Learning to drive a car is something that you have probably looked forward to for a long time. Once you have your driver's license, you are responsible for the safe use and maintenance of the vehicle you are driving, as well as for the safety of your passengers. This interest project will give you an opportunity to recognize and meet the challenges you'll face as the driver and caretaker of a car. Common sense or "car sense" can mean the difference between safety and danger on the road.

**Skill Builders**

1. Check the engine oil, automatic transmission fluid, brake fluid, and power steering fluid in several vehicles. Find out how often the following procedures should be done on a vehicle and obtain some cost estimates for each:
   - Change oil and automatic transmission fluid.
   - Replace brakes.
   - Replace lights and wheels and balance tires.
   - Replace belts, steering lines, and hoses.
   - Replace damaged or loose parts in exhaust system.
   - Replace shock absorbers.
2. With an adult, check the oil and oil filter on a vehicle. Dispose of or recycle the old oil using an environmentally sound method.
3. Check tire pressure with a gauge. Observe a tire being changed by an experienced adult. Make a list of the steps taken. With adult supervision, follow the steps you have outlined and change a tire on a car.
4. Find out what the procedures are in your state for obtaining a learner's permit and a driver's license. What driver's education courses are available? Also find out what's involved in registering a vehicle. Visit the motor vehicle department and get copies of forms, information, and regulations.
5. Visit a car dealership with an adult and evaluate the costs, options, and availability of two different types of cars, both new and used. Find out about financing; where you can borrow money and at what rates, and the costs of leasing a car.
6. Read pages 122–133 in a Resource Book for Senior Girl Scouts. Using the information provided, assemble a vehicle emergency tool kit for the car you will be driving.
7. Contact different insurance companies and find out what types of coverage are required by your state. Find out how your driving and choice of car affect your insurance rates. Investigate the legal liabilities of a driver who is uninsured or underinsured.

**Technology**

1. Find out how an anti-lock braking system (ABS) works and how it differs from traditional braking systems. Find out how ABS affects your driving in emergency situations and inclement weather.
2. How does the rising number of automobiles on the road affect the environment? Survey an automobile for its energy use. Does it use gas economically or not? Has the engine been tuned recently? Do the tires have the proper inflation? Are the air and oil filters clean? Find out about driving habits that save gas. Talk to a car owner, mechanic, or car dealer about energy conservation in the use and maintenance of cars. What has the auto industry been doing to curtail air pollution and make cars more efficient in their use of gas?
3. Air bags have recently become a standard safety feature. Locate the air bags in a car. Read the owner's manual that describes the strengths and limitations of air bags, as well as any dangers. Identify five safety rules to follow when operating a vehicle that has air bags. Share that information with two other drivers.
4. From car ignitions to theft detection, cars are becoming more and more computerized. Describe in what ways cars are computerized. What does that mean for mechanics and service shops? What are the implications for drivers and car owners? Talk with someone who serviced cars before and after computers were installed. Discover the advantages and disadvantages of these changes.
5. Find information about purchasing a car by browsing through the Internet. Explore purchasing and leasing vehicles of your choice, used or new. Use the Internet to compare the cost, safety, resale value, size, storage space, and options such as air conditioning, automatic transmission, and anti-lock brakes.
6. Compute the cost of running a car for a year. Include the cost of gasoline, insurance, registration, parking, taxes, and maintenance. Compare this with the cost of using public transportation. Is the convenience of a car worth the expense?

**Service Projects**

1. Volunteer at a vehicle safety event or workshop emphasizing safety measures through preventive maintenance. Activities might include inspecting tires, cleaning wiper blades, and checking car fluids.
2. Create a car safety campaign focusing on one or more of the following topics: use of safety belts, use of air bags, obscured vision, behavior during and following an accident or breakdown, drunk driving, display the information in two prominent areas of your town, or ask the local newspaper or schools to print the information.
3. Using the poem "Young and Dumb" on page 123 and the information on pages 47–48 in a Resource Book for Senior Girl Scouts, run a discussion group with other teens about driving under the influence. Discuss the severity of the issue and the steps you can take to avoid riding with a drunk driver. Role-play what to do if you think your friend is under the influence and is about to drive.
4. Volunteer with a community-based service for example, one that delivers groceries or meals to the homebound or takes library books to isolated communities or schools.

**Beyond**

- If you're interested in "spinning your wheels" with car sense, learn more about car safety, design, and travel with these related interest projects:
  - Emergency Preparedness
  - Inventions and Inquiry
  - Travel
  - Law and Order