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## For going old gracefully

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By *Larry Printz*

McClatchy-Tribune News Service NORFOLK, Va. — Of the 37 million people 65 and older, 29 million were licensed to drive in 2005, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. By 2020, that number is expected to reach 40 million.

With that in mind, AAA, in conjunction with the University of Florida, has released a study of the features that older buyers should look for in a vehicle:



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**2.9 APR**  
for 72 months  
on brand new  
**2008 Vues**  
With approved credit.

**SaturnofLibertyville.com**  
**SaturnofGurnee.com**

- **Check the seats:** If you have hip or leg pain, look for a seat height that falls between the driver's mid-thigh and lower buttocks. If the driver doesn't have a great deal of leg strength, make sure the seats are power adjustable.
- **So does size:** Make sure the gauges have large numbers that are easy to read. Larger buttons and switches also are good. A thick steering wheel is easier for those with arthritic hands. Power options, such as mirrors and windows, are also worth it.
- **Safety matters:** A safe car reduces the chance of injury in an accident. Check the crash test and rollover ratings from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ([www.safercar.gov](http://www.safercar.gov)) and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety ([www.iihs.org/ratings](http://www.iihs.org/ratings)). Also, look for "active" headrests that move up and forward during a crash to prevent whiplash.
- **Features to look for:** Keyless entry and ignition makes it easier to enter and start the vehicle. Make sure the dashboard markings have enough contrast to read easily. Look for sun visors that extend to block the sun. Some models even have dual sun visors.
- **Driving aids:** Traction aids that keep you on the road, such as anti-lock brakes and stability control, are worth paying extra for because they can prevent an accident.

Some items not mentioned in the study are worth considering: lane-departure warning and blind-spot detection. The first beeps when you stray into another lane. The other flashes a light

when there's a vehicle in your car's blind spot.

My favorite item, no matter your age, is a heated steering wheel, which offers relief for aching hands after hours of gripping it.

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