

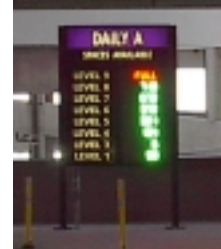
Headache-Free Airport Parking

Driving around in circles will never be the same.

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Ever since I got my very own parking genie at the airport, there's one less thing to worry about when I fly. No more circling the lot, panicked about missing my flight. I pull into the garage and get my wish every time: the best available space.

Baltimore-Washington International is one of two U.S. airports that have installed an electronic guidance system called **Signal-Park** (the other is in Jacksonville, Florida). It's almost magical in its convenience. As you enter the massive garage, a big display tells how many spaces are unoccupied on each level. Once you pick a level, more signs indicate availability in each aisle. It gets better. Each space has an easy-to-spot overhead sensor that's roughly the size of a clock radio. A bright red LED display indicates an occupied space; green beckons you to a free spot.

There is no learning curve. You simply follow the signs and park. BWI has wired 4,900 spaces since 2001, with another 8,000 promised in 2004. By next summer, passengers may be able to reserve spaces in advance. LED displays would turn red over reserved spaces. One potential glitch: how to prevent desperate drivers from nabbing a red space anyway.

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