

American Style 4x4's

The concept and much of the technology used in four wheel drive vehicles has been around for some time, although the application to mainstream personal transport is a relatively recent phenomenon. The principle is simple, applying drive power to all four wheels gives more stable distribution of the engine's power and better traction over rough ground or in bad weather conditions.

Early 4x4s were developed for delivering goods over rough terrain, the army picked up this idea and used it to create highly mobile general purpose (GP) or '*Jeep*' vehicles for World War II. Such vehicles remained in use for specialist applications until car makers such as Subaru and Audi started to develop four wheel drive passenger cars during the 1970's. From the early 1980's more manufacturers started to see the potential of offering a four wheel drive passenger vehicle within their range.

This segment of the car market has become hugely popular lately. Many drivers favouring the high driving position and rugged build despite seldom going 'off-road'. US manufacturers such as Chevrolet, Dodge & Ford have all developed four wheel drive passenger and pick-up vehicles. Foreign manufacturers such as Toyota have produced some very capable vehicles which sell well in the US.

