Check Your Vehicle Width Before Moving Into a Tighter Garage

Why a quick width check matters more than you think

Moving into a house with a smaller garage is exciting until you realize your car might not fit. Many drivers focus on length and height, but vehicle width is often the first thing that causes trouble. A car that is too wide for the garage door or the interior space can mean daily frustration, scratched paint, or even damage to the vehicle. Before you commit to that new garage, a careful look at width can save a lot of headache.

Garage dimensions vary widely, and older homes especially tend to have narrower openings. The standard single garage door is about 8 to 9 feet wide, but the actual opening can be smaller once you account for framing and tracks. Even if the door opening seems fine, the interior width might narrow due to walls, shelving, or support columns. This is where a vehicle width guide becomes essential: it helps you compare your car's dimensions to the space you actually have to work with.

CarRuler provides a practical way to check these numbers side by side. By entering your vehicle's make and model, you can see the width including mirrors and compare it to your garage's measurements. This takes the guesswork out of the process and gives you a clear answer before you move.

What to measure on your vehicle

Vehicle width is not just the body of the car. You need to account for everything that sticks out. The widest part of most cars is usually the side mirrors, which can add several inches to the overall width. Some vehicles have foldable mirrors, but you still need enough clearance to drive through the door without folding them every time. Even if you can fold them in, you have to remember to do it every single time you park.

Another factor is the wheelbase and how the car tracks when you turn. A vehicle might fit when driving straight in, but if you need to angle the car to get around a corner or a parked bicycle, the effective width increases. This is especially true for garages with a short driveway or a tight turn just before the door. You might clear the door opening but scrape a wall or a post inside because the car swings wide.

Don't forget the mirrors

Side mirrors are the most common cause of width-related garage accidents. They are easy to misjudge because they sit outside the car's main body. A mirror that is six inches wide on each

side adds a full foot to the vehicle's total width. If your garage door opening is 96 inches wide and your car with mirrors is 95 inches, you have only half an inch of clearance on each side. That is not enough for a comfortable entry, especially if the driveway is not perfectly straight.

Some newer cars have cameras or sensors that help with parking, but those systems are not a substitute for actual clearance. They can beep or show a video feed, but they do not physically move the car away from the wall. Relying on technology alone can lead to surprises. Measuring the vehicle width guide you get from a reliable source gives you a static number you can trust.

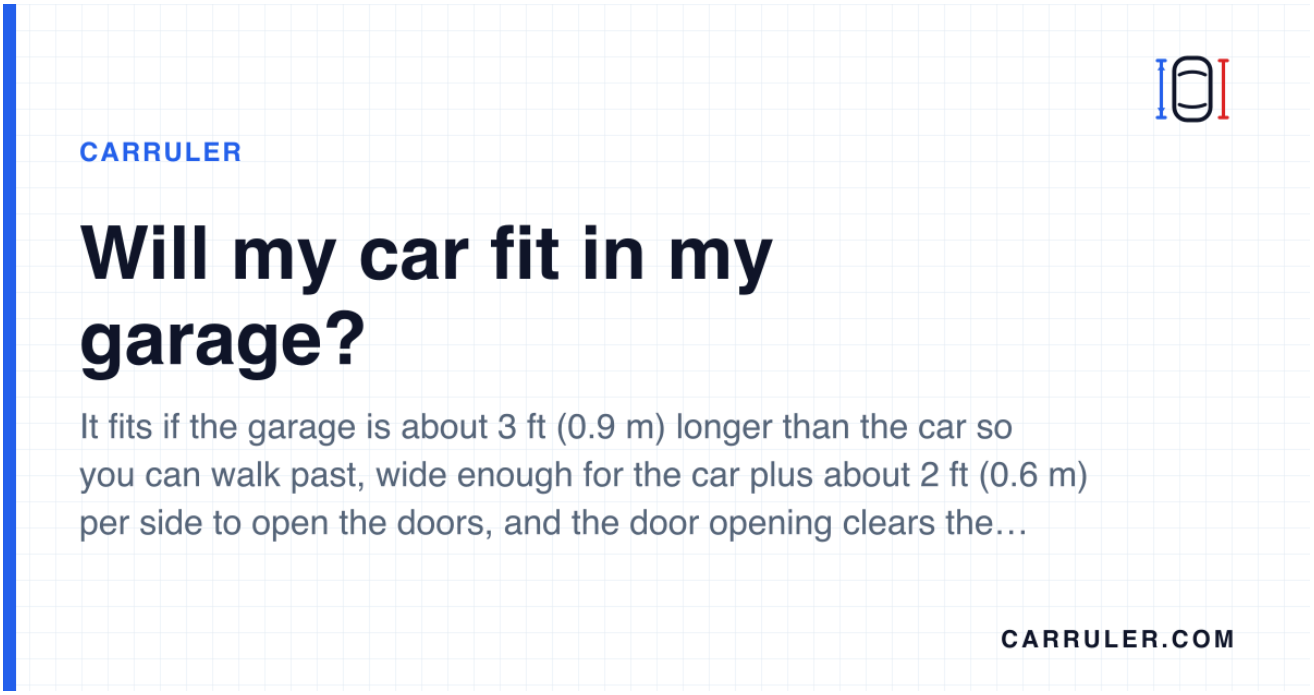
Check the garage interior too

The door opening is only half the story. Once the car is inside, you need space to open the doors and get out. A garage that is wide enough for the car to enter might still be too narrow to let you exit the vehicle comfortably. This is where body width and door swing come into play. If the car is parked close to a wall on the driver's side, you might have to squeeze out sideways or climb over the passenger seat.

Think about everyday use. Do you need to carry groceries, load children into car seats, or store items along the wall? Those tasks require extra room. A garage that fits the car like a glove might look efficient, but it can be impractical for daily life. Measuring the interior width from wall to wall, and subtracting the car's width, tells you how much living space you have left. A good rule of thumb is to have at least 2 to 3 feet of clearance on the driver's side for comfortable door opening.

Watch for obstacles

Garages often have built-in shelves, water heaters, tool racks, or bicycles hanging on the walls. These objects reduce the usable width more than you might expect. Even a narrow shelf that sticks out six inches can turn a tight fit into a no-fit. Before you measure, clear the garage or at least account for every permanent fixture. A temporary storage bin can be moved, but a furnace or a support column cannot.



Also consider the door tracks. Some garage doors have tracks that protrude into the interior space. If your car is tall or wide, the tracks might interfere with the mirrors or the roof. A vehicle width guide that only looks at the door opening might miss this interior narrowing.

Turning space and approach angle

Unless you have a straight driveway that points directly into the garage, you will need to turn the car to align with the door. This turning movement increases the effective width you need. A long car requires more swing, and a wide car needs more room to maneuver. If the driveway is narrow or has a wall on one side, you might find yourself unable to line up straight enough to enter without scraping something.

This is especially important for garages that are set back from the street or that have a sharp angle from the driveway. You might be able to get the car through the door, but only after several back-and-forth adjustments. In a tight residential street, this can be stressful and time-consuming. Checking the turning space before moving in is a wise step.

CarRuler helps here by showing dimensions that include the vehicle's turning radius and overall footprint. While the main focus is on width, the tool gives you a complete picture so you can plan your approach.

What to do if the fit is tight

If your measurements show that the vehicle width is close to the garage opening, you have options. You can adjust how you park, such as pulling in at a slight angle to use the full

diagonal width of the door. Some drivers install mirror extensions or foldable mirrors to reduce the width during entry. Others mark the floor with tape or use a parking guide to center the car perfectly every time.

For very tight garages, you might consider removing one side mirror temporarily, though this is not practical for daily use. A better solution is to look for a different parking spot, such as a driveway pad or a carport. If the garage is simply too narrow, you could widen the door opening, but that is a major renovation. In many cases, knowing the exact numbers ahead of time lets you make an informed choice before you move.

Remember that vehicle width can vary between model years and even between trim levels of the same model. Always check the specific dimensions of your exact car, not just a general range. A vehicle width guide that lets you input your exact vehicle is far more reliable than a rough estimate.

Ultimately, a few minutes of measuring and comparing can prevent years of frustration. Whether you are downsizing your home or just switching garages, knowing the width of your car and the space you have is the first step to a smooth move. Take the time to check both the door opening and the interior, and account for mirrors and obstacles. That clarity will make the difference between a garage that works and one that causes daily stress.