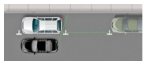
Rearview cameras are beginning to do more than just give a driver eyes in the back of his head. In the most basic form of the technology, a digital camera mounted in the rear captures what's behind a vehicle when it's in reverse and displays the image on the navigation screen.

After being introduced in the late 1990s, the technology has become one of the most popular options with consumers, said Mike Marshall, senior director of automotive product quality research at J.D. Power and Associates. In a J.D. Power survey of emerging technologies, released in June, rearview camera systems ranked No. 5 in consumer interest.



In 2012, Delphi Automotive hopes to begin selling a system that uses cameras to help drivers parallel-park large vehicles. The system, called Parking Guidance, gives drivers step-by-step instructions about where and when to turn the steering wheel to fit into a parallel-parking spot, said Mike Thoeny, global engineering director of electronic controls in Delphi's electronics and safety division.

The system uses an onboard computer to measure angles and distances of a parking spot deduced from images relayed from a digital camera. The computer processes the data into instructions instructing the driver when and how much to turn the steering wheel to make it into the spot.

Other systems on the market automatically park the car, with the driver not touching the steering wheel. But there are issues of cost and consumer acceptance.