

GPS Article

GPS (Global Positioning System) Navigation Devices are an alternative to maps and street directories. They are easily updateable and provide step by step verbal instructions helping you find your destination. Although they are more expensive than buying a map, if you are someone who travels a lot, a GPS will be cheaper and will take up less space than buying street directories and maps for every city and state in Australia.

A GPS works by contacting satellites of which there are between 24 and 32. To obtain an accurate reading anywhere on earth your GPS unit needs unobstructed contact with four or more GPS satellites. Although it is hard to actually see the satellites, if you can see the sky above you, you should be able to access an accurate GPS reading. If you are in a high rise car park, are driving in narrow city streets surrounded by high rise buildings or are driving in underground tunnels, then you may lose your GPS signal until you emerge into a position with a greater area of sky and thus access to more satellites.

When buying a GPS there are certain things you should look for and as with most technology items, you get what you pay for. A decent GPS will cost around \$250 or more. I think the best brands are Tom Tom and Navman. If you are planning to use the GPS only in your car I recommend purchasing a GPS that comes with a windscreen mount. Windscreen mounts have suction caps so your GPS can be temporarily setup while you need it, then put away when not in use. It is a good idea to keep this sort of technology out of sight when not in use to deter thieves from breaking into your car.

Like a mobile phone it is an offence to use a GPS while driving. You can have it turned on so the voice is giving instructions, but if you need to actually look at the GPS screen to set an address for instance, then you have to pull over to the side of the road.

Screen size is very important. The main screen sizes are 3.5 inches and 4.3 inches. The 4.3 inch screen is best as nearly all GPS have touch screen. The larger screen means you are more likely to press the correct buttons as they are bigger.

Maps need to be updated regularly if you will be driving in cities which are constantly expanding with new suburbs and new roads. Even if a road has only been upgraded, with traffic lights

replacing a roundabout, out of date maps can lead to confusion as the GPS will give instructions relating to a roundabout, yet there is no round about in sight and the set of lights won't be mentioned.

Some manufacturers mail out disks with the updates but in most cases updated maps can be downloaded from the manufactures website. I recommend you buy a GPS that allow updates from the internet. If you don't have the internet, if you have dialup internet or if you don't have a large internet download quota you should use the Internet Centre as some map updates can be over 150mb to download.

Once download maps are usually simple to install. Some GPS come with software to install on your computer; this will tell you when there is an update available and will automatically download and install it once you pay for the upgrades. Others GPS need to be plugged into the computer with a USB cord while the update is running. Maps cost anywhere between \$100 and \$200, and most companies prefer payment by credit or debit card. Many GPS maps are made my whereis which is owned by sensis. They are modified to suite your GPS model by the company that made the GPS.

Sometimes in the city, streets are very close to each other and it can be hard to know which one to turn down. If your GPS has spoken street names you will be able to hear the road name and then you will see it written on the street sign. This will help you make sure you are turning down the right street.

In the city you will often be on roads with multiple lanes. Lane guidance tells you what lane you should be in to make upcoming turns. This way you won't have to cut across traffic at the last second or have to make a U turn.

When planning a destination you can set the GPS to avoid tolls and avoid dirt roads. This will generally make trips longer than if you set the GPS for toll roads and to take dirt roads, but it will cost less in tolls and it may save wear and tear on your vehicle caused by gravel roads.

Some people find it difficult driving with a GPS. This is because they don't have faith in it and they try to go different directions thinking they know a better, shorter or quicker way. The key to successful navigation is to put faith in the GPS, while still maintaining common sense.

If you need your GPS updated with the latest maps pop down to the Internet Centre or call Josh on 6343 1720. I can download the maps for you. You will need to bring your credit/debit card so that you can purchase the maps off the internet before downloading them. I can also install the new maps on the GPS for you as well.