



5 things not to say when you're buying a car

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NerdWallet

You're test-driving a new car and you really, really like it. The car salesperson senses your excitement and casually asks, "So, what do you think?" The words "I love it!" are forming in your mind, but ...

If you say this, or a number of other things, you're unwittingly revealing information about yourself. Car salespeople are trained to quickly evaluate you, your taste in cars and your economic profile, industry experts caution. And, as the saying goes, what you say can and will be used against you once you reach the bargaining table.

Eliminating the following statements when you buy a car can help you negotiate a better deal.

1. 'I love this car!'

Saying this to a car salesperson would "give them a hand up when it comes time to close the sale," says Scott Hall, a former car salesman and now executive vice president of operations for Swapalase, which matches leaseholders with car shoppers looking to take over a lease. "In any negotiation, you want to be careful of what you say and how you say it."

As a salesperson, "you're always looking for a commitment," says Robert Crow, who sold Infinitis for over five years before becoming a real estate agent. Saying you love the car "tells them you're committed to buying."

Instead of pledging your devotion, play it cool. Act noncommittal or indecisive when asked for your opinion. After all, you want the dealer to think you can take it or leave it. The ability to walk away from a deal will make you a better negotiator.

2. 'I've got to have a monthly payment of \$350.'

This tops Hall's list of forbidden phrases. Turning a customer into a monthly-payment buyer is the favorite weapon of car salespeople, he says.

"There isn't a dealership out there that wouldn't say 'yes' to any number you name," Hall says — and you'll wind up paying more in interest that way. Negotiating on the monthly payment "takes the focus away from the price of the car."

A smart finance manager can simply extend the length of the loan until the monthly payment amount is what you want it to be, Hall says. The best protection against this, he adds, is to come in with a preapproved loan. That essentially turns you into a cash buyer at the dealership, allowing you to take dealer financing only if it's a better deal.

3. 'My lease is up next week.'

Telegraphing that your car's lease is ending signals desperation and gives a salesperson reason to ratchet up the pressure, Crow says. "It's like saying, 'I need new wheels or I'll be walking pretty soon,'" he says.

Furthermore, he adds, it reveals a lot about you: You favor leasing (which dealerships like) and you probably have good credit. It also opens the door for more probing questions designed to tease out even more information — which can provide valuable ammunition to a good salesperson.

4. 'I want \$10,000 for my trade-in, and I won't take a penny less.'

The problem with this is that the dealership might be willing to make a better offer. By speaking first, you've lost. "Let the person you're negotiating with throw out the numbers first," Hall says. "That's Negotiating 101!"

Before you go to the dealership, research the trade-in value of your car using an online pricing guide like Edmunds, Kelley Blue Book or TrueCar. These are only estimates — every car lot's trade-in prices vary based on local tastes and demand — but you'll have an acceptable figure in mind. Then, when the haggling starts, Hall recommends saying, "You guys can go ahead and appraise my trade. Tell me what you think it's worth."

5. 'I've been looking all over for this color.'

"Color is huge," Crow says. So if a customer has found a rare color on your lot, as a salesperson you know they have to buy from you — and pay the price you name.

Instead, Crow recommends that buyers try to be flexible and go to the car lot with two color choices in mind. Better yet, look at a dealership's inventory online to verify that they have a car in the color you want before you get there. Then, if you're up for it, Crow says, "For fun, let them think they're selling you on this car" by initially seeming neutral about the color.



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