



## Car Buying Tips

What You Need to Know to Save Money

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## Reasons for Buying a Car

Before you start shopping for a car, you'll need to do some homework. Spending time now may save you serious money later. Think about your driving habits, your needs, and your budget. You can learn about car models, options, and prices by reading newspaper ads, both display and classified.

There is a wealth of information about both new used cars on the Internet. You'll find additional information on how to buy a car, detailed instructions for conducting a pre-purchase inspection, and ads for cars available for sale, among other information.

Libraries and bookstores also have publications that compare car models, options, and costs, and offer information about frequency-of-repair records, safety tests, and mileage. Many of these publications have details on the do's and don'ts of buying a used car.

Besides the obvious reason, that being transportation, just like water a car is now considered a necessity in most urban areas. One of the reasons to consider when buying a car is if the vehicle being purchased is a good deal. Is it in good condition? How long a life does it have left? Is it an excellent ride? Does it have a great warranty, etc.

As we said, it's virtually impossible to get along without a car and if you can't afford a new car, following are some basic reasons you should consider when making that all important car purchase.



### ***Is it a good buy?***

The best time period to buy a car is later in the month. Usually, there are numerous rebate programs and bonuses offered by month's end based on a dealer's monthly sales quotas. The idea is, sometimes dealers fall short of meeting their sales objectives if their performance is assessed by the end of the month. This happens more often than not. The result of this is good news to most car buyers. Since dealers are more desperate to meet their quotas, they now have no choice but to sell the vehicle at a lesser than normal price just to make the sales they need to meet their goals.

### ***Peace of mind***

Sometimes dealers will do a "dog and pony show" just for them to make that sale. The result is that car buyers then end up with features that they realize later on they do not really need with a price they actually could not afford. The moral? Don't buy more than you absolutely need. Avoid unnecessary stress and/or sleepless nights.

Always remember to trust your instincts. If ever you feel in doubt, the answer to that is don't -- do not let yourself be pressured into making that purchase now. This is the common strategy of car dealers where they would compel the customer to buy that car, now, this moment, today!



Do not forget that you can always sleep on it and then decide. This is a lot better than making your mind up now and forever holding your peace. If the car is gone the next day, there's probably a good reason why you shouldn't have had it in the first place.

### ***First Impression***

First impressions usually last. Though not always true, in buying cars, you can gather a great deal of information by just observing how car salespersons deal with you. Usually, these non-verbal signals are fairly correct enough to give you a good idea of what to expect from the salesperson and your car purchasing experience.

If at any time you feel that the person selling you the car is not trustworthy or you simply do not like him or her, always remember that you have the option to leave. And, time is precious, especially yours. So do not waste it. You are always free to politely walk away, anytime, anywhere, and in any way you like it. But if there are just a few car dealers in your area, you may want to linger for a few moments more and wait until the negotiations you have with your dealer breaks down and you simply have no option but to run off.

### ***The Invoice Price***

Another thing to consider when buying a car is the invoice price. Make



sure to ask that you see the invoice. If dealers are working their tails off against it, you have enough reason to believe that the car being offered is an unpleasant deal.

Usually, the price on the invoice is the cost the dealer paid the manufacturer for buying the car. This is before any rebates or incentives were included. Once this is known, only then will you have an idea as to how much the dealer could profit from each vehicle sold. Knowing this information could enable you to feel more confident in negotiating the price.

You may also run across this occasionally when purchasing a “used car.” This would occur primarily where you are buying a very late model used car with low mileage and still under the factory warranty.

### ***The Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price***

In layman’s terms, this is commonly called the sticker price. This is the price one usually sees in the window of the car that is being sold.

Never ever consider paying the amount stated on the sticker price. This amount is just the starting point to your negotiations with the dealer.

### ***Incentives***



There are instances when manufacturers provide the dealers with a little something extra, like money, rebates or a bonus because they were able to sell cars that are either overstocked or undersold. Make sure that before actually purchasing a car, you were able to know if that car you are buying has some dealer incentives attached to it. If so, take off that amount from the car's purchase price and have yourself a very good deal and hopefully, a very good car as well.

Remember most of our discussion on invoice pricing pertains to very late model cars. It was worth mentioning here in case you do run across the opportunity to purchase this type of "used car."



## **Where to Get Great Used Cars**

A franchised new car dealership is a reliable, if not the only, source for anyone who wants to buy a new car. But to those who prefer buying used or previously owned cars, there are plenty of options and sources one could choose from to be able to make that vehicle purchase the perfect one.

The following are some of the readily as well as easily available resources to consider when buying a used car.

### ***The Used Car Superstore***

Imagine it as the Wal-Mart of used cars. There have been numerous used car superstores that have mushroomed over the last five years. These superstores usually have a large inventory of used cars, and can number anywhere from 400 to 500 vehicles. The cars found in these stores more often than not are late models.

The vehicles found in these stores come from auctions that cater specially to car dealers. The good thing about buying from these used car superstores is that the warranty they provide are often equivalent to the warranty coverage provided by dealers who sell new cars. However, it is still best to compare.



### ***New Car Dealer***

The logic here is that since new car buyers usually trade in their old cars when they buy a new one, the collection that new car dealerships have are almost always extensive. So used car buyers have a wider range of vehicles to choose from. Also, new car dealerships provide better reconditioning to the used cars traded to them. They are also a more reliable source of used cars because their business is more established compared to other used car dealers. Be aware though that sometimes it would take a lot of negotiation on the price of the vehicle to be purchased. They may also attempt to make you buy more car than what you would actually need.

### ***Used Car Dealers***

There are usually hundreds of used car dealerships in every state. Sometimes, they are small operations that contain not more than fifteen cars in a lot.

Established used car dealers, can have as many as 100 cars or more on their lot. The great thing about buying from used car dealers is that the prices they offer are a lot less than new car dealerships. Also, it is fairly easier to negotiate with them. Not so good news though, the quality of these cars are usually less than the new ones of course. There also may be a smaller selection of makes and models.



## ***Private Owners***

The good thing about buying from private owners is that the prices that they offer are usually reasonable compared to dealers because this is in accordance with book values. You also get the opportunity to actually speak with the owner of the vehicle and witness for yourself how the car was or was not, cared for. A potential disadvantage of this scenario, however, is that it could be a bit inconvenient driving to the private owner's place especially if you are considering looking at eight different cars. Basically that would be eight different places, time and appointments.

Beware though private owners who have a stable of used cars to sell may actually be a dealer. Do not be afraid to ask if you could possibly see the title and registration. Start to get suspicious if you see it is only a few days old.

## ***Car Auctions***

The last decade has seen the development of public auctions for vehicles. Originally, auctions like these were reserved primarily for licensed car dealers. Now, even individuals have the opportunity to bid aggressively for used cars. The quality of these cars put up for auction, as well as the selections of vehicles, actually vary from one auction to another. There are those auctions that specialize in late



model vehicles while there are others which dedicate themselves to cheaper and less expensive vehicles. The good thing about buying used cars from auctions is that you can conveniently compare prices and cars because they are shown side by side with each other.

Also, the prices that they offer are most likely lower than dealerships. However, there is not much chance for you to thoroughly inspect the vehicle being auctioned off. And since you are buying from an auction, it is therefore understood that all sales are final. Any car purchased is automatically yours. Plus, the bidding frenzy could take a hold of anyone and there is a great possibility that you could pay way more than what a vehicle actually costs.

We will delve deeper into the subject of car auctions in an upcoming chapter.



## Tips about Financing

Before purchasing your dream car whether new or used, try to assess if the budget can really afford it.

Questions like:

- How will it be paid?
- Who will be helping to pay for it?
- What is the price limit of the car to be bought?
- How long will it take to pay off the car?

These should be considered even while planning to buy the car. The trend nowadays is that people buy the cars by cashing out the down payment, and the balance will be paid by installment. Others are just lucky enough to have saved the right amount of money that they are able to cash out the total cost of the car, which, by the way, seldom happens anymore. Never set aside the possibility of paying thousands of dollars when buying from a dealer or a specific car company, where in the end, they charge you more for the interest which takes years to pay off.

Once you have found a way to finance the car you have your eye on, then it's time to start shopping around. There are credit unions and even local banks that are willing to loan the needed amount to purchase the car with an Annual Percentage Rate of only 1.9 per cent. However, this may turn out to be a catch, since this will only be



happening on the first year. Without prior notice, these interest rates can increase which is a total inconvenience for those with just a fixed income every year.

It is a big plus if a buyer is a member of a credit union. Being a member could save you the trouble of spending a whole day in a lender's office because the processing of the loan could only take just a few minutes after filling out the necessary papers for the request. In a credit union, fifteen to twenty minutes is all that is needed to do the application. They could even loan up to \$25,000.00 within just an hour after signing the papers.

It can save you quite a bit of money by researching prior to making that loan for a car. Car dealers are really digging out most of the pennies in a buyer's pocket by issuing interest that is sometimes unreasonable. There are two things to consider when thinking of financing a new car:

First, what's the price you are willing to be spend? More often than not, asking yourself the question: How much of the car price do you intend to buy instead? Only do so if you know you can afford the car of your choice. Consider regular monthly expenditures. The monthly payment for the new car should not get in the way of paying the fixed expenses. If in case it does, by merely doing the math, then just consider an older car or one that may not be quite as "upscale." Just make sure that all is checked and examined to avoid hassle in the future.



Second, is it really important to change cars every two to four years? Consider cars offered on a lease, if so. Other dealers and car companies offer the leasing of a car for that amount of time, which you can return but no money will be refunded. However, there is an allotted amount of distance or mileage that should be covered during those years of lease, but this is negotiable. On the other hand, if a buyer is not interested in changing cars, it's best not to opt for the cars for lease.

It is safest to get a loan from a credit union or a financial institution instead of a local car salesman; they will definitely try to squeeze your bottom dollar. Get information from someone you can trust and is expert about financing a car, for they will be able to give you tips to benefit your own interests. Financing either a new or a second hand car is a lot of sweat, but the determination to get the best car at the best price can be considered a success.

This should be a win, win situation for anyone. After all it's your money that is at stake here. Do your research and it can be a beneficial decision on your part.



## **Key-Pointers When Buying a Second Hand Car**

Before you start shopping for a car, you'll need to do some homework. Spending time now may save you serious money later. Think about your driving habits, your needs, and your budget. You can learn about car models, options, and prices by reading newspaper ads, both display and classified. There is a wealth of information about used cars on the Internet: enter "used car" as the key words and you'll find additional information on how to buy a used car, detailed instructions for conducting a pre-purchase inspection, and ads for cars available for sale, among other information.

Libraries and book stores also have publications that compare car models, options, and costs, and offer information about frequency-of-repair records, safety tests, and mileage. Many of these publications have details on the do's and don'ts of buying a used car.

Buying a car from an individual or from a local car dealer is one tedious task if the objective is to purchase a second car that is still in good running condition. A buyer would never trade his hard-earned money with just a complete wasted used car. Whether new or used, when buying a car, it should be treated with the same importance and value.

There are things to take into consideration before buying the car and these are:



1. Educate yourself as a consumer
2. Prepare a list of your needs. Prioritize between the necessities and the wants.
3. Determine the budget and the kind of car that would best fit.
4. Make a selection by models and types. Narrowing them will be helpful.
5. Research both online and offline by dealers.
6. Know the value of the second hand car in the market.
7. Research the Vehicle Identification Numbers and history.
8. Take a mechanic when checking the car whether buying from a friend or a dealer.
9. Never shy away from asking questions.
10. If there's a gut feeling about it not being good, don't be afraid to walk away.

Bringing a mechanic along is always a good strategy. Make sure your mechanic inspects the total car, from the history down to its last screw. It should be parked on a level spot. You should make certain that it was driven for about an hour before the inspection. Always make it on a well lit surrounding and in broad daylight.

### ***How to inspect it thoroughly***

Checking the exterior.



Walk around to see if there is damage to the body. The corners of the car should be shaken and bounced up and down to see if the shock absorbers are still in good condition. Make sure that the wheel bearings do not make any sound when trying to pull the front tires by tugging them. Open the doors lift the hood and the trunk to see if all the rubber seals are still in place. This will also tell if there's anything loose around the hinges. Check for signs of repaint. There will be difference in the color because shops can never duplicate the original paint of the car. Ask someone to turn on all the lights outside of the car and look if all are working. Cars with only 30,000 miles of travel must still have its original tires. Beware if you find a car with only a few miles of travel but has new tires. When the test drive is done, check the discs of the brakes, this should still be clean and smooth. Check the windshield for cracks.

Checking the Interior.

Though it sounds odd, smell the inside of the car. Sniff under mats and the carpet. If it smells like mildew then it's a sign that there is a leak somewhere or that the car may have undergone flood damage. Switch on the air-conditioning to make sure that it really turns the whole inside of the car cold. Next, try the heater. Try out all lights inside as well and never forget to blow the horn. Also try all the seat adjustments. The upholstery should still be in good shape too. There is a lot more to check and here is where the mechanic can help the buyer.



Looking inside the trunk. Once more, smell the insides and check for any signs of leaks. Make sure that some basic car tools are still present for the new user.

Checking under the hood. Feel the wiring for any cracks or brittleness. Squeeze the hoses and the fan belt for any cuts and possible electrical tape patches. Do not take off the cap of the radiator until its cool enough. The greenish color indicates a good condition where the coolant is. Beware of stains and dirty-whitish color on the radiator. Again, let the rest be checked by the mechanic like the batteries.

Checking under the car. Lie down if you must and use an emergency light to see the engine underneath. Feel any signs of residue. Check the pipes and examine any possibility of heavy rusting.

Do the Test Drive. The owner or dealer should not stop a buyer from going over about twenty minutes of test drive. This is a special time to thoroughly look for any problems with the air-conditioning, heater, steering wheel, brakes, transmission, and most importantly, the comfort. Feel everything; it's okay to try it on a hump or a slight bumpy road to really experience the performance. Listen carefully to check any rattles. Have a pen and paper, flashlight, gloves, magnet, towel, blanket and even CD or tape when checking a car out.



## **5 Things You Should Know Before You Sign a Contract**

Security from any fraud and unscrupulous activities should be a serious concern for anyone who is into sales, lease, jobs, or any kind of services that entail certain provisional agreement and settlement.

Whether a party is a first time or an expert person, the industry and the services that go with it presents the concerned person with risks and challenges that you cannot underestimate. Every time that a person is engaged in a commercial transaction in the society, he or she is in danger of submitting their selves to probabilities of fraudulent activities.

That is why contracts were made to ensure the security of both parties involved.

Generally, contracts are created to provide solid information about the agreement that transpired between two or more parties and that any details stated therein are bounded by certain laws and regulations. Hence, it is extremely important for a person to know the important details of the contract before he or she signs and submits to the pact.

Here is a list of some of the things people should know before they sign a contract. Knowing these will surely protect them from any discrepancies or any fraudulent activities that may happen.



1. Be aware that a contract is a legal document, bound by legal provisions and stipulations.

As defined, it is a “legally binding,” printed arrangement signed by two or more factions or groups, which entails their commitment to each other.

With the term legal, this means that any provisions stated therein are bounded by law, in which, any act, made by a particular party or all of the parties concerned, that constitutes as non-conformity to the details of the agreement will be held liable with the law.

This means that anybody could be imprisoned or held in custody with the law unless other wise the concerned party is proven not guilty.

Hence, it is important to be meticulous about the details of the contract before signing it to avoid any potential risk.

2. Make sure that you are dealing with trustworthy and reliable companies

It is extremely important to know first who the concerned person is dealing with. Therefore, it would be better if an individual or a party would try to do some investigations and background checks first before they sign the contract.

If in the event that a person or a party is in doubt, it is best to follow



their instincts and forego the signing of the contract.

### 3. Know the fine print

The problem with most people is that they assume every detail as part and partial of the whole agreement, thinking that everything will be stated as agreed verbally, and that there will be no harm if they will not read thoroughly the fine print.

This should not be the case; otherwise, they can get into trouble with the parties involved or with the law.

People should bear in mind, that the law fully assumes that any person or entity that has agreed to sign in a contract has fully understand the details stipulated therein. Hence, there is no excuse for any party who claims that they had missed certain details in the contract.

### 4. Make sure that all of the details about the contract are fully stated.

This means that all information pertinent to the agreement should be stipulated clearly and completely. For example, for service contracts, be sure that the beginning date and ending date of the service is clearly stated.

### 5. Make certain that there are no blank spaces in the contract

Before signing a contract, concerned parties should try to inspect the



document meticulously and ensure that there are no blank spaces present. This may pose greater risks if left unattended, especially if their signatures are already affixed on the contract.

All of these things are boiled down to the fact that people should be very careful about transactions, deals, or agreements that they commit to. It is relatively important to be aware and knowledgeable of the details of the contract before signing it.

You may have heard that ignorance of the law is not an excuse. This is true, therefore, it is better to be fully aware of it than to be in trouble with the law in the end.



## **Dealership scams out there**

Are you thinking of buying a car but hesitant to approach your local car dealer because you are not sure about the processes of buying a car as well as wary of possible dealership scams? Do you feel that your knowledge about cars and getting great deals is not good enough and you want to learn more about this matter? Then this chapter will enhance your understanding about dealership scams.

### ***The car dealer and his trade***

To have a proper understanding of car dealership scams, you must first have an idea of the car dealers themselves and how they go about their trade selling cars. First of all, the car dealer will try and avoid giving you a price quote. This is because the tendency of the buyer would be to go to another dealer and the other one will probably offer a lower price thus, the first dealer loses the buyer to the second dealer.

To increase their chances of getting you to buy their car, they will try to make you commit to them before they give you the final selling price. On your part, you can do two things: maneuver the dealer into telling you the price quotation or negotiate the terms of the deal with them. If you decided to negotiate with the dealer then be always on the lookout for the following tricks:



### ***Low balling***

This is one of the tricks most commonly done by dealers. They will try to convince the buyer that they can provide the lowest possible price for the car thereby prompting the buyer to start negotiations with the dealer. The salesman will probably tell you that you can get the car that you want for a lesser amount but when you are about to enter negotiations, it turns out that you were not promised a lower price after all. It is just an empty promise.

### ***Best price matching***

When you tell the dealer that you will try to look around and check other car dealerships, the salesman will ask you to return when you get the best possible price and he will offer to match it. By this time, you will probably be too tired and sick of looking around. Chances are that you will take their offer.

### ***Trade in scam***

When you have already bought the car, the salesman will try to contact you before your new car is delivered and tell you that the initial pricing of the car was \$500 lower and would like to collect the balance from you. If you fall for this, he will get an extra \$500 at your expense.



### ***Spraying***

What the dealer will do is to pursue you relentlessly until you give up and buy the car. On the other hand, if you decided to buy from another dealer, he will call you and tell you that he could have given you a lower price thus making you upset. To avoid this, you should not hand out your contact number. Some people even give wrong contact numbers just to evade very irritating car dealers.

### ***Puppy dog trick***

The dealer will allow you to take the car for an overnight or for a whole day, his aim is for you to fall for the car and buy it. This falls in line with the "Yoyo scam in the next chapter.

### ***Immediate sale***

The dealer will give you a very attractive price but he will also make you believe that this deal can only be made until the end of the day. This will cause you to think too much and in the end, make the mistake of buying the car without checking what other car dealers have to offer.



### ***Extra accessories***

The dealer will offer to give you extras like: car mats, window tinting, and other accessories. This aims to stop you from asking for a lower price because of the perceived "extras" that you will be receiving from the dealer. It will slow down the price negotiations and divert your attention away from the price.

All of us want the best deal available and we abhor the notion that someone will take advantage of us through modis operandi like car dealership scams. So before going to the local car dealer, you better have a good idea of what he will be talking about. As they say, only a fool will go to battle unprepared and with no weapons. Your weapon will be knowledge, always remember that.



## **Auto Financing Scams**

Car dealers are often portrayed as predators just waiting for an unsuspecting customer to come along. This is because many people believe that they are always on the prowl for unsuspecting buyers that are not very knowledgeable about cars. This can be unfair because we can argue that there are car dealers out there who would not cheat just to get an extra profit.

How do you tell the difference?

To avoid becoming a victim of sneaky car dealers, look at the following auto financing scams.

### ***Yoyo scam***

You will be allowed by the dealer to bring the car home as soon as possible. The dealer will take care of the financing, a few days later he will contact you again and tell you that there was a problem with your financing plan. He will tell you to set up a new financing scheme through him which, of course, will be at a higher cost and this will also entail a very high profit on the dealer's part.

Be wary of this trick and avoid it at all costs if you detect it. If you have a bad credit standing, don't have your financing done by the dealer and make arrangements for your own financing. If you ever do



avail of the dealer's financing, you should never drive the car back to your home immediately. Wait for at least 24 hours just to make sure that the processing of your financing scheme has been completed already. By allowing 1 whole day to pass by, you are assured that the dealer cannot use this scam on you.

### ***Window etching trick***

Window etching is a very common scam. What the dealer will do is to offer to etch the VIN number of your car onto the window of the car for a price. Basically, the price ranges from as low as \$300 to as high as \$1,000. Some buyers think that they did a good job by being able to talk down the price to a few hundred dollars, but unfortunately for them, a few hundred dollars is still a good amount of money. The best way to avoid this kind of scam is for you to buy an etching kit that you can do on your own. This is available in most auto shops and costs around \$20. See how much they profit from you!

### ***Preparation fees***

For preparing your car, the dealer will often add an additional preparation fee to your bill. Just to conduct a test drive, replace fuses, or take the car's plastic cover off can have your bill increasing by at least \$500! If you visit other shops, you can get the information that these add on costs are already included in the MSRP as set by the manufacturer. Some dealers automatically add it to the buyer's order



to make it look mandatory. To take care of this scam, you can ask the dealer to classify it as credit (it should be identical to the amount of the preparation fee) on the following line. If the dealer does not agree to this, you can just simply walk away from the dealership.

### ***Market adjustment***

The dealer will convince you that the vehicle you want is selling like hot cakes and very popular. In order to sell you the vehicle, they will do some "market adjustments" amounting to a few thousand dollars. This is usually indicated by a tag near the MSRP tag set by the manufacturer. Even if the car you want is very popular and is very much in demand, if it is in stock you should not be tempted because getting a "popular" car is not worth it if you have to pay a few thousand dollars more. You should never pay more than the MSRP set by the manufacturers. If you do, then you are allowing others to take advantage of you.

### ***Warranty extension***

Although this type of scam is old already, it is still being used and there are many who fall for this trick. What happens in this kind of scam is that when you make a loan for the car, the dealer will tell you that you are required to purchase an extended warranty because it is one of the conditions of the bank. There is a simple way of avoiding this scam. Ask the dealer to specify clearly in writing that the extended



warranty is required for the loan to be approved. The dealer will most probably find a way to have it excluded. If he persists in including the extended warranty, do not do business with this guy and go to other dealerships.

These are some of the most common auto financing scams that are utilized by some car dealers. Always keep these in mind if you are going to buy a car. If you or a friend were treated fairly by a dealer in the past, consider using the same dealership again. It's a good indication that they do care about their customers and aren't just looking for a "fast buck."

Think very carefully and do not buy on impulse. Good luck to you and go get that car!



## **Test driving tips**

Are you thinking of getting a car? Are you searching for tips on what to check and look for when considering buying a car? It is of utmost importance to have a thorough knowledge of the car that you are going to acquire. This will ensure your enjoyment and contentment for years to come.

### ***The proper mindset***

First of all, you must keep in mind that test driving a car is not a simple procedure. It will determine the claimed performance of the car you want by the dealer and contrast it with the performance in real conditions. This is the time wherein you can see if the car that you have always wanted measures up with your ideals and standards.

### ***Prepare a checklist of criteria***

It is important to make a checklist of criteria by which you will be able to judge a car's performance without having any problems regarding objectivity. It will help you see the car's advantages and disadvantages without the influence of other factors that are not as important. This will also enable you to conduct the test drive faster since you already have a set list of the things that you are looking for in a car.



### ***Explore other weather conditions***

You should consider test driving a car in inclement weather conditions to have a better feel of the car's overall performance regardless of the type of weather it will be used in. It is good to know the car's feel when driving in rainy conditions or at night. If the dealer requires that a representative accompany you on the test drive, let the person know what you are planning to do and what route you will be taking.

### ***Drive in different kinds of terrain***

When test driving a car, outline a route that will take you to different kinds of terrain like bumpy roads and steep hills. When checking a car's turning capabilities and braking power, consider doing it in a side street that has very little traffic. If you are going to evaluate the car's acceleration and speed, then taking it to the open highway or the interstate is a good idea. You should also do a lot of driving on the types of roads that you encounter in everyday driving like your route from work going to your house or vice-versa.

### ***Inside the car***

When you are inside the car and behind the wheel, some of the things that you should check are the following:



Look to see if the gauges are working properly and are easy to read. Make certain you can easily see beyond the steering wheel and it does not in any way obstruct your view.

### ***On the dashboard***

After checking the gauges and steering wheel, the next thing to look at is the dashboard. Check that all the dashboard controls are within easy reach and you do not need to significantly move out of a comfortable driving position. Search for any extensions on the dashboard that may potentially cause injury to the driver or passenger during sudden stops or when surging forward.

### ***Visibility***

Check that windshield wipers are working properly. Use the squirting mechanism that applies the wiper fluid onto the windshield and find areas that may not be reached by it. This is critical since it may affect your night time driving and when driving during bad weather conditions. Does the car have a tint? If the tint is too thick, it will impair night visibility and cause you to have a hard time driving at night. There are also laws that prevent the windshield from being tinted. Check the rules and regulations in your state to determine if that applies.



### ***On the road***

While driving, check for blind spots by looking closely at the side mirrors as well as the rear view mirror. Evaluate the performance of the car's suspension by checking if it offers a comfortable ride and you feel that you are in control at all times. Look for a parking lot without too much vehicles and conduct a few sharp turns as well as a U-turn. Does the suspension work well or does the car wobble too much?

### ***Steering performance***

Observe that the car has a responsive steering mechanism. A little turn of the steering wheel should be enough for the car to respond efficiently. The steering should be balanced enough so as to have enough power for easy steering and at the same time it should correctly render the feel of the road to the driver.

These are some of the things to consider when taking a car for a road test. Remember to put a car's performance first in your priority before its other aspects.



## **Guidelines in buying cars online**

The Web is a hassle free place to shop for cars. There are many advantages to shopping cars online. First, it greatly reduces the hassle of dealing with car dealers and salesmen. When buying a car online, you don't have to listen to a dealer talk about the specs of a car. You just have to read all about it in a website. You don't have to go to a showroom, you just have to point and click your mouse and you could browse through different make and models of cars. And if you want to take a second look at a car it's very easy.

The advantage of shopping for a car online is that all transactions can be done without you having to go out of your home. After ordering the car you want and paying the price, all you have to do is to wait for your brand new vehicle to be delivered to the nearest dealer. Some dealers would even deliver the car right at your doorstep (or garage for that matter).

There are basically two types of online car shopping websites. One will only get you in touch with a real car seller. This means you have to transact the traditional way. Then there are websites that will take care of everything. Some websites would even deliver the car at your doorstep. Of course this would entail a bigger amount of service fee. And deliveries are made only to nearby areas.

But before you click and buy, you must first know exactly what kind of



car you want. Determine the types of car you're looking for and the price you are willing to pay for that car.

Below are some other tips on how to buy a car online.

1. The most important thing to do is to research. Don't get too excited. Check on the different packages available.
2. Make sure that the Website you go to is secure and reliable. Most sites would let you browse by car type, by price range or both.
3. If you don't want to make all transactions online then you could ask the dealer to meet you in person once you found him on the Internet. Upon meeting the dealer, negotiate with him as you would a normal car dealer and then sign the papers.
4. It's not necessary to pin the model, year and make of the car you want to buy. Just a general picture would do. Determine how you will be using your new car and the reason why you are buying a car in the first place. Ask yourself what features are important to you Do you give more importance to fuel efficiency rather than speed or vice versa? Are you more concerned about safety features than a good sound system? After you've done all these, it's time to determine your budget. Just how much are you willing to spend for a vehicle?
5. Once you have decided on a brand and model car it would be prudent to check on the history of the particular car manufacturer. You



can easily do this by consulting consumer magazines and websites. You could also check out the website of the car's manufacturer (e.g. Ford, Toyota, BMW, etc.)

6. If you cannot afford new models, remember some of our previous discussion. There are websites that sell used cars. Popular search engines usually have an automotive section so this is a good place to shop. If you don't find one here you can try searching using the search string "used car."

7. Check the background of the website of the online car dealer by clicking on the "about us" section of the site. It is advisable to buy only from websites which have detailed information about the vehicles they are selling. Ask if they have conducted inspections of each car in their lot through independent mechanics. If they have, then you'll know that that website is a good place to shop for cars. Most manufacturers' Websites have detailed information on models, including available options, photos and MSRP (Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price).

8. Read reviews about the different make, model and year of cars. A good website must also have reviews and ratings for the cars they are selling. But you should also cross check by visiting independent car sites or sites that do not sell cars or are connected to car companies to get a more objective review.



## **Do not buy a flood damaged car**

Do not buy flood damaged cars. There are many flood damaged cars being sold on the market. Usually, flood damaged cars, SUVs and trucks are placed in salvage yards.

Some though, are made spick and span and put into the car market and they will be up for sale. But the problem is, there really are no tell tale signs of flood damage that would give them away. This is because the car will be restored so they would look almost like new.

The damage caused by the flood would be erased or covered. After the changes, the cars will then be sold to unsuspecting buyers who think they are getting a good bargain.

Fact is flood damaged cars are being moved by unscrupulous merchants. Consumers can and should protect themselves against being taken advantage of in the auto market. Luckily, there are several things consumers can do to protect themselves from buying flood damaged cars.

The best things a consumer can do to be sure if a car is flood damaged or not is to get the history of the vehicle. You can do this by submitting the vehicle identification number (VIN) of a car to a website which provides vehicle history information. What these websites do is search a nationwide database of car information then gathers research on the car's title, maintenance record, registration, and odometer. You



will instantaneously know if the vehicle has been stolen, has had a troubled past, or has had its odometer rolled back through the report that the website will return. Just a little research on a car's history will reveal if it has been salvaged, flooded, rebuilt, or is basically a "lemon."

Prospective car buyers should be aware of flood damaged vehicles being sold on the car market. Why shouldn't you buy flood damaged cars? Well simply because water leaves a lasting damage. Even if the devices and machines requiring electricity will restore it, it will probably fail sooner or later because mold and mildew aren't easy to remove. And when a car is flood damaged any warranty warrant is voided.

Some of these tips are covered elsewhere but they can't be emphasized enough, especially with regard to a flood damaged car. Below are several things you can do to check if a car is flood damaged:

### ***Check for moisture and dirt***

Flood damaged cars usually have moisture trapped and dirt inside the lights. Dampness can also be seen inside the compartment with gloves, console and trunk so you better inspect these spots. Dirt, which can also be a sign of flood damage, can also accumulate under the hood. Moisture can also accumulate under the seat. Of course, rust



is another telltale sign of flood damage.

### ***Smell the car***

Mildew can be easily detected by smelling. Mildew often forms on soaked fabrics so sharpen your sense of smell when you're on the lookout for a new vehicle. Also try to detect other smells that could be caused by flood damage like spilled oil or fuel.

### ***Check if components match***

Mismatched component could mean that the component are changed hurriedly after the car has been salvaged from a flood. So try to see if the carpet, seats and stereo components looks too new for the car.

Also try to check if the car has been titled several times from different states, which is usually a hint that its owners are trying to erase the questionable and negative history of the car by looking for spots where disclosing defects is not required or is easily evaded. Cars that are titled several times are usually salvaged or totaled.

### ***Test drive***

Of course the best way to check the performance of a car is to take it for a test drive. Check the electrical system including all the lights and



the sound system.

### ***Ask an expert***

Have an expert mechanic or technician check the car. Have a second opinion if you may. Expert mechanics and car technician can detect flood damaged cars easily than ordinary people.

Remember that in buying a vehicle, never ever take a chance. Buying a damaged vehicle can cost you more than your money. It could also bring serious accident even death. If you suspect that someone is selling you a car that has been flood damaged immediately say no then walk away. The dough you will save in buying a flood damaged car will quickly replace the headache it will bring.



## Things to Avoid When Buying Used Cars

Nowadays, life can be pretty tough with regard to money. Everything is increasing with prices escalating to ridiculous highs. Along with high costs it's no wonder why there are more scams, swindles and fraudulent activities. People want to know they can get a good "bargain" that makes them vulnerable to those who are looking to make a fast buck!

With all these swindlers and scammers lurking about, it is best to always be on guard and know the things to be avoided in order to prevent the probability of being a victim of frauds and swindles.

Consequently, people who are buying used cars should also be aware of the different fraudulent activities being employed by unscrupulous people in order to have the best buy on used cars.

Moreover, people who are aware that the car they bought is stolen, chances are, they will be detained and will be legally held liable.

Here are some things to avoid when buying used cars:

1. Used car buyers should avoid any transactions that are "too good to be true." This will only make the matter worse if the buyer will believe that the deal is the best-used car deal ever.



2. Buyers should avoid buying used cars from sellers who do not provide a permanent address or the actual place of work of the phone number given.

3. It is important for a buyer to check the VIN or the vehicle identification number plate. It must be securely fastened onto the used car's dashboard, with no rivets that are loosened.

Loosened rivets would mean that the VIN plate does not fit or it has been previously removed.

4. Also, the buyer should avoid buying used cars that have VIN plates that are touched up, paint is newly retouched, and the numbers look as if they are not the original "factory numbers."

VIN plates can be easily swapped by a thief and use those that are taken from a destroyed vehicle.

5. As much as possible, it would be better to avoid buying a used car that is freshly painted. There are instances wherein the stolen car's identity is being changed through changing its paint color.

6. Used car buyers should avoid buying cars from a seller that cannot present the car's "insurance policy." This could mean that the car is stolen or the seller is not the true owner of the car.

It is extremely important for the buyers to take note of these things



before buying a used car. As they say, prevention is the best protection.



## **Car Auctions 101**

Car auctions are a good place to get good bargains on cars. But buying cars from auctions can be very complicated. This is particularly true for the uninitiated. Of course the cars in auctions are generally cheaper. But they are cheap because they lack the guarantees that come with cars bought from dealers. The rules in auctions are simple, you bid an item, you pay for it, and you own it.

It is therefore not advisable for persons without much experience in motor vehicles to just go to an auction and buy a car.

What you'll need if you're planning to buy a car in an auction is a good eye, good observation skills and a willingness to learn the car auction process.

You can even make it a business by buying cars at auction and then selling them at a profit. There are several people who have made huge profits by buying and selling cars at auction.

There are basically two kinds of car auctions, local car auctions and online car auctions. Each of the auctions work differently. Each has a different set of rules so you must study them very carefully if you are planning to buy a car from either kind of auction.

If you want to buy a vehicle in a car auction you must first pre-register



with the local auction you want to join. The pre-registration process won't take much of your time and will provide you all the essential information that you will need in order to buy a car. An auction site will often have an auction staff who will explain to you the rules of their auction site and the procedures and instruction on how to participate and bid on the cars.

It is wise to inspect the cars before the actual bidding begins. Ask the auction organizer or staff if they can allow you to take a closer look at the cars before the start of the actual auction. Another wise decision is to set your payment limit before the actual sale. This way, you won't fall victim to the trap of overbidding.

As in other auctions, it is very important that you signal your bids carefully to the car auctioneer to avoid confusion. Settle your transaction as soon as the auction ends. Look for the block clerk and settle your accounts with him. A car auction staff will usually be available to assist you when you are ready to pay for the vehicle you have won and should also be able to guarantee you a good title for the vehicle.

You must also check the vehicle after you have won and settled your account. Take the vehicle for a test drive and make sure that it conforms to the guarantee and representation made during the auction.

Most auction sites would accept check or credit card if you cannot pay



the car with cash. An auction staff will also usually give you a third party financing offer. It is advisable though to have your own finances ready before entering a car auction. Outside financing is usually cheaper than most in-house financing of auction sites.

Ask for an invoice copy from the auction staff. This will enable you to drive or ship your newly bought car to your location. Most car auction managers will give you good deals on shipping arrangements so inquire about this.

There really are no significant differences between a local auction and an online auction. Online car auctions work more or less the same way as local ones. The only disadvantage of online auction sites is that you won't be able to inspect the car as you would in an actual car auction. In participating in online car auctions make sure that you will be provided with all the necessary information about the car upfront and that there is an actual photograph of the vehicle.

Cars bought from an online auction are usually shipped to the buyer for a minimal fee. Inspect the car immediately upon arrival at your location to minimize risks.

You are now ready for your first car auction. Happy bidding!



## **Take the extra mile: Fuel efficiency tips**

Increases in the price of gas, accompany the increase in the number of fuel-saving scams.

Continuous increase in the price of gas is common news nowadays. This is accompanied by an upsurge in advertising exposures for “gas saving” gadgets. These products attract potential buyers searching for methods to maximize fuel efficiency.

There are important procedures car owners can take in consideration to improve gas mileage. According to the Better Business Bureau, the public should be critical in assessing products that claim gas saving features for vehicle devices or additives for gas and oil.

There are products that feature gas-saving features that really work. However, consumers could be facing a major engine trouble or a nullified creator’s warranty by putting devices to the engine.

Consumers should be wary of these specific advertising slogans: “20 percent fuel efficiency improvement”

A hundred or more devices that feature gas-saving qualities are proven untrue by the Environmental Protection Agency. Worse, there are so-called “gas-saving” devices that may cause a harmful effect to a vehicle’s engine.



Another side effect is more smoke emissions. Examples of these devices are Engine Modifiers, Additives, Fuel Line Gadgets, Liquid Injection, Vapor and Air Release Devices and a lot more.

“Get an additional 4 miles for each gallon with this product”

Consumer testimonials are common in fuel saving ads. Assuming these testimonials are not made up, few consumers test the fuel consumption of their vehicle before putting on the gadget. Therefore, an objective comparison of the fuel consumption before and after the product was added will not be attained.

“Federal Government Approved”

Keep in mind, a government agency never endorses fuel saving devices. Although EPA has assessed potential gas savings but first the product should be evaluated and tested.

The alternative in looking for gas-saving devices, the BBB suggests that the public should take into consideration doing more than one activity that can help conserve gas. The vital way to begin is to concentrate on the gas pump. The consumer should buy only gas as needed. Make sure to review the car manual to know the proper level of octane of the car.

The following are practical tips to conserve gas:



## Efficient driving

Just drive reasonably within the speed limit. Remember that speeds of more than 60 miles per hour increase fuel consumption.

Do not do sudden starts, accelerations and stops. Acceleration should be done gradually. The gas pedal should not be stepped on more than one fourth of the way down. This will allow the engine to function most efficiently. Gas conservation could reach up to 5 percent if sudden stops, jerks and accelerations are avoided.

Make use of gears for overdrive and cruise control as needed. Fuel efficiency is attained when moving on the highway.

Windows should be closed on highways. Windows that are open can create air drag that can decrease the fuel consumption by 10%.

Rough roads should not be taken as much as possible. Dirt, bumps, rough roads and gravels can cause 30% increase in fuel consumption.

Take out unnecessary baggage. The trunk should be kept clean, any gadget, tools or loads that are not needed should be taken out. 100 pounds of extra baggage can affect fuel economy by two percent.

The car should always be maintained. The engine should be given a regular tune up, the tires should always have the right air pressure



and efficiently aligned, the oil should be changed when needed and air filters replaced regularly. Clogged filters can affect gas consumption adversely by up to ten percent.

Turn off the engine whenever there is an opportunity. Idle engine wastes fuel. There are instances where the engine could be turned off; stopping for gas, waiting for someone, changing tire pressure, caught in traffic and a lot more.

Engine warm-up fuel conservation tips:

Lengthy warming up of the engine should be avoided. 30 to 45 seconds should be enough time.

Check if the automatic check is removed after warming up the engine. This is usually stuck which could usually cause poor gas and air combination.

Do not rev the engine. This is usually done before turning off the engine. This causes unnecessary fuel loss and also washes the oil within the cylinder walls. As an effect, there is air pressure loss and consequently fuel loss as well.



## **Read the warranty -- save some money**

When consumers buy a car, the seller or manufacturer pledges to vouch for the car. This is a warranty. Federal law enforces warranties to be always available to buyers. It should be made clear to the consumer even when they are just searching for what car to buy or if they are just browsing the internet.

Coverage differs. Therefore, warranties should be checked together with the design, value, quality and other car characteristics.

Warrantees and guarantees often confuse people that are trying to differentiate the two. These two words, although quite similar, have distinct differences in the area of home improvement.

First, the basic terminologies are somewhat different. Warranty is usually attributed to manufacturers while guarantees refer to the labor.

Warrantees are usually pro-rated. This means that the coverage agreements could change as time goes on. Guarantees from the labor sector mostly are inclusive.

Here are some examples:

1. Siding should have a warranty not to crack, sag or buckle.



2. The intensity of colors will not diminish for 3 points or more.
3. Warranties are transferable to different owners and then changed to 5 years.
4. Require registration.
5. Effects of stains brought about by chemicals or too much mildew due to need for cleaning is not under the warranty.

Warranties usually offer satisfactory coverage but are not one hundred percent.

What is the coverage of guarantee under one year labor?

Example, a product or service falters in just the first year. It will be changed or fixed without charge. To sum it up, if a high priced product is purchased, the coverage will be 100%. As product price decreases, so does the value of the coverage. It is not the manufacturer's fault that less coverage is given for cheap products.

Product information and warranty or guarantee inclusions should be thoroughly understood by the potential buyers before signing anything. Always be on the lookout for contractors that adhere to specific brands for a long time. Chances are they have valid reasons why they remain loyal.

Everyone is like a faithful contractor who looks for good service. These contractors are always on stand by to give service. Warranties and product quality concerns also keep good contractors on their toes. On



the other hand, bad contractors do not care at all for product quality and warranty. They are always scouting for the cheapest product on sale and totally disregarding the warranties and services that it could entail in the future.

What are written warranties?

Written warranties are not compulsory under the law but are commonly found in major purchases. Here are some tips to consider in looking for warranties.

- What is the amount of time provided by the warranty?

Always make sure to take note of the beginning and expiration of warranties and also the terms that may nullify it.

- Who is the person in charge of providing the warranty?

The coverage will be provided either by the manufacturer or seller so it should be made sure which of these two.

- What are the specific steps to be undertaken when there is a product failure?

Check if the company, provider or seller will fix the product, change it with a new one or give the money back.



- What are the parts and specific product failures covered by the warranty?

Buyers should thoroughly examine if there are product parts or kinds that are not part of the warranty coverage. Examples are warranties that ask for payment for work done during the repair process. Be wary of inclusions that could be potentially costly or inconvenient. An example of this is transporting a heavy or huge product to a factory for repair or the product should be given back with its original case intact.

- Are “consequential damages” covered by the warranty?

There are warranties that do not include damages affected by the product or based on the time and money spent in repairing the damages. An example of this is when a newly bought freezer bogs down and the food is spoiled. The seller or manufacturer is not compelled to pay for the food.

- What are the warranty limitations?

There are warranties that only give the warranty coverage if the status of the product is maintained as cited in the condition. Certain warranties specify products like washing machines to be used for home use only. If the washing machine is used in a commercial enterprise and breaks down, no warranty will be given.

Buyers should always read the warranty or guarantee terms before



purchasing any product if they want to make the most out of their hard earned money.



## **PAYMENT OPTIONS**

You have two choices: pay in full or finance over time. If you finance, the total cost of the car increases. That's because you're also paying for the cost of credit, which includes interest and other loan costs. You'll also have to consider how much you can put down, your monthly payment, the length of the loan, and the annual percentage rate (APR). Keep in mind that annual percentage rates usually are higher and loan periods generally are shorter on used cars than on new ones.

Dealers and lenders offer a variety of loan terms and payment schedules. Shop around, compare offers, and negotiate the best deal you can. Be cautious about advertisements offering financing to first-time buyers or people with bad credit. These offers often require a big down payment and a high APR.

If you agree to financing that carries a high APR, you may be taking a big risk. If you decide to sell the car before the loan expires, the amount you receive from the sale may be far less than the amount you need to pay off the loan. If the car is repossessed or declared a total loss because of an accident, you may be obligated to pay a considerable amount to repay the loan even after the proceeds from the sale of the car or the insurance payment have been deducted. If your budget is tight, you may want to consider paying cash for a less expensive car than you first had in mind.



If you decide to finance, make sure you understand the following aspects of the loan agreement before you sign any documents:

- the exact price you're paying for the vehicle;
- the amount you're financing;
- the finance charge (the dollar amount the credit will cost you);
- the APR (a measure of the cost of credit, expressed as a yearly rate);
- the number and amount of payments; and
- the total sales price (the sum of the monthly payments plus the down payment).



## Financing Your New Car

If you decide to finance your car, be aware that the financing obtained by the dealer, even if the dealer contacts lenders on your behalf, may not be the best deal you can get. Contact lenders directly. Compare the financing they offer you with the financing the dealer offers you. Because offers vary, shop around for the best deal, comparing the annual percentage rate (APR) and the length of the loan. When negotiating to finance a car, be wary of focusing only on the monthly payment. The total amount you will pay depends on the price of the car you negotiate, the APR, and the length of the loan.

Sometimes, dealers offer very low financing rates for specific cars or models, but may not be willing to negotiate on the price of these cars. To qualify for the special rates, you may be required to make a large down payment. With these conditions, you may find that it's sometimes more affordable to pay higher financing charges on a car that is lower in price or to buy a car that requires a smaller down payment.

Before you sign a contract to purchase or finance the car, consider the terms of the financing and evaluate whether it is affordable. Before you drive off the lot, be sure to have a copy of the contract that both you and the dealer have signed and be sure that all blanks are filled in.

Some dealers and lenders may ask you to buy credit insurance to pay off your loan if you should die or become disabled. Before you buy credit insurance, consider the cost, and whether it's worthwhile. Check



your existing policies to avoid duplicating benefits. Credit insurance is not required by federal law. If your dealer requires you to buy credit insurance for car financing, it must be included in the cost of credit. That is, it must be reflected in the APR. Your state Attorney General also may have requirements about credit insurance. Check with your state Insurance Commissioner or state consumer protection agency.



## Resources

Before you sign for dealership financing you should check out alternatives. Check with your bank or credit union. In addition, there are online auto financing options. The more options you have in your hand when you negotiate with a dealer, the better off you'll be.

Here are a few online auto financing options:

[FastLaneLoans.com](http://FastLaneLoans.com) zero-to-approval in 60 seconds! Regardless Of Past Credit!

[AutoFinance.com](http://AutoFinance.com) easy online auto financing or refinancing.

[iAutoGuide.com](http://iAutoGuide.com) In just one minute you could be on your way to financing the car you want with payments you can afford

Before you sign anything, be sure you got the best deal. Here are a few places you can find great prices on new and used vehicles:

[Yahoo! Autos](http://Yahoo! Autos). Get a Quote. Quick

[CarSmart](http://CarSmart) Search for a Pre-Owned Vehicle

[CarSmart](http://CarSmart) New Car Invoice Pricing

[CarPrices](http://CarPrices) Select the year, make, model and insert your zip code to get a free new car price quote from a local dealer.