



Purchasing A Vehicle With Or Without A Radio

(What Is Really The Best And Most Economical Option)

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New Vehicle Decisions

For many vehicle shoppers, cost is the primary factor when deciding on what type of vehicle to purchase. The auto maker, body styles, color schemes, interior options; with all the decisions it is hard for anyone to evaluate cost and exactly where anyone can cut or reduce costs.

Electronics Packages

One specific option some auto makers base costs on are electronic packages and/or stereo systems. But what are you really getting with these options?

Domestic (American) Auto Makers:

The words “optional stereo system” are almost unheard of with American auto makers. A car buyer might find this option out there somewhere, but consider yourself lucky if you do. Most likely this option is only available for American made vehicles that are ordered from the factory. Why? It really comes down to the local dealership you would purchase a vehicle from. Stereo systems are a great profit margin for dealerships. It is in their best interests, economically of course, for them to sell you a factory installed stereo system. If you have ever compared prices between dealerships, you might have noticed that each dealership seems to carry different pricing levels for their vehicles as compared to another dealership. Dealerships have to compete against each other, and because of this they have to stock vehicles differently than the next dealership. In order to do this, they place an order for vehicles with the options they want to see on their lot. The options and packages available for vehicles from American auto makers is staggering and each dealer must make decisions on which packages they want their vehicles to have. So, when it comes to cutting out extra cost such as stereo systems, you might get the cold shoulder from your local auto dealer. They simply do not want to remove that high profit margin stereo system from the vehicle you want to buy. What are they going to do with it? Every other car on the lot already has a stereo in it.

“Electronic Packages”: Auto makers are getting smart. They realize that people are looking at ways to cut costs and do not want a new vehicle buyer to leave the lot with a stripped down vehicle - and all of their profits along with it (Think about it !) Electronic packages are the method that American auto makers are using to keep this from happening. That electronic clock you want, the power windows you want, that sunroof that you want, that keyless entry with alarm system.....you get the picture are all thrown into electronic packages. To get the power windows, you must buy everything in the electronics package - everything. The power windows, listed at \$700 now costs you \$1,800 once all the other options are thrown in with it. Electronic packages - get used to the words. If you want a new vehicle without a stereo, what else do you have to give up? The power windows you want, the keyless entry and alarm system.....and the list goes on. In the world of business, this trade-off has a term: “opportunity cost” - the term to describe what you have to give up to get what you want.

Import Auto Makers:

Import auto makers, more common with the major Asian import auto makers, tend to offer more vehicles without radios installed from the factory. Most import auto makers do not use electronic packages to group options together and offer these items as stand alone or individual options. This allows a new vehicle buyer to custom build a vehicle based on their specific wants and needs. Import auto makers, again more common with major Asian import auto makers, do something American auto makers do not - break options up into various other options. An example of this is the vehicles stereo system. American auto makers offer the stereo system from the factory as a single item, a take it as designed manufacturing philosophy that standardizes production. Some import auto makers do not do this but allow the new vehicle buyer to break up the stereo from the factory (actually the auto makers ship vehicles to dealers with a basic stereo option already installed, but allow the dealership to install the rest of the options as a value added to the vehicle if the auto buyer wants to add the option). Some import auto makers will offer the rear speakers as a secondary option inside the main option of a stereo system. This type of option is a win-win for both sides. The new vehicle buyer can get a stereo for a reduced cost and the auto maker sells a part of an option it may have lost without offering it as a partial option.

Buying A Vehicle Without A Radio - Things To Consider

Whether you buy a new vehicle with or without a stereo installed from the factory, you need to know what it is going to take if you buy a vehicle without a radio and plan on installing a radio yourself or plan on having one professionally installed.

The radios installed from the factory are expensive. But what is the real cost, or more specifically what really goes into installing a new radio in a vehicle that did not have a radio installed from the factory?

Cost of a new radio: obviously you will need a new radio. The old adage “you get what you pay for” also applies to new radios, but don’t go overboard. If you plan on going really inexpensive you might be getting a radio that is truly inferior - bad reception, bad audio quality, low power output to the speakers, bad design. If you go too expensive you might make the mistake that most people buying a new radio make - buying what you don’t need (or more common do not know how to use or operate or control). The best thing to do is shop. If you live in an area where there are very few choices of retail shops you may want to look at magazines, visit retailers on the web, or consult retail chains in large cities to see what their prices are. Compare options. But be smart, do this with your knowledge in mind as well as what you feel is your audio knowledge level.

Mounting and securing a new radio: When you purchase a vehicle without a radio, you also purchase a vehicle without all the mounting hardware needed to secure and mount the radio. Even so, most auto makers factory radios are different in size than a new replacement radio. For many auto makers in their vehicles, plastic radio dash installation kits are needed to secure the radio in the vehicle. For these vehicles, these radio installation kits are absolutely necessary to secure the new radio to the vehicles dash as well as adapt any size difference between the auto makers factory radio and dash opening and the new radio.

Cost of new speakers: the best tip The Install Doctor could ever give you on speakers in a vehicle is select the correct size of speakers. The Install Doctors FREE Buyers Guides and Do-It-Yourself Installation Instructions help you make correct decisions on selection speakers. Choosing wrong size speakers will quickly frustrate a new vehicle owner.

Modifying speaker locations before you can even install the speakers: one problem when buying a new vehicle without speakers is that the vehicle must, with some auto makers, be modified to accept speakers. The auto maker will generally design the vehicle so that the speakers can be installed at the factory. If the vehicle is shipped without speakers installed, the holes needed to install the speakers are still in the vehicle, but must be covered up.

Rear deck speakers: metal frame of the rear deck will generally be the same metal whether the vehicle had speakers installed at the factory or not. But the rear deck will be different. A vehicle with speakers installed at the factory will have speaker grills or necessary mounting hardware and cosmetic items already attached to the rear deck inside the vehicle. The same vehicle purchased without a stereo installed at the factory may not have the speaker grills and/or mounting hardware and will generally have a plain rear deck that without speakers grills. This means that these vehicles will have to have holes cut in the rear deck in order for the speakers to be mounted. Each auto maker designs the mounting of their rear speakers differently, so it is advised that the vehicle owner compare a vehicle with and without rear deck speaker to see the difference.

Front door speakers: typically door panels are the same whether you purchase the vehicle with or without a stereo. The metal frame of the door will probably already have a hole cut in the metal whether the vehicle was purchased with or without front door speakers. But there is one MAJOR install tip to consider: Doors are NOT the same for the same vehicle that has power windows and the same vehicle without power windows. Many auto makers completely redesign door panels for use with power windows. This definitely affects the installation of new speakers in a door if no speakers were originally installed at the factory by the auto maker. It is important for a new vehicle owner to understand this. The Install Doctor advises new vehicle owners who purchased a vehicle with or without power windows to look at the same vehicle that has the opposite option. For some auto makers, vehicles without power windows may have problems with speaker depth when mounting new speakers to the metal frame of the door panel. The depth of the new speaker may be deeper than the design of the auto makers new speakers used in the same door. The window may actually roll down and hit the magnet. The Install Doctors FREE Buyers Guides and Do-It-Yourself Installation Instructions can help you make correct decisions and help you understand this. Each vehicle is different. It is difficult to describe every vehicle on this document.

Cost of an AM/FM Antenna: your vehicle will definitely need a new antenna. You must factor in the cost of an antenna.

Vehicle wiring: most modern vehicles have all necessary wires needed to install a new radio and speakers in the vehicles dash as well as the individual speaker wires at each speaker location. On rare occasion, certain vehicles may not have necessary wiring installed at the factory. For these rare occasions, the vehicle will have to be wired.

Cost of miscellaneous install parts: many vehicles require additional install parts. Consult The Install Doctors FREE Buyers Guides.

For additional information on similar topics, please consult the following technical documents:

- 999002** Car Audio Basics (How Mobile Electronics Integrate With Each Other)
- 999003** Radio Install Basics (How Aftermarket Radios Integrate Into Electronics Of Vehicles)
- 999004** Soldering vs. Crimping Your Wire Connections (When And Why To Use Each Method)
- 999005** Why Use Radio Installation Kits (Why Do-It-Yourself Radio Installs Look Amateur - Do It Like The Pros)
- 999006** 'DIN' vs. Double 'DIN' vs. Shafted Radios (Before You Buy, Learn The Fundamental Differences)
- 999007** Mounting Your New Radio To An In-dash Installation Kit
- 999008** Why Use A Snap On Wire Harness Adapter When Installing Your New Radio
- 999009** Wiring Your New Radio Using A Snap On Wire Harness