



Unlike most vehicles on the road, Google's car doesn't run on gasoline. It is powered by an electric battery.

Sensors and cameras detect objects in every direction.

The front of the car is made of a soft foam that could cause less damage in a crash.

The car has seats for two passengers. It has no steering wheel and no gas or brake pedals. Instead, it has a button to start and another to stop in an emergency.

No Driver Needed!

Will roads one day be filled with cars that drive themselves?

A police officer recently noticed a slow-moving vehicle holding up traffic in Mountain View, California. When he pulled the car over, he saw two passengers but no driver. The car was driving itself!

The driverless car was designed by Google. The technology company has been testing robotic vehicles since 2009. Other companies, including Ford and Toyota, are testing their own cars that drive themselves.

Self-driving cars may seem like something out of a movie. But experts say the cars could become a safer option for carrying passengers within the next few years.

Word to Know

automated (AW-tuh-may-tid) *adjective*. operated by a machine rather than by a person

Safety First

Google's **automated** cars use sensors and cameras to "see" objects around them, including other cars, traffic lights, and people crossing the street. Computers use data collected by the sensors to control the car, so there's no need for a driver.

Many experts say driverless cars could make roads safer. More than 90 percent of car accidents are caused at least in part by mistakes made by drivers. That's according to the Department of Transportation. So far, Google's cars have driven more than 1.3 million miles and have been in only 17 minor accidents. Unlike people, driverless cars don't get angry, tired, or distracted.

"It's not going to matter if somebody was having a bad day at work and just wasn't

really focused on what was happening on the road around them," says Jeffrey Miller. He is an engineering professor at the University of Southern California.

Down the Road

Most people won't see robotic cars on roads near them just yet. Right now, driverless vehicles are legal in only a few states. Trained passengers must ride inside the cars to take control if anything goes wrong. Also, Google is still improving its cars. Many haven't been tested at speeds above 25 miles per hour.

Still, Miller predicts that the first self-driving cars could go on sale as early as 2019. He says that one day kids might even "drive" themselves to school by hopping into a driverless car and pressing a button!

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