

Companies List Best Cars for College Students

RICHMOND, Va. — CarMax and Driver's Edge, a nonprofit group that provides youth driver education, recently identified their selections of best vehicles for college students, as the time for kids to go back to school commences.

"It's pretty tough to come up with a list of cars that will satisfy both parents and students," explained Steve Tepper, chief operating officer for Driver's Edge.

"Issues of looks, cost safety and performance don't always line up, but there are some great cars out there that fit the bill safety-wise while still being a cool car to drive," he continued.

Ron Costa, regional vice president for CarMax, added, "Typically, parents' top priorities when looking for a vehicle for their student are price, reliability and safety, while young people may be more interested in style, features and performance.

"We recommend conducting online vehicle research first and then finding a car retailer that provides a transparent, customer-friendly and easy car-buying process," he noted.

In alphabetical order by manufacturer, the companies' top picks included:

- Audi A4
- Dodge Caliber (models with optional ABS)
- Honda Civic
- Hyundai Sonata
- Kia Optima (models with optional ABS)
- Pontiac G6 (coupe or sedan with optional ABS)
- Toyota Corolla (models with optional ABS)
- Volkswagen Jetta
- Volkswagen Passat
- Volvo S40 (four-door sedan)

"When deciding on a vehicle for a young driver, safety has to be a top consideration," pointed out Jeff Payne, president and founder of Driver's Edge. "Motor vehicle collisions

are the leading cause of death for people under 24, outnumbering the combined deaths resulting from drug use, guns and other violence."

Reviewing crash-testing ratings from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is another good idea, in addition to considering the ratings of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, officials highlighted.

Executives went on to clarify, "The cars on the list are recommended only for drivers who have at least two years of practical driving experiences. Smaller cars would not be on the list of cars recommended for true novice drivers."

The criteria the companies used to make their selections included:

1. Each of the choices scored at least a four-star rating from NHTSA for both frontal and side-impact protection in each of the last four years. Exceptions are the Dodge Caliber and the Pontiac G6, which have only been available since 2007 and 2006, respectively.
2. Each car offers an array of active safety features as either standard or optional equipment (i.e., anti-lock braking systems, electronic stability control, traction control, etc.)
3. Cost, reliability and vehicle styling have been considered, but safety considerations weighed more heavily in determining the cars to recommend.

"It's not just about choosing the right car,' Payne pointed out. "There is no five-star rating or safety devices that can take the place of a well-educated driver. A lousy driver can make even the safest of vehicles a bad place to be.

"That's why we also recommend that all drivers seek out the proper training and learn the skills needed to help them stay safer on the highways, whether it's attending a Driver's Edge event or investing in quality performance driving school," he concluded.