



For information on  
AAA's Safe Driving  
for Mature Operators  
Driver Improvement Program,  
contact your local AAA club.

## STRAIGHT TALK for **Mature Drivers**

AAA's Mature Drivers series:

- ▼ Meeting the Challenge
- ▼ Buying a Vehicle
- ▼ Good Vision ...  
Vital to Good Driving
- ▼ Maintaining Your Vehicle
- ▼ Rx for Safe Driving



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## STRAIGHT TALK for **Mature Drivers**

### Buying a Vehicle



## Control, Comfort and Confidence

By 2020, there will be more than 40 million licensed drivers age 65 and older. With the number of senior drivers expected to increase significantly during the next 20 years, automobile manufacturers are beginning to respond to the needs of drivers age 65 and above. That's good news, because it will help everyone remain safe and sound behind the wheel longer.

Aging affects strength, flexibility, coordination and vision. We can't control aging, but we do have the power to choose a vehicle that meets our needs. Selecting a vehicle that is a "good fit" is an important part of safe driving.

The right choice not only makes you more comfortable and confident, it also adds to your safety by giving you greater control. Some of your choices will be guided by personal preference, but this brochure shares pointers designed to improve your safety.



## Which Options Offer the Best Protection?

As a mature driver, you should choose a vehicle with options that add to your comfort and compensate for any loss of strength, flexibility or vision.

Options include:

- ▼ Power steering.
- ▼ Power, anti-lock brakes.
- ▼ Automatic transmission.
- ▼ Power adjustable seats.
- ▼ Large, easy-to-access door openings at a comfortable height.
- ▼ Telescoping or tilting steering wheel.
- ▼ Easy-to-reach controls.
- ▼ Power windows and door locks.
- ▼ Large, well-lit dials and gauges.
- ▼ Automatic day/night — electrochromic — rearview and side mirrors.
- ▼ Automatic climate control.
- ▼ Rear-window defroster.
- ▼ Power-adjustable side mirrors with features to minimize blind spots.
- ▼ Dual front air bags.
- ▼ Daytime running lights.
- ▼ Untinted windshields.
- ▼ Adaptive equipment such as hand throttle and brake controls, steering knobs and gearshift lever extensions.

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## Wise Buys

Your AAA club can help you find the right vehicle at the right price.

AAA publishes an Auto Guide book series that includes *Buying or Leasing a Car* as well as an annual *New Cars and Trucks* publication that contains objective reviews on hundreds of domestic and imported vehicles as well as crash-test ratings and safety features from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Another convenient source is AAA's Internet site — [www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com). Through AAA's AutoMaker™, you can compare models and “build” a car online with all the features you want to get an idea of prices. Many AAA clubs also offer car-buying and financing services that guarantee pre-negotiated prices and member-only benefits.

If you're considering a pre-owned model, AAA's Web site enables you to order a vehicle history report through a special arrangement with CARFAX. The site also includes NADA and Kelley Blue Book guides for accurate estimates on retail values.

## It Pays to Do Your Research

Whether you are considering a new or pre-owned model, it pays to do your research before buying your next vehicle. AAA can help with a variety of member-only discounts and services. You can do all your research online at [www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com), or visit your local AAA office for assistance.



***Your AAA club can help you find the right vehicle at the right price.***

## Finding the Right Fit

Although big vehicles don't deliver the fuel economy of compacts, they often provide greater driver protection. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, occupants of small vehicles are injured more often and more severely than people in large vehicles.

For mature drivers, bigger vehicles are easier to get in and out of, thanks to more head and leg room and the fact that higher seats don't force you to stoop or crouch to slip behind the wheel.

The only way to determine how comfortable you are in a particular vehicle is to try it out. As you get in and out of the vehicle, notice whether you have to bend awkwardly or have difficulty maneuvering your legs. In the driver's seat, check thoroughly for blind spots caused by the vehicle's design. Can you adjust the mirrors for visibility on all sides?

The easiest way to accommodate limited flexibility is to adjust seating. Often drivers sit too low and close to the steering wheel and grip the wheel improperly. To ensure comfort, adequate field of vision and steering control, check these factors:

- ▼ Can you easily adjust the height and tilt of your seat?
- ▼ Is the top of the steering wheel no higher than the top of your shoulders?
- ▼ If not, can you tilt or adjust the steering column adequately?

## Seat Belts Save Lives

Make sure your seat belt fits properly. New vehicles have adjustable shoulder belt anchors that can be raised or lowered so the belt falls across the shoulder comfortably. Also, take the time to find the seat position that enables a secure, comfortable fit. Then you'll have no excuses not to wear your seat belt.

Some automotive dealers stock devices that make it easier to fasten seat belts, especially for individuals with reduced flexibility or muscle strength.



## All the Right Moves

To drive safely, you must be able to steer freely.

In years gone by, drivers were taught to imagine their steering wheel was a clock and place their hands at the 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock positions. However, studies have shown that the 8 o'clock and 4 o'clock positions are safer and allow more control in quick-turn situations.

When placing your hands in the correct positions — 8 and 4 — with elbows resting comfortably against your ribs, can you easily move the steering wheel left and right?

If not, can you adjust the seat or steering wheel to make handling easier? To avoid injury in a crash, be sure to keep at least 10 inches between the steering wheel and your breastbone.

You also must be able to reach and manipulate pedals and controls. Grasp the steering wheel again. Can you comfortably reach gas and brake pedals? Can you easily distinguish between the two pedals? Are there any obstructions near the pedals that might interfere with your leg or foot movements? What about radio and climate controls? Are they easy to find and reach?

***Do your legwork when buying a new vehicle by testing it for comfort, visibility and ease of use.***



## Insist on the Best Visibility

Visibility means the ability to see clearly in all directions — ahead of you through the windshield, to the side through mirrors and windows and behind you through the rearview mirror and rear window.

For the best visibility:

- ▼ Skip the darkly tinted glass. Mature drivers need more light to see clearly — especially at night, when everyone finds driving more challenging.
- ▼ Right-side mirrors should be easily adjustable, preferably using in-vehicle controls.
- ▼ Power-adjustable mirrors are an invaluable tool for checking blind spots.
- ▼ Windshield and side window posts should not block side vision.
- ▼ Check to ensure head restraints do not cause blind spots.
- ▼ Check windshield wipers to make sure they don't leave large areas uncleared or restrict vision when not in use.



***To help compensate for the toll aging takes on reflexes and eyesight, senior drivers should take steps to limit all distractions.***

## Limit Distractions

Driver inattention is a factor in at least 25 percent of crashes — for all ages. To help compensate for the toll aging takes on reflexes and eyesight, senior drivers should take steps to limit all distractions.

- ▼ Recognize that driving requires your full attention.
- ▼ Use a cellular phone only when necessary and, if possible, pull safely out of traffic before talking on the phone.
- ▼ When buying a vehicle, look for easy accessibility to audio and climate controls. Cars with automatic climate controls will ensure you spend less time adjusting the temperature and more time concentrating on the road ahead.
- ▼ Do not attempt to eat while driving.
- ▼ Limit conversations with other passengers, and avoid any emotionally charged discussions while driving.

## Cell Phones and Driving

Distracted driving — including the use of cell phones, among other activities — contributes to thousands of automobile crashes each year. However, carrying a cell phone with you while traveling can provide an extra measure of security in the event of a breakdown or other roadside emergency. Pre-program the cell phone with “911” and AAA’s toll-free roadside assistance number: (800) AAA-HELP.