

Talking About Cars: The Parts of a Car

The word 'car' is one of the first words English students learn. But when I talk to my students *about* cars, many of them have a hard time describing the different parts of a car. If you have this problem, too, don't worry: today we are going to give you some important car vocabulary.

Vocabulary

Seats: Cars don't have chairs, they have seats. The difference between a chair and a seat is that you can't move a seat. They're normally attached the floor under them. Not only cars have seats, movie theaters do, and so do airplanes.

Wheels: Cars don't walk. They *roll*. And almost all of them roll on four wheels. A wheel is the round part of the car that sits on the road. Wheels are important. In fact, sometimes, we refer to a car as a **set of wheels**. Wheels are so important that there are two more important vocabulary words connected with wheels: **rims** and **tires**.

Rim: The **wheel** is made up of two parts. There's the metal part in the middle, and the rubber part on the outside. The metal part is the rim and the rubber part is the **tire**. I don't think that the rims are very important, but 'car people' talk about aluminum rims and steel rims. You can even buy 'custom rims.'

Tire: The rubber part of the **wheel** is the tire. This is the part that actually touches the street. Tires are very important, and you have to buy new tires ever few years. If you live where it snows in the winter, you probably also have to buy 'snow tires' or 'winter tires.' Another word that's important in talking about tires is 'tread.' Tread refers to the pattern on the tires that helps the tire to hold the road. When the tread is gone, we say your tires are bald. You have to buy new tires.

Steering Wheel: You don't want to only drive straight ahead. Often, you want to turn left or right. You turn the steering wheel to make the car go left or right. The steering wheel is a very important part of the car!

Brakes: Everyone talks about how fast their car can go. But, just as important is how fast the car can stop! Imagine if you couldn't stop your car: then you'd have problems. But luckily your car has brakes. Brakes are what you use when you want to stop the car.

Pedals: Your bicycle has pedals. The pedals are where you push with your feet to make the bike move. In the car, the pedals are the controls you move with your feet. Your car will have two or three pedals: a gas pedal, a **brake pedal** and maybe a **clutch** pedal.

Clutch: In an automatic car, all you have to do is press the gas **pedal** and the car moves forward. But in other cars—the ones that *aren't* automatic—it's not that easy. You have to press the clutch

pedal put the car in first gear, and then slowly take your foot off the clutch while you press the gas pedal! It's not impossible to drive a car with a clutch, but it certainly took me a while to learn it.

Headlights: Can you drive your car at night? How do you see in the dark? Your car has some lights to help you see the road at night. They're your headlights. When it's too dark to drive with your headlights, you can always turn on your **high beams**.

High beams: The **headlights** of a car are pointed a little bit down, so that they shine on the road. That means that, when it's very dark, you can't see very far. That's why your car has more lights that are pointed straight ahead. These are your high beams. When another driver is coming towards you on the same road, it's important to turn off your high beams! High beams can blind other drivers!