Believe it or not, electric cars have been around for more than 130 years. The first electric, the 1888 Flocken Elektrowagen, was conceptualized and manufactured in Germany where they became the preferred mode of road transportation even over the gasoline cars of that era.

Today’s electric cars are a bit different from the ones that temporarily took over the automotive market in the late 19th century. However, they still offer the same appealing benefits including less gasoline usage on top of all the same advanced comfort, technology, and safety features that gasoline cars have.

In this Guide to Electric Cars, you’ll learn all about electric cars including the following topics:

- What an electric car is and how it works
- How electric cars differ from gasoline cars and hybrids
- The pros and cons of buying an electric car
- How to buy a new or used electric car
- How and where to charge your electric car

After reading through this electric cars guide, you’ll have a clear understanding of how an electric car can fit into your unique lifestyle. Let’s get started!
What is an Electric Car?

An electric car is defined solely by the electric motor and battery system that powers the vehicle. The battery stores electricity that’s brought in by a charging cable. When the vehicle is powered on, the electricity is channeled from the battery through a controller and into the motor. The motor then channels this energy into the steering system to turn the wheels of the vehicle.
Gasoline Cars vs Electric Cars

Electric cars differ from gasoline cars when it comes to where they get their power. On the outside, these vehicles may look exactly the same. However, under the hood, an electric car has a motor and battery system while a gasoline car has a traditional engine that burns fuel to create its own power which is then channeled to the steering system to turn the wheels.

Hybrid Cars vs Electric Cars

Hybrid cars are the middle ground between gasoline and electric cars. Conventional hybrid vehicles are technically not considered electric vehicles even though they sport a battery-powered electric motor on top of their gasoline engine. This is because the engine still requires gasoline to power the vehicle—the electric motor just enhances the efficiency of the gasoline burning process.

Plug-in hybrid vehicles, on the other hand, are considered electric vehicles because it can run entirely on electric power. However, these vehicles can also be powered by electric-assisted gasoline or diesel fuel.
Pros & Cons of Buying an Electric Car

As with any vehicle, there are pros and cons to consider based on what your particular vehicle needs are. When considering an electric car, it’s important to weigh the following pros and cons.

Reasons to Buy an Electric Car

- **Quiet & Smooth Rides:** The battery-powered motor makes virtually no sound compared to a gasoline-powered combustion system which revs. Electric motors are also very responsive so you can expect immediate pick-up when you apply pressure to the accelerator.
- **Convenient At-Home Charging:** Unlike with gasoline cars where you have to go to the gas station to fuel up, you can charge your electric vehicle right at home as long as you have a power outlet and a charging cord.
- **Lower Ownership Costs:** They don’t use gas, so you never need to pay to fill up your tank again. Also, since they don’t have an engine that lets off all kinds of emissions, electric cars don’t need an exhaust system or engine oil. As a result, you won’t have to pay for engine maintenance like oil changes.
- **Environmentally Friendly:** Electric cars don’t burn petroleum and, consequently, don’t give off emissions. This helps to improve the air quality because your vehicle isn’t contributing to the emissions being put off by gasoline cars.

Cons You’ll Want to Consider

- **More Limited Range:** Mileage varies greatly depending on any model you choose, electric or gasoline. However, some electric cars offer around just 100 miles per charge. There are also electric models that can exceed 200 miles per charge.
- ** Longer Fueling Time:** It takes less than five minutes to fuel a car up with gasoline. However, depending on the electric car model you choose, it could take between 20 minutes and a few hours to charge. Be sure to time your charging around your schedule by charging at night while you sleep.
- **Not as Many Choices:** As of right now, you won’t have quite as many models to choose from when it comes to electric vehicles with only about 40 mostly compact cars and sedans. However, the market is expanding every day to include larger vehicles like SUVs and even electric pickup trucks.
How to Buy an Electric Car

The process of buying an electric car is nearly identical to that of buying a gasoline car. Below, you’ll find a detailed description of the four most crucial steps of the electric-car-buying process.

1. Create a Budget.

The first thing you need to do is create a budget. It’s recommended that you should spend no more than 20% of your monthly take-home pay on your car payments. Keep in mind that you won’t need to pay for gas or as many maintenance services as you would with a gasoline car. However, you’ll want to consider how much charging your vehicle at home will change your electric bill. So, you could consider adjusting your monthly budget based on these facts.

2. Consider Mileage Range.

As with fuel economy in a gasoline vehicle, you’ll want to consider the mileage ranges of the electric vehicles currently on the market. If you plan to use your electric car for commuting to work, you don’t need to worry about having a high mileage range. However, if you travel frequently or your area doesn’t have many charging stations yet, you may need a car with a mileage range in the 200s.

3. See What’s Out There.

After you have a solid budget and wish list figured out, you’ll want to take a look at what’s out there. Many different car manufacturers offer electric vehicles or electric versions of their regular gasoline models. With the slightly smaller market to browse, it’ll be easier to compare models that you like and zero in on something that fits your needs as a driver.

4. Take a Test Drive.

Once you have an electric model in mind, it’s time to locate a dealer near you and take a test drive. You’ll notice the second you start the vehicle that the driving experience is much different than a gasoline vehicle. Do a few laps around the block to get used to it and to make sure that it’s a good fit for you. Focus on comfort, ease, and visibility while you’re behind the wheel.
Should You Buy a Used Electric Car?

Modern electric cars have been around long enough now that buying a used electric car is a feasible and reasonable option for electric car shoppers. However, there are a few things that you’ll want to consider before opting for a used electric car.

The first thing you’ll want to consider is that they don’t differ too much from used gasoline cars. As with any other used vehicle, there will be some evidence of usage. For instance, the battery may not hold as long of a charge as it did when it was first manufactured. However, you can always replace the battery to eliminate that problem and just factor that into your budget.

However, it’ll still perform like an electric car providing you with smooth driving, no need for gasoline, and a positive impact on the environment. You’ll just want to do your research to ensure that the vehicle is in the best condition possible by looking at the car history report.
How & Where to Charge Your Electric Car

Charging your electric car is going to be a different experience than going to the gas station. The first thing you need to know is that not all electric cars charge the same way. There are a few different types of charging including 120-volt, 240-volt, and DC fast charging. All three of these types of charging can happen at your home.

In order to charge at home, you’ll need a compatible electricity outlet in your garage or on the exterior of your home as well as a charging cord. If you don’t have access to an outlet on the outside of your home in order to charge your vehicle, you can always locate a public electric car charging station. As the popularity of electric cars increase, so does the number of public charging locations.

Ready to Find Your Next Electric Car?

In this Guide to Electric Cars, you got a taste of what the electric car world has to offer. Now that you have a better idea of what driving an electric car is like, you’re ready to jump in and get started on the process of finding your next electric car!