

Hone your Haggling Skills to Save Hundreds on a New Car

Buying a car can be one of the most expensive decisions we make, and yet far too many of us end up paying over the odds for a new set of wheels. In the current uncertain climate, it's more important than ever to get a good price on your reliable run-around - or sporty little number - and one of the easiest ways of doing this is by haggling.

Don't be afraid of negotiating a better deal

However, new findings show that of the 1.14 million (*) people planning to buy a brand new car between September 2009 and February 2010, 121,000 (*) do not plan to bargain down the price they pay. This is despite the fact that - depending on the car - you could get a discount of up to 50 per cent (**) on the list price.

In fact, figures suggest the average discount you should be aiming for on a brand new car is around £1,893 (***) which means that overall, British motorists could save themselves a huge £229 million (*) over the next six months.

Seize the opportunity to drive a hard bargain

Few of us enjoy haggling, but there's no time like the present to cast off your inhibitions and try your luck, as despite the Government's scrappage scheme - introduced in May offering "cash for bangers" - the car industry is still going through a difficult period. (See: Buy a new set of wheels as discount deadlines loom.)

With figures showing that the sales of new cars in September were down 20 per cent (****) on previous years, this really is the perfect time to put your bartering skills into practice.

"Now is a good time to negotiate a significant discount on the price of a new vehicle," says Steven Baillie from Sainsbury's Finance. "With typical British reserve, many of us don't haggle hard - despite the big savings that can be made. We'd urge buyers to give it a go."

Homework is the key to confidence

Haggling may be an art, but it doesn't have to be difficult - here's our top tips to steer you through the process:

- * Do your research - knowing the discount you want to aim for will help you haggle more effectively, so make sure you're armed with as much information as possible.
- * Set a budget - enter into negotiations with a fixed idea of the car you want and the amount you're happy to spend - and stick to it.
- * Pick your person - identify the right person to negotiate with and be courteous; your chances will improve if they like you.
- * Show no emotion - try and keep your excitement in check when you're haggling, as if you look too keen, the dealer may be less willing to negotiate on price.
- * Ask for extras - if you can't persuade staff to give you a discount, try and get additional features thrown into the deal, such as a better car stereo.

Pick your moment

If you're planning to haggle, it's worth thinking about timing, as you can often pick up a good price on a new car just before the introduction of new registration plates, as cars left over from the previous registration become less attractive.

Similarly, one of the best times to get a great deal on an old model is when manufacturers are introducing a new one.

Learn when to quit

One of the key elements of successful haggling is knowing when you have got a good deal and not pushing your luck. At the same time, if you're not able to strike a deal, it's equally important to know when to walk away - and to show that you mean business; after all, there are always other cars.

Top tips to drive down the cost:

As well as haggling, there are some other simple steps to make a tidy saving:

- * Shop around for the best deal on a loan.
- * Consider a 0 per cent finance deal from your car dealer - but note you may have to pay a hefty deposit
- * Do the maths to work out if a leasing deal will be cheaper.
- * Look at cars that have been pre-registered, as you essentially get a nearly brand-new car at a second-hand price.
- * If you have an exact model in mind, check out an internet-based car broker.

Notes:

(*) Sainsbury's Finance

(**) Car broker Broadspeed.com

(***) What Car? Target Price 2009

(****) Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), September 2009

About the Author

And finally...if you're thinking of buying a car, you can get an idea of how safe and secure it is by checking out its Thatcham New Car Security Rating. And don't forget to protect your car even further by covering it with comprehensive [car insurance](#).

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