

All-Wheel Drive

vs.

Four-Wheel Drive

Offered as either a part- or full-time system, AWD operates automatically and cannot be engaged or disengaged by the driver.

The majority of AWD systems are available on front-wheel-drive (FWD) vehicles, though there are exceptions (such as the 2020 Ford Explorer). As such, most vehicles with part-time AWD default to FWD when the AWD system isn't in operation.

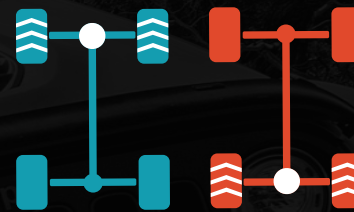
AWD almost always employs a single-speed differential without high or low settings. When activated, some engine power is distributed to the rear wheels in low-traction situations. Some systems such as Acura's Super Handling All-Wheel Drive (SH-AWD) can also deliver more power to either of the rear wheels in an effort to enhance vehicle handling.

AWD is typically featured on passenger vehicles, crossover SUVs, and light-duty pickup trucks like the Honda Ridgeline.

Part-Time / Full-Time



FWD/RWD



Power Distribution



Vehicle Types



4WD is available in part- and full-time configurations. Like full-time AWD, full-time 4WD is always on and cannot be turned off by the driver. Part-time 4WD is controlled by the driver either electronically or, in the case of vehicles like the Jeep Wrangler, by using a floor-mounted shifter.

4WD systems are almost exclusively available on rear-wheel-drive (RWD) vehicles (the FWD Jeep Compass being an exception to the rule). When part-time 4WD is not in use, these vehicles default to sending power to the rear wheels.

All part-time 4WD systems have a transfer case with hi- and low-range settings. Low-range settings will deliver significantly more torque for tough situations. Some also have an automatic setting that allows the vehicle's computer to decide which wheels will get power from the engine, effectively mimicking an AWD system. Certain full-time 4WD systems feature an available locking differential that distributes power equally between the front and rear wheels.

Full-time 4WD is featured on a variety of mid- and full-size SUVs, while part-time 4WD is typically reserved for pickup trucks and off-road oriented vehicles.