

Title:

Q & A's About Mobile Electronics

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Summary:

What's the hottest electronic item for the car today? Two items are very hot right now--hands-free devices for wireless phones and satellite radio for entertainment.

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Article Body:

We've had radios in cars for 80 years, but mobile electronics now include devices for entertainment-including audio and video, navigation and security. This year, we'll buy \$1 billion in electronics for our vehicles. Jim Barry, the Consumer Electronics Association Digital Answer Man, brings us up to speed.

- 1) What's the hottest electronic item for the car today? Two items are very hot right now--hands-free devices for wireless phones and satellite radio for entertainment. XM and Sirius satellite radio each deliver 100 channels of music, sports, comedy and news. Combined, they have about nine million subscribers. Satellite receivers are being built into more new cars and many listeners are buying the portable models that work in their vehicles or out.
- 2) Is it legal to use a cell phone while driving? Some states require drivers to use "hands-free" headphones or speakers when talking on a wireless phone while driving. There are many hands-free devices available, but remember it's best to keep both your hands on the wheel and your mind on the road when driving.
- 3) Are CDs still the most popular music format for cars? They are today, although cassettes haven't entirely disappeared. Many new vehicles are including DVD players that will play music and video with viewing screens built in for backseat enjoyment.
- 4) What if I want to have a lot of music on hand? You have many choices now including the above-mentioned satellite radio, FM radio, CDs and MP3 CDs (which compress the sound to put as much as 10 hours of music on a single disc). All these devices can be built in or installed after you own the vehicle.

5) How do the navigation devices work? Navigation devices use Global Positioning Satellites (GPS), a system of satellite transmitter/receivers that can locate and track individuals and vehicles. Vehicle navigation devices can be equipped with maps of virtually every part of the U.S. Newer models can even give up-to-the-minute traffic information and suggest alternate routes.

6) Isn't it dangerous having all these electronics products in the car? Not if the driver pays attention to the road. That's his or her primary responsibility; in fact, there may be fewer distractions if passengers-especially children- are entertained and occupied with games or movies.