

Handling Help: Turn Corners And Avoid Obstacles With Ease

(NAPSA)—Perhaps you like to drive “enthusiastically.” Or maybe you want to make your car, truck or SUV feel more stable on the road. No matter what you drive, it’s easy to improve your vehicle’s handling.

“A few well-chosen accessories can improve your vehicle’s performance, increase passenger comfort when you’re turning corners and enhance your vehicle’s ability to maneuver around obstacles, so you can avoid crashes,” says Sue Elliott-Sink, director of content for *enjoythedrive.com*, the consumer Web site from SEMA, the Specialty Equipment Market Association.

To help you decide if your vehicle needs handling help, the experts from *enjoythedrive.com* offer these tips:

1. Do your passengers tilt when you turn?

When you’re driving, you’re holding onto the steering wheel, so “body roll” may not be all that noticeable to you. If your passengers have to hang on when you go around a corner, however, your vehicle can use some help.

Besides being uncomfortable, body roll also makes your vehicle harder to drive. During a turn, body roll shifts the vehicle’s weight to the outside tires, making steering more difficult and reducing your tires’ contact with the ground. Less tire contact means less control.

To reduce body roll, you can replace the original front anti-sway bar with a larger one. Plus, you’ll want to add a rear anti-sway bar (or swap to a larger unit).

Lowering springs also will reduce body roll and lower your vehicle’s center of gravity, making it more stable on the road.

2. Do your tires squeal?

Squealing tires are a sign that you’re losing traction, which again means you’re losing control.

If your tires make a lot of noise when you’re going around turns—



ON THE ROAD TO COMFORT—Handling improvements can make your vehicle more comfortable and more fun to drive.

or even when you accelerate from a stop—you need new tires. Either you’ve worn out the ones that came on your vehicle, or you’re a more enthusiastic driver than average.

Automakers choose tires for a particular vehicle based on their profile of that vehicle’s average driver. If the average driver takes a rather leisurely pace around corners, then the tires on your car or truck are going to talk back when you turn quickly. You may need to step up to high-performance—or even ultra-high-performance—tires to accommodate your driving style.

3. Does your vehicle bounce a lot?

If your vehicle bounces two or three times after you hit a pothole or a bump in the road, you’re ready for new shock absorbers. Because shocks and springs work closely together, they must be well matched. If you change to stiffer springs or lower your vehicle, you’ll probably need to change shocks, too.

4. Is there a big delay after you turn the wheel?

It’s easy to make any vehicle more responsive, which makes emergency maneuvers easier.

Older cars and trucks came from the factory with rubber body and suspension bushings, which “crush” when you turn, increasing your vehicle’s response time. Even if your vehicle came with more modern urethane bushings, they may be worn out. A switch to new high-performance urethane bushings can make your car or truck more responsive and also reduce body roll.

Often, a car or truck won’t respond right away when you step on the gas or turn the wheel because the vehicle is trying to twist itself. This is wasted energy, reducing your fuel economy. Fortunately, accessories that stiffen your vehicle—including subframe connectors and strut tower braces—will reduce this body flex, so the vehicle responds to your commands more quickly.

For more information on vehicle handling, visit www.enjoythedrive.com. The Web site includes information on hundreds of the latest custom auto accessories, as well as links to product manufacturers’ and retailers’ Web sites. If you don’t have Internet access, write to SEMA, Handling, 1575 S. Valley Vista Dr., Diamond Bar, CA 91765-3914.