

The best way to purchase your first car

By [David Porteous](#)

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Your first vehicle purchase is an exciting milestone in your life. It means no longer being reliant on public transport or the favours of family and friends. It means being able to travel where you want when you want. It also comes with the pride of owning your own vehicle. It's a life and a career highlight.



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However, it is challenging to get onto the ladder of car ownership. You have no existing vehicle to trade in, your credit record might not be very extensive, and you have limited experience in the world of cars. How do you go about shopping for your maiden automotive purchase?

Firstly, consider a recent pre-owned vehicle that's around a year or two old. These cars will have all the reliability of a new car but will be significantly cheaper. A recent pre-owned vehicle will also have the balance of its manufacturer's warranty and service plan in effect, which means more peace of mind and fewer hidden costs down the line. They might have had their first service but will be in the early stages of their motoring life.

The vast majority of recent pre-owned cars come from the car rental industry. Avis Car Sales, for instance, sells vehicles that are only 9-12 months old, which have been meticulously serviced and are as good as new, just far less expensive.

Next, you should buy from a reputable used-car dealer. Buy from brands you know and recognise. If they've been around for decades, you know they have built a reputation for reliability, they will have the expertise to offer good advice, and be able to offer after-sales service.

Established dealers charge a slight premium for the brand reliability they offer. A reseller like Avis Car Sales will offer similar brand reassurance but will be slightly less expensive than a used car franchise.

Look for a small car. Compact, manoeuvrable cars are easier to handle and you're less likely to bump them in a parking lot or to suffer a fender bender, which is a possibility during your first few months on the road.

Organise finance. You're unlikely to have the ready cash required to buy a relatively new car for cash. Any good dealer will be able to help you arrange finance for your purchase through major banks or car-finance institutions. They will compare various rates and recommend the best financier for you.

Check the service and accident history. High-speed accidents are the worst cause of wear and tear on a vehicle. Ask your dealer directly whether the car you're interested in has been in a bad accident or suffered serious damage. If it has, or if the dealer is evasive about it, steer clear.

Buy a popular brand of car. Well-known automotive brands will have a good resale value when you eventually are ready for your next car. This means their cost of ownership is lower. Little-known brands may be less expensive but will have a lower resale value. Stick with the good brands.

Look for an exchange plan. Sometimes you buy a car and find, after a week or two, that it really doesn't suit you. Some dealers will be prepared to take back the car you've just bought for them and exchange it. Avis Car Sales, for instance, will replace your car with a similar (or similarly priced car) for up to 30 days after you take delivery of your car.

Ask about DataDots. DataDots are tiny polyester particles the size of a pinhead that carries a vehicle's unique identifying information like the chassis number. They can be sprayed throughout the vehicle, making it easy to identify and a deterrent to thieves. If the vehicle you buy has DataDots, it can easily be identified if it is stolen.

Owning a car is a great privilege and an opportunity. Hopefully, these tips can help you make the right choice and take your life to a new level of effectiveness and success.

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