

# Car Buying Strategies

## Tips for Negotiating the Best Deal

### Online

- Find out what your trade-in is worth
- Estimate a payment you are comfortable with
- Search by price or monthly payment
- Research safety, fuel economy, reliability
- Decide which add-ons you want
- Set your walk-away (target) price based on invoice price and options or average retail price
- Call a dealer using the toll-free number and ask the internet salesperson to meet with you

### At the Dealer

- Follow the "two-visit" rule – 1) make sure the vehicle and the terms are right, 2) finalize payment and take possession
- Do your homework and bring it with you – this will keep you from forgetting and will show the salesperson you are an informed buyer
- Negotiate your trade-in first – get it in writing
- Always negotiate using the invoice price (new) or 5% below the average retail price (used) as the base -- don't let the salesperson talk MSRP or sticker price
- Don't give a deposit until the offer is approved in writing
- Complete the back of this toolkit and show it to the salesperson in the finance office
- After you reach agreement, have the salesperson fill out the contract completely
- Compare the "amount due" to your ultimate target – stay within your budget
- Remember, you are in charge -- negotiate the very best deal you can!

## Decisions

I am a credit union member. Please arrange my financing through:

\_\_\_\_\_

- I understand that I will pay these fees:
- Destination Charge (new)
  - Sales Tax (if applicable)
  - License and registration fees
  - REASONABLE documentation fee
- I (want / don't want) an extended warranty
- I (want / don't want) Credit Life Insurance
- I (want / don't want) to lease this vehicle
- I (want / don't want) an add-on anti-theft device
- I (want / don't want) rust proofing or paint sealant
- I (want / don't want) fabric protection
- I (want / don't want) appearance protection package

Agreed upon value for my trade is:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

# *Pocket Buyer's Toolkit*

Buying a vehicle is an important and exciting event with many opportunities for success and for missteps. We have prepared this toolkit to help you make the most of your buying experience.

**Lender's  
Resource  
Group**

## Make/Model Selection Checklist

Evaluate the make/model, not the individual car. Tell the salesman you are cross-shopping models and not ready to buy a vehicle right now. Remain non-committal.

- Look at the car from every angle – anything bother you?
- Doors open easily and doorstops keep doors open?
- Hood open easily & stay open? Engine setup for easy servicing? Easy to check and add fluids?
- Easy to get in/out of driver's seat? Too high or too low?
- Enough headroom & legroom? How is visibility?
- Headrests feel natural? Sound system & environmental controls easy to find and use? Mirrors easy to adjust?
- Check out sound system, navigation, cruise control, etc?
- Lights turn off when engine stops? Interior lights handy?
- Places for your stuff (cell phone, change, cupholder, etc.)?
- Seatbelts easy to use? Can you see into backseat?
- Easy to get in/out of rear seat? Passenger legroom? Can a child seat be easily inserted/removed?
- Trunk/cargo area big enough for your stuff? If seats fold down is it a simple one-person job? Strength required?
- Simple to get to the spare tire?

### Test Drive:

- Engine start easily? Steering easy to lock/unlock?
- Easy to get out of lot? Turning radius small enough for U-turns and parallel parking?
- Enough acceleration for freeway merge & climbing hills? Power at low and high speeds?
- Automatic transmission shift smoothly & timely?
- Manual transmission shifting is smooth?
- High speed steering ok? Under/Oversteer on corners?
- Brakes smooth? Comfortable doing panic stop?
- Quiet when stopped, moving, accelerating? Wind noise?
- Ride too soft or too hard?
- Vibration at high speeds & rough roads?
- Engine idles smoothly at stops?
- Visibility good all directions?
- Instruments easily visible?

**TAKE NOTES! You will forget details about earlier cars unless you write things down.**

**Go on to the next test drive, you might like that car better. If you like more than one car, you will be in a better negotiating position when it comes time to buy.**

## Used Car Inspection Checklist I

Examine the car parked on level ground from a distance and from all angles in natural light:

- Droop to front or rear, looking from the side?
- Droop to either side, looking from the front or rear?
- All body panels exactly the same color?
- All body panels reflect light the same way?

### Take a look up close:

- Problems with the paint or body panels?
- While looking from a shallow angle down the sides of the car, hood, roof and trunk lid: Any ripples in the surface or obvious fender or door alignment problems?
- Uneven paint application, differences in paint surface texture, color shifts or overspray?
- Handles/latches work smoothly for hood, trunk, doors?
- Binding/squeaking when opening? Slamming required?
- Any rust or mud on the bottoms of the doors?
- All external lights and mirrors work?
- Windshield wipers good? Windshield washer works?

### Open the engine compartment:

- Free of oil and coolant leaks? All fluid levels okay?
- Engine oil clean? Dipstick free of varnish? Milky-white foam present?
- Coolant looks rusty, cloudy, dirty, or muddy?
- Power steering fluid burned or black, bubbly, leaking?
- Battery & terminal connections clean? Firmly mounted to battery tray? Electrolyte level correct?
- Belts have cracks or look glazed?
- Hoses brittle or spongy? Leak marks present?
- Signs of recent repair?

### Examine the interior:

- Mud or rust under seats or instrument panel?
- Severe wear of pedals, driver's seat, driver's armrest?
- Problem adjusting tilt-wheel or any seat?
- Problem operating seatbelt, hood latch, trunk release, cigarette lighter, clock, radio, accessories?

### Look in the trunk:

- Clean and dry? Moisture or rust under spare tire?
- Jack and tools present?
- Spare tire in good shape? Tire pressure okay?

### Check the tires:

- Tread evenly worn, tread depth sufficient?
- Pressure okay for each tire?

## Used Car Inspection Checklist II

Check warning lights and instruments with key in ignition but without engaging starter:

- All warning lights (service engine soon, ABS, oil pressure, battery, etc.) on?

### Check the engine with radio and fan off, motor cold:

- Engine starts quickly (<2-3 seconds of cranking)?
- Unusual noises while starting or idling?

### Check the transmission while leaving engine idling:

- Automatic: With foot on brake shift into gear. Any engagement delay in drive or reverse for any gear?
- Manual: Put foot on clutch and shift into each gear. Gears engage easily and shift pattern feels firm? Any unusual noises?

### Check brakes with car idling – automatic transmission in park or manual transmission in neutral:

- Press hard on brake pedal for one minute. Does the pedal soften or sink further during this time?

### Test drive:

- Does the car run well both cold and hot?
- At freeway speeds is there any vibration or overheating?
- Is acceleration smooth?
- Any vibration or roughness during gentle or rapid acceleration?
- Does the transmission shift smoothly?
- Does the car tend to pull to one side on a straight smooth road driving at about 45 mph?
- Does the car pull to one side or do you feel vibration when you make a quick stop? Any squealing?
- Any unusual noises as you drive (turn off radio)?

### Back at the lot with engine idling:

- Do all lights work (headlights, brake lights, each signal light, fog lights, part lights, etc.)?
- Do all accessories work (air conditioning, heater, sound system, power windows, power locks, etc.)?
- Has the engine temperature started to climb while you were checking lights and accessories?

**If the vehicle passes these tests, it's probably in pretty good shape – but not always. Have a professional take a look if you are serious about buying.**