

## What's Hot in 2019

New Vehicles Roll Out Features to Delight Today's Buyers

By Derek Price  
AUTOMOTIVE CRITIC

If you haven't shopped for a new vehicle in several years, you might be surprised at just how much today's newest cars, trucks and SUVs have changed.

New 2019 models are offering more content for the money, more rugged and aggressive styling and more standard safety features than ever before.

Here's a look at five trends shaping the auto industry this year.

### ACTIVE SAFETY FEATURES

Virtually every new vehicle for sale today offers something that was unavailable or very expensive just a few years ago: a suite of active safety features to help drivers steer clear of trouble.

Sensors and computers in the car can do all sorts of things to help drivers avoid wrecks or mitigate their damage. Some can automatically hit the brakes if a pedestrian walks in front of you, or warn you and apply the brakes if you're backing into oncoming traffic.

What's most remarkable is that these high-tech systems — things that were only fitted to luxury cars or sold as expensive add-ons until recently — are being rolled out at dramatically lower price points this year. Some affordable family cars even make them standard equipment at no extra charge, including on their base or



COURTESY PHOTO

A major trend in the car industry this year is lowering the cost of semi-autonomous and active safety features.



COURTESY PHOTO

Phone connectivity is an important battleground for automotive companies. Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are rapidly becoming industry standards for connecting smartphones to the in-car digital screens, and more vehicle are offering them than ever before.

lower-level trims.

### PHONE CONNECTIVITY

Today's drivers are more connected to their smartphones than ever before. While there are obvious dangers related to using handheld devices while driving, most of today's cars offer

ingenious and convenient ways to connect smartphones to the vehicle's digital display. That means you can control your phone and apps through the car's touchscreen, knobs and voice controls, which helps drivers keep their eyes and attention on the road.

The two most popular systems for doing this are Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Both these technologies are intuitive for people already familiar with operating a smartphone, and they're rapidly becoming industry standards. Many drivers find them addictively useful.

Smartphone connectivity is far from universal, though. Different vehicle manufacturers offer very different ways of connecting digitally, from apps on your phone that can help schedule maintenance and remotely start your car, to using the Amazon Alexa services to control and get information about your vehicle.

### TURBOCHARGERS

While Americans have long loved big, powerful

engines, those strong power plants aren't always compatible with good fuel economy.

That's where turbochargers come in.

Today's cars are deploying various iterations of turbochargers and superchargers to boost the power output from smaller, more efficient engines. Even performance cars, trucks and SUVs that commonly utilized big, thirsty V8 engines in the past are switching to turbocharged four- and six-cylinder engines that can make even more power than a V8 without burning as much fuel.

### SUV STYLING

Sales trends in the last several years are clear. Americans are rapidly

changing their tastes from the common four-door sedan to crossover vehicles and SUVs that offer more space and capability without many drawbacks.

A relatively recent trend — one resurrected from the 1990s — is giving new vehicles bodies that look tougher, stronger and boxier. Underneath the sheetmetal, they still might have the efficiency, quietness and refinement of a car, but they look a bit more like rugged, off-road 4x4s.

### SEMI-AUTONOMY

Finally, while fully self-driving cars are still years in the future, it's becoming common for new 2019 vehicles to offer a small degree of controlling themselves.

For example, lane keeping assist is becoming commonplace on many vehicles. This system uses cameras and adjusts the steering to keep the car centered in the lane, even if the driver gets distracted. Some cars can steer themselves around corners and control themselves for short periods of time — typically somewhere around 10 seconds — on well-marked roads.

Combined with radar-based cruise control, which changes your car's speed to maintain a set distance following a vehicle in front of you, these new vehicles feel like they offer just a hint of autonomy, often at surprisingly affordable prices.





COURTESY PHOTO

A major trend in the car industry this year is lowering the cost of semi-autonomous and active safety features. Some vehicles even make them standard equipment this year.

## What's Hot in 2019

New Vehicles Roll Out Features to Delight Today's Buyers

By Derek Price  
AUTOMOTIVE CRITIC

If you haven't shopped for a new vehicle in several years, you might be surprised at just how much today's newest cars, trucks and SUVs have changed.

New 2019 models are offering more content for the money, more rugged and aggressive styling and more standard safety features than ever before.

Here's a look at five trends shaping the auto industry this year.

### ACTIVE SAFETY FEATURES

Virtually every new vehicle for sale today offers something that

was unavailable or very expensive just a few years ago: a suite of active safety features to help drivers steer clear of trouble.

Sensors and computers in the car can do all sorts of things to help drivers avoid wrecks or mitigate their damage. Some can automatically hit the brakes if a pedestrian walks in front of you, or warn you and apply the brakes if you're backing into oncoming traffic.

What's most remarkable is that these high-tech systems — things that were only fitted to luxury cars or sold as expensive add-ons until recently — are being rolled out at dramatically lower price points this year. Some affordable family cars even make them standard equipment at no extra charge, including on their base or lower-level trims.

### PHONE CONNECTIVITY

Today's drivers are more connected to their smartphones than ever before. While there are obvious dangers related to using handheld devices while driving, most of today's cars offer ingenious and

convenient ways to connect smartphones to the vehicle's digital display. That means you can control your phone and apps through the car's touchscreen, knobs and voice controls, which helps drivers keep their eyes and attention on the road.

The two most popular systems for doing this are Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Both these technologies are intuitive for people already familiar with operating a smartphone, and they're rapidly becoming industry standards. Many drivers find them addictively useful.

Smartphone connectivity is far from universal, though. Different vehicle manufacturers offer very different ways of connecting digitally, from apps on your phone that can help schedule maintenance and remotely start your car, to using the Amazon Alexa services to control and get information about your vehicle.

### TURBOCHARGERS

While Americans have long loved big, powerful engines, those

strong power plants aren't always compatible with good fuel economy.

That's where turbochargers come in.

Today's cars are deploying various iterations of turbochargers and superchargers to boost the power output from smaller, more efficient engines. Even performance cars, trucks and SUVs that commonly utilized big, thirsty V8 engines in the past are switching to turbocharged four- and six-cylinder engines that can make even more power than a V8 without burning as much fuel.

### SUV STYLING

Sales trends in the last several years are clear. Americans are rapidly changing their tastes from the common four-door sedan to crossover vehicles and SUVs that offer more space and capability without many drawbacks.

A relatively recent trend — one resurrected from the 1990s — is giving new vehicles bodies that look tougher, stronger and boxier. Underneath the sheetmetal, they

still might have the efficiency, quietness and refinement of a car, but they look a bit more like rugged, off-road 4x4s.

### SEMI-AUTONOMY

Finally, while fully self-driving cars are still years in the future, it's becoming common for new 2019 vehicles to offer a small degree of controlling themselves.

For example, lane keeping assist is becoming commonplace on many vehicles. This system uses cameras and adjusts the steering to keep the car centered in the lane, even if the driver gets distracted. Some cars can steer themselves around corners and control themselves for short periods of time — typically somewhere around 10 seconds — on well-marked roads.

Combined with radar-based cruise control, which changes your car's speed to maintain a set distance following a vehicle in front of you, these new vehicles feel like they offer just a hint of autonomy, often at surprisingly affordable prices.

Phone connectivity is an important battleground for automotive companies. Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are rapidly becoming industry standards for connecting smartphones to the in-car digital screens, and more vehicle are offering them than ever before — either as an upgrade or at no extra charge.



COURTESY PHOTO