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Special Needs Zone



SHORT, TALL, GRANDE:
 CAR TALK'S GUIDE TO GETTING
 A GOOD FIT WITH YOUR CAR

TIPS FOR THE
VERTICALLY CHALLENGED

Being a short driver brings its own set of challenges.

Airbags are a particular concern. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety consider 10 inches to be a safe distance from the air bag. If you're sitting closer than ten inches to your car's airbag, you should have an on-off switch installed. Alternatively, you can have pedal extenders installed on your vehicle. See the resources, below, for more information.

Other concerns include the ability to reach controls, visibility and seat belt positioning and comfort.

Of course, being a short driver can have its advantages. Our grandmother, for example, built up her biceps with the thousands of pull-ups she did, to see over the dashboard.

Resources for the Vertically Challenged

Need An Airbag On/Off Switch? Probably Not
http://www.hwysafety.org/safety_facts/airbags/airbag_switch.htm

Most Shorter Drivers Can Eliminate Risk Without Deactivation
http://www.hwysafety.org/safety_facts/airbags/short_driver.htm
 Minor seating adjustments help shorter drivers sit farther away from air bags.

Air Bag Seating Position Fact Sheet
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/airbagfct/>

Air Bag On-Off Switches
http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/airbags/factsheets/deact_s2.html

How To Get An On-Off Switch
http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/airbags/factsheets/deact_s1.html

Air Bag On/Off Switch Installer Locator
http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/airbags/switch_install/index.cfm

Ford's Power Adjustable Pedals
<http://www.womanmotorist.com/newproducts/sk-ford-adjust-pdls-2k-01.shtml>

Resources for Pedal Extenders:

Easy Rider Pedal Extensions
<http://www.pedalexenders.com/>
 Easy Rider has portable extenders for sale, for height of 2 feet 7 inches to 5 feet 2 inches.

Automobility
<http://www.handcontrolscorp.com/>
 Automobility sells pedal extenders.

Pedal Pusher Extenders
<http://www.pedalexenders.net>
 Pedal Pusher Extenders can be adjusted to add 2,3 or 4 inches to the gas and brake pedals.



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TIPS FOR THE CIRCUMFERENTIALLY CHALLENGED

Watching our pal Daniel Pinkwater get extricated with the Jaws of Life from a Porsche Boxster gave us a new appreciation for the challenges faced by the circumferentially challenged.

Seat belt positioning may be a particular problem. Be sure to ask whether seat belt extenders are available. Federal regulations require car manufacturers to produce seat belts that only fit people up to 215 pounds. In other words, not all cars have seatbelts suitable for the girth-enhanced.

Second, check your distance to the air bag when shopping for a car. It's not usual to discover that the circumferentially-challenged portion of your body is closer than the NHTSA recommended ten inch spacing.

Other concerns include seat comfort, range of steering wheel adjustments, your distance to the air bag, and the relative ease of entry and exit.

Resources for the Circumferentially Challenged (Including Pregnant Women)

2000-2003 Model Year "Roominess" Rankings

List of 2000-2003 cars, pick-ups, and sport utility vehicles grouped according to leg and head room measurements of the front seat and rates overall general interior space.

Big Folks FAQs

Best cars and good tips about seats, seat belts, airbags, reach, and exit/entry.

Large Drivers Demand Safety Belts Fit For All

49 states have mandatory seat belt laws, and more Americans are overweight. List of car manufacturers' seat belt extender policy.

Honda Says No

A woman's personal experience and campaign for seat belts for larger people.

Belt Extender Backers Won't Give Up - 12/31/03

Seat Belts Should Fit EVERY Body: How to Get Seat Belt Extenders...

Seat Belts and Pregnancy Brochure

Big Cars, Little Cars, Which Cars Fit-Part 1

Big Cars, Little Cars, Which Cars Fit - Part 2

Best Vehicles for Taller/Larger Drivers - Forums

Resources for Seat Belt Extenders and Seat Belt Shoulder Strap Tension Adjuster

JC Whitney

[BACK TO TOP](#)

TIPS FOR THE EXCEPTIONALLY TALL

Not that we'd know anything about it, but we've heard that being an especially tall driver has its own set of challenges.

Ironically, visibility is often one of the biggest concerns. Very tall drivers often have to crouch even to see traffic lights. Crouching can also impact the distance from the air bag, bringing the driver within the 10-inch distance recommended by NHTSA and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Some vehicles will also need to have their seat tracking extended, which can also affect the driver's safety, by placing him or her too far away from the airbag.

Other considerations include obvious items, such as finding comfortable seats, head and leg room, ease of entry and exit, and whether the seat belts can be adjusted to your size.

A surprising entry in the "cars for tall people category" is BMW's Mini Cooper. As 6 ft. 8 in. listener Chuck Bergen writes, "Cars that look big are not always accommodating. In many cars -- especially imports -- sun roofs are almost unavoidable and almost always are the kiss of death for tall drivers who like to hold their heads upright. I have two words for your very tall listeners, particularly those like me who love small, nimble cars: Mini Cooper. How they do it, I do not know, but mine even has a sun roof. If a car that small, efficient and nimble can fit a guy like me, the other car makers really have no excuse."

Resources for the Exceptionally Tall

Car Headroom Ranking

New Car Test Drive

1994-2006 car models with specifications for front head/hip/leg room and rear head/hip/leg room dimensions.

Cars & Trucks For Tall

List of favorite tall cars, SUVs, minivans, and pickups.

Consumer Reports Best And Worst Vehicles For Tall Drivers (2001-2005)

Top 10 Vehicles For Tall Drivers

Modifying a Car

Modifying seating for tall drivers

RECARO Seat

Seat contour and movement good for tall drivers

Taller Driver's Buying Guide

5 key criteria when evaluating potential vehicles

Big Cars, Little Cars, Which Cars Fit - Part 1

Big Cars, Little Cars, Which Cars Fit - Part 2


Edmunds.com Determines Top Ten Most Spacious Cars and Trucks

Car Talk

DIY SERVICE

TIPS

Goal #1: Finish with all fingers



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Lists Top Cars and Light and Medium Truck for Driver/Front-Passenger Space

CAR TALK COLUMNS

Charles is very tall, and is searching for a car he can see out of. See what Tom and Ray recommend.

Scott's wife is very small—and Scott's wondering, should they get the airbag disconnected?

Find out how pedal extenders can help you get the proper distance from your airbag.

Seatbelt extenders can make driving more comfortable for the "altitudinally challenged"

Find out about the seatbelt repositioner that's recommended by Chrysler, and has been successfully crash tested.



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Suki123 · 3 years ago

My husband is 6'5." I'm 5'2" - on a good day, maybe in heels. Is there a car you can recommend that would work for us both? We need to replace our Pilot soon, would like a small SUV or wagon. The car would primarily be mine, but I'd like him to fit as this will be our newest car and the one we're likely to take on road trips. Thanks!

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Is Hyundai Elantra GT the Right Car for Winter?

4 comments · a month ago

LongToothBob — There is a lot you can do to prevent a front drive car from doing 180s or 360s on ice. First a good set ...

One More Time, Here Comes the Return of VW's Microbus

1 comment · 24 days ago

George_San_Jose — It's not a micro-bus unless it has that two-color V, with the big VW inside a circle logo on the front.

Can an Old Catalytic Converter Be Cleaned?

8 comments · a month ago

bluewater — It is a joke when the government test vehicles that have no emissions, like electric vehicles. That ...

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kb — NO. First, Dodge doesn't make pickups any more. The 3.0 turbo is a Fiat engine in the 1500 and Grand ...

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