

My Vehicle

Does it really matter what car I drive?

Since the 1950s much work has been done to improve road safety. One area that has shown significant advances is in the design of the vehicle itself. Modern vehicles have two basic types of safety features passive & active.

Passive safety features are those that you probably don't even notice. Passive safety features do their work during a crash. Passive safety features include crumple-zones, integrated rollover protection and air-bags.

Active safety features are designed to help prevent a crash. Active safety features include turn signals, stability-control and ABS (anti-lock braking system).

No one safety feature, either passive or active, will provide a total safety solution. However, there is one safety feature that is both active & passive, and has been shown to give an enormous safety benefit, the seat-belt. We have provided a separate Fact Sheet for seat-belts.

Should I drive a big or a small car?

Generally speaking, bigger cars offer higher levels of occupant protection than smaller cars. However, some of the biggest vehicles also create increased risk for smaller vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. This trend is known as vehicle aggressivity. Larger vehicles can also use more fuel, and cost more to purchase and maintain.

The best way to choose the safest vehicle for your needs is to look for a vehicle that incorporates a range of both active & passive features in a unified design. This can be done by looking at a car's star safety rating. The star ratings are made to help purchasers choose the safest possible vehicle based on objective crash testing and assessment.

In Australia, we have ANCAP, the Australian New Car Assessment Program. There are also American and European new car assessment programs. Although each of the testing programs is similar, there are some differences.

Vehicles are rated on the level of protection offered in a series crash tests, and scores are awarded from one to five stars. A five star rating is currently the highest safety rating. Once you have decided on the type of vehicle you need, try to select a vehicle with the highest safety star rating.

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