

14 Read the article about renting a car in the U.S.

Driving in the U.S.A.

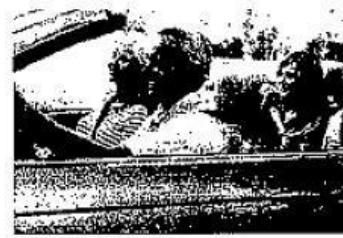
Planning a trip to the U.S.? Have you thought about how you'll get around? If you're going to stay in a big city such as New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, public transportation is the most convenient option. However, to travel almost anywhere else in the U.S., you'll need a car.

Car Rental Tips

Requirements: Most car rental agencies require drivers to be at least 25 years old. Some allow younger drivers, but may charge a higher rate. To rent a car in the U.S., you will need a credit card and driver's license. Visitors can usually rent a car and drive with a driver's license from their home country. However, if your license is in a language that doesn't use the Roman alphabet, you should obtain an International Driving Permit in English.

Cost: Car rental rates change often, and you can usually save money by shopping around for the best price. Be sure to check travel and rental agency websites for special sales and discounts. Look for package deals that offer car rental and airfare or hotel for one low price. If your schedule is flexible, compare prices for different travel dates. It is often cheaper to rent a car on weekends or for a full week rather than a few days.

Safety: Before you leave the car rental lot, inspect the car carefully for damage and make sure everything is working properly. Ask the agent to note any problems on the rental form. Take a few minutes to become familiar with the car: Adjust your seat and mirrors. Locate the controls for the lights, turn signals, and windshield wipers. Then, buckle up! Wear your seat belt, and ask your passengers to wear theirs, too. Most states have seat belt laws, and all states require that young children and babies sit in the back seat in special child seats. When you're ready, follow the traffic laws for the states you'll be driving in. If you're not sure, check with car rental staff before you hit the road.

**Hidden charges:**

Always read the small print on your car rental agreement carefully—to check for hidden charges such as taxes, airport surcharges, and drop-off fees (an extra charge for returning a car to a different location from where you picked it up). Make sure that you drop off the car with a full tank of gas. Rental agencies charge a fill-up fee and high gas prices if they have to fill up the gas tank.

Find and circle the phrases in the article in Exercise 14. Then match the phrases and their meanings. Write the letter on the line.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ get around | a. extra costs that are not clearly stated |
| 2. _____ package deals | b. fasten your seat belt |
| 3. _____ hidden charges | c. travel from place to place |
| 4. _____ fill-up fee | d. begin a car trip |
| 5. _____ buckle up | e. specials that offer two or more services for one price |
| 6. _____ hit the road | f. an extra charge for returning a car without a full tank of gas |

15 Answer the questions about renting a car in the U.S. Use information from the article in Exercise 14. Explain your answers.

1. I am 23 years old. Can I rent a car?

2. Do I need an International Driving Permit to drive in the U.S.?

3. Where can I get the best price for a car rental?

4. I want to pick up a car in New York and drop it off at Los Angeles International Airport.

What hidden charges should I check for?

5. We are traveling with small children. Are there any special requirements?

GRAMMAR BOOSTER

C Put the words in order and write sentences. If a sentence can be written in two ways, write it both ways.

1. dropped / Margo / off / the car

Margo dropped off the car. OR Margo dropped the car off.

2. up / it / Sam / picked

3. the tank / filled / I / up

4. can't / turn / on / Sue / the headlights

5. turn / off / I / can't / them

6. like / He'd / it / to / drop / off / at noon

7. I / to / need / up / it / fill

8. picked / the car / William / up / has
