BACK A WINNER

Prevent car park dings with a hi-tech reversing aid. We choose from 10 – plus tell you how to fit them...

We tested...

Dolphin DPS400
Price: £49.99 **Rating:** ★★★★★
Sensors/visual: Four/no

1 BEST BUY The cheapest four-sensor system we tried, and the units come in a range of 20 colours as a no-cost option. Supplied hole saw made fitting the sensors simple, and wiring was equally easy, via flying leads. It worked flawlessly, even on the wire fencing. No towbar mask, but quality, performance and price make this a strong package.

Meta Targa SR2 TGi
Price: £74.99 **Rating:** ★★★★
Sensors/visual: Two/no

2 RECOMMENDED A brilliant way of fitting a reversing device, as no drilling is involved. Sensors clip into a plastic reg plate frame, with simple wiring. This TGi version also had a towbar mask. While easy to fit and move car-to-car, it didn't fare as well as in previous tests, but it matched the others on the wire roll, even when approached at an angle.

Yada Reversing Camera
Price: £129.99 **Rating:** ★★★★
Sensors/visual: N/A/camera and monitor

3 CAMERA was easy to fit on a bracket which slotted behind the reg plate, with no need for front-to-rear wiring, as the signal was transmitted wirelessly. You can power the 3.5-inch monitor via the 12V socket or wire it in, and there was an AV input, and outputs for headphones and iPod charging. Plus, the clear colour image switched automatically to mono after dark.

Dolphin DPS400M Camera and Mirror Monitor Reversing Kit
Price: £169.99 **Rating:** ★★★★
Sensors/visual: Four/camera and monitor

4 SAME as DPS400 (opposite), but with a different ECU, camera and six-inch colour monitor that clips on to the mirror. Sensors were great, yet the bumper camera let us see obstacles. Monitor had a second AV input for DVD or games console. A superb choice.

Also tested...

Cobra Parkmaster 4
Price: £79.99 **Rating:** ★★★
Sensors/visual: Four/no

Meta Activepark 4
Price: £89.99 **Rating:** ★★★

JML
Price: £29.99 **Rating:** ★★
Sensors/visual: Two/no

Steelmate Parking Assist PTS400N
Price: £199.99 **Rating:** ★★★

EPS 200
Price: £49.99 **Rating:** ★★
Sensors/visual: N/A/N/A

Vision UK Camera
Price: £117.44 **Rating:** ★★★
Sensors/visual: N/A/camera

THINGS that go bump on your car are rarely good news, especially when parking – as the lightest of dings can cost hundreds of pounds in repairs and put your no claims bonus under threat. Car parking spaces haven't got any bigger as new models have increased in size, so a reversing aid is fast becoming an essential.

There's a wide choice available, and as the quality and effectiveness of these products have increased, prices have fallen, so they're better value than ever.

Most comprise up to four ultrasonic sensors fitted into the rear bumper, which detect obstacles as you get closer to them when reversing, and emit a warning beep. Cameras are also readily available, and are useful as they show what a sensor can't. But as they have wide 'fish-eye' lenses, it's often hard to get a true picture, so care is required when using them.

Camera systems are generally sold separately from monitors as they can be connected to most factory-fit multimedia set-ups or aftermarket head units. Ideally, of course, you'd have audio and visual inputs, adding a camera to an existing audio package or combining both at the same time. Just take care with the latest computerised wiring – it's all too easy to cause a whole lot of electronic chaos.

The test

AFTER fitting, we backed up to a stationary vehicle to simulate typical parking, as well as a bollard and – to really challenge the devices – a roll of steel stock fencing. We recorded warnings and checked accuracy on the systems that provided distances. Set-ups scored for enabling a towbar to be programmed out of the zone, while we also considered build quality, electrical connections, ease of fitting, clarity of instructions and value for money.

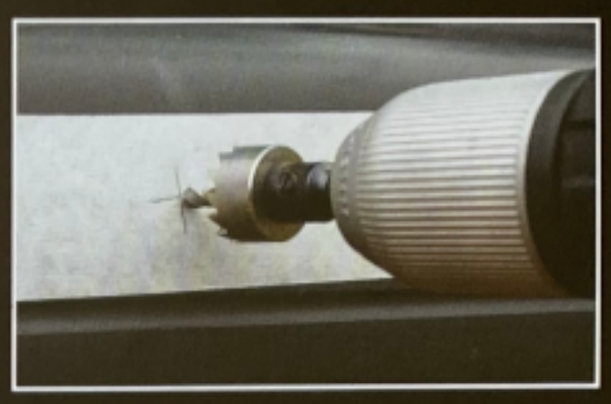
Verdict

FOR a no-frills but accurate reversing aid, the Dolphin DPS400 – with colour-coded sensors included in the price – is hard to resist. Meta's Targa TGi is a good bet if you don't want to drill your bumper. Drivers who require a visual input only should check out the wireless Yada with all its extras, while Dolphin's DPS400M offers the full monty audio/visual experience at the right price.

1. Dolphin DPS400
2. Meta Targa SR2 TGi
3. Yada Reversing Camera
4. Dolphin DPS400M

How to DIY fit a system...

DO THE MATHS
WHEN fitting in-bumper sensors, measure positions carefully – even a slight error will look terrible. Masking tape will make it simple to mark the spot with a pencil.



HOLE LOT BETTER
USE the right size saw to make the sensors' holes – some systems include one in the box. Take the bumper off the car to do this, so as not to damage bodywork.

WILLING AND CABLE
WHERE possible, route the wiring into the vehicle using an existing rubber grommet. A squirt of WD-40 will make it easier to remove and refit tight grommets.

IN THE SHADE
FACTORY-fit sensors are usually colour-coded to the bumper. You can spray yours to match (before fitting) – or some systems offer the option of coloured sensors.

GET IT RIGHT!
CAMERA mounting positions are key. It's easiest to place the cam in the bumper, but if you're securing it elsewhere, make sure it won't impede the opening of the tailgate.

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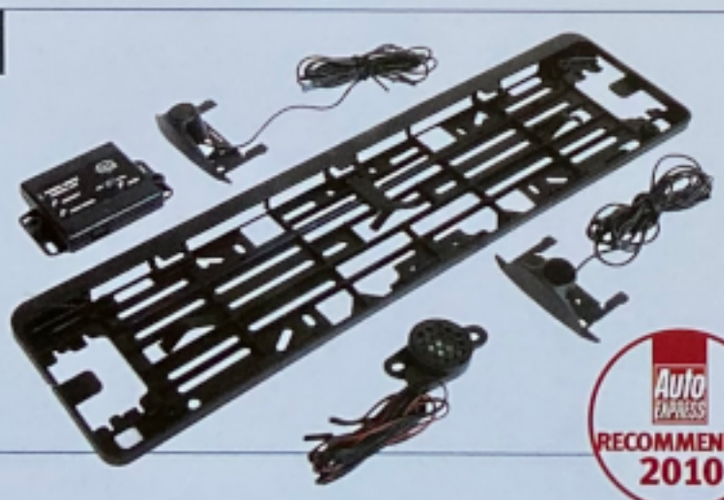

Auto Express RECOMMENDED 2010

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Auto Express BEST BUY 2010

Contact: Parking Sensors (Dolphin, EPS) 01483 522225 www.parkingsensors.co.uk