

Kyle Busch is the author of Drive the Best for the Price: How to Buy a Used Automobile, Sport-Utility Vehicle, or Minivan and Save Money. In 1991, the book's author purchased a used 1986 vehicle for \$2,600 that a private owner had driven 82,000 miles. He has driven the vehicle for over nine years and the odometer has now logged over 292,000 miles. The vehicle continues to provide for his daily transportation needs.

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**Questions and Answers for Saving Money on Transportation**  
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**Adapted from "Drive the Best ..."**

With a soft economy and an uncertain stock market, more and more people are keeping an eye on spending and they are interested in getting more for their money. Kyle Busch has over a quarter-century of experience saving money on transportation. He answers ten commonly asked questions about purchasing vehicles and saving money.

(Q) Why does it make sense to consider buying used vehicles?

(A) Transportation is a depreciating asset that loses value, especially during the first three years of ownership. Buying a 2- to 3-year-old used vehicle will provide about a one-third reduction in the cost. Additionally, the initial owner will have "test driven" the vehicle for the second owner.

(Q) What is a common error than many people make when buying transportation?

(A) A common error when buying transportation involves buyers not thoroughly identifying their transportation needs and then purchasing a vehicle that does not entirely meet those needs. For example, a buyer might choose a mid-size family sedan that satisfies many of his or her needs. However, six months after the purchase, the buyer realizes that another vehicle in the same category provides a softer ride, better fuel economy, etc. and would have better satisfied his or her driving needs.

(Q) After identifying transportation needs, what should buyers do next?

(A) It is worthwhile to visit a local public library to research which vehicle(s) will indeed satisfy specific transportation needs and then identify those that have good reliability ratings.

(Q) Is it best to buy a vehicle from a specific source?

(A) Each transportation source has certain advantages and disadvantages. However, the important thing to keep in mind is that a number of vehicle sources should be considered (i.e., private owners, rental car companies, company vehicles, off lease vehicles, new car dealerships, bank repossessions, the Internet). When buyers inform a vehicle source that they are also considering the other sources, better deals are usually obtained.

(Q) What questions should buyers ask by telephone to better determine if a vehicle is worth their time to investigate?

(A) - How many miles has the vehicle been driven (the average is about 11,000 to 12,000 miles per year)?

- Is the transmission an automatic, a semi-automatic, or a manual? If the transmission is not what the buyer wants, there is no need to ask further questions.

- Has the vehicle been repainted and if so, why? It is best to avoid repainted vehicles.

- When are the next state inspection and emissions standard test due? The vehicle should have a minimum of at least eight-months remaining until the next required state inspection and emissions test.

- How often were the engine oil and the oil filter changed, and who performed the service? An acceptable answer would be every 3,000 to 3,500 miles or about every three to four months.

- Are you the original owner of the vehicle? Original owners tend to take better care of vehicles.

- What is the reason that the vehicle is being sold? It is encouraging if the individual is the original owner and if he or she is planning to again buy the same make of vehicle.

(Q) What if the owner is lying when answering questions about a vehicle?

(A) It is worthwhile to obtain as much information about a vehicle as possible, therefore, buyers should ask questions. The interior and exterior inspections, and vehicle test-drive help to verify the information provided by the owner.

(Q) How long should the vehicle test-drive take?

(A) It is worthwhile to test-drive a vehicle for a minimum of 20 minutes on two separate occasions. The test-drive should include a variety of roads that buyers will drive day-in and day-out.

(Q) Should buyers take a vehicle to a mechanic before making a purchase?

(A) A mechanic should confirm what buyers have concluded after they have inspected and test-driven a vehicle. Buyers should request that the vehicle be raised on a lift for the mechanic's inspection and that the mechanic test-drives the vehicle.

(Q) Of course buyers want to save money, but what protection do they have when purchasing a 2- to 3- year-old vehicle?

(A) Most vehicles have manufacturers' bumper-to-bumper warranties of three years-36,000 miles or four years 50,000 miles in addition to five years-60,000 miles on the drive train (i.e., engine and transmission). The warranties are transferable to buyers who purchase the vehicles. The warranties begin on the date that vehicles are first purchased from new car dealers.

Buyers best interests are also served when they have performed research to identify vehicles that have favorable reliability ratings.

(Q) What is a long term benefit of saving one-third when buying vehicles?

(A) The average new vehicle costs about \$15,000 to \$18,000. Most 2- to 3- year-old vehicles will easily provide five or more years of trouble free driving. If buyers invest the savings (i.e., \$5,000 to \$6,000) and they are able to add \$800 per year toward transportation, after a five-year period, they will have the money needed to purchase another 2- to 3- year-old vehicle without straining their budget.