How to make the most of a test drive.

Every day, the average person is behind the wheel for almost an hour. Whether they're driving to school or work, or just running errands, they're traveling an average of 11,498 miles each year. So, when it comes to cars, comfort is important. And, as always, safety is a priority. Are you in the market for a new car? To find the perfect vehicle for your needs, be sure you make the most of a test drive. Here's how.

BEFORE YOU GO:

1. **Familiarize yourself with the safety features.** With today's technology, cars are getting smarter and smarter. From adaptive cruise control to active park assist, explore the current options to figure out what you like and don't like.
2. **Make a list.** Determine what you need in a vehicle – your nonnegotiables. Maybe you need to accommodate a car seat. Or a rooftop carrier. Or a travel trailer. Decide what you can't live without, then let that be your starting point.
3. **Make photocopies of your license.** Often, the salesperson will do this for you, but bringing your own could save time AND eliminate the possibility for identity theft. Especially if you take the copies with you when you leave.

AT THE DEALERSHIP:

1. **Do a walkaround.** When you find a vehicle you want to test drive, take note of any scratches or dents. Then, share them with the salesperson. This will decrease the risk of getting blamed for existing imperfections.
2. **Find all the controls you could need.** Before you start your test drive, adjust your seat and mirrors. Find your windshield wipers and turn signals. Look for cruise control settings. See where your gas tank is. Try to remember the functionalities you use on a regular basis, then ensure this car

works the way you want it to.

3. **Check the tech.** Is the control panel easy to use? Can you connect your phone wirelessly to have hands-free capabilities? Are there voice controls? Can you adjust the radio with buttons on your steering wheel? Spend some time getting a real feel for the features.

DURING YOUR DRIVE:

1. **Go on the highway.** Many people make the mistake of simply taking a car around the block. However, you probably drive on the highway just as often.
2. **Accelerate and brake.** See how it picks up speed, how quickly it comes to a stop and how safe you feel while experimenting with it.
3. How does the car sound? Is it smooth and silent? Or can you hear some sort of rattling that could be cause for concern? Also, see how the radio system sounds. Bonus points if you confirm Bluetooth calls are crystal clear.
4. **Test comfort, for you and your passengers.** Sit in every seat to ensure you're satisfied. Is there enough leg room? Elbow room? Would the seat itself be comfortable for long periods of time?

After you've made the most of your test drive, take some time to truly think about it. And remember, before you invest in any vehicle, talk to your independent insurance agent. After all, you'll want to know how much your new coverage will cost.

For more tips and tricks, read our blog post: 5 things to do before driving away in a rental car.