

# Want New Wheels For Your Vehicle?

(NAPSA)—“A new set of wheels can instantly improve the look of any vehicle, but choosing the right ones can be daunting,” says Sue Elliott-Sink, director of content for [enjoythedrive.com](http://enjoythedrive.com), the consumer Web site from SEMA, the Specialty Equipment Market Association. “There are literally thousands of wheel designs available, so there’s a style to suit every taste and budget.”

To help take the stress and guesswork out of wheel shopping, SEMA offers these tips:

## 1. Know what you’ve got.

The easiest way to replace wheels is to get the same size that came on your vehicle. That way, virtually all you need to know is the year, make and model of your car or truck. Knowing the size of the wheels that came on it from the factory is also helpful.

It’s easy to figure out what size wheels are on your vehicle: Just read the side of the tire. If it says, “P175/70R-14,” for example, you have 14-inch-diameter wheels. (The P stands for passenger car tire; the 175 is the tire’s width, measured in millimeters; the 70 is the aspect ratio, or the tire’s width divided by its sidewall height; and the R stands for radial.)

## 2. Go bigger, hassle-free.

Often, people want larger-diameter wheels. For example, you may want to change from 16-inch wheels to 17- or 18-inchers. Swapping on larger wheels can really enhance the look of a vehicle, and also enhance its performance. Most experts recommend that you compensate for larger wheels by buying lower-profile tires. The key is to retain the same overall diameter of the wheel-and-tire package.

## 3. Stay safe.

Most people never consider the safety aspects of their wheels—but all wheels have a load rating, so it’s vital to purchase replacement wheels with a load-carrying capacity the same as, or higher than, the factory wheels. Tires also have a load rating, which is equally important—especially on



vehicles used for towing or hauling heavy loads.

## 4. Gain more options with more knowledge.

It’s pretty easy to find basic plus-sizing options for any vehicle. Many retailers—both online and in stores—ask for year, make and vehicle model, then show you wheels that will fit. However, for catalog shopping or alternative wheel-and-tire packages, you’ll need to know a little more.

For starters, is your vehicle front- or rear-wheel drive? You also may need to know your vehicle’s bolt pattern, so you can buy wheels that bolt right on.

You may need to know the desired backspacing and offset, too. Backspacing is the distance between the innermost edge of a wheel and the mounting surface. Offset is the distance from the center of a wheel to the mounting surface.

## 5. Lose some weight.

Some wheels are considerably heavier than others. As you might guess, the lightest wheels usually are designed for racing. But swapping to lighter wheels benefits on-the-street performance, too. Simply put, the lighter the wheels, the less effort it takes for a vehicle to accelerate and the better its ride quality. As a rule, steel wheels are

much heavier than aluminum.

## 6. Choose a finish.

Wheels are available in a variety of finishes—painted, anodized and even gold-plated. For shiny rims, you can choose polished aluminum or chromed finishes. Black rim choices include painted, powder-coated or anodized aluminum. Of all the options, bare aluminum wheels require the most maintenance.

## 7. Compensate for taller wheel-and-tire combos.

If you decide on a larger overall diameter wheel-and-tire package for aesthetic reasons—because it fills up the wheel wells—or because it provides more ground clearance off-road, your speedometer and odometer readings may be off. You also might notice problems with transmission shift points, cruise control and anti-lock brake systems. These issues are easily solved by installing a custom computer chip or a recalibration device that compensates for the change in tire height.

For more information on wheels and tires, including a glossary of the terms mentioned in this article, visit [www.enjoythedrive.com](http://www.enjoythedrive.com) or write to SEMA, Wheels & Tires, 1575 S. Valley Vista Dr., Diamond Bar, CA 91765-3914.