

10 Steps to Pick the Right Aftermarket Car Stereo

In this passage, we'll go over some of the basic steps involved in choosing a new car stereo for your vehicle.

Step 1

Determine your price range. You can get a decent car stereo for under \$100.00 in most cases.

Step 2

See if you have a USB port. If you own an iPod or iPhone, some car stereos have a USB port that will, in most cases, read files off of your device, play your device, and charge your device, all via the USB-to-30-Pin cable that came with your iPod or iPhone.

If you don't own an iPod or iPhone, the USB port on some car stereos accept USB thumb drives so it can read and play files off of the drive.

If you're looking to not spend a lot, most all car stereos include a 3.5-millimeter auxiliary audio input jack that allows you to plug a 3.5-millimeter auxiliary audio input cable into both your iPod or iPhone or other device and into the jack on the stereo itself. This method will NOT control or charge your iPod or iPhone, however, and will NOT read files off of the device.

Step 3

Consider extras. If you are a frequent traveler, some car stereos offer the ability to add on a SIRIUS or XM Satellite Radio tuner that installs somewhere in your car's interior. Or, in some cases, the car stereo will be satellite radio ready, and

will only require an antenna to be run and connected to the back of the unit. You will need to, however, pay via a monthly or yearly subscription, for this service.

Step 4

Decide whether or not you want HD. If you are tired of listening to the standard AM and FM radio stations on your current car stereo, consider purchasing a car stereo that has a built-in HD Radio tuner. HD Radio is free to listen to, and has better sound quality than standard AM and FM radio stations do. Instead of only a single AM or FM radio station on one frequency, there are three to five additional AM or FM radio stations on that same frequency.

Step 5

Decide if you want to have bluetooth capability. If you are always in your car, some car stereos allow you to add-on Bluetooth, or buy a car stereo with Bluetooth standard. The caller's voice comes through all of your vehicle's speakers, and most car stereos include a built-in Bluetooth microphone. You connect your phone wireless to the car stereo in order to use it. Some car stereos even allow you to stream music wirelessly from your Bluetooth-enabled device.

Step 6

Go "Mechless". If you do not find yourself listening to CDs in your car a lot, then you may want to consider buying a "mechless", or digital media car stereo. These car stereos do NOT feature a CD player, and only a radio, with integration for iPods, iPhones, and other devices. These are generally cheaper to purchase.

Step 7

Consider your factory car stereo's options. Do you have a CD c

hanger in your trunk? Does your car have factory satellite radio? Do you have controls on the steering wheel for the radio? Do you have an upgraded factory premium sound system and/or an amplifier? Does your factory car stereo already have Bluetooth and iPod and iPhone and USB inputs? Does your vehicle use its factory car stereo to play the warning chimes through your vehicle's factory speakers? These are only some of the considerations required when replacing your vehicle's factory car stereo.

Step 8

Consider the method of installation into your decision process. Can you install the car stereo yourself? Or will you be paying someone or getting someone to install the car stereo for you? Most consumer electronics retailers or car audio shops will install your new car stereo for a fee. If you ARE installing the car stereo yourself, is it difficult to disassemble your vehicle's dashboard to get to the factory car stereo?

Step 9

Consider the expandability options. Do you want to add any features onto your new car stereo later?

Step 10

Finally, find the right-fitting car stereo for your vehicle. DIN units are the most common type of car stereo, and only take up a small, rectangular space in your vehicle's dashboard. DIN-and-a-Half, or Double DIN units are used in many American and Import vehicles. They take up a larger, more square-like space in your vehicle's dashboard. A factory car stereo may require DIN tools to be removed, available at most consumer electronics retailers and car audio shops for less than \$5.00, or you can make your own set of DIN tools out of old metal coat hangers.

