

Talking About Cars: My First Car

I had never even heard of my first car until I started looking for a car. I was going to college and needed a **set of wheels** to get around. I grabbed the local newspaper and turned to the classified ads. And there it was: a 1985 Lincoln TownCar. I wasn't sure what that was, but the price was right and my mother said Lincolns were **reliable**.

My first impression of the car was good: It was *huge*: even in the backseat a basketball player would have extra legroom! And it had luxuries I'd never even heard of: there was a sensor that could tell when the car should turn on and off the **headlights**. And if I turned the **high beams** on, there was a sensor to tell when they might blind another driver. The car turned off the high beams for me.

Since the car was made in 1985, it didn't have the remote control for the locks that most cars have now. What it had was an electronic combination lock on the driver's side door: there were five buttons that I could push in a certain order in order to open the door. I thought it was cool.

In fact, I had never locked a car until I got the Lincoln. Where I grew up, you didn't need to lock cars. But, I started locking the Lincoln, just so I could push the buttons to open it. I really loved driving that car.

There were problems, too, though. First, the car was a **gas guzzler**. I knew this when I bought it: it's impossible to build a car that big and not have it burn a lot of gas. Second, the car's age began to show. I was driving a lot between my parents' house and the university, plus going to my Army training. . . and the car started having more and more problems. The went from **cosmetic** problems to the power windows and, finally, **brake** problems.

Eventually, I got rid of the TownCar—I was more that a little sad when I did—and only had a motorcycle. I loved my motorcycle, too, but that's a story for another day.

What's your favorite car? Have you ever driven—or owned—the car you always wanted to have? Was it as great as you thought? Have you ever owned a car that you really loved? Why did you love that car?

Vocabulary

Set of wheels: A car has four wheels. In fact, all a car *has to* have are wheels and a motor. And so, we sometimes refer to a car as a 'set of wheels.' You'll hear this phrase in sentences like “That's a nice set of wheels you have there!” or “My first set of wheels was a nice, old Lincoln.” or “My car's not much, but all I need is a set of wheels.”

Gas guzzler: To 'guzzle' is to drink fast. After you run a marathon, you might 'guzzle' water. And 'gas,' you know is the fuel that most cars run on. So, it's easy to figure out that a gas guzzler is a car that 'drinks' a lot of gas, very fast! Now the price of gas is a lot higher than it was ten years ago. I guess not so many people drive gas guzzlers.

Cosmetic: You might know that cosmetics is the term for 'make up.' It's what women use to change the way they look. The word 'cosmetic' has to do with appearance. Cosmetic problems are problems that don't change the way a car works, they just change the way it looks. Cosmetic problems can be rust, a dent, paint problems, or anything else that changes the way a car looks. Cosmetic problems are easy to see, but I try to remind myself that they aren't important.