

Let's Go Car Shopping!

The **BIG** Idea

- What are the most important things to consider when buying a car?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Which Car Would You Choose? (5 minutes)
- II. What to Look for in a Car (10 minutes)
- III. Do Your Research Before You Go (20 minutes)
- IV. Think You Found "The One"? (5 minutes)
- V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 162, Car Ads
 - Student Handbook page 163, New vs. Used Cars
 - Student Handbook pages 164-166, Find Your Car
 - Student Handbook page 167, Test Drive Tips
- Information packets about two used car options (one per student, see **PREPARATION**)
- Overhead projector and/or LCD projector
- Chart paper and markers

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Identify criteria to consider when purchasing a car.
- Identify steps to take in researching a car purchase.
- Weigh information needed to choose a car.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students begin by choosing a car from a list of ads and explaining the reasons for their selections. Next, the class identifies some of the things people look for when buying a car, and review the advantages and disadvantages of new and used cars. Then students review two local advertisements and research the cars' actual value and fuel efficiency. Finally, students discover how to evaluate a specific car they're considering purchasing, from researching its history to looking for hidden problems. They also explore a list of "test-driving tips" to keep in mind when they finally get behind the wheel.

PREPARATION

- The following handouts can be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
 - **Student Handbook page 162, Car Ads**
 - **Student Handbook page 163, New vs. Used Cars**
 - **Student Handbook pages 164-166, Find Your Car**
 - **Student Handbook page 167, Test Drive Tips**
 - List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
 - List the day's vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
 - For **Activity III, Do Your Research Before You Go**, use www.cars.com to find and print out two ads for cars under \$8,000, available locally, that will appeal to your students. Also print out pages from the following sources that contain information about these cars:
 - Kelly Blue Book (www.kbb.com)
 - Car Fax (http://www.carfax.com/car_safety/ratings/SRR.cfm) Although reports from this website cost money, some information is available for free.
 - (www.fueleconomy.gov) Click on "Compare Side by Side."
- Make enough copies so that you have a class set of information packets for each car. Familiarize yourself with these websites so you can demonstrate their use.
- If Internet access is available, make arrangements to project the websites listed above via your laptop and LCD projector.
 - You may wish to update **Student Handbook page 162, Car Ads**, with current models available in your area.

VOCABULARY

Make: the brand of a car, or the name of the car company, such as Ford, Toyota, or Chevrolet.

Mileage: the total number of miles a vehicle has been driven, as shown on the odometer; also used to refer to MPG (miles per gallon), or the number of miles a vehicle can travel on one gallon of fuel (MPG is usually provided for city driving and highway driving).

Model: One of the specific types of cars made by the company, such as Taurus, Corolla, or Silverado; each model has its own unique design and features.

Warranty: A guarantee that comes with a car that the company will repair certain problems for a specific period or number of miles.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

In **Activity I, Which Car Would You Choose**, if time permits, have students work in pairs and spend a few minutes sharing their car choices and the reasons for their choices.

In **Activity III, Do Your Research Before You Go**, you may choose to abbreviate the activities for the sake of time, omitting the research on Car B at the bottom of **Student Handbook pages 164-166, Find Your Car**. If you choose this option, you'll also need to skip the comparison questions on this student handbook page (**Activity V**).

You may choose to complete the final page of **Student Handbook pages 164-166, Find Your Car**, in **Activity III**.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up: Which Car Would You Choose? (5 minutes)

1. [To begin this lesson, as students enter the classroom, have them turn to **Student Handbook page 162, Car Ads**. Give students a few minutes to read the scenario and answer the question.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Welcome, everybody. By now, I hope you've had a chance to choose a car. I'd like to see a show of hands: How many of you have shopped for a car before? How many of you think you'll shop for a car in the next few years? Well, it looks like that's almost everybody! I think you're going to be interested in the next couple of lessons in our "Money Matters" unit. Today and next week we're going to focus on buying cars — how to find and pay for a car that's right for you.
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Even though we're going to be focusing on cars over the next few weeks, you're going to learn some important lessons for any big purchase you make in life. In a nutshell, those are:
 - Always start by figuring out what you really need — and if you really need what you're about to purchase.
 - Look closely at your budget and determine what you can really afford.
 - Do your research to make sure you're buying a quality product that will last. After all, you could be paying for it for a long time!
 - Don't believe advertisements. Carefully investigate your purchase through objective third-party reviews.

II. What to Look for in a Car (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now I'd like you to think about why you chose the car you did in the Warm Up activity. What do we look for when we're shopping for a car? [Write their responses on the board or chart paper. Guide them to include the following:
 - style
 - cost
 - reliability
 - speed/drivability
 - gas mileage
 - mileage
 - special features (sunroof, stereo system, etc.)
 - safety
 - size

- reputation of car company
 - proximity of local repair shops
 - mileage and repair history]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Something else you might consider when buying a car is whether to buy a new or used car. You might think that new is always better. After all, a new car has hardly been driven. Well, both new and used cars have advantages and disadvantages. Let's look at those more closely. Please turn to your **Student Handbook page 163, New vs. Used.**

[As a class, review the advantages and disadvantages of new and used cars. As first-time car buyers, most students will probably purchase a used car. Help them understand that used cars have their advantages, as long as they thoroughly research the car.]

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Another question you'll need to consider is whether you'll buy from a dealership or a private seller. When you start searching for cars in the classifieds, you'll see ads from both types of sellers. I want to make a quick note about each:
- Used car dealers often offer warranties or guarantees that they will repair certain problems for a specific period or number of miles. A warranty is very valuable for a used car, as you never know what could go wrong. However, you pay for this. This is one reason that car prices are typically higher at dealers.
 - Private sellers: Of course, private sellers don't offer warranties, which is why it's important to research the specific car you buy. (You'll learn more about this later in the lesson.) However, private sellers also tend to have lower prices. So if you're buying a reliable model with reasonable number of miles, and you know the car you're buying doesn't have a history of problems, this can be a smart way to buy a car.
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Before we move on, I want to make a note about "mileage," or the number of miles the vehicle has been driven, which is always shown on a car's odometer. Of course, this is only an issue if you're buying a used car. As you can probably guess, the more miles a car has been driven, the less it will cost. But the more a car is driven, the more it could (and probably will) require in repairs and replaced parts. If you're buying a used car, especially one with lots of miles, you'll want to do your research to estimate how much you could spend on repairs and replacing parts.

III. Do Your Research Before You Go (20 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** When you start looking for a car, chances are you will quickly narrow down your options using the criteria we just discussed. You may first narrow

your choices to a specific make, or brand, of car — like Ford or Toyota. Then you'll determine which model, or specific car made by that company, is right for you. Corolla or Camry are both models made by Toyota. It's always good to have at least a couple of different models in mind.

Once you've decided which models are best for you, do your research to find out what people do and don't like about these cars. You'll find car reviews online (www.cars.com) and in magazines. Also talk to people who own the car and check online bulletin boards where owners post comments about problems they've encountered. You can also find websites like CARFAX Safety and Reliability Ratings (http://www.carfax.com/car_safety/ratings/SRR.cfm), which provides information about a specific model's crash test results, safety recalls, reliability ratings, and ownership costs.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** To get a better idea of how this research is done, we'll research two cars that are currently on sale in our area. Please turn to your **Student Handbook page 164-166, Find Your Car**, for instructions.
 - The first page of this student handbook page describes four websites where you can find information about cars for sale. We'll look at features of these websites as we use them to compare cars.
 - The second provides space to record your findings.
 - The third contains a list of questions to ask once you've finished your research.

To save time, I've already printed out information from these websites for two cars, A (year, make, model) and B (year, make, model). You can return to these websites at home to investigate cars of your own choosing.

3. [Distribute car packets you've created, providing each student with a copy of the information for both cars. (See **PREPARATION** for details.)]
4. [As you discuss each website, illustrate its highlights using your laptop and LCD projector. After reviewing each website, direct students to the relevant information in their packets and pause so they can record details on the first page of **Find Your Car**. Complete the chart for Car A as a class.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: The websites listed on the first page of **Find Your Car** provide a great overview of any car you're thinking about buying. These aren't the only places you'll find this information. But it's important to know that it's available, and not difficult to check out.

- **Cars for Sale:** You can search for cars for sale online using websites such as www.cars.com. Type in the year, make, model, and price you're looking for, and you'll find details on cars that fit your specifications.
 - **Car's Value:** You can check to make sure you're paying a fair price on sites such as Kelley Blue Book (www.kbb.com). You can input the car's year, make, model, mileage, overall condition, and other details to find out its value. Note that there are different values listed: Private Party Value, which is closer to what you should pay a private seller, and Suggested Retail Value, which is representative of a dealer's asking price. Be sure to note who's selling the car you find and match the correct value.
 - **Car's Fuel Efficiency:** You can check out your car's estimated MPG (miles per gallon) at www.fueleconomy.gov. Click on "Compare Side by Side." Enter the car's year, make, and model. Then look under "Estimated New EPA MPG" to find the "Estimated MPG" for city driving, highway driving, and combined. You'll also find the "Annual Fuel Cost" (estimated cost of gas per year) on this page.
 - **Car's History:** You can even investigate a car's history, a final step in the process before you buy. We won't do this today – you need the car's Vehicle Identification Number to get the info. We'll talk more about this before the end of class.
5. [Once the class has completed the chart on the second page of **Find Your Car** for Car A, have them complete the information for Car B individually. Then reconvene the class for the discussion below.]

IV. Think You Found "The One"? (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Okay, let's say you've narrowed down your choices, searched for cars for sale around you, and researched the car to make sure it's one you want and fairly priced. And now it's time to check out the car itself. You're probably pretty excited about getting in the car and taking it for a test drive. After all, you've got to see it and drive it for yourself to know if it's really "the one."

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** First, you want to look beyond the car's exterior. After all, it's what's under the hood that could end up costing you more money than you bargained for. You'll find a lot of specific tips online for how to test-drive and evaluate a car. You can find a few in your **Student Handbook page 167, Test Drive Tips.**

In short, you should be actively looking for anything that doesn't quite seem right — whether it's a funny smell or an odd noise. Any of these things could signal potential problems and big money down the road. And be thorough. Be sure to test everything in the car. If you find any problem with the car, it should be subtracted from the price.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Second, you want to make sure the car doesn't have any hidden mechanical problems. In other words, you want to make sure you're not buying a "lemon" — a car with recurring problems that are difficult to diagnose and fix.

You've probably heard of "certified used cars" or "certified pre-owned cars." This means the car has been through a thorough inspection and any problems have been repaired. In addition, the car is backed by a manufacturer's warranty. You do pay extra for a car in this condition, but it's a nice guarantee. Also, it's usually limited to cars that are under five years old and with less than 100,000 miles.

So what do you do if the car you want to buy is not certified? Simple: Get it checked out by a mechanic you trust — someone who's not affiliated with the dealership in any way. This inspection will cost you, but it's well worth the expense. If the mechanic finds a problem, it could save you from buying a lemon. If the problems are minor, they should be deducted from the final cost of the car.

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Finally, you always want to do a little "background check" on the specific car you're going to buy. At this point, you've already researched the make and model, but now that you know the specific car, be sure to investigate the car's history. All you need is the car's Vehicle Identification Number or VIN, which is specific to every car. Once you have the VIN, you can access the car's Vehicle History Report for about \$30. (You can access history reports online at www.carfax.com.) This report will tell you if the car's been in a major accident, damaged by flood, had many owners, used as a rental — factors that could affect the car's reliability, safety, and value and end up costing you in repairs.

One note of caution here: A bad report can help you rule out a car with a problematic history. But don't use a good report as your only source of information about a

car. Carfax and similar sources may not find all the problems you're trying to avoid. There's no substitute for investigating on your own.

5. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** And after all that, if you still love the car, should you make the purchase? No! Even if everything checks out, never drive off the lot that day. Take a day or two to think about it and double-check your financing. (We'll talk more about that step next week.)

V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Before we wrap up for the day, I'd like you to consider the cars you researched today. Turn back to the third page of **Find Your Car** and complete the section listed as, "Choose Your Car." [Give students a few minutes to answer these questions.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now don't get too attached to that car! Next week, you'll find out whether or not you can afford it. We'll also talk about getting car loans—borrowing money to pay for a car.

Car Ads

You are about to start your freshman year in college. You will be commuting to school from home, so you need a car. You sit down one morning over your Cheerios and read over the classifieds to see what's out there. Check out the car ads below.

AUTOMOBILES

Brand new, fun to drive, and it's got your name on it.

SATURN ION, 2007, Brand new, metallic blue 4-door sedan, 5-speed manual transmission, 4 cylinder 2.2 Liter engine, power locks, auto locking doors, driver airbag, AM/FM/single CD with 4 speakers, tilt steering wheel. Come into your friendly Saturn dealer and test drive today! **\$12,300**

A kickin' truck for hauling it all.

CHEVROLET Silverado 1500, 2001, black, long bed, V8 4.8 Liter engine, 4WD, automatic transmission, A/C, power steering, AM/FM, front air bags. Excellent condition, 140,000 miles. Call Bobby after 5pm, 123-XXX-XXXX. **\$6,800**

Picture yourself in a red luxury convertible.

BMW 328 iC, 1998, Red 2-door convertible, 6-cylinder 2.8 Liter engine, 5-speed manual transmission, A/C, power steering, AM/FM stereo, leather. Excellent condition, 105,000 miles. Call the BMW Showroom for a test drive today. **\$13,000**

The car that won't let you down.

FORD TAURUS SE, 2000, Burgundy 4-door sedan, V6 3.0 Liter engine, automatic transmission, 2WD, power steering, driver and passenger airbags, anti-lock brakes, AM/FM cassette radio, power windows, A/C, cruise control. Good condition, 90,000 miles. Call June during the day (XXX-XXX-XXXX). **\$3,660**

Which one would you choose? Write two sentences below describing the reasons for your choice.

New vs. Used Cars

It's a big question every car buyer asks: Will you buy used or new? Chances are, as a first-time car buyer, you'll opt for a used car. But in case you're wondering what the difference is, here's a look at the advantages and disadvantages of each.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Used Cars	<p>Lower cost: Lower purchase price and lower insurance premiums.</p> <p>“Certified” used cars are under warranty.</p> <p>You can research the reliability and repair history of that particular make and model.</p>	<p>Cost of repairs: Older cars are more likely to need repairs and replacements.</p> <p>Although “certified” used cars are under warranty, these typically cover less than warranties for new cars.</p>
New Cars	<p>The thrill of owning the latest model.</p> <p>New cars come with full warranties.</p> <p>Require fewer repairs.</p> <p>Despite higher costs, financing rates can be lower.</p>	<p>Higher cost: Higher purchase price and higher insurance premiums.</p> <p>Depreciation: The moment you drive off the lot, it loses a big chunk of its value. A car's value typically decreases about 30% after the first couple of years.</p>

Find Your Car

Which car would you choose if you were looking today? Use information on the web to find and compare your options.

Step 1: Find the Cars You're Looking for

Use online classified ads like www.cars.com to search the web by make, model, year, and price. Record the information you find under "Car Details."

Step 2: Check the Price

Research each car's value using Kelley Blue Book (www.kbb.com). You can input the car's year, make, model, mileage, overall condition, and other details to find its value. Record this information under "Car Value."

Step 3: Check Your Car's Fuel Efficiency and Estimate Fuel Costs

Check out each car's MPG at www.fueleconomy.gov. Click on "Compare Side by Side." Enter the car's year, make, and model. Then look under "Estimated New EPA MPG" and enter the "Estimated MPG" for city driving, highway driving, and combined. Enter the "Annual Fuel Cost" (estimated cost of gas per year).

Step 4: Investigate the Car's History

Once you've identified your top choices, you can research the history of specific cars at www.carfax.com and similar websites. By entering the car's Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), you can find its history – fires, floods, accidents, even repairs. There's a charge for this service, so check the website for current rates. (You can also find safety and reliability ratings on this website free of charge.) Note: You should always have a reliable mechanic check out a used car you're considering. A report from Carfax (or a similar service) is not a substitute for an inspection by a qualified mechanic.

Find Your Car (continued)

CAR A		
Car Details		
Make	Model	
Year	Mileage	
Price	Seller	
Features		
Car Value		
(check one)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Private Party Value		
<input type="checkbox"/> Suggested Retail Value		
Estimated MPG and Fuel Costs (regular gasoline)		
Combined	City	Highway
Estimated cost of gas per year		

CAR B		
Car Details		
Make	Model	
Year	Mileage	
Price	Seller	
Features		
Car Value		
(check one)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Private Party Value		
<input type="checkbox"/> Suggested Retail Value		
Estimated MPG and Fuel Costs (regular gasoline)		
Combined	City	Highway
Estimated cost of gas per year		

Find Your Car (continued)

Choose Your Car

Look back at the information you recorded about both cars and answer the questions below.

1. Which car has been driven fewer miles?

2. Which car has more of the features you need in a car?

3. How does each car's price compare with its Kelley Blue Book Price?

4. Which car gets the better gas mileage?

5. Based on what you've learned about both cars, which one would you choose?

6. What would you still like to know about this car before you bought it? How could you find those answers?

Test Drive Tips

You'll find lots of tips online for what to look for when testing cars. Remember, the most important thing is to take your time, be thorough, and be tough! Here's a list of some things to do and look for during a test drive:

Before You Drive

- Test everything in the car. Open and close all the doors, test all the car seats, push every button, open and close all the windows. Test both the air conditioning and the heater – no matter what the weather's like outside.
- Sit in the passenger seat and the back seats too.
- Sit in the driver's seat and test the radio and other controls to make sure they're easy to reach while driving. Be sure to turn off the radio when you start the test drive so you can hear any unusual noises.
- Sit in the car and look in front of you and in the rear-view and side-view mirrors. Can you see well? Do you notice any blind spots?
- Look under the hood. Even if you don't know much about cars, check to make sure it looks relatively clean and that there are no funny fuel smells, leaks, or cracks in the belts. Also make sure there's no oil buildup or sludge inside the valve cover.
- Start the engine and stand behind the car. Look for abundant or dark smoke.

On the Drive

- Drive on many types of roads. City streets, the highway, winding roads, steep climbs, smooth roads, and bumpy roads.
- Accelerate quickly to see if the car has enough power to pass slower cars or merge onto a busy highway.
- Notice if the car jumps or lurches when you switch gears.
- Test the steering and handling by taking the car around sharp turns, long curves, and short curves. Also be sure to try parallel parking.
- Test the brakes by stopping quickly in a safe place, such as a parking lot. Be sure to let your fellow passengers know and check for cars behind you before trying this!
- Test the alignment. Drive in a straight line and notice if the car pulls to the right or left.

