

What to Expect When Buying Your First Car

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When it comes to buying a new car, you can prepare, but you don't really know what you're doing until you do it. Here are some of the realities that face first-time car buyers.

Negotiations can be tricky. Many people are intimidated by the process of finding the best price. Research prices on similar makes and models beforehand, and know the fair value of the car you're interested in.

Visit the DMV. Another gritty reality of buying a car is visiting your local DMV office to get your registration in order. Check your local DMV website before you go to ensure you bring all necessary paperwork, identification, or forms.

Get under the hood. When you first get your new car, flip through the manual and learn the ins and outs of the car. Get acquainted with everything from pre-setting your radio stations to understanding where your windshield wiper switch is. Knowing how your car operates will help you in the long run.

Organized paperwork isn't optional. Keep the title, insurance info, registration, or other important paperwork organized and in a safe place—you'll need them in the future for inspections, registration, and other requirements.

Your car needs a home. If you don't have a designated driveway or garage, check with your local town ordinances to determine if you need a street parking permit.

Listen to the weatherman. Seasonal maintenance is important. In colder areas, you should think about snow tires, and be prepared with shovels and ice scrapers. In warm-weather locations, you may want to take measures to prevent engine or cooling system issues.

Spend a little time planning for all of these considerations and you'll be ready to enjoy your new set of wheels.

