

Frugal 2019 Model 3 New Buyer Tips and Tricks Guide

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What follows is a summary of the key tips and tricks I picked up on my 2019 model 3 SR buying and initial ownership experience. I suspect that I'm a part of a new generation of 'frugal' Tesla owners that have been waiting for our \$35K chance to experience all the greatness. I personally worked my way up the EV Ladder over the past year, starting with a used Fiat 500e, a 2018 Leaf, and I had the first registered SR+ in Nebraska (March 2019 build). My most recent update was to a used 2019 Performance model 3 in May of 2020. This guide is my way of giving back to all those who shared with me on my journey. Feel free to jump to the section that is of most interest. Or if you're in the Omaha area, join the [Tesla Owners Omaha](#) Facebook group.

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Before buying

- Set up an account on the [Tesla forums](#) to find answers to your questions that are not covered in this guide. There's lots of good up to date info to be found there. Consider following one of the ['Waiting Room'](#) threads to hang with others in your situation.
- Shop around for insurance. If you're like me, this is my most expensive vehicle, and the insurance can be pricey. There does not seem to be a single 'best' answer, but you may want to consider adding glass coverage since a windshield is \$1200. One interesting thing I discovered is that my performance model only cost \$47 more a year to insure than my SR+.

- Convincing the Spouse. This is the toughest task for many first time buyers. Here's a [TMC post](#) with some ideas (not all of them good). For me, I started cheap (used Fiat 500e) and 'for me' to show that EV's can work and save on fuel. But once she drove the Tesla, she was hooked on the performance, and the ability to run the A/C while waiting at the kids soccer games and practices. Top concern for her remains the availability of fast chargers when traveling. Tesla is the only viable option to mitigate this. But it is a fact that chargers are not as ubiquitous as gas stations. So focus on daily convenience.
- Picking features – When ordering you'll struggle to pick the right features. Here's a nice [summary comparison of the interior package features](#) (credit Troy on TMC). Here are my thoughts/logic when making the selections on my first Black SR+ model.
 - Color – Black is free, other colors cost.(update: the free color is now the White Pearl in August 2019) Black was my least favorite because I don't clean my cars as often as I would like, and my previous experience with black was that it shows swirls in the finish over time. Pre purchase, I thought I liked my greenbacks more than I dislike swirls. Post purchase, I'm still torn. Now that I know the SR+ did not get the HW3 module, I think I should have tried harder to find a 2018 that they would have discounted to get the color I really wanted.
 - Update - when I moved to the performance model, I was fortunate to find a Silver, and it definitely shows less dirt and swirls.
 - Stereo - My opinion of the SR+ stereo is that it's a nice setup. The immersive sound feature is a bit of a gimmick. It's like turning on the 'stadium' setting on my home stereo. It feeds a bit more 'surround sound' type of echo to the rear speakers. It is plenty good for day to day use. I have never thought I needed more/better than what it offers. (Except I wish the screen had an HDMI input).
 - Update - comparing the SR+ to my Performance's premium sound system I can't tell a measurable difference in having the subwoofer.
 - Battery Size – This is the biggest decision, and the most costly. Buy as big as you can afford. Most advise running between 20% and 80% for best longevity. ; This cuts 40% off your capacity. And the ugly truth is that the posted numbers are for California weather. When electric cars experience weather below 50 degrees range goes down in proportion to the temp because your heater usage goes up, and battery capacity is lessened. In my experience this winter, it was not uncommon to experience a 40% decrease in range at 32F. Drive at high speed on the interstate when it's cold, or in town at 0 degrees Fahrenheit and I would not be surprised to see a 50% decrease in range. For me, my super chargers are 100 miles apart on the interstate. If I were to charge to 100%, and plan to arrive at 20%, my 240 mile SR+ would only go 50% of 192 miles and leave me short of my next charger in the winter. So I bought knowing that this is my trip car in the summer months only, and winter around town car.
 - I don't have enough interstate experience in my performance model to offer a comparison - more updates to come....

- 5-Feb-2022 update. In my 2019 M3P I figure about 200 miles usable range at 76mph on interstate. I've made the trip from the Lincoln Ne supercharger to Salina KS a couple times and it's as far as I would try in the car with the family at 50 degrees. Headwinds and temps make a big difference. I could make the 231 mile trip from my house to Salina if the winds are right and temps are high, but range anxiety makes it a unpleasant experience
- Wheels - If you're not a fan of the aero wheel covers, know there is a nice set of rims underneath them.([left column of this picture](#)) You'll want to order [the lug cover, and center cap kit from Tesla](#). If you do this you'll also want to order this suction cup kit ([link](#)) that is perfectly sized to help you pull the center caps off if you want to put the covers back on to maximize your range for a road trip. Frugal users will skip upgrading to any wheel over 18" because these high torque cars burn through the rubber, and the bigger the wheel, the higher the replacement tire costs. So if you need another wheel, I suggest going after market in an 18", and consider lowering springs if you want a more aggressive look.
 - I did run a set of 20" performance wheels on my SR+ in the summer, and noticed about a 30watt hr/mile hit on the consumption. The sticky rubber and loss of the aero covers made a notable difference.
- Auto Pilot – For the frugal owner, skip these features. You get a 'normal' cruise control, maps, and the ability to see cars in your blind spots on the screen without any upcharge. From the demo I've had (you should get a 30 day trial), the adaptive cruise is nice, but is not worth more than a couple hundred; but they charge thousands. (update now it's actually a required feature that's baked into a higher starting price). And the auto steering is not ready for prime time. It takes an annoyingly tight grip on the steering to keep it happy, and it is too center of the lane focused, driving into potholes, and staying in the center when passing semi's on the interstate.
 - May 2020 Update, my performance model has Enhanced Auto Pilot (EAP). Since my initial trial in march 2019, I can report that in May 2020 the jerkiness in speed adjustments is still noticeable, and it still does not know how to deal with the widening of the road when right turn lanes are added. It tries to stay in the middle of what it believes the lane to be, and then jerks to the left when it realizes the lane is actually splitting. At least it knows to avoid the traffic cones now. But for interstate travel it is nice to have AP.
- Performance – any of the models' high torque will put a grin on your face, and I find it hard to believe most drivers would notice any difference in acceleration when comparing any of the non-performance models to each other. For the frugal user, ignore performance differences as a decision criteria. Or leave your frugal card at home and go all-in for the performance model.

- Update - May 2020, I traded in my frugal card for a big grin. I justified it by buying a used performance so some of the initial de-valuation was consumed by the first buyer. It did open up some new fun options like running it in the 1/8mile at the local dragstrip (7.2 seconds).
- RWD or AWD – Frugal users will go rear wheel drive (RWD). The traction control is astoundingly good. Keep decent tread on your tires and you'll do as good as most FWD cars on the road in the snow. And if you find it's not as good as you want, snow tires are always an option that will perform better than the AWD anyway. This is [a fun video to help in this decision](#).
 - May 2020 update - This is still good guidance. The AWD is not needed for weather related reasons. In the performance model it is needed for the faster acceleration. But if you're frugal, the long range rear wheel drive with aero wheels would be a great choice. Lighter, lower cost, and longer range.

Ordering

- Trade-in tip - Tesla will offer you an offer over the web, but they may also match Carmax offers. When I traded in my Model 3 Tesla's offer was 2K less than carmax. I actually found the best deal buying from a local used car dealer who has a special interest in Teslas. - shout out to Dakota Buuck at <https://chargedautomotive.com/> for helping me find the rare 2019 Silver. Let him know that Scott with the silver and red seats sent you.
 - If buying used, be sure to join the [Nebraska Tesla Owners club](#) ([link](#)) for a discount on your new purchase (\$500 as of July 2020). I messed up and missed out on this one :(

At Pickup

- Bring a copy of your insurance.
- I was the only one present at delivery, and was still able to get my wife on the title.
- Ask your delivery specialist to send you your window sticker. If you're the first to buy a new model in your state, you may need to provide your Monroney window sticker as evidence of MSRP so that they can properly set their tax tables. In Nebraska my purchase agreement paperwork was insufficient evidence of MSRP when I was the first to register a Model 3 SR.
- Bookmark a couple [checklists](#) of things to check over when your car is still at the store (or when it rolls off the truck).

While your car is on order – go deal shopping

- Know that the SR model does not come with floor mats. You may want to order these and bring them with you to your pickup if the weather is questionable. I picked up the

well liked [3D Maxpider floor mats](#) off of ebay when they had a 15% off any purchase coupon floating around.

- Watch for a 'Endurance' card to use for saving your dashcam, and sentry mode footage. It does not have to be high speed, but it should be an endurance model because many people report that regular cards die after a few months of use. I'm buying this \$30 [EVO 128 gig Endurance card](#), and putting it in a USB card reader I had left over from another project. You can watch [SlickDeals.net](#) for similar sales.
 - June update: I can confirm the following card and reader are working well)
 - Card
 - https://www.amazon.com/Samsung-Endurance-128GB-Micro-Adapter/dp/B07B984HJ5/ref=pd_ybh_a_67?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=699FYK5VRYTA1XW9TCGS
 - Reader
 - https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07G5JV2B5/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o05_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1
- Car wash supplies
 - Ceramic coating - I bought the [CarPro Cquartz 30ml](#) from Amazon and self applied after a good wash/dry and polish. Still happy with the results 1 year after application. This effectively replaces waxing for a couple/few years.
 - Snow Canon - AUTOWN Foam Cannon Car Wash, Snow Foam Lance 1 Liter Bottle with 1/4" Quick Connector Foam Blaster for Pressure Washer Gun \$18.98
 - This one is ok, not great. I had to replace O ring seal that tore after a couple uses, and the nozzle is a bit loose so it does not stay with the desired spray pattern.
 - https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07DGS6FPB/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o01_s01?ie=UTF8&psc=1
 - Car wash foam - I'm very pleased with the Chemical Guys CWS_110 Honeydew Snow Foam snow canon foam. It lingers long enough to wash the whole car down. It's pricey - \$18.99 for 64 oz (should be enough for a couple years).
 - https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B06VS4JH62/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o00_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1
- Tempered Glass Screen protector - note that it's not a square screen, one edge has a curve to it. \$16.99
 - Happy with this purchase; not sure that it's needed. The screen is not like your phone where old school car keys might scratch the glass.
 - https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07GKGDC5M/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o01_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1
- After Market Seat Covers - My used 2019 had these Tsportsline red vinyl covers installed. The car only has 4K miles so I can't offer any durability commentary, but they seem to fit well, and the color definitely makes the car unique. They are a bit darker color in person.

<https://tsportline.com/collections/model-3-interior-accessories/products/tesla-model-3-seat-upgrade-interior-kit-insignia-design-non-perforated?variant=13122145583222>

- March-2022 update. At 32K miles they are still looking great and are the most commented feature on the car. Would recommend if you're looking to customize.



Things I learned after buying

Shout out to the UK Tesla owners group for their [100 things you never knew about Tesla](#) post that focused on the model S and X, but also helped me discover some things that also work on the M3. This [Things a Tesla Newbie needs to know](#) page may also be of interest as you seek knowledge in your journey.

1. I was presented with a 30 day Autopilot/Full Self Drive trial after purchase. It was a great way to confirm that I made the right choice to hold off on these bonus features (for now).
 - a. 2020 update - auto pilot in the new Performance is handy on the Highway, but summon, parking and other in town use is of novelty value only (in my opinion).
2. There are ['rules' on super charger use](#) to help everyone have the best experience. In short, pick a stall that has a different number than the others that are in use. And if all numbers are taken, pick the same number of someone that looks like they are getting ready to head out; they are likely at the slow end of their charge anyway. If you share a number, there's a good chance that your charging speed (and the other person on the same number) will be cut in half.
3. You can track your Super Charger usage and bills on a 'History' menu on your account page of the Tesla site. It took a few days after my first usage before the History menu appeared for me.

4. Pull the left stick toward you to flash your lights (and wave Hi to other Tesla friends on the road)
5. Computer Reboot - After software updates, or if something weird happens on the screen press on the brake pedal, and press and hold both steering wheel buttons in until the screen goes black. For me, I once had the Sentry red eye get stuck on the screen, and this fixed it. You'll still be able to drive (gas/brakes/steering) while the computer is rebooting, but you won't have the speedometer, and turn signals/wipers may not work.
6. Tow hook is in the frunk floor.
7. Releasing the charger cord while charging –
 - Option 1) when using the J1772 adapter you can press the thumb button on the charger cord to release the lock. You'll know you're unlocked when the Tesla logo turns white. If it does not turn white, you may first need to wake the car. The fastest way to do this is by pressing the trunk open button above the rear license plate.
 - Option 2) From the screen select the lightning bolt 'charging' page, and there should be an unlock icon on the picture of the car where the charging port is located.
 - Option 3) If it's really stuck, there is a manual release cord in the top driver side part of the trunk by the charge port.
 - Experience Note: Don't yank too hard or you may pull off the rubber tip on the cable.
8. Quick navigate to home shortcut – swipe the navigate logo on the map down to go home, or to the right to go to work.
9. Get connected with other users – search for facebook groups with 'Tesla' and your home city. Look for groups in your local town and your pickup/dealer city if they are not the same.
10. When going on a long trip that requires multiple supercharger stops, attempt to arrive at the next charger with 15-20% charge left. Then only charge enough to arrive at the next supercharger with 15-20% left. The super chargers work faster the more empty the battery is. Then they slow as the battery fills. There is a great free app called A Better Route planner that lets you define your trip and charge times using these types of metrics. It also lets you enter in your average burn rate for that day's temps and HVAC usage so that it can adjust its formulas. Highly recommended. [Related TMC link](#), [ABRP Vendor page](#)

11. [Sentry Mode and TeslaCam](#) – these features record selected camera data to a card/drive you put into one of the front USB ports. You need to format the drive to be FAT32, and add a TeslaCam folder to the root directory. After inserting the card you should see a new icon on the top of the map screen with a red dot. At this point there's a rolling cache of video collected from the cameras when driving. Picking this icon will save the last 10 mins of video to a folder so it will not be overwritten. When sentry mode is enabled it records video when any motion is detected. Sentry mode content is not in a loop, it just goes until it fills up your drive. So you'll want to periodically clean up the videos to free up space. *(see the deal shopping section of this doc for links to the card/reader that are working for me)*
12. Easter eggs are now just games in the 'toybox' menu. The paint app is nice to jot down a phone number if you can't find a pen.
13. Hold - You can keep the car from creeping ahead, or rolling backwards when stopped by pressing firmly on the brake. The 'Drive' D will show 'hold' when it's engaged. If you go to the dragstrip you want this setting on so you can more easily stomp the accelerator when you see the third yellow light.
14. Road rash tip. On the 18" Aero rims road rash is almost an inevitability. [This touch up paint](#) is nearly an exact match and renders rash nearly invisible (a Dremel tool can be used to smooth particularly deep gouges) - *credit to Jeff on the Tesla Owners Omaha Facebook group for sharing this tip*
15. Nice apps for locating chargers in the midwest: [Plugshare](#), Chargepoint
16. Opening Charge port door - there are buttons on the touch screen on several screens, or you can just lightly press on the bottom back corner of the door/cover when the car is awake and it should open.
17. [List of voice commands](#)

Trading In your Tesla when it's time to get a new one

Fortunately I had a chance to sit with both my SR+ and the new Performance model for a bit of time. Here's what I learned from the experience. **Doing the Factory Reset DOES NOT clear out all of the personal settings.** So try these items in this order.

- 1) De-link spotify, netflix and any other app from your personal accounts. Although the Performance model I was purchasing had been factory reset, I was still able to see the prior owner's email in the Spotify App.
- 2) Explicitly remove any addresses you have navigated to. At a minimum, be sure to de link your home and work addresses. Your map search history is not cleared on a reset.
- 3) Once the above items are cleared, then you can do the reset.

Note that until there's a new owner listed, you'll likely be able to see your old car in the Tesla App. So if you just bought a used Tesla, know that the prior owner may be able to track you until you get the car switched to your account.

Things I still want to learn

- Being a former Nissan Leaf owner, I really enjoyed the LeafSpy app. I've not found a similar (low cost) app for the Tesla, but plan to try out the TeslaFi(monthly fee), and Stats(iOS only) apps.
 - March 2022 update - still looking for a no charge app. Tesla has restricted their API's making it tough for developers to make an official app.
- Lots of Tesla folk are having a new form of long term wax like protection added to their cars after delivery. These new ceramic coatings are usually done by professional detailers for hundreds. *I bought the [CarPro Cquartz 30ml](#) from Amazon and took a weekend to do it myself a couple weeks after buying the car. I found that clay barring a new car added more scratches that it removed, so I skipped this after testing on a small area. But I did use a Meguires polish before applying the ceramic coating. So far I'm happy with the results. It makes regular washing easier. August 2019 update - it's still beading in the rainstorms, and washing is much easier. May 2020 update - it was still in great shape when I traded it in. Having lasted a year, it was a worthy DIY project.*
- I've ordered a couple DIY Qi Phone charging boards to test out [similar to this article](#).
June 2019 update - the front charge port did not have enough amperage to power this dual coil unit - <https://www.ebay.com/itm/292796151874>, but it is working fine with this single coil unit - <https://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItemVersion&item=292973691669&view=all&tid=1669312142019> . I just zip tied the board to the plastic under the rubber and set the rubber mat on top. Double stick tape may also work. It is a bit sensitive to the phone location, but works as a cheap solution until I find a cheaper fit for purpose item. Here's a \$33 unit that I'll be watching the reviews on - https://slickdeals.net/f/13118290-tesla-model-3-dual-qi-center-console-wireless-phone-charger-dock-with-usb-splitter-32-99-free-shipping?attrsrc=Test%3AHideExpiredSearch%3AHide%20Expired&src=SiteSearchV2_SearchBarV2Algo1
 - May 2020 update - I'm not going to reinstall the DIY solution in my new vehicle. It was too lumpy and sensitive on the phone position.

Thanks for taking the time to read through my guide. Be sure to [offer feedback and ideas on this post](#) so that I can continue enhancing this article. Decide to buy PM me (krusen) on [Tesla Motor Club](#) and share your experience.

Thanks,
Scott