicle they have not seen. However, on busy, multi-lane roads, they may issue too many warnings to the driver.

Reversing and Parking Aids

Reversing and Parking Aids alert the driver to the proximity of objects or people behind the car, and reversing cameras can help drivers to see behind when reversing.



The car has a Lane Departure Warning Systems (LDWS)

Yes No

The car has a Blind Spot Information Systems (BLIS)

Yes No

The car has Reversing and Parking Aids

Yes No

E-Call

E-Call automatically makes a 112 emergency call when it detects a severe impact, and transmits the location of the crash and other data. It alerts the emergency services even if the occupants are not able to call for help, or do not know where they are. Check the car's handbook for the detail about how it works.

The car has E-call

Yes No

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Before You Buy

History

Reduce the risk of buying a stolen, or previously written off, car by using the DVLA's online vehicle enquiry service at <https://www.gov.uk/get-vehicle-information-from-dvla> to check:

- when its current vehicle tax expires
- when its MOT expires or if it registered as SORN (Statutory Off Road Notification)
- the date it was first registered
- colour
- engine size
- year of manufacture
- CO2 emissions
- current vehicle tax rate

V5C vehicle registration certificate

Check that the V5C vehicle registration certificate ('log book') has a 'DVL' watermark, is the latest issued and the details in the log book are correct at <https://www.gov.uk/get-vehicle-information-from-dvla>

If the car is three years or more old, check it has a genuine MOT certificate and that the car's MOT history is correct at <https://www.gov.uk/check-mot-history-vehicle>

Vehicle Identification Number

Check the vehicle identification number and engine number match the DVLA records at . <https://www.gov.uk/vehicle-identity-check>

Hire Purchase Information (HPI) (<https://www.hpcheck.com/>)

An HPI check will show whether there is any outstanding finance on the car.

Safety Check

Use one of the independent safety check services offered by motoring organisations, or take a knowledgeable friend with you. Websites such as Which and Autotrader also provide lists of safety checks to conduct.

Test Drive

Always test drive a vehicle, on different types of road, to familiarise yourself with it. Make sure you are insured to drive it on a test drive.

Check

- you have a good, clear view while driving and when doing manoeuvres, such as reversing you can see and operate all the instruments and controls.
- it is running smoothly and working properly
- you feel comfortable driving the vehicle

Car History check conducted

Yes No

Car Safety Check conducted

Yes No

Test Drive conducted

Yes No

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Where to get advice

Manufacturers

Brochures provide details and specifications.

EURO NCAP (www.euroncap.com)

Vehicle Recalls

The Vehicle Inspectorate publishes Vehicle Safety Recalls periodically. Vehicles and components that have safety-related defects liable to cause a significant risk of crashing are subject to recall by the manufacturer and recorded in the publication.

Consumer Programmes and Magazines

There are various motoring television programmes and magazines which review and assess new cars.

Motability (www.motability.co.uk)

Customer Information Services on 01279 635666 (Minicom: 01279 632273).

DVLA's online vehicle enquiry service

<https://www.gov.uk/get-vehicle-information-from-dvla>

Check a V5C Vehicle Registration Certificate ('log book')

<https://www.gov.uk/get-vehicle-information-from-dvla>

Check MOT History

<https://www.gov.uk/check-mot-history-vehicle>

Check a Vehicle Identification Number

<https://www.gov.uk/vehicle-identity-check>

HPI Check

<https://www.hpicheck.com/>



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