

SHOP TALK

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Do You Think You Can Handle It?

What does it take to be a professional race car driver? Grit? Bravery? A touch of insanity? Most agree it takes all that and more. Professional drivers also agree that exceptional car-handling skills top the list of necessary traits. If you can't handle the machine, you won't make it in this profession.

It's not that easy to maintain control of a car going 150-200 mph. Race car drivers train for this. They start when they're young and hone their skills by driving every day. Many start out racing go-karts when they're little tikes — five or younger. By the time they reach their late teens or early 20s, they have years of driving and racing experience under their belts and can handle lightning-fast cars without much difficulty.

Do you have to be a professional driver to own a super-fast sports car? No. But it would probably help. The internet is littered with stories of brand-new supercars crashing within days of the new owner taking possession. In the U.K. in April 2022, a driver crashed his new Ferrari 488 within two miles of the dealer's lot. No injuries were reported in this case, but the driver's ego (and wallet) were certainly impacted.

The point is that it takes considerable skill to handle a high-powered sports car. Even the best professional drivers crash sometimes.

The stage is set. Now for the kicker. Did you know a new GMC Hummer EV pickup has about the same torque as a Ferrari F8 Spider? That's right. The Hummer can nearly outrun the Ferrari in a drag race, thanks to the most recent iteration of the Hummer's electric engine. That's cause for concern.

One of the selling points of today's EVs is rapid acceleration. According to *Automotive News*, "electricity provides instant torque and acceleration. There's no need to move pistons, spool turbochargers or shift gears," all of which take precious time. Internal combustion engines have to accelerate to a couple thousand revolutions per minute before hitting full speed. An electric motor reaches peak power within a tenth of a second. Zero to 60 in practically no time at all.

Everyone has seen a car spin out, even if just in the movies. This happens when engine power overwhelms tire adhesion. In other words, the force of the vehicle's movement is too much for the tires. They lose their grip on the road, and the car spins out. Race cars are aerodynamically designed to account for this phenomenon and minimize it. EV designers are now doing the same, spreading the weight of the heavy electric battery across the bottom of the vehicle to help with traction. While this design improvement provides more stability during rapid acceleration, it does nothing for

poor or inexperienced drivers who don't know how to handle this level of torque and aren't prepared for it.

So we ask: Will the average driver be able to safely handle the speedy EVs of the future?

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Until now, the price of high-powered luxury sports cars kept the majority of the population from purchasing them. EVs may change all that. Even at today's prices, they're still a fraction of the cost of a luxury sports car. And it's likely the average price of EVs will decrease as they become more widely available. That means middle-class Americans will be able to buy a vehicle that can challenge a Ferrari on a racetrack.

Safety advocates and racing experts wonder whether making this kind of acceleration available to everyday drivers is a good idea. There's a big difference between the typical commuter and someone who drives race cars for a living. City streets and highways come with many distractions, while race tracks are controlled environments. And a race car driver is only focused on one thing: driving the car. Commuters tend to multitask.



Also, think of new drivers. Newly-licensed 16-year-olds often borrow a parent's vehicle for a night out. Allowing an inexperienced driver to borrow an EV that goes 0-60 mph in approximately 3 seconds may be asking for trouble. Most experienced drivers would have a challenge with that kind of speed and power unless they were prepared for it and knew how to handle it.

Motorsports expert Roger Griffiths of Andretti Autosport sums the EV acceleration situation up this way: “To be honest, at those kinds of speeds, you are basically a passenger. I don't know how much control you have. The only thing[s] faster are...top fuel dragsters.”

He sounds a little worried. How about you? ⚙️

SKI TRIP
Word Search

DIRECTIONS:
Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

S	H	R	E	T	N	I	W	S	P	Q
L	E	Z	S	J	O	H	I	U	D	G
I	U	V	B	K	Z	K	S	N	O	W
A	P	V	O	O	S	Q	T	G	E	V
R	M	R	Q	L	O	Z	R	L	X	N
T	H	Y	E	X	G	T	O	A	O	I
S	E	L	G	G	O	G	S	S	V	G
E	G	W	P	S	L	L	E	S	H	J
L	R	E	D	W	O	P	R	E	P	F
O	G	J	T	P	O	H	E	S	X	G
P	B	U	E	G	O	N	D	O	L	A

- BOOTS
- CHAIRLIFT
- GLOVES
- GOGGLES
- GONDOLA
- POLES
- POWDER
- RESORT
- SKIS
- SLOPES
- SNOW
- SUNGLASSES
- SUNSCREEN
- TRAIL
- WINTER



Need a New Set of Wheels? Good Luck!

Looking for a new-to-you set of wheels? So are many other people. Unfortunately, they're still having challenges finding reliable automobiles at reasonable prices. Here's a quick update on the state of the used vehicle market, followed by a few tips to help you get the best deal.

As you'll recall, the used car market was hit hard with computer chip shortages due to supply chain issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. New cars were nearly nonexistent, and the few that rolled off the production line were often missing some of the luxury features consumers love, including heated seats and steering wheels. Despite that, new car prices went sky-high, driving those in need of transportation to the used-vehicle market for new wheels.

As more people shunned new vehicles in favor of used ones, the price of used cars soared. Drivers who already owned reliable vehicles held onto them. Suddenly there were very few used vehicles to be had, leaving those with a real need for transportation — perhaps due to an accident or theft — completely in the lurch.

You might think the market would have recovered by now. But two years later, it's in much the same position. New vehicle production has picked up, and used car prices have come down slightly, but demand is still high for used vehicles. Now a new factor has entered the equation. Rising interest rates threaten to offset any price drop consumers hoped to take advantage of. That means those who need a loan to buy a used vehicle may actually end up paying more for it than they would have a year ago.

So what if you're one of the unlucky few whose car has given up the ghost and refused to budge? What if you lost your car to thievery?

The best advice we can offer is to remain calm and educate yourself before making a move. Acting hastily isn't in your best interest, no matter how urgent the matter seems. Here are a few tips from *Consumer Reports* for making the best of the current used car market.

Do your research. Educated consumers tend to get the best deals. Whether you're buying new or used, take time to research vehicles to determine which models best fit your needs. Focus on customer satisfaction and



highway safety ratings in addition to miles per gallon and specialized features.

Look for reliability. Reliability should be at the top of your list if you really need new wheels. Your primary concern is getting from Point A to Point B, so forget about the fancy bells and whistles found on newer vehicles.

Consider older vehicles. New isn't always better, especially in this market. Several manufacturers build vehicles that get high marks for safety, reliability, and longevity. Three that come to mind are Honda, Toyota, and Subaru. You'll find many models still running well after 100,000 miles or more.

There's nothing wrong with buying an older vehicle that's been well-maintained. Keep in mind, though, that it may be out of the factory warranty period. You could buy an extended warranty or service plan. Still, it might behoove you to save your pennies to pay for any repairs or maintenance instead.

Once you find a vehicle you're interested in, take it to your local auto repair shop for an inspection before making your final decision. You need to go into the deal knowing everything there is to know about the vehicle.

Consider buying new. If you're looking for a more current model — one to three years old — you may find it costs nearly the same as it did fresh off the showroom floor. If you have to finance the purchase, you may want to consider buying new instead. New vehicles often come with dealer incentives that qualify buyers for lower interest rates and better financing terms. Plus, new vehicles come with new factory warranties, an added benefit.

Purchasing a used vehicle isn't entirely out of the realm of possibility. It may just take a little more work on your part. If you have questions about which vehicles best fit your needs (and your wallet), contact the professionals at your local auto repair shop. They have lots of experience with used vehicles and can help steer you in the right direction. Good luck! ⚙️

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Inside: Should EV manufacturers play a roll in slowing consumers' need for speed?

Differing Opinions

Peruse enough reviews of automotive repair shops and you'll come across the occasional claim that a shop was "trying to sell me something I didn't need."

This claim annoys me no end as both a repair shop owner and a business owner. Why?

It supposes a business can survive by duping people rather than creating happy, life-long customers.

So what causes these claims?

It's usually a difference of both opinions and standards. For example, shop A has a process to check for wheel bearings that are starting to fail. This involves checking for excessive chassis vibrations through the springs. It's a quick check that can tell you if a bearing is starting to fail way before it makes noise or comes loose.

Shop B has no such process. It simply checks for excessive road noise and looseness.

It's easy to see that a wheel bearing that fails at shop A is never caught by shop B. And what usually happens is that

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someone taking their vehicle in for a "second opinion" at shop B is told that they didn't need something that was recommended by shop A.

Most people would feel like their trust was betrayed, especially if the first shop failed to communicate its processes and recommendations fully.

The truth is that shop B doesn't have thorough enough processes or lacks the expertise to identify the problem properly.

One shop thinks it's fine to overlook a potential problem until it becomes a real one, while the other wants you to know every detail about your vehicle.

You decide which one is best for you.

Until next time, *Dave*